

Nonnative Accents and Conflict Management:  
The Mediating Roles of Stereotype Threat, Regulatory Focus, and Conflict Behaviors on  
Conflict Outcomes

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## ABSTRACT

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The proposed study explores the experiences of nonnative speakers when they interact with native speakers in conflict situations. The aim of the study is to test if nonnative speakers experience stereotype threat when interacting with native speakers in conflict situations and, if so, to examine how stereotype threat affects their regulatory focus, conflict behaviors, and outcomes. A serial mediation model with three mediators (stereotype threat, regulatory focus, conflict behaviors) will be tested. This study contributes to the field of organizational psychology and conflict studies by 1) extending stereotype threat literature and examining nonnative speakers as a social identity group that experiences stereotype threat, 2) exploring the effects of stereotype threat in a conflict context, and 3) extending workforce diversity literature and examining language diversity in relation to conflict-related behaviors and outcomes in organizational settings. The findings from the proposed study offer insights into understanding the effects of language diversity on conflict dynamics within the increasingly globalized, multi-cultural world of organizations.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A plethora of scholars and practitioners have stressed the importance of managing and leveraging diversity (e.g. race, gender, ethnicity, age) in organizations in the past two decades. However, there is one aspect of diversity that has been relatively ignored until recently: language diversity. As the workplace in the United States becomes increasingly global, organizations are more likely to employ persons whose native language is not English. According to the United States Census Bureau (2014), one in four young adults between ages 18 and 34, 17.9 million people in total, speaks a language other than English at home. As the number of immigrants continues to increase in the United States, it is no surprise that the number of nonnative English speakers entering the workforce is also increasing. In addition, English has now become the “language of business” throughout the world and more multinational companies are mandating English as the common corporate language (Lauring & Selmer, 2012). Such trends make it increasingly important for us to understand the role nonnative accents play between individuals in organizations.

Not surprisingly, nonnative accents have been identified as a source of tension and conflict in teams within organizations. Brett and colleagues (2006) identified accents and common-language fluency as one of the categories that can create barriers to a multicultural team’s ultimate success. Misunderstandings or deep frustration may occur because of nonnative speakers’ accents, lack of English fluency, or problems with translation or usage. These factors may also influence *perceptions* of status or competence such that a person with a nonnative accent may be perceived as lower in status or competence regardless of his/her actual competence (Brett, Behfar, & Kern, 2006).

Although the exact number of cases of discrimination based on language ability and accent is hard to determine, in 2013, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission received more than 10,600 complaints of employment discrimination based on national origin, which includes those involving perceived problems with language ability and accent. Compared to the number of complaints in 1997, this represents an increase of 60 percent. For example, Deseret News (2012) reported that an Iraqi hotel worker in Phoenix filed a complaint because his coworkers at the Four Points by Sheraton continuously mocked his accent and called him derogatory names. Managers refused to take his complaints seriously, even though a hostile work environment had developed. Ultimately, he won a \$500,000 settlement. Similarly, dozens of Filipino hospital workers in California won a nearly \$1 million settlement after claiming they were harassed and reprimanded for speaking with an accent or in their native languages. These cases illustrate that language diversity can engender tension and conflict at multiple levels in organizations. As such, it is becoming increasingly important to understand the impact of nonnative accents on interpersonal interactions at work, especially because accents are often as salient as differences in ethnicity, age, gender, and skin color.

However, thus far, limited attention has been given to studying the effects of nonnative accents on conflict management and outcomes, which is surprising given that language affects every aspect of organizational life, and in particular conflict, which is a pervasive reality at work. To date, there have not been any empirical studies published that examine the stereotype effects of nonnative accents on conflict behaviors or conflict outcomes. In the proposed study, I aim to explore the effects of stereotype threat on nonnative speakers when they engage in conflict situations with native speakers, and examine their implications for nonnative speakers' motivational orientations, behaviors and outcomes in conflict situations.

## **Stereotype Threat**

*Stereotype threat* is a situational predicament in which a person feels at risk of confirming a negative stereotype about one's social group (Steele & Aronson, 1995). In a seminal study by Steele and Aronson (1995), the researchers found that controlling for self-reported SAT scores, African-American participants performed worse than their White peers on verbal questions when the task was described to be diagnostic of their intellectual ability, whereas when the task was framed as a problem-solving exercise not diagnostic of ability, African-American students did not differ from their White peers in their performance. The authors reasoned that knowledge of the prevalent cultural stereotype asserting the intellectual inferiority of African Americans interferes with Black students' performance on intelligence tests by raising their anxiety due to concerns of confirming that stereotype.

Since Steele and Aronson first introduced the mechanism of stereotype threat, more than 300 published articles have documented a wide variety of performance decrements observed among those who are targeted by negative stereotypes (McGlone & Pfiester, 2015). For example, the effects of stereotype threat have been demonstrated in the performance of women on mathematical reasoning (Inzlicht & Been-Zeev, 2000; McGlone & Aronson, 2006) and political knowledge tests (McGlone, Aronson, & Kobrynowicz, 2006). When a task was described as diagnostic of intelligence, Latinos and Latinas (Gonzalez, Blanton, & Williams, 2002) and Native Americans performed more poorly than did Whites on college preparedness tests (Osborne, 2001), and children with low socioeconomic status performed more poorly than those with high socioeconomic status (Croizet & Claire, 1998).

Although stereotype threat is most keenly experienced among groups historically targeted by negative stereotypes, even groups who typically enjoy advantaged social status can experience

stereotype threat. For example, White male university students performed more poorly on a math test when they were told that their performance would be compared with that of Asian men (Aronson et al., 1999). Such comparisons made students mindful of the stereotype of Asian mathematical superiority and consequently impaired their performance relative to others who were not told that such comparisons would be made. In a similar way, Whites also performed more poorly than Blacks on a motor task when it was described to them as measuring their natural athletic ability (Stone, 2002).

In sum, in situations where a devaluing stereotype is relevant, people targeted by the stereotype experience an extra mental burden stemming from concern that their behaviors will reinforce the stereotype in the eyes of others (McGlone, & Pfiester, 2015). This extra pressure to avoid confirming the negative stereotypes associated with the group undermines the targeted group members' performance.

### **Stereotype Threat and Communication Behaviors**

To date, the majority of research on stereotype threat has examined its effects on academic performance (Spencer, Logel, & Davies, 2016), which has shown to be robust. More recently, scholars began to examine the interpersonal consequences of stereotype threat in evaluative contexts where *communication behavior* is the measure of performance. For example, Palomares (2009) found that women used more tentative language (hedges, disclaimers, and tag questions) when discussing stereotypically masculine topics whereas men used more tentative language when discussing stereotypically feminine topics. Importantly, this contrast emerged in mixed but not same-sex dyads because participants had a heightened awareness of their gender identity when communicating about a counter-stereotypical topic with an opposite-sex partner.

McGlone and Pfiester (2015) also explored the impact of gender stereotype threat on communication behaviors. They found that when women participated in a communication exercise portrayed as diagnostic of leadership abilities, they were less fluent and used more tentative language compared to women in a non-leadership ability control condition. The women who experienced stereotype threat produced almost 50% more disfluencies (i.e. pauses, fillers, restarts) during their simulation performances than those not under threat conditions. Men exhibited a similar pattern; the male participants who participated in an exercise portrayed as diagnostic of relationship maintenance skills produced more disfluencies and used more tentative language than males in the control condition.

## **The Current Study**

### *Conflict Context and Stereotype Threat*

In the current study, I extend the literature on stereotype threat and communications by examining the effects of stereotype threat in an important and often emotionally loaded communication context: conflict situations. *Conflict* is a felt struggle between individuals over perceived incompatible differences in beliefs, values, and goals, or over differences in desires for esteem, control, and connectedness (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). While interpersonal conflicts can involve physical violence and other nonverbal behaviors, when conflicts arise between individuals in organizations they are most often expressed through verbal communication. Communication is the means that people use to express their disagreements or differences, and communication also provides the avenue by which conflicts can be successfully resolved, or worsened (Northouse, 2014).

In this study, I propose that conflict situations with native speakers can trigger stereotype threat effects in nonnative speakers. According to Schmader, Johns, and Forbes (2008), situations

of stereotype threat involve activation of three core concepts: the concept of one's ingroup, the concept of the ability domain in question, and the self-concept. More specifically, stereotype threat has been found to occur when the following conditions are met: (a) the domain in which an individual is performing is relevant to the stereotypes associated with the individual's identity group, (b) the task is challenging, (c) the individual is performing in a domain with which he or she identifies, and (d) the context in which the task is being performed is likely to reinforce the stereotype (Roberson & Kulik, 2007; Block et al., 2011).

According to this framework, nonnative speakers can experience stereotype threat in interpersonal conflict situations with native speakers because a) nonnative speakers are often stereotyped to be less competent, difficult to understand, and speaking the language poorly b) managing or attenuating tension between people with perceived incompatible differences in beliefs, values, and goals is challenging, c) being able to effectively communicate and handle conflict situations can be important to the accented individual, and d) ineffective communication in conflict situations can reinforce the stereotype that nonnative speakers are less competent, difficult to understand, and speaking the language poorly. In sum, being in conflict situations with native speakers can trigger and activate stereotype threat in nonnative speakers.

#### *Stereotype Threat, Motivational Orientation, and Conflict Management*

Researchers who examined the motivations of individuals under stereotype threat have found associations between stereotype threat and regulatory focus (Forster, Higgins, & Strack, 2000; Higgins, 1998; Seibt & Forster, 2004). *Regulatory focus* is a motivational mechanism that influences people's sensitivity to potential gains and losses in their environment (Higgins, 1998). A focus on the presence or absence of losses is called a *prevention focus* and a focus on the presence or absence of gains is called a *promotion focus*. Studies that have examined the

relationship between stereotype threat and regulatory focus found that priming individuals with a negative stereotype induces more of a prevention focus, where individuals are motivated to avoid failures rather than promote success (Seibt & Forster, 2004). Larsen (2004) also demonstrated that detecting threatening information (such as stereotype threat) tunes attention, perception, judgement, and memory toward outcomes relevant to avoiding the threat. Based on these empirical findings, stereotype threat will be examined in relation to regulatory focus in the current study.

Research has shown that differences in regulatory focus also influence differences in conflict management. For example, regulatory focus theory has been studied in relation to choices of goals in negotiation (e.g., Appelt & Higgins, 2010; Galinsky, Leonardelli, Okhuysen, & Mussweiler, 2005), concerns over justice (Cropanzano, Paddock, Rupp, Bagger, & Baldwin, 2008; O'Brien & Oyserman, 2010), retaliation in reaction to unfairness (Brebels, DeCremer, & Sedikides, 2008), and victim-transgressor repentance and forgiveness (Santelli, Struthers, & Eaton, 2009). With regard to conflict management behaviors, a prevention focus has been found to be more associated with the use of avoidant, non-confrontational behaviors, whereas a promotion focus is more associated with the use of integrative, problem-solving behaviors (Ayduk et al., 2003; Winterheld & Simpson, 2011). The current research will extend this literature by examining the relationships between regulatory focus and conflict management behaviors under conditions of stereotype threat.

#### *Conflict Management Behaviors and Conflict Outcomes*

Past research examining the consequences of employing various conflict management behaviors has shown that avoiding conflict can undermine relationships and performance (Chen & Tjosvold, 2002). On the other hand, the use of problem-solving behaviors in conflict tends to be more associated with satisfaction with conflict outcomes and relationships (Pruitt & Carnevale,



1993; Cai & Fink, 2002; Kim & Coleman, 2015; Canary & Cupach, 1988). Accordingly, I predict that the use of more avoidant conflict behaviors associated with a stereotype threat-induced prevention orientation will lead to more negative and dissatisfying conflict outcomes, while problem-solving behaviors associated with a promotive motivational orientation will lead to positive outcomes.

To summarize, the following research questions will be addressed in the proposed study:

1) Do nonnative speakers experience heightened levels of stereotype threat in conflict situations with native speakers? 2) How do heightened levels of stereotype threat affect differences in nonnative speakers' regulatory focus?, 3) How do differences in regulatory focus affect conflict management behaviors, and 4) How do these differences in conflict management behaviors affect disputants' experiences of conflict outcomes?

This study contributes to the field of organizational psychology and conflict studies in the following ways. First, the current study extends stereotype threat literature by 1) examining nonnative speakers as a social identity group that experience stereotype threat when interacting with native speakers and 2) exploring stereotype threat effects in relation to *behaviors* and *outcomes* rather than *performance*. Second, it contributes to conflict literature by exploring the effects stereotype threat in a conflict context. Third, the study extends workforce diversity literature and examining language diversity as a type of diversity that influence conflict-related behaviors and outcomes in organizational settings. Furthermore, the findings from the proposed study may offer insights into understanding the effects of language diversity on conflict dynamics within the increasingly globalized, multi-cultural world of organizations.

This dissertation proposal is organized as follows. Chapter two reviews the theoretical and empirical literature on stereotypes of nonnative accents, stereotype threat effects of nonnative

accents, regulatory focus theory, conflict management behaviors, and conflict-related outcomes. Hypotheses are specified throughout the chapter. Chapter three outlines the methodology and design of the current study, including the sample, procedure, and measures. This chapter also includes a discussion of potential methodological limitations related to the use of self-report questionnaires and how those limitations will be addressed in the current investigation. Chapter four reports the results of serial mediation analyses and the tests of study hypotheses. Lastly, chapter five includes a summary of the study findings as well as the theoretical and practical implications of the study. The limitations of the study and future research directions are also discussed.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Stereotypes associated with nonnative accents: Evaluations of nonnative accents**

The way one speaks, including one's accent, is a significant social force (Cargile, & Giles, 1997). An accent, which represents one's manner of pronunciation (Giles, 1970), constitutes an important part of a speaker's social identity and conveys a considerable amount of social information. In this way, a nonnative accent is one of the most salient characteristics of people from other countries who come to live, work, or study in a host country that identifies, and potentially stigmatizes, them as not being native born (Derwing & Munro, 2009). Consequently, nonnative accents can serve as an out-group cue.

Rakic, Steffens, and Mummendey (2011) investigated social categorization by using both accents and looks to indicate ethnicity and they found that "it was rather irrelevant for participants what targets looked like; it mainly mattered whether they were speaking with an accent or not...it was almost as if participants became blind to the visual category information in the presence of more meaningful auditory category information" (p.24). Similarly, for children in the United States, a nonnative accent was found to be a stronger negative cue than race (Kinzler, Shutts, DeJesus, & Spelke, 2009); children preferred to be friends with other children who spoke with a native accent. Moreover, preference for native accent emerges in infants as young as 5 months (Kinzler et al., 2007), suggesting that an accent *is* a powerful out-group cue.

Even though preference for native accents emerges at a very young age, as research with infants and children demonstrates, most researchers argue that there is nothing inherent to accents that make some more aesthetically pleasing than others; rather, accents serve as cues to social identities, activating either negative or positive stereotypes (Gluuzek, Dovidio, 2010). *Standard*

*accents* within a given country are perceived as more desirable, prestigious, and pleasant to listen to than nonstandard, or ethnic accents (Lippi-Green, 1997).

In this way, there are *stereotypes*, knowledge structures containing beliefs and expectations about the typical members of social groups that distort perceptions of those social groups (Stangor, 2009), associated with nonnative accents. Lambert et al. (1960) conducted one of the first studies on language attitudes and since then, a plethora of research has investigated how nonnative-accented individuals are perceived and evaluated. In general, accented individuals are perceived as less pleasant to listen to than are non-accented speakers (Lindemann, 2003), and the stronger the accent the more negatively accented individuals are evaluated (Nesdale & Rooney, 1996). Individuals who have nonnative accents are viewed as less intelligent, less loyal and less competent (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). In addition, nonnative speakers tend to be rated low in status, especially when their accents are perceived as difficult to comprehend.

There are also consequences for stereotyped nonnative speakers in organizations. According to Gluzek and Dovidio (2010), nonnative speakers are less likely to be hired. In its report, *Immigration Reform: Employer Sanctions and the Question of Discrimination*, the United States General Accounting Office (1990) estimated that 461,000 employers out of 4.6 million engaged in illegal discriminatory hiring practices based on a person's foreign appearance or accent. Using a telephone audit, it found that 41 percent of 86 employers treated applicants with foreign accents differently from applicants without foreign accents; they told accented callers that jobs were filled when the jobs were still open, required significantly different documents from accented callers compared to unaccented callers, and scheduled employment interviews only with unaccented callers.

Moreover, nonnative speakers are more likely to be assigned by potential employers to lower status positions and receive lower earnings (Gluzek and Dovidio (2010). Hosoda and Stone-Romero (2010) found that nonnative speakers were less likely to be recommended for promotions than native speakers because a nonnative accent signals a lack of fit with the dominant group. Similarly, nonnative speakers using the same scripted response as native speakers were significantly less likely to be recommended for a middle-management position or receive new-venture funding when compared to native speakers (Huang, Frideger, and Pearce, 2013). These findings illustrate that nonnative speakers can face discrimination in organizations as a result of negative stereotypes associated with their nonnative accents.

### **Stereotype threat: Experiences of Nonnative Speakers**

Research on accents has mainly been studied from the dominant group's perspective (Lippi-Green, 1997), investigating the ways listeners from the native culture evaluate and respond to speakers with nonnative accents (Derwing, 2003). Within research on accents in social and organizational psychology, focus on the speakers and the behavioral consequences associated with having an accent is very limited (Derwing, 2003; Gluzek & Dovidio, 2010). Much of the research from the perspective of the accented individual has been concentrated in other fields, such as applied linguistics and second language acquisition (e.g., Derwing & Munro, 1997; Lindemann, 2003), sociolinguistics (e.g., Sliwa & Johansson, 2014; Lippi-Green, 1997), and communication (e.g., Flege & Fletcher, 1992).

Findings from the aforementioned studies indicate that nonnative speakers are aware of the stereotypes associated with nonnative accents and report experiencing discrimination. For example, Derwing (2003) found that one-third of the respondents reported experiences of discrimination because of their accents, and 53% of the respondents indicated they would be

respected more if they did not speak with a foreign accent. In Gluszek and Dovidio (2010), respondents with strong nonnative accents reported higher perceived stigmatization. Moreover, when I interviewed 12 nonnative English speakers in the United States as a pilot study and asked them to recall interactions with native English speakers, they expressed being aware of negative stigma or judgment associated with their accent: “what comes with having a [foreign] accent is not positive. It relates to other things like intelligence and competence” [US02]. Similarly, another person said, “If you cannot speak English with native accent, they think your English is not good, even if the content of the speech is very knowledgeable. Accent determines whether you are good at English or not” [US10].

In this way, nonnative speakers are aware of the negative stereotypes associated with nonnative accents and perceive discrimination when interacting with native speakers. Such awareness of negative stereotypes associated with nonnative accents and perceptions of stigmatization can cause nonnative speakers to feel at risk of confirming negative stereotypes about their social group when interacting with native speakers in conflict situations. Therefore, I predict that nonnative speakers will experience stereotype threat in conflict situations with native speakers.

Hypothesis 1: Nonnative speakers in conflict situations with native speakers will experience heightened stereotype threat compared to nonnative speakers in conflict situations with nonnative speakers.

### **Stereotype Threat and Regulatory Focus**

*Regulatory focus* is a motivational mechanism that influences people’s sensitivity to potential gains and losses in their environment (Higgins, 1998). Individuals with prevention focus are concerned with the presence or absence of losses whereas individuals with promotion focus are sensitive to the presence or absence of gains. The cognitive processes associated with the

promotion and prevention regulatory foci create different goals and standards, yielding different cognitions, emotions, and behavioral outcomes (Trawalter & Richeson, 2006).

When people are in a promotion focus, they are concerned with their ideals and nurturance needs. This focus results in a general sensitivity to the presence versus absence of positive outcomes and is associated with eager, explorative approach-oriented information-processing strategies aimed at reaching a positive outcome. Promotion-focused people also prefer approach strategies for goal attainment, such as pursuing all available means for advancement (Forster, Higgins, & Idson, 1998) and exhibit more abstract, global information processing (Crowe & Higgins, 1997). They also experience positive outcomes more intensely and with more cheerfulness, and experience negative outcomes with lower intensity and more dejection-related emotions (Higgins, Shah, & Friedman, 1997; Idson, Liberman, & Higgins, 2000).

In contrast, prevention focus results in a general sensitivity to the presence versus absence of negative outcomes and is associated with vigilant, risk-averse avoidance-oriented information-processing strategies aimed at preventing a negative outcome. Prevention-focused people prefer avoidance strategies for goal attainment (Forster et al., 1998; Higgins et al., 1994) and engage in more concrete, local information processing (Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Forster & Higgins, 2005). They experience negative outcomes more intensely and with more agitation, and experience positive outcomes with lower intensity and more quiescence-related emotions (Higgins et al., 1997; Idson et al., 2000).

While people differ in the chronic accessibility of promotion and prevention foci, situations that have salient potential gains or losses may induce a regulatory focus that overcomes a person's chronic focus (Shah, Higgins, & Friedman, 1998). The theory posits that prevention focus is triggered when safety and security needs are made salient, and promotion

focus is triggered when goal pursuit seems possible (Higgins, 1998). Based on this logic, it seems reasonable to theorize that prevention focus can be activated in situations where sensitivity to the risk of failure and identity safety needs are made salient (e.g. presence of stereotype threat). The pressure to avoid confirming the negative stereotypes associated with one's group can instigate a vigilant monitoring of thoughts and behaviors, or a prevention focus.

Several studies have examined the relationship between regulatory focus and stereotype threat (Forster, Higgins, & Strack, 2000; Seibt, & Forster, 2004) and found that stereotype threat can induce a prevention focus where people strive to circumvent negative outcomes rather than to promote positive outcomes (Grimm et al., 2009). In a series of experiments, Seibt and Förster (2004) demonstrated that priming individuals with a self-relevant negative stereotype induces a prevention focus and noted that the activation of a negative stereotype makes the risk of failure salient, which leads to a prevention goal of avoiding failure rather than a promotional goal of achieving success. Similarly, Osyerman et al. (2007) found that priming stigmatized social category membership heightened prevention focus. Based on the theoretical rationale and empirical evidence, I predict that stereotype threat will be differently associated with prevention and promotion regulatory foci.

Hypothesis 2a. Stereotype threat will be positively associated with prevention focus.

Hypothesis 2b. Stereotype threat will be negatively associated with promotion focus.

### **Conflict Management Behaviors**

Conflict management is defined as “behavior oriented toward the intensification, reduction, and resolution of the tension” (De Dreu, Harinck, Van Vianen, 1999, p.371). The research in conflict management behaviors is largely guided by two different underlying perspectives. One premise is that an individual has a “conflict style” and uses a stable pattern of behaviors in conflict



situations (Brewer, Mitchell, & Weber, 2002; Friedman et al., 2000; Hall, 1969). An alternative perspective advocates that the strategy selected by the individual is contingent upon and influenced by salient stimuli in the individual's environment (Putnam & Wilson, 1982). Researchers using this perspective consider that the individual uses strategies related to the situational requirements (De Dreu, Evers, Beersma, Kluwer, & Nauta, 2001; Coleman et al., 2010; 2012). This research assumes the latter perspective, and explores conflict management behaviors not as chronic "styles," but rather as strategies that are influenced by contextual characteristics of the conflict situations.

Dual Concern Theory (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986), related to earlier work by Blake and Mouton (1964) and to Deutsch's Theory of cooperation and competition (Deutsch, 1973), is often used to describe different ways of handling conflict. The theory argues that conflict management is a function of high or low concern for self, combined with high or low concern for others. The dual concern model identifies four different conflict-handling modes based on two dimensions: assertiveness (degree to which one tries to satisfy one's own concerns) and cooperativeness (degree to which one tries to satisfy others' concerns). Concern for self represents the importance of solving a conflict by advancing one's own priorities. Concern for others represents the felt importance of ensuring the other person gets a desirable solution to the conflict.

Since Blake and Mouton's (1964) initial research on conflict modes, several two-dimensional dual concern models depicting conflict modes have been developed (Hall, 1969; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974; Putnam & Wilson, 1982; Rahim, 1983, De Dreu et al., 2001).

These dual concern models delineate four<sup>1</sup> conflict handling behaviors to describe conflict management behaviors: problem-solving (high concern for self and others), forcing (high concern for self, low concern for others), yielding (low concern for self and high concern for others), and avoiding (low concern for self and others).

A *forcing* behavior is characterized by a concern for one's own outcomes and would be expected to lead to a focus on achieving one's own goals in the conflict. It is a confrontational approach that emphasizes the enforcement of one person's choices over those of the other. Putnam and Wilson (1982) state that tactics commonly used to resolve disagreements in this style include: directive communication about the issue, a persistent argument for one's own position, and an attempt to take control of the interaction.

A *yielding* behavior is characterized by a high concern for the other's outcomes and a low concern for self, and this behavior leads to a tendency to make concessions to one's partner. This non-confrontational behavior emphasizes preserving the relationship with the other person rather than pursuing an outcome that only meets an individual's own concerns. Yielding seemingly provides an easy way to settle disputes since one party gives in to the other party so that conflict is reduced. However, because the interests of the person who is yielding are not addressed, his/her issues are unlikely to be resolved and a sustainable agreement between the two parties is less likely to be reached (Cai & Fink, 2002).

An *avoiding* behavior describes behavior that serves to minimize addressing the conflict explicitly, either by ignoring it or shifting attention to a different issue. This behavior is usually

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<sup>1</sup> Some versions of the conflict model (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Rahim, 1983) include a fifth behavior, "compromising" which is characterized by moderate concern for self and moderate concern for others. However, my view is consistent with Pruitt and Kim's (2004) view in that "compromising" is not a distinct behavior but a kind of collaborating behavior involving a half-hearted attempt to find a solution serving both parties' interests.

accompanied by withdrawal and this style is often used when the potential ramifications of confronting the other party seem to outweigh the benefits of resolving the conflict.

Lastly, *problem-solving* behavior is associated with high concern for self and for others, so efforts would be made to ensure that both parties' outcomes are maximized. Thus, a problem-solving behavior concentrates on resolving issues in a collaborative manner. Individuals with this behavior face conflict directly and try to find new and creative solutions to problems by focusing on their own needs as well as the needs of others. In addition, problem-solving behavior implies an attempt to arrive at solutions and outcomes that are satisfying to all members.

### **Regulatory Focus and Conflict Management Behaviors**

To date, regulatory focus theory has not been studied in relation to the Dual-Concern model of conflict behaviors; however, there is theoretical and empirical support to suggest that a prevention focus would be associated with avoiding and yielding behaviors and a promotion focus would be associated with problem-solving behaviors.

Regulatory focus theory posits that the desired end-state or goal for the prevention focused individuals is safety, whereas the desired end-state or goal for the promotion focused individuals is accomplishment (Lieberman, Molden, Idson, & Higgins, 2001). Because a prevention focus involves a sensitivity to negative outcomes, an inclination to avoid mismatches to desired end-states is the natural strategy for prevention self-regulation (e.g., carefully avoiding mistakes). In contrast, a promotion focus involves a sensitivity to rewards and an inclination to approach matches to desired end-states is the natural strategy for promotion self-regulation (e.g., pursuing all means of advancement) (Lieberman et al., 2001).

Based on this rationale, the desired goal of a prevention focused individual in a conflict situation would be preventing escalation of the conflict, whereas the desired goal of a promotion

focused individual in a conflict situation would be achieving positive solutions to the conflict. With regard to behaviors used to reach the desired goals, the desired goal of preventing escalation of the conflict would likely be obtained through the use of avoidant, non-confrontational strategies, such as avoiding and yielding, whereas the desired goal of achieving solutions would likely be obtained through the use of promotive strategies, such as problem-solving.

Studies examining the relationship between regulatory focus and conflict behaviors have found that a prevention focus is associated with the use of avoiding and yielding behaviors to attenuate tensions, whereas a promotion focus is associated with the use of problem-solving behaviors to find solutions that benefit both parties (Ayduk et al., 2003; Winterheld & Simpson, 2011). For example, the prevention-focused people's preferred mode of behaviors in relationships involved tactics designed to circumvent situations that might escalate conflicts and result in rejections (Winterheld & Simpson, 2011). Similarly, Ayduk and colleagues (2003) found that people who are more prevention-focused strived to ensure relationship harmony by averting behaviors or situations that might intensify conflict.

On the other hand, studies have shown that promotion-focus is associated with problem-solving tactics (Winterheld & Simpson, 2001; Galinsky et al., 2005). Promotion-focused people used more creative problem-solving tactics such as generating novel solutions to their conflicts (Winterheld and Simpson, 2001) and a promotion-focus led negotiators to create more resources at the bargaining table that benefit both parties (Galinsky et al., 2005).

Based on these theoretical rationale and empirical findings, I predict the following:

Hypothesis 3a. Prevention focus will be positively associated with avoiding and yielding behaviors.

Hypothesis 3b. Promotion focus will be positively associated with problem-solving behaviors.

From a theoretical perspective, a forcing behavior can be associated with a promotion focus because the behavior emphasizes the enforcement of one's gains. However, a promotion focus has been shown to induce cooperation, not competition (Bittner & Heidemeier, 2013) and a forcing behavior is a competitive approach that focuses only on achieving one's own goals. Given that regulatory focus theory has not been studied in relation to the Dual-Concern model of conflict behaviors, and a limited theoretical or empirical evidence is available to hypothesize the relationships between regulatory focus and *forcing* behaviors, this relationship will be explored in the current study.

### **Conflict Outcomes**

Past research examining the consequences of various conflict management behaviors has shown that avoiding behaviors are negatively correlated with perceptions of appropriateness, effectiveness, competence, and relational satisfaction (Canary & Cupach, 1988; Gross & Guerrero, 2000; Friedman et al., 2000; Tjosvold, 2008). Studies also indicate that avoiding and yielding conflict behaviors undermine relationships and performance in teams (Chen & Tjosvold, 2002). Although some scholars have questioned the universality of this finding by suggesting that avoiding and yielding conflict behaviors may be associated with effective and positive outcomes in collectivistic cultures (i.e. China) where maintaining harmony and relationships are more valued, experimental and field studies conducted in China show that open discussion promotes understanding of each other's perspectives, develops higher quality solutions, and strengthens relationships (Tjosvold & Sun, 2002; Tjosvold, Hui, & Sun, 2004). Based on these findings and replication of the results in his other works, Tjosvold (2008) claims that avoidant conflict behaviors

(e.g. avoiding and yielding) undermine performance and relationships in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures.

On the other hand, problem-solving behavior is perceived as both effective and appropriate and hence associated with satisfaction with conflict outcomes and relationships (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Cai & Fink, 2002; Kim & Coleman, 2015; Canary & Cupach, 1988). This behavior is characterized by a “willingness to exchange information openly, to address differences constructively and to make every effort to pursue a solution that will be mutually acceptable” (Cai & Fink, 2002). Past research suggests that problem-solving behavior is the most “effective” conflict behavior because it is most likely to yield win-win solutions (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Pruitt & Kim, 2004).

Consistent with the literature, I predict the following:

Hypothesis 4a. Avoiding and yielding behaviors will be negatively associated with satisfaction with the outcome, self, process, relationship, goal attainment, and positively associated with negative affect.

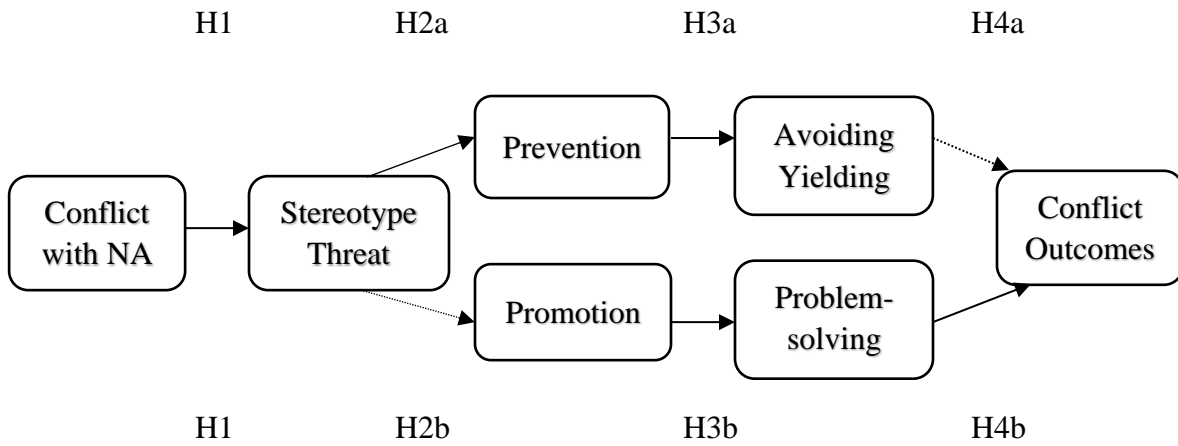
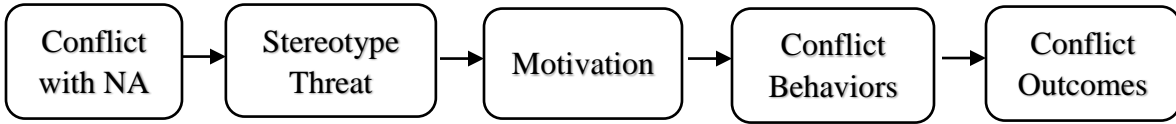
Hypothesis 4b. Problem-solving behaviors will be positively associated with satisfaction with the outcome, self, process, relationship, goal attainment, and positive affect.

In sum, I propose that stereotype threat, regulatory focus, and conflict behaviors, in sequence, will mediate the relationship between nonnative-native interactions (NNA-NA) and conflict outcomes. Specifically, I hypothesize that in conflict situations with native speakers, nonnative speakers will experience heightened levels of stereotype threat (Hypothesis 1), which will induce a prevention focus (Hypothesis 2a). This vigilance to negative outcomes will prompt nonnative speakers to utilize avoiding or yielding conflict management behaviors (Hypothesis 3a), which, in turn, will lead to dissatisfactory conflict outcomes (Hypothesis 4a). Conversely,

stereotype threat will be negatively associated with a promotion focus (Hypothesis 2b), and the sensitivity to positive outcomes will elicit problem-solving behaviors (Hypothesis 3b), which, in turn, will lead to satisfactory conflict outcomes (Hypothesis 4b).

Past research has documented that *power* and *cooperative-competitive goal interdependence* can influence the extent to which individuals experience stereotype threat, and as a result, these variables will be controlled in the current study. Van Loo and Rydell (2013) found that feeling powerful protected participants from experiencing stereotype threat and buffered them from the deleterious effects of the stereotype threat. Similarly, research examining the associations between goal interdependence and stereotype threat indicate that competitive goals exacerbate and cooperative goals attenuate the negative effects of stereotype threat by differentially influencing the levels of stereotype threat experienced by the individuals (Van Loo, Boucher, Rydell, & Rydell, 2013; Lee & Nass, 2012). Moreover, past studies have shown that importance and intensity of conflicts can influence conflict behaviors and outcomes (Coleman, Kugler, Bui-Wrzosinska, Nowak, & Vallacher, 2012). As such, power, goal interdependence, importance and intensity of conflict will be controlled in this study.

Figure 1. The Proposed Mediation Model



Solid line: positive relationship  
 Dotted line: negative relationship



## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### **Participants**

Participants included 106 nonnative English speakers from Teachers College, Columbia University and other schools within the Columbia University system. Eighty-four participants were female (80.8%) and 20 were male (19.2%). Participants' average age was 26.9 years ( $SD=4.73$ ), with a range of 20 to 40 years. Seventeen participants identified as White (16.7%), five as Hispanic / Latino (5.2%), two as Black / African American (1.9%), and seventy-three as Asian / Pacific Islander (75.2%). The gender and ethnic diversity of the sampled participants are representative of the student population of Teachers College, Columbia University. 77% of the matriculated students are female and 76.8% of the international students come from Asia. Of these participants, 7 had more than 10 years of experience (7%), 15 had 5-10 years of work experience (14.7%), 59 had 1-5 years of work experience (57.8%) and 18 had less than 1 year of work experience (17.6%).

### **Research Design and Procedure**

Study hypotheses were tested using a cross-sectional methodology. Data were collected from individuals using an online survey software, Qualtrics. The web-based questionnaire included measures of stereotype threat, regulatory focus, conflict behaviors, and conflict outcome variables (i.e., conflict satisfaction, perceptions of goal-attainment, and positive and negative affect). The questionnaire was administered to participants electronically.

Participation were solicited through the posting of fliers and using Teachers College virtual bulletin board service where interested individuals were invited to email the study administrator to express interest in participating. Once potential participants showed interest via email and wished to participate in the study, they were asked to complete a pretest prior to receiving the main

questionnaire. The pretest consisted of measures of dispositional characteristics such as conflict styles (De Dreu et al., 2001), stigma consciousness (Pinel, 1999), regulatory focus (Lockwood et al., 2002) and demographic variables (see Appendix A for the pretest survey questions). Upon accessing the study link, participants received study consent information explaining the research, risks, benefits, confidentiality, time involvement, and use of the study findings. Consent were be made by clicking “next” button at the bottom of the consent page.

A week after completion of the pretest, participants received a link to the main questionnaire. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: 1) recall conflict with a native English speaker (NS) and 2) recall conflict with a nonnative English speaker (NNS). In the NS condition, participants were be asked to, “*Please think of an important work conflict situation with a native English speaker where you felt your accent affected your interaction with the native speaker and briefly describe the conflict. What was the conflict about and how did you manage the conflict?*” In the NNS condition, participants were asked to, “*Please think of an important work conflict situation with a nonnative English speaker where you felt your accent affected your interaction with the nonnative speaker and briefly describe the conflict. What was the conflict about and how did you manage the conflict?*” Then, they were asked four questions to qualify the types of conflicts that they recalled: 1) how important was the conflict to you? 2) how intense was the conflict? 3) with whom did you have the conflict and what was your relative power compared to your opponent, and 4) perception of goal interdependence.

Next, participants completed measures of experienced stereotype threat and regulatory focus during the conflict, and conflict behaviors they utilized to manage the conflict. They were also asked to share their satisfaction with the conflict (feelings about instrumental outcome, processes, self, relationships), perceptions of overall goal attainment, and positive and negative

affect (Appendix B). Following the completion of the main questionnaire, participants received debriefing information and a \$15 e-gift card from Amazon.com. The total duration of participation was approximately 30 minutes (5 minutes for the pretest, and 20-25 minutes for the main online questionnaire).

*Common method variance.* Because the predictor and criterion variables were collected from the same source at the same point in time, ways of reducing the effects of common method variance were considered. Common method bias refers to “variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than through the constructs the measures represent” (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003, p. 879). This bias leads to the risk of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables being inflated or deflated as a result of the use of common methods.

Following the recommendations suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003), several approaches were used to minimize and address the common method bias. As *ex-ante* approaches implemented at the research design stage, participants were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of the study, provided assurance that no right or wrong answers exist and that they should answer as honestly as possible. These procedures should “reduce people’s evaluation apprehension and make them less likely to edit their responses to be more socially desirable, lenient, acquiescent and consistent with how the researcher wants them to respond” (Podsakoff et al., 2003, p. 888).

As *ex-post* approaches implemented after the data collection, statistical procedures were used to determine whether common method bias was a problem and control for it if necessary. As suggested by Chang, Witteloostuijin, & Eden, (2010) and Podsakoff et al. (2003), Harman’s single-factor test was conducted to examine the extent of common method bias (see the results section).

## Measures

A complete list of all measures used in the study can be found in Appendices A and B.

### Mediators

*Stereotype threat.* Stereotype threat experienced by the nonnative speakers was measured with the Explicit Stereotype Threat Scale (ESTS). The Explicit Stereotype Threat Scale was first developed by Marx and Goff (2005) as a manipulation check for their experiment examining participants' experience of stereotype threat. This scale was originally designed to measure Blacks' subjective experience of stereotype threat in academic settings. Since then, the scale has been replicated in numerous studies (Marx & Stapel, 2006). ESTS has also been adapted to measure subjective experiences of stereotype threat of Whites with racism (Goff, Steele, & Davies, 2008), Blacks with police encounters (Najdowski, Bottoms, & Goff, 2015), and women with math performance (Marx, Stapel, & Muller, 2005). The scale consists of four items ( $\alpha = .91$ ) with responses provided on a seven-point scale from 1-strongly disagree to 7- strongly agree.

In this study, the ESTS was adapted to examine nonnative speakers' experiences of stereotype threat during the interactions with (non)native speakers in the conflict situations that the participants recalled (e.g. I worried that the (non)native speaker's evaluations of me would be affected by my nonnative accent). In order to assess how much stereotype threat the participants experienced, the four stereotype threat questions were averaged. A high score indicate greater levels of stereotype threat.

*Regulatory Focus.* Regulatory focus were assessed with a modified version of a regulatory focus scale developed by Coleman, Kugler, Vallacher, & Kim (working paper). The scale consists of 8 items (four prevention items and four promotion items) and has a response scale of 1- not at all to 7- very much. The promotion focus items ( $\alpha = .73$ ) include: "I focused on bringing about

ideal outcomes in this conflict,” and “I looked for new possibilities created by the interaction between you and the other party”. The prevention focus items ( $\alpha = .78$ ) include: “I focused on avoiding negative outcomes during this conflict,” and “I was concerned about not worsening the conflict situation.” The items were factor-analyzed using principal-axis extraction with varimax rotation to test if a 2-factor model fits the data. The results showed that the two-factor model fit the data; Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant ( $\chi^2(28) = 269.848, p < 0.001$ ), and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy indicated that the strength of the relationships among variables was high (KMO = .80). The two-factor model explained a total of 48.78% of the variance: promotion accounted for 25.26% of the variance while prevention accounted for 23.52% of the variance.

In this study, I study regulatory focus as a *state-level* variable rather than a chronic, trait-like variable, and measure regulatory focus of the participants during the recalled conflict situations. Hence, adapting one of two most widely used chronic measures, the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (RFQ; Higgins et al., 2001) or the general regulatory focus scale developed by Lockwood, Jordan, and Kunda (2002) to a state-level measure was initially considered. However, many of the items in these scales were either related to experiences during childhood (e.g., how often did you obey rules and regulations that were established by your parents; Higgins et al., 2001) or academic settings (e.g., My major goal in school right now is to achieve my academic ambitions; Lockwood et al., 2002) and changing the items to fit the domain of conflict settings in organizations required significant alterations to the original scales. As a result, regulatory focus inductions, coding schemes, and manipulation checks utilized in conflict or organizational contexts were considered, and the measure developed by Coleman et al. was chosen because of its relevance in conflict contexts.

*Conflict management behaviors.* The Dutch Test for Conflict Handling (DUTCH; De Dreu et al., 2001) was used to assess conflict management behaviors. The measure was first developed to assess individual preferences for conflict management (De Dreu et al., 2001) and the items are closely related to other instruments measuring conflict management behaviors, such as the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II). The measure consists of 16 items measuring four distinct types of conflict behaviors, yielding (4-items;  $\alpha = .83$ ), problem-solving (4-items;  $\alpha = .80$ ), forcing (4-items;  $\alpha = .75$ ), and avoiding (4-items;  $\alpha = .73$ ). For each item, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with statements on a scale from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. The items were adapted to read in a past tense to reflect how individuals behaved in the conflict situations they recalled. Example items include, “I tried to find a solution that really satisfied me and the other person” and “I tried to avoid a confrontation with the other.”

The DUTCH measure was chosen to be used in this study because 1) it has been used effectively to assess conflict management behaviors at the individual level (De Dreu, 2007; De Dreu & van Vianen, 2001), 2) the measure is concise and consists of 16 items whereas ROCI-II consists of 24 items, 3) it is possible to adapt the DUTCH measure whereas the author of ROCI-II does not allow adaptation, and 4) it is available to be used without any associated fees.

#### Dependent Measures

Outcome variables include conflict satisfaction (feelings about instrumental outcome, process, relationship, self), goal attainment, and affect.

*Conflict satisfaction.* The Subjective Value Inventory (Curhan, Elfenbein, & Xu, 2006) was utilized to assess the range of psychological satisfaction resulting from the conflict interactions. The inventory consists of four underlying subconstructs: feelings about the instrumental outcome ( $\alpha = .79$ ; e.g. how satisfied were you with your own outcomes in this conflict

situation?), feelings about the process ( $\alpha = .93$ ; e.g. did you feel that your counterpart listened to your concerns in this conflict situation?), feelings about the relationship ( $\alpha = .96$ ; e.g. how satisfied were you with your relationship with your counterpart as a result of this conflict?), and feelings about the self ( $\alpha = .72$ ; e.g. did you behave according to your own principles and values?). A global score (referred as *conflict satisfaction* in this manuscript) was also calculated by averaging four underlying subcontracts ( $\alpha = .95$ ; 16 items). Participants were asked to respond on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much) on these measures.

*Perceptions of goal-attainment.* Following Kugler et al., (2011), *perceptions of goal-attainment* were measured using three items ( $\alpha = .97$ ; e.g., to what extent did you attain what you were aiming for in this situation?). Participants were asked to respond on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much).

*Affect.* Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) were utilized to assess positive and negative affects resulting from the conflict interactions. The measure consists of 20 affect descriptors (10 positive and 10 negative) yielding a Positive Affect Score ( $\alpha = .91$ ) and a Negative Affect Score ( $\alpha = .89$ ). On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely), participants were asked to rate the degree to which they experienced the descriptor at the end of the conflict.

#### Manipulation Check

At the end of the main questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate whether the conflict they recalled was with a native English speaker (1), a nonnative English speaker (2) or do not know (3).

## Covariate / Control Variables

The trait-level stigma consciousness, regulatory focus, conflict styles, self-assessed language fluency, accent-strength, goal interdependence, power, and conflict importance and intensity, along with various demographic factors were collected as possible covariates and controlled for in the analyses (see Appendix A).

*Trait-level stigma consciousness.* To control for the effects of trait-level stigma consciousness on the outcome variables, stigma consciousness regarding nonnative accent was measured by adapting the Stigma Consciousness Questionnaire (Pinel, 1999). Example items include, “my being a nonnative speaker influences how native speakers act with me” and “stereotypes about nonnative speakers have affected me personally” (10 items;  $\alpha = .86$ ).

*Trait-level regulatory focus.* To control for the effects of chronic regulatory focus on the outcome variables, regulatory focus was measured using the general regulatory focus scale (Lockwood, Jordan, and Kunda, 2002). Example items include, “In general, I am focused on preventing negative events in my life” (prevention, 8 items;  $\alpha = .83$ ) and “I typically focus on the success I hope to achieve in the future” (promotion, 10 items;  $\alpha = .85$ ).

*Trait-level conflict styles.* To control for the effects of chronic conflict styles on the outcome variables, conflict styles were assessed using the Dutch Test for Conflict Handling (DUTCH; De Dreu et al., 2001) measure (yielding,  $\alpha = .65$ ; forcing,  $\alpha = .72$ ; problem-solving,  $\alpha = .78$ ; avoiding,  $\alpha = .77$ ). Example items include, “I try to find a solution that really satisfies me and the other person” and “I try to avoid a confrontation with the other” (see the *Conflict Management Behaviors* section for descriptions of the measure).

*Self-assessed English fluency and foreign accent strength.* Because individuals’ perceptions of their own language fluency and accent strength can affect the extent to which they



experience stereotype threat and influence their interactions with native speakers, nonnative speakers' perceptions of their own language were examined as covariate variables. Items include: "how fluent in English are you?" and "in your opinion, your nonnative accent is..." (1-not at all noticeable, 5-very noticeable).

*Conflict Importance and Intensity.* The importance and intensity of the conflict can influence conflict behaviors and outcomes, hence they were measured as covariate variables. On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely), items asked 1) how important was the conflict to you? (importance) and 2) how intense was the conflict? (intensity).

*Power.* The scholarship on power has shown that possessing power leads individuals to experience more positive affect and pursue a more assertive approach in relationships (Keltner et al., 2003; Marmot, 2004) whereas lack of power is associated with negative affect, vigilance, and attention to threat and punishment (Plant, Hyde, Keltner, & Devine, 2000; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Because power has a profound impact on the interpersonal relationships and can influence conflict behaviors and outcomes, power was examined as a covariate variable.

Power was measured by asking participants to indicate their positions of power in relation to their opponents. Specifically, participants were asked to answer whether they felt they had more / less / equal power compared to their opponents. The responses were then recoded so that 1 indicated less, 2 indicated equal and 3 indicated more power.

*Cooperative-competitive goal interdependence.* Deutsch's (1971, 1973) social interdependence theory posits that people's beliefs about how their goals are related determine the way they interact, which, in turn, determines outcomes. As such, cooperative-competitive goal interdependence were examined as a covariate variable. Following Alper, Tjosvold & Law (1998), two items were utilized to measure cooperative and competitive interdependence on a 7-point

Likert scale (1-not at all, 7- very much). In accordance with Deutsch's (1949, 1973) cooperation and competition theory, the first item, "How much did you think your reaching your objectives would help the other person reach his/ her objectives?" measured the extent to which the participants assumed a cooperative goal relationship with their counterparts and the second item, "How much did you think your accomplishing your objectives would interfere with the other person's objectives?" measured the extent to which the participants assumed a competitive goal relationship with their counterparts.

*Demographic variables.* Various demographic factors were collected as possible covariates to be controlled. These include ethnicity, work experience, gender, and age.

## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

In this chapter, I discuss the preliminary, main, and supplementary analyses that were conducted to address the research hypotheses stated in Chapter 2. First, preliminary analyses which include descriptive statistics and correlational analyses among all key variables are presented. Next, the main analyses conducted to test a proposed model of sequential mediation using PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) are reported. PROCESS was chosen to analyze the current data because 1) it utilizes an ordinary least-squares- or logistic-based path analytical framework to test for both direct and indirect effects (Hayes, 2013), 2) allows exploration of serial mediation models, and 3) requires less sample size to detect mediation compared to the structural equation modeling (Wolf, Harrington, Clark, & Miller, 2013). Finally, supplementary analyses that test an alternative model of mediation (i.e. parallel mediation) are presented.

### Preliminary analyses

The means, standard deviations and correlations for each of the key study variables are displayed in Table 1. According to the manipulation check, while all participants in the NS condition recalled conflict situation with native English speakers, 26 of the 81 participants in the NNS condition recalled conflict situation with native English speakers. I ran t-tests to examine the differences between data from the participants in the NS condition and 26 people from the NNS condition who recalled conflict situation with native English speakers and found no significant differences. The data were then merged so a total of 51 participants recalled conflict with native speakers (NS) and 55 participants recalled conflict with nonnative speakers (NNS). The reason why there was a greater number of participants assigned in the NNS condition was that many participants in the NNS condition had more energy to talk about a conflict with a native

speaker (versus a nonnative speaker) and reported recalling a conflict with a native speaker. In order to have a more balanced sample size between the two conditions, more people were assigned to the NNS condition. NS was dummy coded as 1 (presence of interaction with native English speaker) and NNS was dummy coded as 0 (absence of interaction with native English speaker) for further analyses.

As hypothesized, the independent variable, presence or absence of interaction with native English speaker was significantly correlated with stereotype threat ( $r = .43, p < .001$ ) such that nonnative English speaking participants who interacted with native English speakers in conflict situations experienced heightened stereotype threat compared to nonnative English speaking participants who interacted with another nonnative English speakers in conflict contexts. Stereotype threat was also positively associated with a prevention-focused orientation ( $r = .32, p < .01$ ) and yielding ( $r = .25, p < .01$ ) and avoiding ( $r = .28, p < .01$ ) behaviors. A prevention-focused orientation was positively associated with more passive conflict management behaviors, such as yielding ( $r = .43, p < .001$ ) and avoiding ( $r = .48, p < .001$ ) whereas a promotion-focused orientation was positively associated with more assertive conflict management behaviors, such as problem-solving ( $r = .72, p < .001$ ) and forcing ( $r = .42, p < .001$ ).

As for the criterion variables, nonnative English speaking participants who interacted with native English speakers in conflict situations experienced less satisfaction with the conflict process ( $r = -.20, p < .05$ ) and more negative affect ( $r = .24, p < .05$ ) compared to nonnative English speaking participants who interacted with another nonnative English speakers in conflict contexts. Stereotype threat was positively associated with negative affect ( $r = .33, p < .01$ ). While prevention was not correlated with any of the outcome variables, promotion was positively associated with feelings about instrumental outcome ( $r = .41, p < .001$ ), process ( $r = .37, p < .001$ ), relationship ( $r$

= .35,  $p < .001$ ), self ( $r = .57$ ,  $p < .001$ ), perception of goal attainment ( $r = .49$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and positive affect ( $r = .40$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Overall, yielding and avoiding conflict management behaviors were associated with lower satisfaction and problem-solving and forcing conflict management behaviors were associated with higher satisfaction (see Table 1).

Lastly, in determining the control variables for analysis, several relationships emerged. For demographic variables, gender, dummy coded as 0=female, 1= male, was negatively correlated with promotion focus ( $r = -.23$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and problem-solving ( $r = -.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ) such that women displayed more promotion and problem-solving behaviors. Participants who interacted with native English speakers in conflict situations were older than participants who interacted with nonnative English speakers ( $r = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and age was positively correlated with promotion focus ( $r = .22$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Ethnicity, dummy coded as 0= White, 1= minority, was not correlated with any of the outcome variables. A univariate analysis was also conducted to test relationships between the five ethnicities (White / European, Hispanic / Latino, Black / African American, Asian / Pacific Islander, and Native American) and all outcome variables. Results revealed that ethnicity is not a significant predictor of the outcome variables.

Other control variables include type of interdependence in the conflict recalled (cooperation and competition), power differences between the parties, importance and intensity of the conflict, and self-rated fluency and accent strength. For type of interdependence, cooperation was associated with promotion ( $r = .21$ ,  $p < .05$ ), yielding ( $r = .20$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and problem-solving ( $r = .32$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Cooperation was also positively correlated with feelings about instrumental outcome ( $r = .37$ ,  $p < .001$ ), process ( $r = .47$ ,  $p < .001$ ), relationship with the opponent ( $r = .48$ ,  $p < .001$ ), self ( $r = .30$ ,  $p < .01$ ), perception of goal attainment ( $r = .37$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and positive affect ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Alternatively, competition was also positively correlated with perception of

goal-attainment ( $r = .25, p < .01$ ) and positive affect ( $r = .31, p < .01$ ). Power differences between the parties was not correlated with any of the study variables.

Conflict importance was positively associated with presence of interaction with native speakers ( $r = .21, p < .05$ ) such that participants who recalled conflict with native English speaker reported their recalled conflict as having higher importance than participants that recalled conflict situation with another nonnative speaker. Conflict importance was also positively associated with promotion ( $r = .20, p < .05$ ), forcing ( $r = .26, p < .01$ ) and negative affect ( $r = .29, p < .01$ ). Interestingly, ethnic minorities rated their recalled conflict as having higher importance compared to Whites ( $r = .31, p < .01$ ). Conflict intensity was associated with many of the dependent variables: feelings about instrumental outcome ( $r = -.22, p < .05$ ), process ( $r = -.26, p < .01$ ), relationship ( $r = -.33, p < .01$ ), goal attainment ( $r = -.22, p < .05$ ) and negative affect ( $r = .20, p < .05$ ). Similar to conflict importance, ethnic minorities rated their recalled conflict as having higher intensity compared to Whites ( $r = .30, p < .01$ ). Conflict intensity was also negatively associated with cooperation ( $r = -.32, p < .01$ ).

Not surprisingly, accent strength was positively correlated with stereotype threat ( $r = .25, p < .05$ ) such that participants who perceived themselves to have strong accents experienced heightened stereotype threat. Fluency was associated with promotion ( $r = .21, p < .05$ ) and problem-solving behaviors ( $r = .22, p < .05$ ). All of the significant covariate variables were included as controls in subsequent analyses.

Trait-level measures included in the pretest (e.g., stigma consciousness, regulatory focus, and conflict styles) were also explored and analyzed to control for their effects on outcome variables. Generally, the trait-level variables were correlated with state-level variables and associated with outcome variables in the predicted direction. However, these measures did not

change or add to the results of the main mediation analyses, so they were excluded from further analyses.

#### Common method variance

Because this study used a cross-sectional design, it is important to determine whether common method variance, i.e., variance that stems from the measurement method rather than from the intended constructs to be assessed (Podsakoff, et al., 2003), is present. As suggested by Chang, Witteloostuijn, & Eden, (2010) and Podsakoff et al. (2003), I conducted Harman's single-factor test to examine the extent of common method bias. An unrotated principal components analysis was conducted using scale items for all covariates, an independent variable, mediators, and outcome variables. The results showed that the single factor accounted for less than half of the variance (26%), and it was concluded that common method bias may not pose a large threat in the current data sample.

#### Main analyses

In this study, I hypothesized that in conflict situations with native English speakers, nonnative English speakers will experience heightened levels of stereotype threat (Hypothesis 1), which will induce a prevention focus (Hypothesis 2a). This vigilance to negative outcomes will prompt nonnative speakers to utilize yielding or avoiding conflict management behaviors (Hypothesis 3a), which, in turn, will lead to dissatisfactory conflict outcomes (Hypothesis 4a). Conversely, stereotype threat will be negatively associated with a promotion focus (Hypothesis 2b), and the sensitivity to positive outcomes will elicit problem-solving behaviors (Hypothesis 3b), which, in turn, will lead to satisfactory conflict outcomes (Hypothesis 4b).

While many continue to follow the causal steps approach outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) to test mediation, more current research in the field has demonstrated that emphasizing the

direct and/or total effect of independent variable on dependent variable before or after controlling for a mediator can lead to misleading conclusions in theory testing because significant indirect effects can occur in the absence of significant total or direct effects (Rucker, Preacher, Tormala, & Petty, 2011). Following Rucker et al., 2011, I tested direct and indirect relationships amongst variables using PROCESS with a bootstrapping method (Model 6; Hayes, 2013). The bootstrapping method provides appropriate tests of statistical significance by creating a sample-based estimate of the indirect effect and biased-corrected, accelerated confidence intervals. In the current study, 10,000 possible samples were created from resampling the original data set. If the 95% confidence interval for an indirect path does not include 0, there is evidence of a significant indirect path.

#### Hypotheses Testing: H1-H2a-H3a-H4a

In order to test the direct and indirect effects of interacting with native English speakers (NS) on dependent variables through stereotype threat, prevention and yielding / avoiding behaviors, I ran two sets of mediation tests, one for yielding and one for avoiding behaviors. Each set of mediation tests contained three outcome variables: 1) conflict satisfaction (a global score of 4 subconstructs of SVI were utilized), 2) perceptions of goal-attainment, and 3) negative affect. In all of the following tests, NS was included as a predictor (0= interaction with a nonnative English Speaker, 1= interaction with a native English speaker), and stereotype threat, prevention, yielding / avoiding were included as mediators. Seven covariates were also included: gender, age, cooperative and competitive interdependence, conflict importance and intensity, and self-assessed fluency. Although accent strength was initially controlled, it was later included in the model because it is an important and meaningful theoretical factor that influences stereotype threat. For exploratory purposes, results were analyzed with and without controlling for accent strength.



Generally, there was a very minor increase in the effect sizes when accent strength was excluded as a control variable, but there were no significant changes to the results.

*Model 1: NS → Stereotype Threat → Prevention → Yielding → Conflict Satisfaction.* As predicted, participants who interacted with a native English speaker in conflict situations experienced heightened stereotype threat compared to participants who interacted with another nonnative English speaker ( $\beta = .430$ ,  $SE = .100$ , 95%  $CI = .232$  to  $.628$ ). Stereotype threat was significantly associated with a prevention focus ( $\beta = .335$ ,  $SE = .114$ , 95%  $CI = .109$  to  $.561$ ) and a prevention focus was significantly associated with yielding behaviors ( $\beta = .401$ ,  $SE = .100$ , 95%  $CI = .202$  to  $.601$ ). Moreover, yielding was negatively associated with conflict satisfaction ( $\beta = -.301$ ,  $SE = .099$ , 95%  $CI = -.497$  to  $-.105$ ) (see Figure 2). Lastly, as hypothesized, a serial mediation model indicated that the indirect effect of NS on conflict satisfaction through stereotype threat, prevention, and yielding in sequence is significant (95%  $CI [-.056, -.005]$ ; see Table 2). Interacting with a native English speaker was associated with heightened stereotype threat, which then led to higher prevention. Prevention in turn, was positively associated with yielding behaviors and yielding was negatively associated with conflict satisfaction. All together, these variables explained 38.1% of the total variance.

*Model 2: NS → Stereotype Threat → Prevention → Yielding → Goal-attainment.* Participants who interacted with a native English speaker in conflict situations experienced heightened stereotype threat compared to participants who interacted with another nonnative English speaker ( $\beta = .430$ ,  $SE = .099$ , 95%  $CI = .234$  to  $.626$ ). Stereotype threat was significantly associated with a prevention focus ( $\beta = .334$ ,  $SE = .113$ , 95%  $CI = .110$  to  $.558$ ) and a prevention focus was significantly associated with yielding behaviors ( $\beta = .407$ ,  $SE = .099$ , 95%  $CI = .211$  to  $.603$ ). Moreover, yielding was negatively associated with perceptions of goal-attainment ( $\beta = -$

.376, SE = .094, 95% CI = -.563 to -.190) (see Figure 2). Lastly, as hypothesized, a serial mediation model indicated that the indirect effect of NS on perception of goal-attainment through stereotype threat, prevention, and yielding in sequence is significant (95% CI [-.062, -.007]; Table 2). Interacting with a native English speaker was associated with heightened stereotype threat, which then led to higher prevention. Prevention in turn, was positively associated with yielding behaviors, which ultimately was negatively associated with perceptions of goal-attainment. All together, these variables explained 41.4% of the total variance.

*Model 3: NS → Stereotype Threat → Prevention → Yielding → Negative Affect.*

Participants who interacted with a native English speaker in conflict situations experienced heightened stereotype threat compared to participants who interacted with another nonnative English speaker ( $\beta = .423$ , SE = .103, 95% CI = .218 to .627). Stereotype threat was significantly associated with a prevention focus ( $\beta = .343$ , SE = .115, 95% CI = .114 to .571) and a prevention focus was significantly associated with yielding behaviors ( $\beta = .413$ , SE = .101, 95% CI = .211 to .614). Moreover, yielding was positively associated with negative affect ( $\beta = .450$ , SE = .091, 95% CI = .269 to .632) (see Figure 2). Lastly, as hypothesized, a serial mediation model indicated that the indirect effect of NS on negative affect through stereotype threat, prevention, and yielding in sequence is significant (95% CI [.009, .077]; see Table 2). Interacting with a native English speaker was associated with heightened stereotype threat, which then led to higher prevention. Prevention in turn, was associated with yielding behaviors, which ultimately was positively correlated with negative affect. All together, these variables explained 38.0% of the total variance.

*Model 4: NS → Stereotype Threat → Prevention → Avoiding → Conflict Satisfaction.*

Participants who interacted with a native English speaker in conflict situations experienced heightened stereotype threat compared to participants who interacted with another nonnative

English speaker ( $\beta = .427$ ,  $SE = .100$ , 95% CI = .230 to .625). Stereotype threat was significantly associated with a prevention focus ( $\beta = .333$ ,  $SE = .114$ , 95% CI = .106 to .560) and a prevention focus was significantly associated with avoiding behaviors ( $\beta = .469$ ,  $SE = .091$ , 95% CI = .288 to .650). Avoiding was also negatively associated with conflict satisfaction ( $\beta = -.241$ ,  $SE = .110$ , 95% CI = -.459 to -.022) (see Figure 3). Lastly, as hypothesized, a serial mediation model indicated that the indirect effect of NS on conflict satisfaction through stereotype threat, prevention, and avoiding in sequence is significant (95% CI [-.055, -.003]; see Table 3). All together, these variables explained 34.6% of the total variance.

*Model 5: NS  $\rightarrow$  Stereotype Threat  $\rightarrow$  Prevention  $\rightarrow$  Avoiding  $\rightarrow$  Goal-Attainment.*

Participants who interacted with a native English speaker in conflict situations experienced heightened stereotype threat compared to participants who interacted with another nonnative English speaker ( $\beta = .428$ ,  $SE = .098$ , 95% CI = .232 to .623). Stereotype threat was significantly associated with a prevention focus ( $\beta = .333$ ,  $SE = .113$ , 95% CI = .108 to .558) and a prevention focus was significantly associated with avoiding behaviors ( $\beta = .474$ ,  $SE = .090$ , 95% CI = .295 to .652). Moreover, avoiding was negatively associated with perception of goal-attainment ( $\beta = -.398$ ,  $SE = .103$ , 95% CI = -.603 to -.193) (see Figure 3). Lastly, as hypothesized, a serial mediation model indicated that the indirect effect of NS on perception of goal-attainment through stereotype threat, prevention, and avoiding in sequence is significant (95% CI [-.072, -.009]; see Table 3). Interacting with a native English speaker was associated with heightened stereotype threat, which then led to higher prevention. Prevention in turn, was associated with avoiding behaviors, which ultimately was negatively associated with perceptions of goal-attainment. All together, these variables explained 40.7% of the total variance.

*Model 6: NS → Stereotype Threat → Prevention → Avoiding → Negative Affect.*

Participants who interacted with a native English speaker in conflict situations experienced heightened stereotype threat compared to participants who interacted with another nonnative English speaker ( $\beta = .421$ ,  $SE = .102$ , 95% CI = .217 to .624). Stereotype threat was significantly associated with a prevention focus ( $\beta = .342$ ,  $SE = .115$ , 95% CI = .112 to .571) and a prevention focus was significantly associated with avoiding behaviors ( $\beta = .501$ ,  $SE = .092$ , 95% CI = .318 to .684). Moreover, avoiding was positively associated with negative affect ( $\beta = .361$ ,  $SE = .107$ , 95% CI = .147 to .574) (see Figure 3). Lastly, as hypothesized, a serial mediation model indicated that the indirect effect of NS on negative affect through stereotype threat, prevention, and avoiding in sequence is significant (95% CI [.008, .070]; see Table 3). Interacting with a native English speaker was associated with heightened stereotype threat, which then led to higher prevention. Prevention in turn, was associated with avoiding behaviors, which ultimately was positively associated with negative affect. All together, these variables explained 30.0% of the total variance.

To summarize, nonnative English speakers experienced heightened levels of stereotype threat when they interacted with native English speakers in conflict context (Hypothesis 1 supported), which induced a prevention focus (Hypothesis 2a supported). This vigilance to negative outcomes prompted nonnative speakers to utilize yielding or avoiding conflict management behaviors (Hypothesis 3a supported), which, in turn, lead to dissatisfactory conflict outcomes (Hypothesis 4a supported). As hypothesized, serial mediation models indicated that the indirect effect of NS on conflict outcome variables through stereotype threat, prevention, and yielding / avoiding in sequence are significant.

## Hypotheses Testing: H1-H2b-H3b-H4b

In order to test the direct and indirect effects of interaction with native English speakers (NS) on dependent variables through stereotype threat, promotion and problem-solving behaviors, I conducted three mediation tests with each of the three outcome variables: 1) conflict satisfaction, 2) perceptions of goal-attainment, and 3) positive affect. In all of the following tests, NS was included as a predictor (0= interaction with a nonnative English Speaker, 1= interaction with a native English speaker), and stereotype threat, promotion, problem-solving were included as mediators. Eight covariates were also included: gender, age, cooperative and competitive interdependence, conflict importance and intensity, and self-assessed fluency and accent-strength. Because NS → stereotype threat link (Hypothesis 1) has been established in the previous analyses, I will not report it again in the following section.

*Model 7: NS → Stereotype Threat → Promotion → Problem-solving → Conflict Satisfaction.* Contrary to my prediction, stereotype threat was not negatively associated with a promotion focus ( $\beta = .169$ , SE = .101, 95% CI = -.033 to .370). As expected, promotion focus was significantly associated with problem-solving behaviors ( $\beta = .697$ , SE = .084, 95% CI = .530 to .865) but surprisingly, problem-solving was not significantly associated conflict satisfaction ( $\beta = .081$ , SE = .122, 95% CI = -.161 to .322) (see Figure 4). Lastly, a serial mediation model indicated that the indirect effect of NS on conflict satisfaction through stereotype threat, promotion, and problem-solving in sequence is not significant (95% CI [-.006, .029]; see Table 4).

*Model 8: NS → Stereotype Threat → Promotion → Problem-solving → Goal-attainment.* Similar to the results above, stereotype threat was not negatively associated with a promotion focus ( $\beta = .170$ , SE = .101, 95% CI = -.031 to .371), a promotion focus was significantly associated with problem-solving behaviors ( $\beta = .684$ , SE = .083, 95% CI = .519 to .850), and problem-solving was

not significantly associated with perceptions of goal-attainment ( $\beta = -.027$ ,  $SE = .116$ , 95% CI =  $-.257$  to  $.203$ ) (see Figure 4). Lastly, a serial mediation model indicated that the indirect effect of NS on perceptions of goal-attainment through stereotype threat, promotion, and problem-solving in serial is not significant (95% CI  $[-.020, .009]$ ; see Table 4).

*Model 9: NS  $\rightarrow$  Stereotype Threat  $\rightarrow$  Promotion  $\rightarrow$  Problem-solving  $\rightarrow$  Positive Affect.*

Stereotype threat was not negatively associated with a promotion focus ( $\beta = .124$ ,  $SE = .101$ , 95% CI =  $-.086$  to  $.334$ ), a promotion focus was significantly associated with problem-solving behaviors ( $\beta = .678$ ,  $SE = .087$ , 95% CI =  $.506$  to  $.850$ ), and problem-solving was positively associated with positive affect ( $\beta = .225$ ,  $SE = .133$ , 95% CI =  $-.040$  to  $.490$ ) (see Figure 4). Lastly, a serial mediation model indicated that the indirect effect of NS on positive affect through stereotype threat, promotion, and problem-solving in serial is not significant (95% CI  $[-.002, .051]$ ; see Table 4).

In sum, stereotype threat was not negatively associated with a promotion focus (Hypothesis 2b not supported), promotion was associated with problem-solving behaviors (Hypothesis 3b supported), and problem-solving behaviors were only positively associated with positive affect (Hypothesis 4b partially supported). Serial mediation models indicated that indirect effect of NS on conflict outcome variables through stereotype threat, promotion, and problem-solving behaviors in sequence are not significant.

## Supplementary Analyses

### Exploratory Analyses

As mentioned in Chapter 2, I explored the relationship between promotion and forcing conflict behavior in this study. From a theoretical perspective, a forcing behavior can be associated with a promotion focus because the behavior emphasizes the enforcement of one's

gains. However, a promotion focus has been shown to induce cooperation, not competition (Bittner & Heidemeier, 2013) and a forcing behavior is a competitive approach that focuses only on achieving one's own goals. As such, this relationship was explored in the current study by testing the relationship,  $NS \rightarrow ST \rightarrow Promotion \rightarrow Forcing \rightarrow Outcomes$ . Promotion was indeed associated with forcing ( $\beta = .303$ ,  $SE = .110$ , 95% CI = .086 to .520). Although forcing was not associated with conflict satisfaction ( $\beta = .177$ ,  $SE = .090$ , 95% CI = -.002 to .355), it was associated with perceptions of goal-attainment ( $\beta = .181$ ,  $SE = .084$ , 95% CI = .014 to .347) and positive affect ( $\beta = .251$ ,  $SE = .093$ , 95% CI = .065 to .436). The indirect effects of NS on the three conflict outcome variables (e.g. conflict satisfaction, perceptions of goal-attainment, and positive affect) through stereotype threat, promotion, and forcing in sequence were not significant.

#### An Alternative Model: Parallel Mediation

Given the cross-sectional study design and that data for the three mediators were collected simultaneously, I considered the possibility that the three mediators could independently influence the outcome variables. Hence, a parallel mediation model was also tested (Model 4 in PROCESS; Hayes, 2013). In parallel mediation, all of the mediators - stereotype threat, regulatory focus, conflict behaviors - are hypothesized to be influenced by the independent variable (e.g., presence or absence of interaction with native English speaker) and to influence the dependent variables (e.g., conflict satisfaction, goal-attainment, and affect) (Hayes, 2013). To test this parallel mediation model, a total of nine mediation tests were conducted similar to those conducted for the serial mediation. Results revealed that none of the models were significant. As an example, in testing  $NS \rightarrow Stereotype\ Threat / Prevention / Yielding \rightarrow Conflict\ Satisfaction$  model, the predictor, being in a conflict situation with native English speaker was unrelated to prevention ( $\beta = .031$ ,  $SE = .111$ , 95% CI = -.189 to .252) and also with yielding ( $\beta = .120$ ,  $SE = .108$ , 95% CI = -

.054 to .384). Moreover, stereotype threat was unrelated with conflict satisfaction ( $\beta = .084$ ,  $SE = .102$ , 95% CI =  $-.119$  to  $.286$ ) and prevention was also not associated with conflict satisfaction ( $\beta = .194$ ,  $SE = .100$ , 95% CI =  $-.004$  to  $.392$ ). Hence, it was concluded that a serial mediation model was a better fit with the data for this study.

To summarize, in accordance with the proposed model of a sequential mediation with three mediators, nonnative English speakers experienced heightened levels of stereotype threat (Hypothesis 1 supported), which induced a prevention focus (Hypothesis 2a supported). This vigilance to negative outcomes prompted non-native speakers to utilize yielding or avoiding conflict management behaviors (Hypothesis 3a supported), which, in turn, lead to dissatisfactory conflict outcomes (Hypothesis 4a supported). As hypothesized, serial mediation models indicated that the indirect effect of NS on conflict outcome variables through stereotype threat, prevention, and yielding / avoiding in serial are significant.

On the contrary, stereotype threat was not negatively associated with a promotion focus (Hypothesis 2b not supported), promotion was associated with problem-solving behaviors (Hypothesis 3b supported), and problem-solving behaviors were only associated with positive affect (Hypothesis 4b partially supported). Serial mediation models indicated that indirect effect of NS on conflict outcome variables through stereotype threat, promotion, and problem-solving behaviors in sequence were not significant.



## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The goals of the current study were to test if nonnative speakers experience stereotype threat when interacting with native speakers in conflict situations and, if so, to examine how stereotype threat affects their regulatory focus, conflict behaviors, and outcomes. Utilizing the theories of stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Schmader, et al., 2008), regulatory focus (Higgins, 1998; Forster & Higgins, 2005), and the dual-concern model of conflict (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974; De Dreu, et al., 2001), I predicted that conflict situations with native speakers would trigger stereotype threat in nonnative speakers, which would induce a prevention focus. This focus would in turn result in higher sensitivity to negative outcomes, which would prompt nonnative speakers to utilize avoiding or yielding conflict management behaviors, which, in turn, would lead to less satisfactory conflict outcomes. Conversely, I predicted that stereotype threat would be negatively associated with a promotion focus, and that the resulting sensitivity to positive outcomes would elicit problem-solving behaviors, which, in turn, would lead to more satisfactory conflict outcomes.

In sum, I proposed that stereotype threat, regulatory focus, and conflict behaviors, in sequence, would mediate the relationship between nonnative-native interactions (NNS-NS) and conflict outcomes for the non-native speaker. Results mostly support the study hypotheses. The results of each of the hypotheses are discussed below.

### **Role of Nonnative Accents on Stereotype Threat**

In accordance with hypothesis 1, the findings suggest that interacting with native speakers in a conflict situation can trigger stereotype threat in nonnative speakers. Compared to nonnative

speakers who were in conflict with another nonnative speaker, nonnative speakers in conflict with native speakers experienced significantly higher levels of stereotype threat.

Although nonnative accents have not been studied in direct relation to stereotype threat previously, this finding is consistent with other research on the theory of stereotype threat. According to the stereotype threat framework by Schmader, et al. (2008), stereotype threat occurs when (a) the domain in which an individual is performing is relevant to the stereotypes associated with the individual's identity group, (b) the task is challenging, (c) the individual is performing in a domain with which he or she identifies, and (d) the context in which the task is being performed is likely to reinforce the stereotype (Roberson & Kulik, 2007; Block et al., 2011). In this study, a) the domain was a specific type of communication context (i.e. conflict situation) where nonnative speakers are often stereotyped to be less competent, b) managing conflict is typically considered to be a difficult task, c) communicating effectively and resolving conflict can be important to the nonnative speaker, particularly in a work setting, and d) ineffectively handling conflict can reinforce the stereotype threat that nonnative speakers are less competent.

It is also worthwhile to note that ethnicity was not a significant predictor of stereotype threat and being an ethnic minority did not have any impact on nonnatives' experiences of stereotype threat when interacting with native speakers in conflict contexts. This is consistent with the findings from Rakic, Steffens, and Mummendey (2011). They investigated social categorization by using both accents and looks (ethnicity) and found that auditory category information was a more salient and important predictor of social categorization than visual category information. Moreover, accent strength was positively associated with stereotype threat, meaning that the nonnative speakers who rated themselves as having a strong nonnative accent experienced higher levels of stereotype threat. Taken together, these findings suggest that having

a nonnative accent alone, regardless of ethnicity, can trigger and activate stereotype threat in nonnative speakers when interacting with native speakers.

### **Relationship between Stereotype Threat and Regulatory Focus**

Consistent with the current literature on stereotype threat and prevention focus, the findings indicated that stereotype threat was positively associated with a prevention-focus (hypothesis 2a supported). Several studies have explored the relationships between stereotype threat and regulatory focus and found that stereotype threat generally induces a prevention focus. For example, Seibt and Förster (2004) demonstrated that priming individuals with a self-relevant negative stereotype induced a prevention focus and noted that the activation of a negative stereotype makes the risk of failure salient, which leads to a prevention goal of avoiding failure rather than a promotional goal of achieving success. Similarly, Stahl, van Laar, & Ellemers (2012) found that responses to stereotype threat were virtually identical in the condition in which no regulatory focus had been induced and in the prevention focus condition. Thus, findings from the current study corroborate previous findings that stereotype threat generally induces a prevention-focus.

In accordance with hypothesis 2b, stereotype threat was examined in relation to a promotion-focus. Contrary to the hypothesis, stereotype threat was not found to be negatively associated with a promotion-focus. Although unanticipated, the results are logical given: 1) the theoretical operationalization of promotion and prevention as being orthogonal dimensions, and 2) the lack of robust empirical evidence that suggest a negative relationship between stereotype threat and promotion-focus.

First, the regulatory focus theory posits that cognitive processes associated with promotion and prevention regulatory foci make different goals and standards salient, yielding different

cognitions, emotions, and behavioral outcomes (Trawalter & Richeson, 2006). However, it is important to note that prevention and promotion foci are considered to be independent dimensions (Higgins, 1997). From a theoretical standpoint, it is possible for a person to have high levels in one focus, both foci, or neither focus. As an example, an individual could be high in both foci by avoiding the misfortunes of feared goals by approaching the successes tied to their ideal goals (Johnson, Chang, & Yang, 2010). Individuals who are high in both prevention and promotion would appear highly motivated whereas individuals who are low in both foci would appear to be less so. Given the orthogonality of the two dimensions, a positive relationship with one of the foci does not necessarily make for a negative relationship with the other more likely. In other words, a positive relationship between stereotype threat and prevention does not make for a negative relationship between stereotype threat and promotion more likely. Moreover, prevention and promotion have been found to be positively correlated in previous studies (Higgins et al., 2001; Pfattheicher & Sassenrath, 2014; Coleman et al., 2017).

Second, several studies that have empirically examined the relationship between a promotion-focus and stereotype threat found that promotion can attenuate the detrimental effects of stereotype threat (Forster, Higgins, & Strack, 2000; Keller & Bless, 2008). For example, Stahl, van Laar, & Ellemers (2012) found that when participants were induced to have a promotion focus, their performance on a math task did not differ between the stereotype threat condition and the control condition. In other words, stereotype threat had no effects on performance under a promotion focus. However, a promotion focus moderating the relationship between stereotype threat and performance does not necessarily mean that stereotype threat will always be negatively associated with a promotion-focus and there is no direct empirical evidence to suggest that stereotype threat is negatively associated with a promotion-focus. Based on the orthogonality of

the two regulatory foci, it is also plausible that stereotype threat is unrelated to a promotion-focus. Future studies should further explore the stereotype threat – promotion focus relationship.

### **The Role of Regulatory Focus on Conflict Behaviors and Outcomes**

As predicted with hypotheses 3a and 3b, regulatory focus was associated with conflict behaviors such that a prevention-focus was associated with more passive behaviors (i.e. yielding and avoiding) whereas a promotion-focus was associated with more assertive behaviors (i.e. problem-solving). These findings are in accordance with the prepositions of the regulatory focus theory. Regulatory focus theory posits that the salient goal for prevention-focused individuals is safety, whereas the salient goal for promotion-focused individuals is accomplishment (Lieberman et al., 2001). Based on this rationale, the goal of preventing escalation of a conflict would more likely be obtained through the use of avoidant, non-confrontational strategies, such as avoiding and yielding, whereas the goal of achieving solutions would more likely be obtained through the use of promotive strategies, such as problem-solving.

While dual-model concern theory has not been tested in relation to regulatory focus theory, past studies examining the relationship between regulatory focus and general conflict behaviors are also consistent with the current findings. Past research found that people who are more prevention-focused strived to ensure relationship harmony by averting behaviors or situations that might intensify conflict (Ayduk et al., 2003) whereas promotion-focused people used more creative problem-solving tactics such as generating novel solutions to their conflicts (Winterheld and Simpson, 2001) and created more resources at the negotiation bargaining table that benefit both parties (Galinsky et al., 2005).

Although no explicit hypotheses were proposed regarding regulatory focus and conflict outcomes in the current study, it is worthwhile to note the significant relationships that emerged

between these variables. Consistent with previous literature, higher promotion focus was highly associated with satisfactory conflict outcomes (Galinsky et al., 2005). Specifically, promotion was positively associated with conflict satisfaction and perceptions of goal-attainment. Interestingly, a prevention-focus was also positively associated with perceptions of goal-attainment. This is consistent with the theory of regulatory focus in that people with a prevention focus attain their goals by focusing on avoiding negative outcomes.

Lastly, as part of an exploratory analysis, I examined the relationship between a promotion-focus and forcing behaviors and found that promotion was indeed positively associated with forcing behaviors. From a theoretical standpoint, this finding is reasonable given that forcing behaviors are typically aimed at achievement of gains. While forcing and problem-solving behaviors consist of differing motivations, needs, and goals, they seem to share the common goal of promoting achievement and self-gain.

### **Conflict Behaviors and Conflict Outcomes**

As predicted, passive conflict behaviors such as yielding and avoiding led to more dissatisfactory conflict outcomes (hypothesis 4a supported). Specifically, both yielding and avoiding behaviors were associated with less conflict satisfaction and goal attainment and positively associated with negative affect. This is consistent with past research findings that claim that avoiding and yielding behaviors are negatively correlated with conflict effectiveness, relational satisfaction and team performance (Canary & Cupach, 1988; Gross & Guerrero, 2000; Friedman et al., 2000; Tjosvold, 2008; Chen & Tjosvold, 2002).

On the other hand, an unanticipated finding from this study was that problem-solving behavior was not associated with more satisfactory outcomes (hypothesis 4b not supported). While problem-solving behavior was associated with positive affect, it was unrelated to conflict

satisfaction and goal attainment. This is inconsistent with the literature on the dual-concern model, which posits that problem-solving is characterized by a “willingness to exchange information openly, to address differences constructively and to make every effort to pursue a solution that will be mutually acceptable” (Cai & Fink, 2002) and hence is a most “effective” conflict behavior because it is most likely to yield win-win solutions (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Pruitt & Kim, 2004).

There is a plausible methodological explanation for the lack of positive relationship between problem-solving behaviors and satisfactory outcomes. It is possible that there was an overlap between the items used to measure promotion (e.g. I focused on bringing about ideal outcomes in this conflict) and problem-solving behaviors (e.g., I tried to find a solution that really satisfied me and the other person). This interpretation is supported by the statistical evidence which demonstrated a very high association between promotion and problem-solving behaviors ( $\beta >.67$ ). Moreover, promotion was also significantly associated with conflict satisfaction and goal attainment. Thus, it is plausible that promotion-focus explained much of the statistical variance in conflict satisfaction and goal attainment that should have been explained by problem-solving behaviors.

### **Role of Language-related Skills on Stereotype Threat**

Though no explicit hypotheses were made regarding language-related skills, several findings emerged in relation to stereotype threat, regulatory focus, conflict behaviors and outcomes. The first notable pattern was that the participants’ self-rated accent strength was positively correlated with stereotype threat such that participants who perceived themselves as having strong accents experienced heightened stereotype threat. As this is the first study that directly explores an association between accent strength and stereotype threat of nonnative speakers, there is no existing literature to support this finding. However, the current finding is

aligned with previous study findings which suggest that bias against strong accents are more severe than light accents (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). If accented individuals are aware that strong accents are perceived less favorably than light accents, the perception of their own accent strength can influence the extent to which they experience stereotype threat.

Interestingly, fluency was also associated with a promotion-focus and problem-solving behaviors. It is possible that nonnative speakers who feel that they are fluent in English are more eager to pursue positive outcomes because they feel that they have the means to manage conflicts constructively through effective communication. As a result, they may also engage in more problem-solving behaviors because they feel that reaching a win-win solution is a plausible option.

### **The Mediating Roles of Stereotype Threat, Regulatory Focus and Conflict Behaviors on Conflict Outcomes**

Taken together, the current study explored whether nonnative speakers experience more dissatisfactory conflict outcomes as a result of the mediating roles of stereotype threat, regulatory focus, and conflict styles. Consistent with the theories and current literature, the proposed model of a sequential mediation with three mediators was supported. Nonnative English speakers experienced heightened levels of stereotype threat, which induced a prevention focus. This vigilance to negative outcomes prompted non-native speakers to utilize yielding or avoiding conflict management behaviors, which, in turn, lead to dissatisfactory conflict outcomes. In sum, tests of serial mediation models indicated that the indirect effects of native speaker interaction on conflict outcome variables through stereotype threat, prevention, and yielding / avoiding in serial are significant. On the contrary, tests of serial mediation models indicated that indirect effects of native speaker interaction on conflict outcome variables through stereotype threat, promotion, and problem-solving behaviors in sequence are not significant.



## **Theoretical Contributions**

The current study makes several significant contributions to the stereotype threat, diversity, and conflict literature. First, the current study extends stereotype threat literature by examining nonnative speakers as a social identity group that experience stereotype threat and establishes stereotype threat phenomenon for nonnative speakers. Since the publication of the seminal work by Steele & Aronson (1995), stereotype threat effects have been studied extensively to account for a wide variety of performance decrements observed among various social identity groups that are targeted by negative stereotypes. However, research establishing a stereotype threat phenomenon for nonnative speakers is limited (Glusek and Dovidio, 2010). Moreover, the current study contributes to the literature by examining behaviors (i.e. avoiding behaviors) and outcomes (i.e. satisfaction and affect) rather than performance decrements.

Second, this study extends the workforce diversity literature by examining language as a type of diversity. Past workforce diversity research has mainly focused on studying antecedents and consequences of diversity in gender, age, race/ethnicity, culture, tenure and educational backgrounds in teams and organizations (Milliken & Martins, 1996). Compared to other dimensions of diversity, language diversity is an under-researched area in organizational studies (Lauring & Selmer, 2012), and there are relatively few studies on language use in organizations. An accent constitutes an important part of a speaker's social identity and signals "foreignness" to the observer. As such, understanding the impact of accents in the workplace is important because accents are as salient as ethnicity, age, gender, and skin color and are a source of discrimination and conflict.

Third, this study examines the effects of stereotype threat in a conflict management context. While research has documented gender stereotype threat effects in more formal negotiations (Kray,

Thompson, & Galinsky, 2001; Kray, Reb, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004; Kray, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2002), there is a paucity of research on the behavioral consequences of stereotype threat in the more pervasive forms of informal interpersonal conflict situations. As conflicts are a natural and inevitable aspect of organizational life, it is important to explore the stereotype threat effects on conflict behaviors and outcomes in organizations.

### **Practical Implications**

The current study offers several implications for managers and organizations who seek to understand as well as manage language diversity and conflict dynamics of their workforces. First, the study provides clear evidence that having a nonnative accent can alone trigger stereotype threat; nonnative speakers indeed experience stereotype threat when interacting with native speakers in conflict contexts. Thus, managers who are managing diverse teams should be aware that nonnative speakers may feel threatened and anxious when interacting with native speakers in conflict situations.

Furthermore, the sense of feeling threatened can elicit a prevention-focus goal orientation where employees focus on preventing escalation of the conflict rather than attempting to resolve the conflict with native speakers. As a result, nonnative speakers may engage in more passive behaviors when interacting with native speakers, which ultimately leads to less satisfaction with conflict outcomes, less goal-attainment and feeling more negative emotions, such as nervousness and distress. Thus, managers and native speakers working with nonnative speakers should be mindful of the experiences of the nonnative speakers and not automatically attribute their passive conflict behaviors as their lack of interest or commitment in resolving conflicts and/or their “personalities.” It is possible for a nonnative speaker who can effectively manage conflicts with

other nonnative speakers to bungle in conflict situations with native speakers as a result of stereotype threat.

Last, but not least, the current theoretical model introduces three points of intervention to managers and leaders in organizations. The first point of intervention is stereotype threat: one way that managers can mitigate stereotype threat experienced by nonnative speakers is explicitly valuing and championing language diversity in the organization and assuring that nonnative speakers will not be negatively evaluated based on their accents (see Kim, Roberson, Russo, & Briganti, under review). The second point of intervention is regulatory focus: managers can urge nonnative speakers to employ a promotion focus goal orientation rather than a prevention focus orientation. One way to achieve this is by assuring nonnative speakers that mistakes and failures are natural part of organizational life; thus nonnative speakers should strive towards achieving their ideal outcomes instead of focusing on preventing negative outcomes alone. Lastly, the third point of intervention is conflict behaviors. When managers see nonnative speakers making concessions prematurely or attempting to avoid interactions with native speakers, they can promote problem-solving behaviors by encouraging nonnative speakers to explicitly express their own needs and goals.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study that may restrict the interpretation of the results. First, the cross-sectional design of the current study limits its ability to make causal claims about the relationships between and among the study variables (McGrath, 1982). A related potential limitation is that all variables were collected using self-report questionnaires. There are documented limitations of self-report measures, including social desirability, retrospective memory effects and common method bias (Spector, 1994). While there was no evidence of

common method bias in the current investigation, future studies should employ experimental designs and/or utilize objective measures (i.e. conflict behaviors coded by outside raters) to test the replicability of the findings. Moreover, asking participants to recall a conflict situation where their accents played a role may have influenced the results, so future studies should be conducted to replicate the current findings.

Another potential limitation lies in the generalizability of the findings given that the study used a student sample. Moreover, the sample predominantly consisted of women and Asians. While no gender or ethnic differences were found in the current study, results should be interpreted with caution. In a similar way, the average age of the sample was relatively young (27 years) and although all participants had some work experience, only 21.7% had more than 5 years of work experience. Professionals with longer years of work experience may be more skilled at managing conflicts and as a result may not be as susceptible to stereotype threat effects. Thus, future studies should test the current theoretical model in organizational settings to see if the same findings are replicated in a non-student sample of working professionals.

### **Future Research Directions**

There are various avenues of research that could build on findings obtained from the current study. One logical next step would be to examine nonnative speakers' conflict behaviors and outcomes directly instead of relying on self-reports. For example, it would be valuable to test if objective observations of their behaviors and conflict-related outcomes are aligned with the nonnative speakers' self-reports and the current findings.

Another possible direction is to explore the boundary conditions, or moderators that attenuate the detrimental stereotype threat effects in nonnative speakers. For example, past research has documented that *power* and *cooperative-competitive goal interdependence* can

influence the extent to which individuals experience stereotype threat. Van Loo and Rydell (2013) found that feeling powerful protected participants from experiencing stereotype threat and buffered them from the deleterious effects of the stereotype threat. Similarly, research examining the associations between goal interdependence and stereotype threat indicate that competitive goals exacerbate and cooperative goals attenuate the negative effects of stereotype threat by differentially influencing the levels of stereotype threat experienced by the individuals (Van Loo, Boucher, Rydell, & Rydell, 2013; Lee & Nass, 2012). Although power and goal interdependence variables were controlled for the purposes of this study, future studies should examine whether these contextual factors of conflict impact the behaviors and outcomes of nonnative speakers in conflict situations.

Based on the correlational findings of the current study, it was noted that nonnative English speaking ethnic minorities rated their recalled conflict as having higher importance and intensity than nonnative English speaking Whites. This is an intriguing finding, yet given the correlational nature of the relationship, it is difficult to draw conclusions from this study. Hence, following studies can explicitly test whether ethnic minorities perceive conflicts with native speakers as more important and intense than Whites. If nonnative English speaking ethnic minorities indeed experience conflicts as more intense than nonnative English speaking Whites, then there may be a “double jeopardy” (King, 1988) effect at play where ethnic minority nonnative English speakers experience conflict with native speakers with most intensity because they are both ethnic minorities and nonnative English speakers.

The findings from current study suggest that prevention focus leads to dissatisfactory conflict behaviors and outcomes, however, it would be worthwhile to examine conditions in which prevention focus can be useful and even necessary in stereotype threat and conflict situations. As

the regulatory focus theory implies, both promotion and prevention foci can be useful and relevant motivational orientation depending on circumstances and following studies should explore the regulatory focus – situation fit within the contexts of stereotype threat and conflict.

Lastly, future research should investigate the stereotype threat phenomenon of nonnative speakers dyadically. For the purposes of the current study, I focused on the conflict experiences of nonnative speakers in hopes to better understand their psychological processes when they interact with native speakers in conflict contexts. However, Kim et al. (under review) suggests that native speakers also have negative experiences in conflict situations with nonnative speakers. As conflicts are dynamic in nature, nonnative speaker's behaviors are likely to affect and be affected by the behaviors of native speakers, and vice versa, so it would be valuable to explore the experiences of both nonnative and native speakers in conflict contexts.

## **Conclusion**

With expanding globalized markets, language diversity is likely to increase. Linguists studying non-native accent have found it to produce stronger negative biases than race (Kinzler, Shutts, Deesus, & Spelke, 2009), therefore understanding the impact of non-native accents in the workplace is crucial because accents can be source of tension and conflict in organizations.

One non-native speaker that I interviewed said, "This interaction [with the native speaker] made me feel miserable. I was afraid of not communicating well and making things worse. My accent blocked me from asking, because I didn't want to ask. I didn't want to look stupid or incompetent. So I did nothing. I was shattered. I felt so vulnerable in many ways." It was this sentiment that drew me to explore the experiences of nonnative speakers in conflict contexts in organizations and the current investigation sought to shed light on the psychological mechanisms underlying the experiences of nonnative speakers in conflict contexts. It is with much hope that

further studies will be conducted in this area so that deeper understandings of the role language diversity plays in conflict contexts can be obtained.

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## Appendix A.

### PRETEST

#### **Dispositional Conflict Style**

Please indicate how you handle your disagreement or conflict at work (1-not at all, 5-very much)

Dutch test for conflict handling (DUTCH)

##### Yielding

1. I give in to the wishes of the other party.
2. I agree with the other party
3. I try to accommodate the other party.
4. I adapt to the other parties' goals and interests.

##### Forcing

1. I push my own point of view.
2. I search for gains
3. I fight for a good outcome for myself.
4. I do everything to win.

##### Problem solving

1. I try to find a solution that really satisfies me and the other party
2. I stand for my own and other's goals and interests.
3. I examine ideas from both sides to find a mutually optimal solution.
4. I work out a solution that serves my own as well as other's interests as much as possible.

##### Avoiding

1. I avoid a confrontation about our differences
2. I avoid expressing differences of opinion as much as possible
3. I try to make differences appear less severe
4. I try to avoid a confrontation with the other

#### **Stigma Consciousness Questionnaire**

For the statements below, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement (1- strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)

1. Stereotypes about nonnative speaker shave affected me personally.
2. I worry that my behaviors will be viewed as stereotypical of nonnative speakers.
3. When interacting with native speakers, I feel like they interpret all my behaviors in terms of the fact that I am a nonnative speaker.
4. Most native speakers judge nonnative speakers on the basis of their accent.
5. My being a nonnative speaker influences how native speakers at with me.
6. I almost always think about the fact that I am a nonnative speaker when I interact with native speakers.
7. My being nonnative speaker influences how people act with me.
8. Most native speakers have a lot more basis against nonnative speakers than they actually express.

9. I often think that native speakers are unfairly accused of being biased against nonnative speakers. ®
10. Most native speakers have a problem viewing nonnative speakers as equals.

### **General Regulatory Focus Scale**

For the statements below, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement (1- strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)

1. In general, I am focused on preventing negative events in my life.
2. I am anxious that I will fall short of my responsibilities and obligations.
3. I frequently imagine how I will achieve my hopes and aspirations.
4. I often think about the person I am afraid I might become in the future.
5. I often think about the person I would ideally like to be in the future.
6. I typically focus on the success I hope to achieve in the future.
7. I often worry that I will fail to accomplish my academic goals.
8. I often think about how I will achieve academic success.
9. I often imagine myself experiencing bad things I fear might happen to me.
10. I frequently think about how I can prevent failures I my life.
11. I am more oriented toward preventing losses than I am toward achieving gains.
12. My major goal in school right now is to achieve my academic ambitions.
13. My major goal in school right now is to avoid becoming an academic failure.
14. I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to reach my “ideal self” – to fulfill my hopes, wishes, and aspirations.
15. I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to become the self I “ought” to be – to fulfill my duties, responsibilities, and obligations.
16. In general, I am focused on achieving positive outcomes in my life
17. I often imagine myself experiencing good things that I hop will happen to me.
18. Overall, I am more oriented toward achieving success than preventing failure.

### **Fluency**

How fluent in English are you? (1-not at all fluent, 5- very fluent)

### **Accent Strength**

In your opinion, your nonnative accent is... (1-not at all noticeable, 5-very noticeable)

### **Demographics**

Gender (M/F)

Age

Ethnicity (White/European, Hispanic / Latino, Black / African America, Asian / Pacific Islander, Native American, Other)

Nationality

How many years of work experience do you have? (0-1, 1-5, 5-10, 10+)

Primary Language(s)



MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE

**Conflict situation recall and conflict behaviors (open-ended question)**

[Nonnative –Native Conflict]

Please think of an important work conflict situation with a native English speaker where you felt your nonnative accent affected your interaction with the native English speaker and briefly describe the conflict.

- What was the conflict about?
- Who was the conflict with?
- How did you manage the conflict and what did you do?

[Nonnative –Nonnative Conflict]

Please think of an important work conflict situation with a nonnative English speaker where you felt your nonnative accent affected your interaction with the nonnative English speaker and briefly describe the conflict.

- What was the conflict about?
- Who was the conflict with?
- How did you manage the conflict and what did you do?

Did your counterpart have a same cultural background as you? (yes, no, I don't know)

**Importance / Intensity of the conflict**

How important was this conflict to you? (1-not at all, 7-extremely)

How intense was the conflict? (1-not at all, 7-extremely)

**Power**

Did you feel that you had more/less/equal power than your counterpart?

1. More
2. Less
3. Equal

**Goal Interdependence** (Alper, Tjosvold, & Law, 1998: 1-very little, 5-very much)

In this conflict...

How much did you think your reaching your objectives would help the other person reach his/ her objectives? (cooperation)

How much did you think your accomplishing your objectives would interfere with the other person's objectives? (competition)

### **Explicit Stereotype Threat Scale** (1-strongly disagree, 7-strongly agree)

During the interaction with the (non)native speaker...

- 1) I worried that my ability to communicate in the conflict situation would be affected by my nonnative accent.
- 2) I worried that if I communicated poorly in the conflict situation, the native (nonnative) speaker would attribute my poor communication to my being a nonnative speaker.
- 3) I worried that the native (nonnative) speaker's evaluations of me would be affected by my nonnative accent.
- 4) Because I know the negative stereotypes about nonnative speakers, I worried that my anxiety about confirming those stereotypes would negatively influence how I communicate with the native (nonnative) speaker.

### **Conflict Behaviors**

Please continue to think about the conflict you just described. How did you respond in this conflict situation? (1-not at all, 5-very much)

Dutch test for conflict handling (DUTCH)

#### Yielding

- I gave in to the wishes of the other person.
- I concurred with the other person.
- I tried to accommodate the other person.
- I adapted to the other person's goals and interests.

#### Forcing

- I pushed my own point of view.
- I searched for gains
- I fought for a good outcome for myself.
- I did everything to win.

#### Problem solving

- I tried to find a solution that really satisfied me and the other person.
- I stood for my own and other's goals and interests.
- I examined ideas from both sides to find a mutually optimal solution.
- I tried to work out a solution that serves my own as well as the other's interests as much as possible.

#### Avoiding

- I avoided a confrontation about our differences
- I avoided expressing differences of opinion as much as possible
- I tried to make differences appear less severe
- I tried to avoid a confrontation with the other

**Regulatory Focus (1-strongly disagree, 7-strongly agree)**

During the conflict...

Promotion

I focused on bringing about ideal outcomes in this conflict

I looked for new possibilities created by the interaction between the other party and myself

I tried to achieve my goals in the conflict

I was willing to push myself to try to make the situation better

Prevention

I focused on avoiding negative outcomes during this conflict

I was concerned about not worsening the conflict situation

I was concerned about avoiding losses in the conflict

I was willing to push myself to prevent the situation from getting worse

**PANAS (Watson Clark, & Tellegan, 1988; 1-not at all, 7-extremely)**

To what extent did you experience the following emotions at the end of the conflict interactions?

Enthusiastic

Interested

Determined

Excited

Inspired

Alert

Active

Strong

Proud

Attentive

Scared

Afraid

Upset

Distressed

Jittery

Nervous

Ashamed

Guilty

Irritable

Hostile

Tense

Discouraged

Relaxed

Happy

### **Conflict-related Outcomes**

#### **Subjective Value Inventory – 4 subscales: Self, Process, Relationship, Instrumental Outcome (Curhan, J. R., Elfenbein, H. A., & Xu, H., 2006: 1-not at all, 7- extremely)**

Did you “lose face” (i.e., damage your sense of pride) in the conflict? (r)

Did this conflict make you feel competent?

Did you behave according to your own principles and values?

Did this interaction positively impact your self-image?

Did you feel your counterpart listened to your concerns?

Would you characterize the conflict process as fair?

How satisfied were you with the ease (or difficulty) of reaching an agreement or solution?

Did your counterpart consider your wishes, opinions, or needs?

How satisfied are you with your relationship with your counterpart in this conflict?

Did the negotiation make you trust your counterpart?

Did the conflict build a good foundation for a future relationship with your counterpart?

Did your counterpart make a positive impression on you?

How satisfied were you with your own outcome?

How satisfied were you with the balance of your own outcome and counterpart’s outcome(s)?

Did you feel like you forfeited or “lost” in this conflict? (r)

Did you think the terms of the resolution was consistent with principles of legitimacy, objective criteria or common standards of fairness?

#### **Goal Attainment (Kugler et al., 2011: 1-not at all, 7-very much)**

To what extent do you think you...

Achieved your goals in this situations?

Gotten what you wanted in this situation?

Attained what you were aiming for in this situation?

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations for All Key Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
<b>Predictors</b>													
1. Conflict with NS	.48	.50											
<b>Mediators</b>													
2. Stereotype Threat	4.34	1.79	.43***										
3. Prevention	4.76	1.19	.10	.32**									
4. Promotion	5.01	1.10	.03	.17	.42***								
5. Yielding	3.03	.90	.16	.25**	.43***	.01							
6. Problem-solving	3.59	.84	.12	.04	.14	.72***	.03						
7. Avoiding	3.16	.88	.16	.28**	.48***	.10	.50***	.13					
8. Forcing	2.94	.88	.11	.15	.15	.42***	-.17	.34***	-.08				
<b>Dependent Variables</b>													
9. Instrumental Outcome	4.22	1.42	-.18	.03	.03	.41***	-.29**	.34***	.14	.35***			
10. Process	3.89	1.74	-.20*	.03	.15	.37***	-.06	.35***	.04	.29**	.73***		
11. Relation	3.60	1.84	-.11	.08	.16	.35***	.09	.32**	.05	.28**	.66***	.85***	
12. Self	4.24	1.38	-.04	.04	.08	.57***	-.25*	.48***	-.09	.45***	.63***	.58***	.49***
13. Conflict Satisfaction	4.04	1.39	-.17	.02	.11	.47***	-.14	.42***	-.05	.36***	.90***	.94***	.90***
14. Goal-attainment	4.35	1.85	-.17	.07	.08	.49***	-.21*	.37***	-.14	.37***	.86***	.73***	.66***
15. Positive Affect	3.38	1.30	.01	.09	-.09	.40***	-.24*	.35***	-.07	.43***	.58***	.47***	.56***
16. Negative Affect	3.01	1.27	.24*	.33**	.15	-.08	.38***	-.09	.30**	-.05	-.47***	-.31**	-.25*
<b>Controls</b>													
17. Age	26.8	4.67	.27**	.04	.07	.22*	-.05	.14	-.04	.18	-.04	.03	.03
18. Gender	.19	.40	-.03	.03	-.03	-.23*	.02	-.25*	.03	-.06	.02	-.01	-.05
19. Ethnicity	.84	.37	.01	-.13	.13	.17	-.02	.14	-.01	.05	.01	.05	.08
20. Work experience	2.09	.79	.20*	-.06	-.14	.05	-.14	.07	-.15	.08	-.11	-.09	-.07
21. Cooperation	3.34	1.24	.06	.10	.12	.21*	.20*	.32**	.16	.17	.37***	.47***	.48***
22. Competition	2.90	1.28	-.06	-.08	-.11	-.04	-.13	-.15	-.05	.10	.181	.11	.12
23. Power	1.65	.68	-.06	.05	-.07	.01	-.04	.07	-.13	-.02	.09	.06	.09
24. Accent strength	3.16	1.28	.14	.25*	.07	.02	-.06	.01	.06	.05	.12	.08	.11
25. Fluency	4.26	.82	-.07	.01	-.05	.21*	.09	.22*	.06	.01	.10	.02	.02
26. Importance	4.75	1.47	.21*	.10	.05	.20*	-.01	.13	.12	.26**	-.16	-.14	-.15
27. Intensity	4.11	1.61	.09	-.11	.02	.12	-.16	.03	-.16	.14	-.22*	-.26**	-.33**

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations for All Key Variables (continued)

Variables	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
13. CS	.73***														
14. Goal-attainment	.63***	.82***													
15. Positive Affect	.66***	.62***	.59***												
16. Negative Affect	-.18	-.39***	-.35***	.06											
17. Age	.19*	.05	-.09	.11	.08										
18. Gender	.01	-.02	-.01	-.01	.07	.02									
19. Ethnicity	.09	.06	.05	.03	-.13	.04	-.18								
20. Work experience	.17	-.07	-.17	-.02	-.02	.67***	.10	.05							
21. Cooperation	.30**	.47***	.37***	.25*	-.18	.01	-.03	.08	.11						
22. Competition	.10	.14	.25**	.31**	.10	-.05	.16	.12	-.06	.04					
23. Power	.16	.10	.10	.11	-.06	.11	.11	.04	.15	.10	-.09				
24. Accent strength	.04	.10	.02	.09	-.01	.29**	.21*	-.01	.18	.08	-.04	.01			
25. Fluency	.08	.07	.15	.05	.01	-.14	-.15	.01	-.20*	.02	-.02	.03	-.27**		
26. Importance	.15	-.13	-.10	.14	.29**	.14	-.06	.31**	.18	-.05	-.08	-.07	-.03	.01	
27. Intensity	.03	-.25*	-.22*	-.04	.20*	.15	-.12	.30**	.18	-.32**	-.01	-.13	.01	-.01	.65***

Note. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$ . The N varies from 100-106 due to missing data. Conflict with Native Speaker dummies include 0=Absence 1=Presence. Ethnicity dummies include 0=White, 1=Minority, Gender dummies 0=female 1=male.

Table 2. Relationships between Conflict with Native Speakers and Dependent Variables Mediated by Stereotype Threat, Prevention-focus, and Yielding.

Path	Coeff <sup>a</sup>	SE	95% LICI <sup>b</sup>	95% ULCI
<b>Direct</b>				
NS → Conflict Satisfaction (CS)	-.1855	.1009	-.3862	.0152
<b>Indirect</b>				
NS → Stereotype threat (ST) → CS	.0360	.0464	-.0446	.1422
NS → ST → Prevention → CS*	.0279	.0202	.0024	.0893
NS → ST → Yielding → CS	-.0022	.0167	-.0374	.0327
<b>NS → ST → Prevention → Yielding → CS*</b>	-.0174	.0110	-.0563	-.0046
NS → Prevention → CS	-.0219	.0260	-.1016	.0086
NS → Prevention → Yielding → CS	.0136	.0149	-.0053	.0580
NS → Yielding → CS	-.0301	.0346	-.1232	.0219
<hr/>				
<b>Direct</b>				
NS → Perceptions of Goal-Attainment	-.1755	.0962	-.3667	.0158
<b>Indirect</b>				
NS → ST → Goal	.0743	.0503	-.0095	.1938
NS → ST → Prevention → Goal	.0287	.0188	-.0033	.0823
NS → ST → Yielding → Goal	-.0021	.0204	-.0430	.0412
<b>NS → ST → Prevention → Yielding → Goal*</b>	-.0220	.0121	-.0619	-.0068
NS → Prevention → Goal	-.0206	.0260	-.0984	.0123
NS → Prevention → Yielding → Goal	.0158	.0178	-.0093	.0648
NS → Yielding → Goal	-.0398	.0411	-.1363	.0284
<hr/>				
<b>Direct</b>				
NS → Negative Affect (NA)	.0535	.0948	-.1351	.2421
<b>Indirect</b>				
NS → ST → NA*	.0907	.0447	.0165	.1977
NS → ST → Prevention → NA	-.0196	.0169	-.0711	.0024
NS → ST → Yielding → NA	-.0008	.0252	-.0509	.0518
<b>NS → ST → Prevention → Yielding → NA*</b>	.0269	.0151	.0085	.0771
NS → Prevention → NA	.0125	.0212	-.0088	.0842
NS → Prevention → Yielding → NA	-.0172	.0226	-.0755	.0175
NS → Yielding → NA	.0624	.0508	-.0209	.1841

Note. N=96-100 depending on missing data. Number of bootstrap samples = 10000.

a= Standardized coefficients.

b= Bias corrected 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals.

\*significant

Table 3. Relationships between Conflict with Native Speakers and Dependent Variables Mediated by Stereotype Threat, Prevention-focus, and Avoiding.

Path	Coeff <sup>a</sup>	SE	95% LICI <sup>b</sup>	95% ULCI
<b>Direct</b>				
NS → Conflict Satisfaction (CS)	-.1839	.1023	-.3873	.0194
<b>Indirect</b>				
NS → ST → CS	.0355	.0434	-.0408	.1323
NS → ST → Prevention → CS	.0268	.0196	.0007	.0838
NS → ST → Avoiding → CS	-.0022	.0125	-.0296	.0224
<b>NS → ST → Prevention → Avoiding → CS*</b>	-.0160	.0111	-.0553	-.0031
NS → Prevention → CS	-.0185	.0247	-.0916	.0120
NS → Prevention → Avoiding → CS	.0111	.0143	-.0061	.0561
NS → Avoiding → CS	-.0176	.0257	-.0911	.0203
<b>Direct</b>				
NS → Perceptions of Goal-Attainment	-.1764	.0959	-.3669	.0142
<b>Indirect</b>				
NS → ST → Goal*	.0759	.0449	.0010	.1768
NS → ST → Prevention → Goal*	.0337	.0196	.0064	.0892
NS → ST → Avoiding → Goal	-.0044	.0196	-.0452	.0353
<b>NS → ST → Prevention → Avoiding → Goal*</b>	-.0268	.0141	-.0715	-.0089
NS → Prevention → Goal	-.0207	.0281	-.0936	.0220
NS → Prevention → Avoiding → Goal	.0165	.0207	-.0166	.0701
NS → Avoiding → Goal	-.0301	.0397	-.1239	.0369
<b>Direct</b>				
NS → Negative Affect	.0949	.1005	-.1049	.2948
<b>Indirect</b>				
NS → ST → NA *	.0861	.0443	.0104	.1894
NS → ST → Prevention → NA	-.0170	.0153	-.0606	.0045
NS → ST → Avoiding → NA	.0010	.0184	-.0366	.0389
<b>NS → ST → Prevention → Avoiding → NA*</b>	.0259	.0138	.0082	.0702
NS → Prevention → NA	.0092	.0178	-.0103	.0695
NS → Prevention → Avoiding → NA	-.0140	.0207	-.0664	.0197
NS → Avoiding → NA	.0305	.0378	-.0309	.1258

Note. N=96-100 depending on missing data. Number of bootstrap samples = 10000.

a= Standardized coefficients.

b= Bias corrected 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals.

\*significant



Table 4. Relationships between Conflict with Native Speakers and Dependent Variables Mediated by Stereotype Threat, Promotion-focus, and Problem-solving.

Path	Coeff <sup>a</sup>	SE	95% LICI <sup>b</sup>	95% ULCI
<b>Direct</b>				
NS → Conflict Satisfaction (CS)	-.1468	.0956	-.3369	.0433
<b>Indirect</b>				
NS → ST → CS	.0119	.0432	-.0691	.1032
NS → ST → Promotion → CS	.0321	.0239	-.0003	.0982
<b>NS → ST → Problem-solving (PS) → CS</b>	-.0054	.0098	-.0351	.0080
NS → ST → Promotion → PS → CS	.0041	.0079	-.0058	.0293
NS → Promotion → CS*	-.0798	.0502	-.2017	-.0050
NS → Promotion → PS → CS	-.0103	.0179	-.0587	.0170
NS → PS → CS	.0139	.0241	-.0221	.0785
<b>Direct</b>				
NS → Perceptions of Goal-Attainment	-.1281	.0914	-.3097	.0535
<b>Indirect</b>				
NS → ST → Goal	.0327	.0445	-.0546	.1232
NS → ST → Promotion → Goal*	.0414	.0263	.0002	.1066
NS → ST → PS → Goal	.0017	.0081	-.0112	.0240
<b>NS → ST → Promotion → PS → Goal</b>	-.0014	.0068	-.0197	.0092
NS → Promotion → Goal	-.0955	.0573	-.2166	.0054
NS → Promotion → PS → Goal	.0031	.0145	-.0208	.0396
NS → PS → Goal	-.0043	.0190	-.0482	.0308
<b>Direct</b>				
NS → Positive Affect (PA)	.0079	.1031	-.1973	.2130
<b>Indirect</b>				
NS → ST → PA	.0258	.0484	-.0612	.1350
NS → ST → Promotion → PA	.0127	.0150	-.0044	.0602
NS → ST → PS → PA*	-.0176	.0137	-.0629	-.0008
<b>NS → ST → Promotion → PS → PA</b>	.0102	.0116	-.0019	.0507
NS → Promotion → PA	-.0344	.0341	-.1271	.0068
NS → Promotion → PS → PA	-.0274	.0234	-.0969	.0013
NS → PS → PA*	.0405	.0288	.0011	.1217

Note. N=96-100 depending on missing data. Number of bootstrap samples = 10000.

a= Standardized coefficients.

b= Bias corrected 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals.

\*significant

Figure 2.

Model 1: *NS* → *Stereotype Threat* → *Prevention* → *Yielding* → *Conflict Satisfaction*.

Note: \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

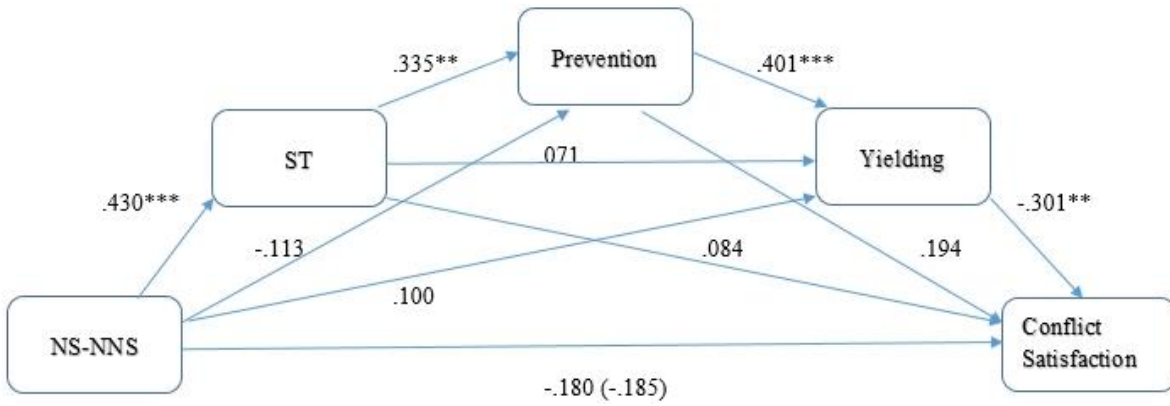


Figure 3.

Model 2: *NS* → *Stereotype Threat* → *Prevention* → *Yielding* → *Goal-attainment*.

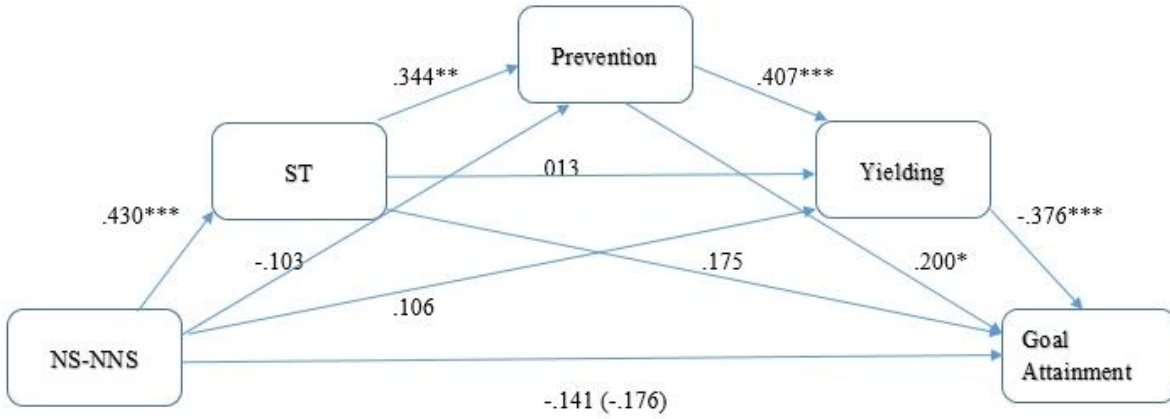


Figure 4.

Model 3: *NS* → *Stereotype Threat* → *Prevention* → *Yielding* → *Negative Affect*.

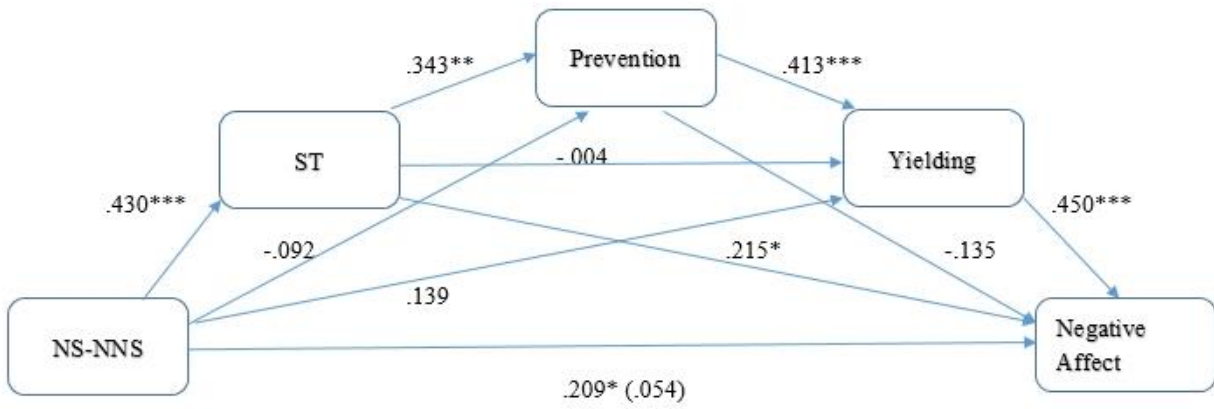


Figure 5.

Model 4: *NS* → *Stereotype Threat* → *Prevention* → *Avoiding* → *Conflict Satisfaction*.

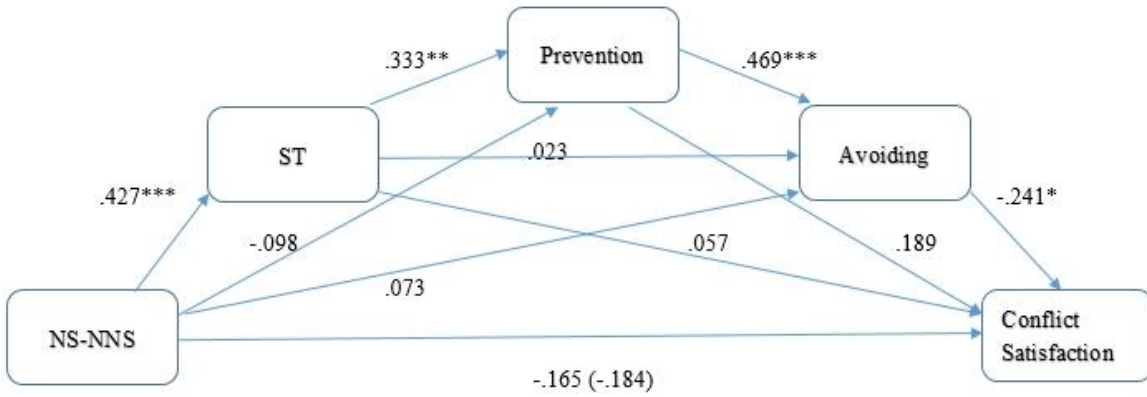


Figure 6.

Model 5:  $NS \rightarrow$  *Stereotype Threat*  $\rightarrow$  *Prevention*  $\rightarrow$  *Avoiding*  $\rightarrow$  *Goal-attainment*.

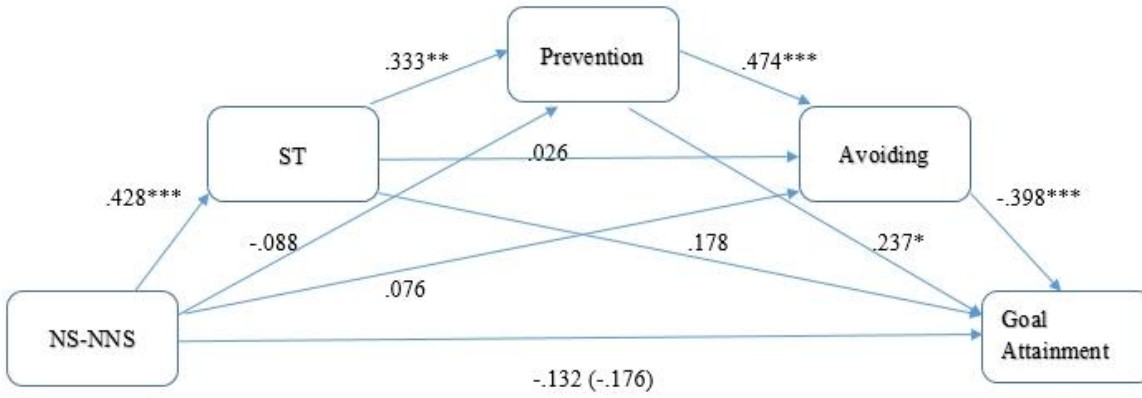


Figure 7.

Model 6: *NS* → *Stereotype Threat* → *Prevention* → *Avoiding* → *Negative Affect*.

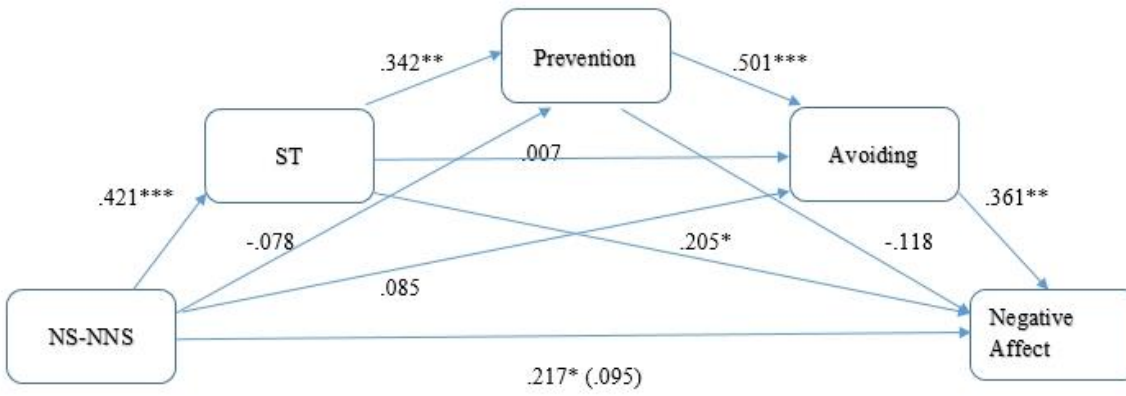


Figure 8.

Model 7: *NS* → *Stereotype Threat* → *Promotion* → *Problem-solving* → *Conflict Satisfaction*.

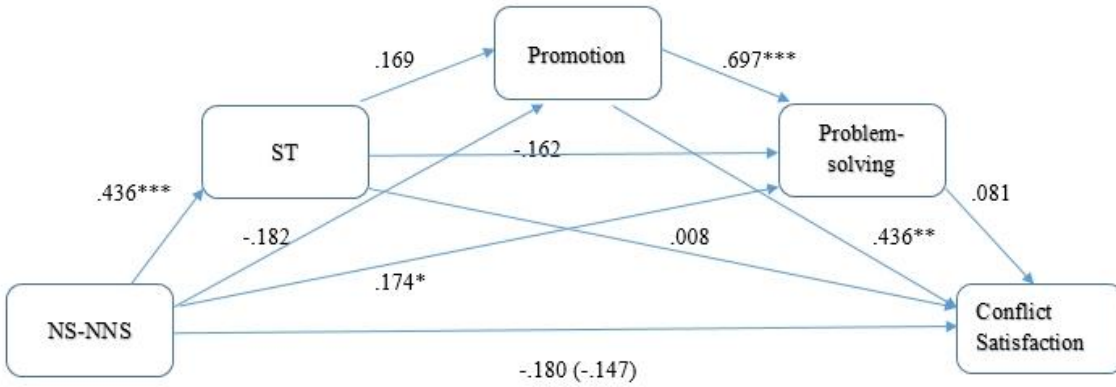




Figure 9.

Model 8:  $NS \rightarrow$  *Stereotype Threat*  $\rightarrow$  *Promotion*  $\rightarrow$  *Problem-solving*  $\rightarrow$  *Goal-attainment*.

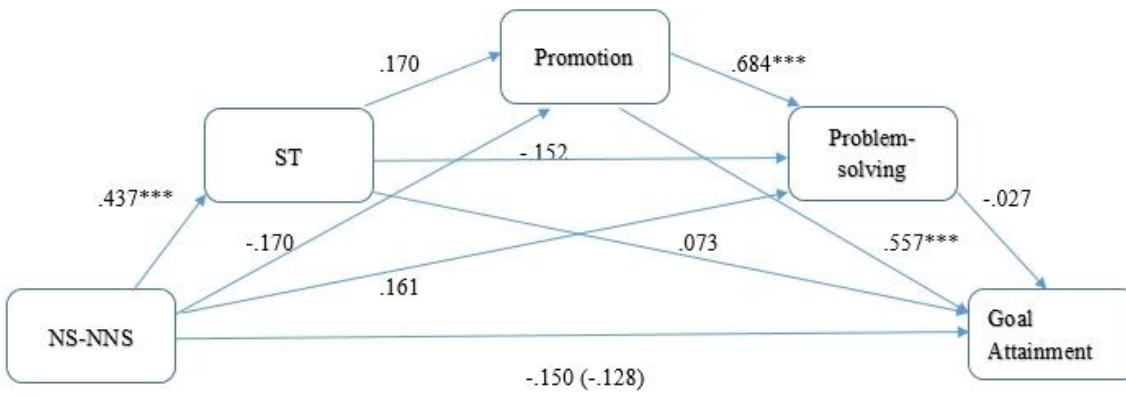


Figure 10.

*Model 9: NS → Stereotype Threat → Promotion → Problem-solving → Positive Affect.*

