

# **DISSERTATION DEFENSE**

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## **“PASSING THE BUCK”: INCONGRUENCE BETWEEN**

### **GENDER ROLE AND TOPIC LEADS TO AVOIDANCE OF NEGOTIATION**

Avoidance of negotiation is rarely investigated, and the implicit assumption guiding much of the current negotiation research is that engagement is inevitable. In addition, compensation and other monetary issues are typically examined in research on negotiation, even though recent work has shown that other topics related to both employment and family life are also negotiated in organizations. In this dissertation, I tested hypotheses about how incongruence between gender role and negotiation topic influences the likelihood of avoiding negotiation in a series of three experimental studies. I hypothesized that the prospect of negotiating over a topic that does not fit one's traditional gender role will lead to avoidance. Specifically, in the first two experimental studies, I tested hypotheses about how incongruence between gender role and negotiation topic influences the likelihood of passing off the negotiation to another party, i.e., “passing the buck.” Study 1 showed that women were significantly more likely to avoid a negotiation about compensation than men, and that aversion concerning negotiation partially mediated this gender difference. Study 2 revealed a significant two-way interaction between gender and negotiation topic on avoidance. Women were significantly more likely to avoid negotiation about compensation than men; conversely, there was a trend for men to avoid negotiation about access to a lactation room. This interaction was mediated by feelings of aversion to the negotiation situation. In a third experimental study, I tested hypotheses concerning the effect of gender role incongruence on opting out of a negotiation by engaging in an alternative task. Women were significantly more likely than men to opt out of negotiating when the negotiation concerned a masculine topic, but men were not significantly more likely than women to opt out of a negotiation about a feminine topic. In addition, masculinity was a significant, negative predictor of willingness to forfeit some amount of compensation for the study in order to avoid negotiation. The findings from these studies underscore the importance of investigating the gendered nature of negotiation topics as well as examining avoidance of negotiation.