

Some research suggests that men and women manage conflict differently, and other studies find similarities. Targets' expectations based on their partner's sex may also influence how they manage conflict. Additional factors, such as stakes – the consequences of the conflict – can influence targets' conflict management styles. Although target sex may be important, we hypothesize that stakes better predict conflict management style than sex.

RQ: How do expectations based on partner's sex influence how targets manage conflict?

RQ: How do conflict stakes sex influence how targets manage conflict?

We recruited 200 volunteers on craigslist and 375 undergraduate students from a large Northeastern university to complete an online survey where they read a scenario depicting a conflict with a close friend. The survey asked the participants to rate the stakes of scenario, their closeness with their friend, and their conflict management style. Partner gender was more predictive of conflict management style than target sex, and stakes of a conflict were the most predictive overall. These findings suggest that men and women share more similarities than differences, however gender expectations still shape how individuals manage conflict. The objective of the project is to produce applicable guidelines for students who learn and live in housing communities because they engage in same and opposite sex friendships and the consequences of poorly managed conflict are high.