

MULTIPLEX CONFLICT AND ADVICE SEEKING

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Multiplex conflict: Examining the effects of overlapping work-related and personal-based conflict on advice-seeking in organizations

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study examines the extent to which multiplex conflict relationships, or those infused with both relationship and task conflict, are related to employee decisions regarding from whom to seek advice at work.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were gathered from 75 employees in a medium-sized life sciences firm in the US Midwest and analyzed using social networks analysis.

Findings - Findings demonstrate that although employees were less likely to seek advice from someone with whom they experienced relationship conflict, employees were more likely to seek advice from those with whom they experienced task conflict. Moreover, advice was still sought from those with whom both forms of conflict were present simultaneously.

Implications – The current study demonstrates that employees are willing to seek advice from those with whom there is task conflict despite the simultaneous presence of relationship conflict. Compared to relationships free of relationship conflict (e.g., friendships), those characterized by multiplex conflicts provide greater access to others with divergent perspectives while also reducing the need for advice seekers to invest resources towards the protection and maintenance of the positive affective portion of the relationship.

Originality/value – Although much of the focus of conflict research has been directed towards intragroup task and relationship conflict, our multiplex social networks approach provides a unique opportunity to explore the effects on advice seeking stemming from the co-occurrence of these distinct types of conflict within the same employee dyad. In doing so, we contribute to the continuing debate regarding the primacy of affective or cognitive concerns in judgment and behavior.

Key words: conflict; advice; social networks; multiplex relationships

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Despite the prevalence of sophisticated information technology in many contemporary organizations, extant research suggests that considerable amounts of organizational knowledge continue to be transmitted through informal social networks (Borgatti & Cross, 2003; Levin & Cross, 2004; Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2001). Even in the midst of the ongoing digital revolution and in lieu of formally prescribed organizational structures (Cross, Rice, & Parker, 2001; Hansen, 1999; Levin & Cross, 2004), navigating informal social networks remains vital to how employees secure resources necessary to meet individual and organization goals (Cross & Borgatti, 2004; Devine, 1999; Huber, 2001). This underscores the importance of understanding how intraorganizational *advice networks*—which comprise advice seekers, advice sources, and the relationships that connect them—emerge, and in particular, who is sought out as an advice partner.

Individuals have a strong preference to engage only with network partners towards whom they have positive affect (Casciaro & Lobo, 2008). Yet, the organizational needs that push individuals to seek out advice in the first place often require individuals to engage with those whom they dislike or with those with whom they are in conflict (Labianca, 2014). Indeed, recent social networks scholarship argues that many workplace relationships are more accurately described as being ambivalent (Methot, Melwani & Rothman, 2017) or *multiplex* (Methot, Lepine, Podsakoff, & Christian, 2016), potentially having both positive and negative elements which co-occur in a particular dyadic relationship, rather than be characterized as having purely positive content (e.g., Shah, Dirks, & Chervany, 2006) or purely negative content (Venkataramani & Dalal, 2007). Even a conflictual workplace relationship itself can have both functional and dysfunctional elements and can, thus, be viewed as being multiplex (e.g., Hood, Cruz, & Bachrach, 2016).

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This emerging multiplexity perspective suggests a need to consider theories that account for advice partner selection while reconciling potentially conflicting interests between interpersonal compatibility and access to resources held by the potential partner. Prior cost-benefit theorizing (Nebus, 2006) argues that the probability of a person investing their time, attention and energy into contacting another for advice increases as the overall perceived benefits of doing so, such as improved decision making, a strengthened relationship, and enhancing one's reputation, exceed the perceived costs, including being perceived as incompetent, feeling indebted to the source, being turned down, or engendering conflict.

We take a conservation of resources (COR) theory perspective (Hobfoll, 1989) to understand these cost-benefit considerations between overlapping forms of workplace conflict—task versus relationship conflict—and advice seeking. According to COR theory, factors such as time, information, attention, and emotional energy are valuable resources that individuals are motivated to protect in response to resource threats, expand in the absence of imminent resource threats, and recover in response to a loss of resources (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007; Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014). COR is an especially useful theory for explaining approach and avoidance in the choice of advice partners in an organizational network setting (Ito & Brotheridge, 2003). COR helps to explain how some coworkers might be viewed as greatly beneficial in expanding one's knowledge resources and thus be sought for advice, while others might be perceived largely as a threat to one's existing resource stocks because of particular types of conflict in which they are embroiled with the advice seeker, and are thus avoided.

Our social network field study aims to make a number of contributions. First, we seek to contribute to the ongoing debate regarding the extent to which conflict is a benefit or detriment to workplace outcomes. Extant research on interpersonal conflict (for a recent review, see Greer &

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Dannals, 2017), commonly defined as the perceived divergence of interest or opinion between parties (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2007; Pruitt & Kim, 2004), has focused largely on two types of conflict—*task conflict* (divergence of opinion or interests over work-related topics) and *relationship conflict* (non-work-related disagreement and divergence of interests or opinions stemming from personality clashes and interpersonal incompatibility) (Jehn, 1995). Some studies argue that task conflict can be a positive force in organizations by helping decision makers challenge incorrect assumptions and overcome groupthink (e.g., De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997; Pondy, 1967; Tjosvold & Johnson, 1977), whereas other studies suggest that relationship conflict is nearly always detrimental, and rarely productive (De Dreu, 2008; Wall & Callister, 1995). We expect that individuals will weigh the costs and benefits of relationships that have no conflict or different types of conflict and that the influence of these considerations will be manifested behaviorally in their choice of partners from whom they seek advice.

Second, a multiplex view of conflict offers a more nuanced understanding of the extent to which task and relationship conflicts co-occur between the same two employees and the impact of this co-occurrence (or lack thereof) on other network-based relationships within these dyads, such as advice-seeking. Specifically, we posit that in the presence of conflict, the extent to which an advice seeker will approach or avoid a potential source is likely influenced by the *type* of conflict (i.e. task, relationship, or both) perceived by the seeker. Thus, we respond to recent calls (Hood et al., 2016, p. 10) to “test multiplex views of conflict in the context of other types of social networks such as trust networks (e.g., Chua, Ingram, & Morris, 2008), leadership networks (e.g., Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007), and advice networks (e.g., Schulte, Cohen, & Klein, 2012)”.

Third, we seek to expand COR theory by merging it with a social network view and applying it to the emerging multiplex view of conflict. For example, conflict can be perceived as a

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threat to both personal-based and work-related resources (Carnevale & Probst, 1998). As a form of resource protection, individuals may be motivated to avoid such threats, particularly if conflict comes in the form of relationship conflict. Conversely, resources expended while engaging in task conflict might be seen as an *investment* that aids in creative problem solving and decision-making. As a result, the insights generated from task conflict can be viewed as a future resource that advice seekers are motivated to invest existing resources to attain. Accordingly, the extent to which resource protection, expansion or recovery is prioritized according to the perceived costs and benefits associated with either the cognitive primacy of task conflict and affective primacy of relationship conflict (e.g. Edwards & von Hippel, 1995) might be key in determining who is (or is not) sought for advice in organizations. From this COR perspective, we expect that advice partners would be selected in the following order: first, from those with whom the individual has no conflict; then from those with whom they have only task-related conflict; and finally from those with whom they have only relationship conflict. What remains unclear theoretically and empirically is what will happen when both task and relationship conflict co-occur in a particular dyad, our focus here.

Finally, despite the distinction between task and relationship conflict having received considerable research attention at the group level (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; de Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2012; Hülsheger, Anderson, & Salgado, 2009), task and relationship conflict are rarely investigated at lower levels of analysis, including the dyadic, relational network perspective adopted here. This is surprising given acknowledgements that task and relationship conflict can occur between some, none, or all of the members of a given employee social network (Jehn, Rispens, Jonsen, & Greer, 2013) or even co-occur among those working in teams (O'Neill, McLarnon, Hoffart, Woodley, & Allen, 2015). Indeed, explorations of conflict using a social networks lens have been rare, resulting in a preponderance of research focused on generalized

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assessments of intragroup conflict. Such studies have tended to rely on individuals' aggregated perceptions of the group as the referent of conflict, as opposed to more targeted assessments of the presence or absence of one or more types of conflict with *specific others* (Jehn, Rispens, & Thatcher, 2010). Our study allows us to contribute a more precise and nuanced understanding of how different forms of conflict are related to advice seeking within the context of specific dyads.

We begin by reviewing extant research on advice networks and the emerging multiplex view of conflict. Using COR theory as a lens, we then describe how advice seeking is likely to be driven by the cost-benefit considerations inherent in the presence of relationship, task, and multiplex forms of conflict. We test our multiplex view of conflict and advice seeking with a field sample derived from a medium-sized life sciences firm in the Midwestern U.S. We conclude by discussing our work's theoretical and practical implications and future research directions.

Advice Seeking

Much of the research linking interpersonal relationships to advice seeking in organizations has been pursued from a social network perspective, which views the organization as a nexus of dyadic formal and informal relationships and exchanges that make up the broader social structure (Borgatti, Mehra, Brass, & Labianca, 2009). Each employee in the network is considered a potential exchange partner with varying probabilities of a relationship developing outside of the organization's formally prescribed ties. Advice networks are characterized by constellations of advice seekers, advice sources, and the interpersonal relationships between them which facilitate knowledge flow, knowledge creation, and learning (e.g. Sparrowe et al., 2001).

Advice seeking in organizations is a crucial aspect of accomplishing tasks, learning, and ultimately innovating. When one employee asks another for advice, they are asking for help in getting information to generate problem solutions, in finding where relevant people and resources

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are located, with assistance in reformulating problems, with validating and affirming an approach that they are considering taking, and with lending legitimacy and credibility to their work (Cross, Borgatti, & Parker, 2001). It is a specific help-seeking behavior (e.g., Hofmann, Lei, & Grant, 2009) that imposes costs on the person from whom advice is sought, while bringing benefits to the advice seeker (Lee & Allen, 2002). Thus, individuals are likely to consider carefully from whom to solicit advice while weighing the costs and benefits of doing so (Nebus, 2006), both for themselves and for others.

Although advice-seeking shares conceptual overlaps with other forms of information search behavior such as feedback seeking, advice-seeking has not been adequately distinguished from these related constructs. This may help to explain why advice seeking has received relatively less research attention than other forms of help seeking. For example, Brooks, Gino, and Schweitzer (2015) argue that advice seeking differs from other help seeking behaviors in three ways: advice seeking solicits prescriptive courses of action; the advice seeker retains agency in whether to use the provided assistance; and that there is an implied value congruence in seeking advice from a particular individual. Brooks et al., (2015) further distinguish advice seeking from feedback seeking: “Although advice seeking and feedback seeking both solicit information from others (see Otero & Graesser, 2001; Rioux, 2005; Savolainen, 1995), the type of information they solicit is very different. The temporal focus of feedback seeking is different from advice seeking, and the nature of the information being sought also differs. Whereas advice seeking solicits help for a current or upcoming problem or decision, feedback seeking solicits information about past performance (see Ashford, Blatt, & Walle, 2003; Morrison & Bies, 1991)” (p. 1422). In this study, we break with Brooks et al.’s (2015) perspective that advice seeking implies value congruence and instead argue that some people are sought strategically because of *differing* values or perspectives,

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which is a foundational assumption of interpersonal conflict relationships.

Multiplex Social Network View of Conflict

Social networks research conceptualizes organizations as a nexus of relationships wherein each employee is a “node” or “actor” in a network and between any two of these actors are different network ties for each type of relationship (Borgatti et al., 2009). For example, a conflict network is one characterized by the presence or absence of divergent opinions or incompatible preferences among actors (e.g. Hood et al., 2016). We further distinguish conflict relationships based on whether they are primarily task-related, relationship-based, or display aspects of both types of conflict (i.e. multiplex conflict). This is in keeping with researchers who have called for investigations of the extent to which different forms of conflict coexist (Amason, 1996; Behfar, Friedman, & Brett, 2015; de Wit et al., 2012; O’Neill et al., 2015; Shaw et al., 2011). Our main goal is to understand how a relationship between two actors in the task, relationship, or multiplex conflict network is related to a potential tie between those same actors in the advice-seeking network, as we elaborate below.

Relationship Conflict and Advice Seeking

Relationship conflict is disagreement based on perceived divergence of interest or opinion that is not work related; instead it can be rooted in such things as gossip, political views and personal style (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007). Relationship conflict has been linked with negative group outcomes, such as low satisfaction, poor performance and a lack of group cohesion (Carnevale & Probst, 1998). Evidence suggests that relationship conflict results in decreased performance and satisfaction in groups because of the information processing loss due to groups having to deal with personal issues, instead of focusing on the group’s goals and decisions (e.g. Edwards & von Hippel, 1995). Relationship conflict poses other potential resource threats, which,

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according to COR, may create disincentives for interpersonal communication, including avoiding advice seeking from those with whom we experience relationship conflict.

Research has consistently shown the negative effects of relationship conflict for individual well-being. The social stress of relationship conflict experiences can lead to negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety and frustration (Jehn, 1997; Jehn, Bezkrkova, & Thatcher, 2007). Other harmful health-related outcomes, such as depression, burnout, and life dissatisfaction, have also been linked to relationship conflict experiences (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; de Wit et al., 2012; Jehn, 1995). Further, perceived relationship conflict can be a threat to self-image, which can provide a strong motive for avoiding individuals who are threatening to one's self-esteem (Spector & Bruk-Le, 2007). These negative effects of having relationship conflict can create strong avoidance tendencies for those who react with a sense of self-protection. For example, individuals who experience relationship conflict might avoid certain others in the workplace, which can rearrange the interactions and pattern of social exchange in the group (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995; Shaw et al., 2011), including such pro-social instrumental exchange as advice seeking.

The actual or potential loss of resources associated with relationship conflict present strong liabilities and therefore elicit strong avoidance tendencies relative to actively seeking out someone for advice (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995). Moreover, the salience of relationship conflict triggers a reduction of psychological safety and threats to self-esteem that diminish expectations of benefit while simultaneously increasing the anticipated costs (personal well-being) of seeking others for advice (Leary et al., 1995). Thus, consistent with COR theory, individuals who perceive relationship conflict with another will be unlikely to seek that person for work-related advice.

Hypothesis 1: Perceptions of relationship conflict with another person will be negatively related to also having a work-related advice seeking relationship with that person.

Task Conflict and Advice-Seeking

Task conflicts refer to “disagreements among team members related to the content of their decisions and differences in viewpoints, ideas, and opinions about the task” (Jehn et al., 2013, p. 352). Driven largely by information processing theory (Carnevale & Probst, 1998; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003), previous research on the extent to which task conflicts result in an overall depletion of resources on the one hand or an enhancement of resources on the other has been mixed. For example, the attentional-resource model of conflict suggests that the stress, discomfort, and interpersonal friction triggered by task disagreements distracts from employees’ ability to perceive and process information (Shaw et al., 2011). Task conflicts may be perceived as a personal affront or an attempt to embarrass (Swann, Polzer, Seyle, & Ko, 2004). From this perspective, task conflicts may cause disputants to redirect their attention away from the task and towards concerns that are more personal. It is important to note, however, that the presence of task conflict does not necessarily imply that a bad *personal* relationship exists. For example, in addition to being the best of friends, two employees might also possess fundamental disagreements regarding how to get something done at work. Indeed, recent work on ambivalence and multiplexity demonstrates that conflict and friendship often overlap among team members (Hood et al., 2016). Despite the noted costs of task conflict on outcomes such as satisfaction and performance (Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Bartels, 2007), the COR perspective we employ provides several reasons to expect individuals to seek advice from those with task conflict.

First, seeking advice from sources with whom we experience task conflict can improve decision-making and problem solving. The time and energy spent engaging in task conflict may serve as an investment of resources that facilitates the broadening, building or recovery of other resources. For example, Halbesleben and Bowler (2007) note that even when employees’ own

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emotional resources are being depleted, they might “maintain relationships with others that can assist them in replenishing their resources whether through help, emotional support, or simply a channel for venting frustration” (p. 102). Moreover, resources expended in task conflict can provide potential benefits to the parties involved due to increased cognitive activation (Labianca & Brass, 2006) and more accurate perspective-taking (Bunderson & Boumgarden, 2010; Edmondson & Lei, 2014). This benefits the parties involved to the degree that such disagreement increases the diversity of views and information (de Wit et al., 2012), as well as provides a context where the dyad challenges each other’s work-related ideas and opinions (Schulz-Hardt, Mojzisch, & Vogelgasang, 2007). Compared to consensus surrounding tasks or processes, task conflict facilitates deeper understanding regarding one’s own position as well as those of others (Tjosvold & Johnson, 1977; Tjosvold, 1985). Moreover, task conflict compels parties to gather new data to either confirm or refute previous assumptions (Hülshager et al., 2009).

However, when needing advice, it is reasonable to imagine that one might target those with *similar* rather than conflicting viewpoints in order to confirm their original position. While this may put the seeker at ease, the action does little to stimulate the creative processing and counterfactual thinking that helps to overcome groupthink and avoid suboptimal decision making (Janis, 1982). Conversely, there are instances when individuals intentionally seek out those known to possess diametrically opposing opinions. For example, extant research on dialectical inquiry and devil’s advocacy suggests that, in an effort to avoid suboptimal decision making and problem solving, decision makers may seek others to challenge and scrutinize their initial assumptions and solutions (Schweiger, Sandberg & Rechner, 1989). To broaden the range of alternatives considered and to prevent groupthink (Janis, 1982), decision makers might seek out parties with divergent opinions and non-redundant expertise to play the role of devil’s advocate. In contrast, parties that share

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similar ideas, positions and expertise may be less effective than conflicting parties in providing one another with fresh insights and new alternatives or to identify faulty logic or inaccurate assumptions. In this way, communications with those possessing divergent opinions and experiences are more likely to stimulate rich debate and critical reevaluation of key assumptions than are communications with those possessing redundant and complementary information (Olson, Parayitam, & Bao, 2007).

Secondly, beyond the value of diverse information held by others, the actual *process* of seeking advice from one in whom task conflict exists may convey value in terms of image enhancement and impression management. For example, the act of advice seeking may convey wisdom, warmth and confidence towards those targeted (Brooks et al., 2015). Advice seeking can also stroke the ego of the source by affirming the source's social position and expertise in the network. The act of reaching out to another for advice signals a willingness to cooperate and to be vulnerable. Although such gestures pose risks to the face and social standing of the seeker, they may create a net positive return by generating the goodwill and favor necessary to avoid the escalation of work-related tensions (Pelled, 1996), recover from previous episodes of conflict, or prevent the transformation of task conflict into more dysfunctional patterns of relationship conflict (Amason & Sapienza, 1997).

Additionally, advice seeking could be deployed strategically to demonstrate ones' competence to a source (Brooks et al., 2015). Research on transactive information processing suggests that in an attempt to establish one's expertise in the minds of others, individuals may engage in a number of learning-oriented behaviors such as asserting one's expertise or lack thereof, challenging another's knowledge, or defending one's position by offering rationale and supporting information in response to a challenge (Schweiger, Sandberg, & Rechner, 1989). Such behaviors

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could improve the source's understanding of the value, relevance, and accessibility of the seeker's expertise (Jehn et al., 2013) and subsequently help to establish the shared understanding, trust and coordination necessary to facilitate more effective and efficient information processing between the pair (Hollingshead, 1998).

Thus, given motivations to protect, replenish or enhance resources, an individual seeking advice from within their personal network is likely to see value in targeting those with divergent views and opinions on work-related matters. Indeed, individuals may perceive a greater net positive return from seeking advice among those with whom they have task-related differences than among those with whom they lack conflict. The friction between two opposing positions can provide a net positive return, despite the apparent strain and energy investment required in the process.

Hypothesis 2: Perceptions of task conflict with another person will be positively related to also having a work-related advice seeking relationship with that person.

Multiplex Conflict and Advice Seeking

Drawing on COR theory, we have argued that the costs associated with relationship conflict are likely to deter advice seeking, while the potential value of task conflict is likely to encourage such behavior. However, it remains unclear whether advice will be sought or avoided in the simultaneous presence of *both* types of conflict. The multiplex approach we adopt posits that task conflict and relationship conflict can be present simultaneously between an advice seeker and a selected source. Indeed, moderate-sized correlations demonstrated in recent studies suggest that task and relationship conflict can and do co-occur in organizations (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; de Wit et al., 2012; Jehn, Rispens, & Thatcher, 2010). Less understood, however, is whether an advice seeker will perceive an overall net *benefit* or *loss* of resources in the presence of multiplex conflict with a potential information source. Consequently, we speculate on both of these competing

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expectations.

First, in favor of greater advice seeking in the presence of both relationship and task conflict, extant research finds that conflicts with non-friends are more beneficial for performance than those with friends (Hood et al., 2016). The authors reason that because conflicts between friends threaten the flow of social and emotional resources available through friendships, friends will invest greater amounts of care and consideration towards one another when engaged in disagreements. Conversely, conflicts with non-friends are more efficient, requiring conflicting parties to invest fewer resources towards the interaction.

From this perspective, one might posit that when advice is needed, individuals are more likely to seek out those with whom they experience both relationship and task conflict due to the greater efficiency of those multiplex conflicts being unencumbered by the possibility of social and emotional resource loss. Moreover, because of the relational threats inherent in task conflict, those seeking a diverse perspective (such as a devil's advocate or minority dissenter) might opt for a person with whom there already exists relational difficulties over one in which an unequivocally positive relationship could be placed at risk. In this way, resource preservation concerns might motivate advice seekers to prioritize the multiplex conflict's work-related instrumental benefits over the inherent affective liabilities associated with its personal/relationship-based components.

A competing argument follows from the affective primacy hypothesis (Casciaro & Lobo, 2014), suggesting that the heightened negative emotional content accompanying relationship conflict may be a potentially stronger force in determining who one seeks for advice compared to the force associated with the potential gains from the instrumental content of task conflict. This is because emotional content or responses in processing information about an object takes precedence over cognitive processing, or evaluation (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn et al., 2010). For

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example, Casciaro and Lobo (2008) found that individuals in an organization were less likely to choose someone for task interactions when there was negative interpersonal affect, even if the other person was considered to be competent. In a subsequent study, Casciaro and Lobo (2014) found that affective concerns, such as positive emotions toward another person, preceded cognitive evaluation when choosing a task partner at work. Thus, the affective primacy view (e.g., Zajonc, 1980; Zajonc, 2000; Zajonc & Markus, 1982) predicts individuals who perceive both relationship and task conflict with another person will prioritize the negative emotional content of relationship conflict over task conflict's potential instrumental gains, and avoid seeking that person for advice.

The aforementioned discussion mirrors long-standing tension regarding the primacy of affective versus cognitive information as a driver of judgment and behavior (Casciaro & Lobo, 2008). However, the preponderance of this research seems to fall on the side of the affective primacy hypothesis, particularly with regard to social networks (e.g., Casciaro & Lobo, 2014); thus, we will use this as the theoretical basis for hypothesizing the following relationship between multiplex conflict and advice seeking:

Hypothesis 3: Perceptions of having multiplex (i.e. both relationship and task) conflict with the same other person will be negatively related to also having a work-related advice-seeking relationship with that person.

METHODS

Data and Sample

Data were gathered from an entire division of a medium-sized Midwestern US life sciences products manufacturing firm. Employees from all 11 functional departments completed sociometric questionnaires, as well as additional survey items that were part of a larger research project on employee turnover. There were 107 employees in this division; only 99 were scheduled to take the

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survey (e.g., due to leaves of absence and illness), and 75 employees voluntarily completed the entire survey (71% response rate). To determine if there were any systematic biases explaining the non-responses, we conducted t-tests comparing the ethnicity, sex, organizational tenure, or supervisor status of the respondents and non-respondents and found no significant differences. The sample consisted of 20 supervisors (27%), 37 females (49%) and was almost entirely Caucasian (97%). Average tenure was 3.9 years at the company, with a range of about one month to fifteen years. Formal hierarchical levels provided by the company separated individuals across five levels within the organization.

The network perspective treats each dyad as having the potential for multiple underlying relations of various types (e.g., advice-seeking, relationship conflict, task conflict), and intentionally collects these multiple relations separately leaving it up to the researcher to decide whether to combine the relations or leave them separate based on theory. This study's focus is on examining whether the presence of one or more types of conflict relations between two people also relates to the presence of an advice seeking relation between them. By definition, this type of dyadic, relational data cannot be independent, and we are, in fact, hypothesizing non-independence across the relations. Therefore, our analyses rely on “double semi-partialing” multiple regression quadratic assignment procedure (DSP-MRQAP) (cf, Singh & Tor, 2008), which handles non-independent data at the dyadic level appropriately, as detailed in the Analysis section below.

DSP-MRQAP requires square matrices for analysis. Therefore, all the variables in this study were assembled in square (75x75) matrix form. While the collected data included information for all the network members as reported by respondents, only complete responses were used to create the measures because non-respondents to the network questions did not have any network data. The network measures used in this study were collected through pen and paper surveys as single items,

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as is typical in sociometric research (see Appendix A). This approach has been found to be reliable when used in combination with questions about recurring relationships as well as employing the roster method, where the respondents are given a list of all members taking part in the survey to facilitate recall (Marsden, 1990) as done in this study. The network questions were included as part of a longer psychometric and demographic organizational survey. This study on human subjects was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the university where the study was conducted, and all participants signed consent forms as part of the study. The following section provides detail about how each network relationship and variable was measured and modeled to test the above hypotheses with sociometric data.

Dependent Variable: Advice Seeking

Advice seeking relationships were measured by asking respondents to indicate which employees from a roster of all employees in the division they regularly sought out for work-related advice and knowledge (“*Do you go to this person for work-related advice and knowledge?*”). All respondents’ nominations were then used to create a 75 x 75-person matrix, such that if person i selected person j as someone they go to for advice, the cell of ij would be coded a 1 for all indicated pairs and a 0 if not nominated. This method provided a cell-by-cell directed ($i \rightarrow j$) matrix indicating who goes to whom for advice as the dependent variable, *advice seeking*.

Independent Variables

Task conflict, relationship conflict, and multiplex conflict. Task conflict refers to differences that arise over work-related issues such as strategy making, decision selection, and problem solving (Jehn, 1995). Relationship conflict refers to non-task, personal-related difficulties often involving acrimony, personality clashes, and interpersonal tension (Jehn, 1995). Task and relationship were measured by asking respondents to indicate which employees were individuals with whom they

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perceived having conflict (“*Conflict with others is a natural occurrence in our social life. If you do get into conflict, from time to time, with this person, is the source of those conflicts, most often, work-related, personal-related, or an even blend of both?*”). Respondents were then asked to indicate the type of conflict, if any, they have with every other employee in the division (1-none, 2-work related, 3-personal related, 4-even blend of work and personal). The answers for all 75 respondents were aggregated into a single 75 x 75 valued matrix. If the respondent chose another employee, this was coded as the corresponding conflict type in the matrix, such that if person *i* selected person *j* as someone they have personal conflict with, the cell of *ij* would be coded a 3 and so forth, for all indicated pairs. If employees were not selected, the matrix cell for that pair of employees would be left as a 0, which is the referent category. This method provides a cell-by-cell directed matrix indicating who perceives what type of conflict with whom. To create the individual conflict variables, we generated four separate matrices from the original valued matrix. For *task conflict*, task conflict cells were re-coded as a 1 in the new matrix, while all other cells were coded as 0. In a similar manner, all responses indicating *relationship conflict*, *multiplex* (i.e. *relationship and task*) *conflict*, and *no conflict* were re-coded into individual matrices.

Control Variables

Affect. Interpersonal affect is generally considered to be the feelings one has toward some other person or object in terms of emotion or affective attitude (Elfenbein, 2007, p. 343). Interpersonal affect is here defined as “an individual’s generalized positive or negative feelings toward another person” (Casciaro & Lobo, 2008, p. 656). This is different from conflict as conceptualized in this paper, which is a perception of work-based or personal-based divergence of opinion or interest. The relationship between conflict and affect, or emotion, is underexplored, and thus the relationship between negative affect and conflict is not well established (Borgatti, Everett,

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& Freeman, 2002). However, these constructs are theoretically distinct, as both affect and conflict measure different aspects of interpersonal relationships.

It was important to control for affect because positive or negative affect directed at another individual is likely to be related to attracting or repelling informal voluntary advice seeking ties. This prediction is consistent with recent work by Casciaro and Lobo (2008), who found evidence that disliking another person mediates advice seeking regardless of the individual's perceptions of the other person's competence. Other research has shown that negative affect is related to reduced helping and increased hindering workplace behaviors (Venkataramani & Dalal, 2007). For these reasons, it was important to control for how positive and negative affective ties might relate to these advice-seeking relationships.

Interpersonal affect was measured by asking respondents to indicate how they generally felt about each employee on the organizational roster (e.g., 1-dislike a lot; 3-neutral; 5-like a lot; see Appendix A). Because we were only interested in the positive and negative affective relations for this control variable, the non-responses and neutral ties were coded as 0. All individual responses were aggregated into a single 75-by-75 cell matrix. To create the positive and negative tie matrices, negative relations (1-dislike a lot, 2-dislike a little) and positive relations (4-like a little, 5-like a lot) were separated into two binary matrices. Each relation was recoded as 1; all remaining cells were left as 0. The resulting two binary matrices indicate *positive ties* and *negative ties*, respectively.

Required work flow. Controlling for required workflow ties between employees is important because conflict relationships and advice seeking relationships might be related to work-based dependence or interdependence with others (for a recent review of relevant literature on conflict and emotion, see Nair, 2008). To the extent that an individual is required to work with another person to complete work tasks, it increases both the likelihood of experiencing conflict with that person, as

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well as seeking them out for advice. It is also likely that those with whom one is required to work to accomplish their job would be potentially knowledgeable about salient work-related issues, further increasing the likelihood of being sought out for advice. Each individual was asked to go through a roster and identify the employees with whom they must work to accomplish their organizational tasks (see Appendix A). Respondents' answers to this question were aggregated into a directed 75 x 75 *work flow* matrix where 1 in cell ij indicates that person i is required to work with person j to accomplish work tasks and 0 otherwise.

Sender effects (supervisor and gender). To control for supervisor effects on advice seeking (e.g., a supervisor who was particularly busy might be inaccessible, compared to a less-busy supervisor), we created a *supervisor* variable by copying the supervisor vector for all respondents (1-supervisor, 0-non supervisor) across all columns to create a 75 x 75 matrix. We also controlled for potential gender effects on advice seeking by copying a vector of each respondent's gender (1-male, 0-female) over all the columns of a 75 x 75 matrix to create the *gender* variable matrix.

Similarities (supervisor, gender, ethnicity, formal level). Individuals often will connect with each other based on dyadic similarities such as gender or ethnicity (Ibarra, 1992; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001) To control for this possibility, a *same gender* variable was created based on the gender demographic vector that created a pair wise match matrix, such that if person i and person j were both male or both female, the ij cell was coded a 1. Non-matched pairs were coded as zeroes. We also controlled for the possibility that two individuals occupying the same subordinate position might be more likely to seek each other for advice based on common experiences with a supervisor. If they shared a supervisor, the corresponding cell was coded as 1, and a 0 otherwise for the *same supervisor* variable. Using the same method, a *same ethnicity* variable was created based on whether any pair of individuals had the same reported ethnicity.

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Finally, we created a *same formal level* matrix and *same department* matrix which indicated the pairs of individuals who were at the same formal level and worked in the same department within the organization. We expected members of the same peer groups would be more likely to seek each other for advice.

Differences (knowledge, tenure, performance, and formal level). Individuals' differences in knowledge might be a possible source of motivation for advice seeking, with less knowledgeable employees seeking advice from those more knowledgeable (Cross & Borgatti, 2004). Individual employee knowledge was measured by a supervisor assessment based on a two-item scale measuring knowledge of the job and knowledge of work process (See Appendix A). The items were scored from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree and then averaged. To create a *knowledge difference* matrix, we calculated the pairwise real difference in knowledge between all dyads. Thus, this method resulted in a 75 x 75 cell matrix where each cell represents the real difference in supervisor-rated knowledge for every pair of individuals. Values for some supervisors who did not provide knowledge or performance ratings for specific individuals were left as missing in the final matrix (See Table 1). This method was also used to calculate the real *difference in tenure, difference in performance and difference in formal level* for all individuals. Performance was an aggregated seven item scale (Labianca, Brass, & Gray, 1998; Tsui, 1984) filled out by each employee's supervisor (see Appendix A). Tenure was calculated as the number of years each individual had been with the organization until the time of the study. Formal level was the relative formal hierarchical level as provided to us by the organization (level ranged from 3 to 7, with seven being the highest level).

Insert Table 1 about here

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Analyses

All matrix operations and analyses were conducted in UCINET 6.5 (Borgatti et al., 2002). The model was tested using the Dekker semi-partialling multiple regression quadratic assignment procedure (DSP-MRQAP) due to the fact that the data were relational ties among employees, which tend to be highly dependent. Traditional OLS regression is ill-suited to this kind of data because OLS requires the assumption that the data are independent. The DSP-MRQAP method effectively neutralizes this issue. The procedure performs a standard OLS regression across all dependent, independent and control variable matrices (Krackhardt, 1988). Then the rows and columns of the dependent variable matrix are randomly permuted in the same manner, preserving the underlying dependence structure and producing a new dependent variable matrix. The method then computes the regression coefficients and resultant R^2 again with the new randomized dependent variable matrix. This step was carried out 10,000 times with different random dependent variable matrices. The resulting betas and R^2 values for each of the independent variables are used as the distribution against which significance is calculated. If five percent of the permuted betas are larger than the observed betas, the beta is considered significant at the .05 alpha level (Kilduff & Krackhardt, 2008). Quadratic assignment procedure (QAP) correlations are calculated in a similar manner and are displayed in Table 1.

RESULTS

Respondents reported 159 task conflict-only ties, 33 multiplex ties, and 15 relationship conflict-only ties within the sample (see Table 2 for additional descriptive statistics). Among the control variables, results indicate that, as expected, required work flow relationships were a significant predictor of advice seeking ties ($\beta = .29, p < .001$). Differences in formal level were also

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significantly related to advice seeking ties, with a negative coefficient indicating that an individual with a lower formal level will seek the higher-level individual for advice ($\beta = -.001, p < .05$).

Additionally, differences in supervisor rating of employee knowledge indicates that lower-rated, less knowledgeable employees seek higher-rated employees for advice ($\beta = -.001, p <$

$.001$). Individuals that report to the same supervisor were more likely to have advice seeking ties ($\beta = .007, p < .001$). Positive affective ties between employees ($\beta = .29, p < .001$) were positively related to advice seeking, while negative affective ties were unrelated ($\beta = .02, n.s.$). Finally, advice seeking was more likely among employees expressing no conflict with the other party ($\beta = .20, p < .001$).

Insert Table 2 about here

Hypotheses were tested by regressing advice-seeking relationships on task conflict, relationship conflict and multiplex conflict (i.e. co-occurring task and relationship conflict) (Model 5 fit: $R^2 = .64, p < .001$; see Table 3). In line with Hypothesis 1, relationship conflict has a significant, *negative* relationship with advice seeking (Model 5: $\beta = -.10, p < .05$). This suggests that individuals with relationships characterized exclusively by personal difficulties with another person will not seek that person for advice. Results indicate that task conflict was significantly and *positively* related to advice seeking relationships (Model 5: $\beta = .15, p < .001$) as expected in Hypothesis 2, suggesting that individuals who perceive exclusively task conflict with another person will seek that person for advice. Contrary to our expectations, advice seeking had a significant *positive* relationship with multiplex conflict (controlling for uniplex task and relationship conflict, and positive and negative affective ties) (Model 5: $\beta = .13, p < .001$). These findings suggest that when individuals perceive both task and relationship conflict in the same

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relationship (i.e. multiplex conflict), they are more likely to also seek advice from that individual. As a result, Hypothesis 3, which had argued for affective over cognitive primacy, was rejected in favor of results suggesting the dominance of task conflict ties. Overall, these results suggest that the type of conflict individuals perceive with others influences whether they will seek that person for advice in the organization.¹

Insert Table 3 about here

DISCUSSION

Employing a social network perspective on advice seeking, we examined the choice of advice seeking partners in an organizational field setting in the presence or absence of conflictual relationships with those potential partners. As might be expected, employees needing advice prefer to approach others with whom they do not have conflict. However, in an organizational setting, some conflict is inevitable and employees will often need advice from partners with whom they have conflict. We tested whether different types of conflictual relationships (i.e., those conveying solely task conflict, solely relationship conflict, or multiplex task and relationship conflict) between employees is related to advice seeking between those individuals. We developed hypotheses based on conservation of resources (Hobfoll, 1989) theory describing the cost and benefits underlying these types of conflict ties and relating that to the likelihood of partners engaging in advice-seeking relationships within the organization.

Results indicated that relationship conflict between employees was *negatively* related to advice seeking. We hypothesized that the detrimental effects of relationship conflict can damage or threaten one's self-esteem, a valuable personal resource. Reduced self-esteem can occur from negative behavioral encounters, which might additionally produce avoidance tendencies in an effort

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to protect one's self-image. As a result, the actual or potential loss of resources associated with relationship conflict produces a net negative amount of intrinsic value in a relationship, and is thus negatively related to instrumental network ties such as advice seeking. Moreover, expectations of future resource losses likely mitigate any potential net value from seeking that person for advice. Thus, due to resource preservation concerns, relationship conflict represents a barrier to interpersonal instrumental ties, such as advice seeking.

Support was also found for the expectation that task conflict would be *positively* related to advice seeking relationships. We argued from a conservation of resources view that resources spent engaging in task conflict generate a positive return on investment by stimulating new perspective taking, mental activation, and increased exposure to diverse information. When critical evaluation and vetting is needed, people might recognize that they need to reach out to those with information that challenges their preconceived notions. The degree to which a task conflict relationship provides these extrinsic returns results in a higher likelihood of seeking out an instrumental advice tie. This is a theoretical break from previous work on advice seeking. For example, Brooks, et al. (2015) argued that there is an implied value congruence in seeking advice from a particular individual. Our work, instead, suggests that advice seekers might at times value incongruent advice in an organizational setting more than was previously understood. This would position task conflict as a valuable instrumental resource in the network, providing important divergence in perspective and cognitive activation that might assist knowledge transmission and ultimately innovation for individuals motivated to invest in its acquisition and development. We should note that in our sample, task conflict was much more prevalent compared to relationship conflict and multiplex conflict. This is important when studying conflict types from a network perspective in organizations, because while task conflict might be the dominant form of conflict, it might not

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necessarily be the most important when it comes to advice seeking behavior. The low occurrence of relationship conflict is, however, in line with general findings about negative ties, which tend to represent a small proportion of the total ties in an organization (Labianca, 2014).

We also considered competing explanations for the likelihood of advice seeking derived from the cognitive primacy of the work-related benefits of multiplex conflicts versus the affective primacy of the personal-based costs of these conflictual relationships (Casciaro & Lobo, 2008). In line with the cognitive primacy hypothesis, despite the potential for resource loss associated with the personal-based elements of multiplex conflict ties, the benefits available via the non-personal, work-related aspects of multiplex conflict ties would take priority when the employee recognizes that advice is needed. On the other hand, the affective primacy hypothesis suggests that when task and relationship conflict co-occur, the negative aspects of relationship conflict will outweigh the potential positive aspects of work conflict, reducing advice seeking at the dyadic level.

Our study's results suggest support for the cognitive primacy hypothesis. This highlights the important role of diversity and interdisciplinary collaboration in today's workplace, which increasingly requires employees to develop innovative solutions and engage in creative decision processes. Our study demonstrates that when unique perspectives are needed, employees are willing to seek advice from others despite the simultaneous presence of personal incompatibilities or friction. Compared to relationships free of personal conflict (e.g., friendships), those characterized by multiplex conflicts lessen the need for advice seekers to invest resources towards the protection and maintenance of the affective portion of the relationship. In this way, retrieval of diverse information via a multiplex tie is relatively efficient and unencumbered by relational concerns. However, we note that much of the advice we studied here is instrumental and work-related in nature; perhaps the affective portion of the relationship might matter more in determining a partner

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when seeking more personal advice. Future research examining work-related versus personal advice seeking is, thus, warranted.

Finally, previous theorizing on advice-seeking partner choices (Nebus, 2006) suggested that while the value of the potentially provided advice was weighed, the likelihood that the target person would provide the advice was a major consideration also factored into the partner choice. While our work doesn't negate this general expectancy theory approach to choosing advice partners, our results suggest that, in spite of the potentially increased likelihood of not receiving advice from a partner with whom you are engaged in conflict, these partners are not being avoided entirely. Instead, in certain instances and with certain types of conflict, they might be intentionally sought out because the advice itself might have more value, thus overcoming the increased potential cost of dealing with the conflictual relationship.

This study made some key contributions to the study of conflict in organizations. We added to the ongoing debate regarding whether task and relationship conflict are purely beneficial, or purely detrimental to organizational outcomes by showing how some kinds of conflict can positively influence advice seeking. We were able to examine the co-occurrence of task and relationship conflict and did so at the dyadic, person-to-person level, rather than at the group or team level. And finally, we added to COR theory by using it as a framework for understanding the perceived opportunities and threats associated with task conflict, relationship conflict, and their overlap in multiplex conflict. By doing so, we were able to weigh in on the importance of cognitive versus affective primacy for interpersonal relationships in selecting informal social network partners in organizations.

Limitations and Future Research

Due to the cross-sectional nature of this study, no causal relationships can be asserted

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definitively about the relationship between conflict and advice seeking, or any of the other variables used in this study. Whether one seeking another person for advice results in conflict, or one person seeks another person for advice because of existing conflict cannot be determined from these data. There are also the typical questions about generalizability from a single-sample sociometric study which will require future research. Future work could also examine the contexts in which work, personal, or multiplex conflict might be born out of other relationships, such as required work ties, friendship, or even advice seeking itself, through longitudinal studies.

As we note earlier in the manuscript, there are similarities and differences between advice and other forms of informal employee resources such as feedback. For example, while advice seeking is typically focused on gaining information that can be used to address current or future challenges/opportunities, feedback seeking is behavior focused on obtaining information about how others (especially supervisors) perceive a focal individual's prior work behavior and performance. Nevertheless, feedback sought might include advice on strategies to adapt one's behavior to improve performance in the eyes of others. Both advice- and feedback-seeking are likely driven by anticipated search costs such as perceived incompetence, loss of face, exposure of weaknesses and deficiencies, and public embarrassment (e.g. Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Vancouver & Morrison, 1995). Although finer-grained distinctions between advice and feedback were beyond the scope of the current study, we encourage future research that unpacks the extent to which conflict might exert differential effects on advice seeking versus feedback seeking.

In our statistical analysis, the reported increase in R^2 in our MRQAP models is relatively modest with the addition of conflict measures. To investigate this further, we ran our analysis regressing advice seeking only on conflict ties (without controls) and found the explained variance (R^2) to be .13. Therefore, are careful not to overstate the effects of conflict in relation to advice

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seeking; however, these results do suggest a significant relationship between advice seeking ties and conflict ties in our data.

The role of individual traits, or personality, in advice seeking behaviors within the context of conflict relationships is also an important area of inquiry for future work (cf, Matzler, Renzl, Müller, Herting, & Mooradian, 2008). Individual differences such as self-efficacy or openness to experience (e.g., Cabrera, Collins, & Salgado, 2006) might provide insights into why some people avoid conflict, while others might seek conflict for social exchange and advice seeking. Relatedly, the COR perspective we employ suggests that impacts of conflict on advice-seeking are driven by a number of enabling (e.g. goodwill, perspective taking, impression management) and suppressive (e.g. fear, insecurity) psychological processes that we do not address explicitly . It will be important for future research to explore the mediating effects of such processes on the association between multiplex conflict and advice-seeking.

Moreover, the main focus of COR research has been directed primarily towards the prevention of resource loss and secondarily on the replenishment of resources following such a loss. Less studied has been the growth of resources through investment. In the event of an actual resource loss, those with a low baseline level of resources might find it difficult to replenish what was lost—a condition that could compromise one’s ability to protect against new or continued threats, resulting in subsequent downward resource spirals. Advice seeking might be employed strategically to prevent the escalation of latent conflict by building goodwill with a source in whom the seeker has an adversarial relationship. As noted by Brooks and colleagues “people may seek advice strategically—without the intention of relying on the advice they receive—as an impression management tool” (2015; p. 1422). As such, resource conservation through investment is a key, yet understudied aspect of COR theory, and one we encourage future research to address more fully.

Implications

Managers often are required to make decisions about where they expend important resources, such as when and where to facilitate conflict management and resolution (e.g., Amason, 1996; Rahim, 2002). Where managers spend critical resources in resolving or reframing conflict can be an important issue, as some conflict might encourage advice flow, while other conflict might discourage advice seeking. Knowing which conflict relationships might be detrimental and which beneficial to organizational functioning can be an important insight and decision-making tool for managers to leverage limited resources to affect the greatest benefit (e.g., Tjosvold, 2008). Thus, managers and organizations can benefit from understanding the role of different types of conflict on key instrumental relationships, such as advice seeking.

Answering the question posed in this study provided additional perspective on the debate over the positive (or negative) effects of conflict in work settings (De Dreu, 2008). While obviously not resolving the debate, this study suggests that conflict in work settings may play an important role in interpersonal, *instrumental* relationships. Organizations looking to influence sharing and dissemination of work-related knowledge, particularly when creativity and innovation are required, might benefit by helping individuals to reframe existing relationship conflicts as being more work-related (Folger & Poole, 1984; Pace, 1990). As an example, helping individuals realize that previous occupants of the same roles were also engaged in conflict can often help employees recognize that the conflict is due to roles and organizational design issues, which can help them reframe their conflictual relationships away from personalized relationship conflict to task conflict. We should note that our results suggest that explicitly not having conflict of any kind was positively related to advice seeking. However, if and when conflict does occur, efforts to keep conflicts task related and avoid relationship conflict are beneficial (de Wit, Jehn, & Scheepers, 2013).

Conclusion

This study investigated the interpersonal conflict relationships that affect instrumental advice seeking behavior in organizations. Conflict was considered as both work-related and relationship-based to determine how conflict is related to informal instrumental work advice ties in an organization. This study suggests that the conflict type affects the potential flow of advice in workplace social networks, with task conflict having a positive effect on seeking a particular partner for advice while relationships containing exclusively personal conflicts create avoidance. Where task and relationship conflict co-occur in a particular dyad, the behavioral effects on advice seeking appear to be more similar to task-only conflicts, rather than relationship-only conflicts. This can have critical effects on the overall productivity and performance of an organization to the degree that relationship conflict interrupts the flow of advice in the organization, while task and multiplex conflict allows advice seeking behavior to continue. We hope research continues to explore the relationship between conflict and advice seeking within organizations.

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Footnote

¹ Post-hoc analyses revealed that gender moderated the relationship between conflict and advice seeking, with men more likely than women to seek advice from another person with whom they experienced either multiplex or relationship conflict (results available from the first author). This suggests that some individual characteristics might affect the evaluation of potential risks and rewards involved in advice seeking in the presence of interpersonal conflict.

MULTIPLEX CONFLICT AND ADVICE SEEKING

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for all Matrix Variables

Matrix Variable	Mean ^b	S.D.	Sum ^c	Min ^d	Max ^d	Observations
1 Advice Seeking	0.09	0.28	475	0	1.0	5550
2 Gender	0.53	0.50	2960	0	1	5550
3 Supervisor	0.23	0.42	1258	0	1	5550
4 Difference in Formal Level	0.00	1.38	0	-4	4	5550
5 Difference in Knowledge ^a	0.00	0.95	0	-2	2	4290
6 Difference in Performance ^a	0.00	1.13	0	-3	3	4290
7 Difference in Tenure	0.00	6.12	0	-15	15	5550
8 Same Ethnicity	0.92	0.27	5118	0	1	5550
9 Same Department	0.10	0.30	560	0	1	5550
10 Same Formal Level	0.28	0.45	1546	0	1	5550
11 Same Gender	0.50	0.50	2750	0	1	5550
12 Same Supervisor	0.05	0.21	248	0	1	5550
13 Workflow	0.10	0.29	525	0	1	5550
14 Positive Affect	0.11	0.31	608	0	1	5550
15 Negative Affect	0.01	0.10	55	0	1	5550
16 No Conflict	0.10	0.29	529	0	1	5550
17 Relationship Conflict	0.00	0.05	15	0	1	5550
18 Task Conflict	0.03	0.17	159	0	1	5550
19 Multiplex Conflict	0.01	0.08	33	0	1	5550

^aThe lower number of observations reflects missing data for some supervisors. ^b Mean is the average for all cells in the matrix including zeroes, but not missing data. Thus, difference matrices have a mean of zero as the differences cancel out above and below the diagonal. ^cSum is simply the result of adding all the cells in the matrix together; again, above and below the matrix diagonal, the differences cancel out. ^dThese are the minimum and maximum values for all cells in the matrix.

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Table 2
Pearson *QAP* Correlations for all Matrix Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Advice Seeking Tie								
2 Supervisor	0.03							
3 Gender	0.02	0.06						
4 Difference Formal Level	-0.04 *	0.34 ***	0.22 **					
5 Difference Knowledge	-0.07 **	0.19 *	0.13 *	0.31 **				
6 Difference Performance	-0.02	0.13 †	-0.03	0.22 *	0.46 ***			
7 Difference Tenure	-0.05 *	0.32 ***	0.04	0.22 *	0.35 **	0.14		
8 Same Ethnicity	0.07 **	0.08	-0.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00 *	
9 Same Department	0.08 ***	-0.04	-0.01	0.00 †	0.00	0.00	0.00 *	-0.09 *
10 Same Formal Level	0.06 ***	-0.06 **	-0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.01
11 Same Supervisor	0.25 ***	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00 †	0.00	0.00
12 Same Gender	-0.01	0.00	0.07 ***	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.01
13 Workflow Tie	0.72 ***	0.03	0.00	-0.02	-0.04 *	-0.01	-0.03 *	0.07 **
14 Positive Tie	0.74 ***	0.06 *	-0.01	0.00	-0.04 *	-0.01	-0.04 *	0.10 ***
15 Negative Tie	0.10 ***	-0.02	-0.01	-0.03 †	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.02
16 No Conflict Tie	0.64 ***	0.00	0.01	0.00	-0.03 †	0.01	-0.04 *	0.07 **
17 Task Conflict Tie	0.33 ***	0.07 *	0.04 †	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01	0.00	0.05 ***
18 Relationship Conflict Tie	0.05 ***	0.04 *	-0.04 **	-0.01	0.02	0.02 †	-0.01	0.00
19 Multiplex Conflict Tie	0.12 ***	0.00	-0.02	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.04 **	0.01

No of Observations = 5550 dyads.

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

MULTIPLEX CONFLICT AND ADVICE SEEKING

Table 2 Continued
 Pearson QAP Correlations for all Matrix Variables

	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
10 Same Formal Level	0.01									
11 Same Supervisor	0.07 ***	0.29 ***								
12 Same Gender	-0.02	0.04 *	0.02							
13 Workflow Tie	0.08 ***	0.05 **	0.23 ***	-0.01						
14 Positive Tie	0.09 ***	0.06 ***	0.23 ***	-0.02	0.74 ***					
15 Negative Tie	0.03 *	0.03 *	0.12 ***	0.01	0.21 ***	-0.04 ***				
16 No Conflict Tie	0.06 **	0.09 ***	0.25 ***	-0.01	0.61 ***	0.78 ***	0.03 *			
17 Task Conflict Tie	0.05 *	-0.02	0.07 ***	-0.01	0.41 ***	0.32 ***	0.29 ***	-0.06 ***		
18 Relationship Conflict Tie	0.01	0.02 †	0.06 **	-0.01	0.11 ***	0.09 ***	0.06 *	-0.02	-0.01	
19 Multiplex Conflict Tie	0.02	0.01	0.10 ***	0.01	0.15 ***	0.09 ***	0.28 ***	-0.03 *	-0.01	0.00

No of Observations = 5550 dyads.

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

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Table 3

MRQAP regression results for advice seeking behavior

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1 Supervisor	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.01
2 Gender	0.03 †	0.02	0.03 †	0.03 †	0.01
3 Difference Formal Level	-0.03 *	-0.03 *	-0.03 *	-0.03 †	-0.01 *
4 Difference Knowledge	-0.04 **	-0.04 **	-0.04 **	-0.04 **	-0.01 **
5 Difference Performance	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.00
6 Difference Tenure	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	0.00
7 Same Ethnicity	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02
8 Same Department	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
9 Same Formal Level	-0.01 †	-0.01 †	-0.01 †	-0.01 †	-0.01 †
10 Same Supervisor	0.05 ***	0.05 ***	0.05 ***	0.05 ***	0.07 ***
11 Same Gender	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
12 Workflow Tie	0.33 ***	0.30 ***	0.33 ***	0.33 ***	0.29 ***
13 Positive Tie	0.40 ***	0.34 ***	0.41 ***	0.40 ***	0.29 ***
14 Negative Tie	0.04 ***	0.02 *	0.05 ***	0.04 ***	0.02
15 No Conflict Tie	0.12 ***	0.19 ***	0.11 ***	0.13 ***	0.20 ***
16 Task Conflict Tie		0.08 ***			0.15 ***
17 Relationship Conflict Tie			-0.04 **		-0.10 *
18 Multiplex Conflict Tie				0.01 †	0.13 ***
Intercept	-0.03 ***	-0.03 ***	-0.03 ***	-0.03 ***	-0.03 ***
R ²	0.63	0.64	0.63	0.63	0.64

Note: N= 4290 dyads. Gender: 1 = male, 0 = female. All coefficients are unstandardized. All difference variables represent real differences. Thus, a negative coefficient means that lower valued individuals are likely to seek higher valued individuals for advice. † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Permutations = 10,000.

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Appendix
Survey items

Social Network Questions		Survey Questions	
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Question</u>	<u>Variable</u>	<u>Items</u>
Required Work-Flow	Are you required to work directly with this person in order to get your work done (e.g. receiving inputs or providing outputs)?	Supervisor Rating of Employee Performance $\alpha = .91$ (source: Tsui, 1985)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) This employee is performing his/her total job the way I would like it performed. 2) I am satisfied with the total contribution this employee has made to the organization. 3) I enjoy working with this employee. 4) This employee has met all of my expectations in terms of his/her roles and responsibilities. 5) I respect this employee's judgment. 6) I believe that this employee will pitch in and help whenever I ask 7) If I had my way, I would change the manner with which this person is doing his/her job.
Advice Seeking	Do you go to this person for work-related advice and knowledge?	Supervisor Rating of Employee Knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) This employee has a poor overall knowledge of his/her job duties, expectations and responsibilities. (Reversed) 2) This employee has a great overall knowledge of company procedures, products and services.
Interpersonal Affect	How do you generally feel about this person? (1-dislike a lot 2- dislike a little 3- neutral, 4-like a little, 5-like a lot)		