Exploring burnout and work-family facilitation as factors influencing why and when relational demography diminishes employee citizenship

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Considering the increasingly diversified workplace, surprisingly, little is known about the effects of supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity on job performance and how such effects might occur. Further, what organizations can do to minimize potentially negative consequences of sex dissimilarity on these processes and outcomes remains unclear. We integrated the relational demography framework and work-family enrichment theory to explicate an underlying mechanism and boundary condition of the supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity–interpersonal citizenship behaviour linkage (ICB). Results from 201 supervisor–subordinate dyads indicated that subordinates in diversified employment relationships perceive a lack of personal accomplishment, which corresponded with less ICB. However, these negative consequences of sex dissimilarity were attenuated when employees perceived greater work-family facilitation.

Practitioner points

- Managers should be cognizant of possible biases originating from sex similarity when relating to and motivating their subordinates of the opposite sex.
- To promote citizenship work behaviours among their employees, managers should allocate resources to all employees, irrespective of their gender.
- The beneficial effects of work-family facilitation for employees’ health and productivity should be emphasized.

As the modern workplace evolves, new challenges arise. For instance, today’s increasingly complex, dynamic, and highly interdependent work environments often call for employees to engage in interpersonal citizenship behaviours (ICB), wherein they help each other with task-related issues and personal concerns (Settoon & Mossholder, 2002). There is also considerable growth in diversity, with women currently constituting 46.8% of the total US labour force and 34% of managers (US Department of Labor, 2013). This means that many men and women supervise or are supervised by a member of the opposite sex. Given such demographic shifts in workplace composition and the importance of ICB in predicting organizational (e.g., reduced turnover; Ferrin, Dirks, & Shah, 2006; Mossholder, Settoon, & Henagan, 2005; Regts & Molleman, 2013) and

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individual effectiveness (e.g., Liu & Ipe, 2010), it is unsurprising that there has been an increased empirical attention paid to these phenomena.

Specifically, researchers have explored personal, relational, and organizational factors that may encourage these beneficial extra-role behaviours (Bowler & Brass, 2006; Settoon & Mossholder, 2002; Venkataramani & Dalal, 2007). Emphasizing the relational nature of ICB, studies consistently have demonstrated that high-quality relationships between co-workers usually lead to higher levels of ICB (e.g., Bowler & Brass, 2006; Tse, Lam, Lawrence, & Huang, 2013). Yet, research on workplace diversity suggests that relationship quality is often worse among demographically dissimilar peers because of tendencies towards in-group favouritism and outgroup disliking (DiTomaso, Post, & Parks-Yancy, 2007; Tsui, Porter, & Egan, 2002). Although these biasing effects are prevalent among all forms of demographic diversity (i.e., race, sex, age, etc.), we focus on exploring how and why supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity may negatively influence ICB because of increasing gender diversity in the workplace and the penchant for supervisor–subordinate sex differences to impact relationship quality (Pelled & Xin, 2000).

Because of social categorization (Hogg & Terry, 2000), those with sex dissimilar supervisors often report more discrimination and lower psychological well-being, trust, leader-member exchange, satisfaction with their supervisor, mentoring, and overall quality of the supervisor–subordinate relationship (Avery, Tonidandel, & Phillips, 2008; Konrad, Cansnitts, & Goldberg, 2010; Pelled & Xin, 2000; Raghuram, Luksyte, Avery, & Macoukki, 2012; Vecchio & Brazil, 2007; Vecchio & Bullis, 2001). Yet, the information exchange perspective suggests that working with opposite-sex peers and supervisors may yield benefits because of differences in perspectives, experiences, and mindsets that are paramount for innovation, creativity, and more accurate decision making (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). To reconcile these seemingly conflicting findings, research has unearthed a number of organization and job factors (e.g., supervisor support, employment status; Avery, Volpone, Mckay, King, & Wilson, 2012; Vecchio & Bullis, 2001) that proved useful in attenuating the negative impact of cross-sex dyads and accentuating its positive consequences. Despite the informative nature of these studies, they have focused mainly on how work environment may attenuate the negative effects of sex dissimilarity on outcomes and somewhat underexplored the role of non-work aspects in this domain. Due to growing interdependence between employees’ professional and personal lives (Hammer & Zimmerman, 2011), it stands to reason that the extent to which work and family are facilitated may mitigate the potential costs associated with working for a sex dissimilar supervisor. It is possible that employees’ relative reluctance to engage in ICB in cross-sex dyads may be attenuated if their job helps them deal with family issues. Such a conclusion, however, is purely speculative, as empirical evidence is lacking in this domain.

Given these limitations to the literature, this study seeks to shed some much needed light on when and why sex dissimilarity might lead to negative outcomes for subordinates (including reduced ICB). In doing so, our research makes three contributions to the literature. First, we extend the relational demography literature by unpacking why supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity could be detrimental for ICB. In particular, we believe that social categorization (Hogg & Terry, 2000) often induces differential treatment in dissimilar dyads (relative to similar ones) that likely yields inequitable affective and instrumental resource allocation. In turn, this interferes with the achievement of work goals, thereby acting as a stressor (Halbesleben, 2006; Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004) promoting burnout (i.e., response to prolonged exposure
to adverse work conditions; Maslach, 2003). When people are burned out, they tend to withdraw psychologically from their work (Taris, Van Horn, Schaufeli, & Schreurs, 2004), which likely corresponds with lower levels of organizational citizenship behaviour (i.e., OCB; Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbeke, 2004; Cropanzano, Rupp, & Byrne, 2003; Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2011; Swider & Zimmerman, 2010) or employee pro-social and extra-role behaviours to maintain and enhance the psychological context that supports task performance (Organ, 1997; Organ & Ryan, 1995). Although no studies have linked supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity to ICB, research examining conceptually similar constructs such as OCB provide a measure of preliminary support for our theoretical assertions (Loi & Ngo, 2009; Taris et al., 2004).

Second, we unpack the role of work-family facilitation (WFF; when performance in one’s work role enriches performance in one’s family role; Grzywacz, Carlson, Kacmar, & Wayne, 2007) as a factor that may attenuate the negative effects of sex dissimilarity on ICB. Though working for sex dissimilar supervisors may correspond with inadequate resource allocation, resulting in burnout (Halbesleben, 2006; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Van Rhenen, 2009) and subsequent reduced ICB, burnout can be minimized. For instance, if an employee’s job helps enhance their family life, this resource could help dampen the impact of stressors on their well-being by providing them with greater opportunities for recovery from workplace stressors via enjoyment in one’s family role. Accordingly, we argue that when employees perceive that the skills, perspectives, and experience at work enhance their family lives (i.e., WFF), they may be more resistant to the impact of stressors (e.g., supervisor sex dissimilarity) on their level of burnout and, subsequently, ICB. Mixed empirical findings regarding the link between sex dissimilarity and outcomes further supports the existence of potential moderators in this domain. In particular, some research has demonstrated a negative influence of sex dissimilarity on attitudinal and behavioural outcomes (Tsui & Oreilly, 1989; Vecchio & Brazil, 2007), whereas others found no relationship (Bauer & Green, 1996; Bowler & Brass, 2006; Epitropaki & Martin, 1999) or unexpectedly (albeit a small fraction of papers) linked sex dissimilarity to heightened trust (Jeanquart-Barone, 1993). Thus, we argue that WFF could help attenuate the anticipated negative indirect effect of sex dissimilarity on ICB through burnout.

In unpacking the moderating role of WFF in the proposed model, we attempt to address the recent call to examine WFF as ‘an important construct that could have important implications for managers wanting to enhance the productivity of a complex demographic workplace’ (Boyar & Mosley, 2007, p. 277). By integrating research on relational demography with work-family literature, we advance our theoretical knowledge about how WFF may alleviate negative consequences of demographic dissimilarity and promote positive outcomes including improved well-being and productivity of professional men and women. In addition to theoretical and practical contributions, this research has potential implications for society at large because, through encouraging WFF, organizations can help fulfill the needs of their demographically diverse employees, thereby making them productive workers and parents.

We begin our argument below by extending relational demography to articulate why superior–subordinate sex dissimilarity could promote employee burnout and, ultimately, may diminish ICB. Further, we integrate tenets of work-family enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) theory to determine how WFF operates as a factor that may influence the proposed indirect sex dissimilarity → burnout → ICB relationship, comprising a moderated mediation model (see Figure 1).
Prior to considering how it is influenced by relational demography, it is helpful to provide a brief background on ICB. Like other types of extra-role behaviours (e.g., OCB; Organ, 1997; Organ & Ryan, 1995), ICB refers to voluntary and discretionary work activities that are not specified by job descriptions (Bowler & Brass, 2006; Mossholder et al., 2005; Settoon & Mossholder, 2002). Contrary to these conceptually similar work behaviours, ICB has a different target, as it focuses on benefiting other employees in the organization (Scott & Judge, 2009). Similar to other extra-role behaviours that are directed towards benefiting others such as altruism (Organ, 1997; Organ & Ryan, 1995), ICB captures cooperative assistance for those employees who need it. However, it is distinct from altruism in that ICB emphasizes the content of helping, namely person- and task-focused, whereas altruism captures helping in general. Considering the interpersonal nature of ICB, researchers have demonstrated that people tend to help their workplace friends (Bowler & Brass, 2006) and popular employees (Scott & Judge, 2009). Employees who are embedded in networks of individuals holding comparable work status also tend to perform ICB (Ferrin et al., 2006). In looking at why people engage in ICB, it appears that some incumbents are driven by the desire to reciprocate and develop long-term bonds, whereas others do so to manage self-image in the eyes of their co-workers (Bowler, Halbesleben, Stodnick, Seevers, & Little, 2009).

Despite the informative nature of these studies, one aspect of the interpersonal nature of ICB remains understudied. Specifically, how does the relationship with one’s supervisor affect helping behaviours geared towards co-workers? Some evidence suggests that employees in high-quality supervisor–subordinate relationships will be motivated to help their co-workers, thereby making the supervisor’s job easier (e.g., Sparrowe, Soetjipto, & Kraimer, 2006). Conversely, those in low-quality dyads may be discouraged from ICB because of the increased stress and subsequent reduced energy and motivation stemming from social categorization (Tsui & Oreilly, 1989). Supervisor–subordinate demographic similarity often corresponds with a higher quality relationship, as evidenced by heightened family-supportive supervision (Foley, Linnehan, Greenhaus, & Weer, 2006), lowered perceived discrimination (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2008), and reduced withdrawal (Avery et al., 2012). Alternatively, dissimilarity leads to negative consequences such as less career development mentoring (Avery, Tonidandel, et al., 2008), lowered perceived organization support (Liao, Joshi, & Chuang, 2004), and diminished empowerment (Kirkman, Tesluk, & Rosen, 2004). As such, we argue that supervisor–subordinate sex similarity may positively influence ICB, whereas dissimilarity may have a negative impact.
Our assertion that supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity relates negatively to ICB builds on the relational demography framework (Tsui & Oreilly, 1989; Tsui et al., 2002), which is grounded in self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oaks, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) and the similarity-attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971). Essentially, people tend to categorize themselves and others into groups based on visible characteristics (e.g., sex) and this categorization produces in- and outgroup distinctions. Based on self-enhancement motives, people tend to prefer similar to dissimilar others in a form of in-group favouritism bias. Accordingly, demographic dissimilarity often produces negative consequences in organizational settings (Avery & McKay, 2010; Avery, Richeson, Hebl, & Ambady, 2009; DiTomaso et al., 2007), whereas similarity tends to play a beneficial role due to the accompanying heightened information exchange (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007).

Applied in the current context, these theories suggest supervisors and subordinates who are similar in sex likely perceive that they share communication styles, experiences, and fundamental values (Byrne, 1971; Tsui & Oreilly, 1989; Tsui et al., 2002). These processes occur through correspondent inference, wherein people’s internal qualities are inferred from their observable characteristics (Eagly & Chin, 2010). Supporting these theoretical assertions, research has demonstrated moderate correlations between demographic (e.g., race or sex) and deep-level diversity (e.g., shared vision, passion, and goals; van Emmerik & Brenninkmeijer, 2009). Such perceived experiential similarity increases liking and frequency of interactions, thereby improving the quality of the relationship between a superior and a subordinate (Tsui & Oreilly, 1989; Tsui et al., 2002; Vecchio & Brazil, 2007). Likewise, the mentoring literature links sex and race similarity to the development of higher quality, longer lasting developmental relationships that emphasize both psychosocial and instrumental goals (Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Thomas, 1990). In short, supervisor–subordinate sex similarity corresponds with a heightened sense of interpersonal trust and higher quality leader-member exchange (Pelled & Xin, 2000).

This enhanced relationship quality is also likely to be associated with the provision of better defined performance expectations and more resources than if the subordinate is of the opposite sex to the supervisor (Foley et al., 2006; Winfield & Rushing, 2005). Accordingly, support from one’s supervisor tends to correspond with greater in- and extra-role performance, presumably because this behaviour reflects positively on the supervisor (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006) and helps him/her deal more effectively with unforeseen work difficulties (Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009). Similarly, trust in one’s supervisor predicts employee willingness to help their co-workers (Poon, 2006). Although no research has empirically examined the relationship between supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity and ICB, studies exploring conceptually similar topics support our predictions. For example, sex dissimilarity between co-workers related negatively to altruism, especially for men working in predominantly female groups (Chattopadhyay, 1999). Consequently, we anticipate the following:

**Hypothesis 1:** Supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity relates negatively to ICB.

The mediating role of burnout

Beyond simply considering a new outcome, we also extend relational demography research by examining a prospective mediator of the sex dissimilarity–ICB link. In doing so, we respond to recent calls ‘to understand the underlying mechanisms for performance of ICB’ (Bowler & Brass, 2006, p. 78) and ‘explore mediators that link demographic
similarity or difference to performance outcomes’ (Tsui et al., 2002, p. 923). Following these calls, there have been several attempts to unpack mechanisms of these effects. For example, a recent meta-analytic investigation demonstrated that in teams with low levels of interdependence, demographic (e.g., sex) dissimilarity led to low social integration, which in turn decreased extra-role behaviours (Guillaume, Brodbeck, & Riketta, 2012). Further, subordinates working with racially dissimilar superiors reported lowered supervisor support and subsequent reduced organizational commitment (David, Avery, & Elliott, 2010). Extrapolating from these findings, it appears that working in cross-sex dyads, wherein one feels socially isolated, disempowered, and lacking supervisory support, is likely to be a stressful experience. Indirectly supporting this idea, research has demonstrated that lacking critical resources such as social support and empowerment leads to burnout (Bakker et al., 2004; Janssen, Lam, & Huang, 2010).

Employees rely on their supervisors for resources to fulfil their work demands (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002); yet, in mixed-sex dyads, resource allocation or support may be inadequate (e.g., Turban, Dougherty, & Lee, 2002; Winfield & Rushing, 2005). Given that (1) sex dissimilarity appears to diminish resources and (2) such insufficient resource allocation is apt to result in burnout (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004), it is logical to assume that burnout may explain why working with opposite-sex supervisors may correspond with reduced ICB. Burnout consists of three dimensions (Maslach, 2003): Emotional exhaustion (i.e., depletion of one’s affective resources), depersonalization (i.e., negative detachment from one’s job), and reduced personal accomplishment (i.e., feeling of personal inefficacy at work; diminished abilities to perform one’s job). We argue that all three dimensions of burnout may prove useful in explaining why ICB is reduced in cross-sex dyads.

Specifically, the pattern of relative deprivation commonly reported by those working for supervisors of the opposite sex (i.e., low support, low trust, poor relationship quality) likely would lead to employees experiencing exhaustion through the depletion of emotional resources, disengaging from their job, and questioning their own competency, all of which are the bases for burnout. Consistent with this position, meta-analytic evidence showed that out of all sources of social support, supervisor support had the strongest correlation with all dimensions of burnout (Halbesleben, 2006), indicating that those who receive less support from their boss commonly tend to experience elevated exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional accomplishment.

In essence, employees become emotionally exhausted when they experience too many demands, which deplete their capacities to adequately fulfil these demands (Halbesleben, 2006). On the one hand, supervisors can play a key role in suggesting ways or offering resources to meet work demands successfully. On the other hand, sex dissimilarity has been shown to diminish this psychosocial and instrumental support (Thomas, 1990; Turban et al., 2002). As such, employees in cross-sex dyads may lack critical work support, leading to the depletion of affective resources that are paramount for helping behaviours (Bakker et al., 2004). Interestingly, some research has demonstrated that OCB directed at co-workers actually increases as a function of exhaustion to help develop a social support network to deal with the exhaustion (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007). Given our focus on ICB concerning assistance with task-related issues that require mobilization of cognitive resources (e.g., knowledge, patience, etc.), we argue that such assistance cannot be effectively realized when one is emotionally depleted. Thus, we expect a negative link between exhaustion and ICB.

Distinct from emotional exhaustion, depersonalization occurs when employees decide to minimize contact with the source of strain and distance themselves from this
stressful situation (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Because sex dissimilarity is associated with lack of support, trust, and mutuality (Turban et al., 2002), relationships in such dyads unlikely grow into deep-level connections. Consequently, it could deepen depersonalization, which has been found to reduce extra-role behaviours (Bakker et al., 2004).

The third form of burnout, reduced personal accomplishment, taps how inefficacious individuals feel about their job (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). As such, people experiencing it may have lowered motivation and confidence in their ability to assist others effectively. These factors are critical for facilitating employee helping behaviour (Lee, 2001). Not surprisingly, meta-analytic evidence shows that this form of burnout (i.e., reduced personal accomplishment) is negatively related to citizenship behaviour (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). Altogether, this suggests the three dimensions of burnout may act as an explanatory mechanism for the effect of sex dissimilarity on ICB.

**Hypothesis 2:** Burnout mediates the relationship between supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity and ICB such that sex dissimilarity increases emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and reduces personal accomplishment, resulting in diminished ICB.

The moderating role of WFF

The indirect relationship stipulated by the second hypothesis is grounded in the belief that the lack of resources and unfair treatment that commonly occur in mixed-sex dyads will precipitate burnout, thereby diminishing ICB. However, stressors (such as that presented by an unsupportive supervisor) do not always produce psychological strain (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005). In essence, we ask whether we should expect sex dissimilarity to have the predicted deleterious effects if employees perceive their job as helping them to juggle work and family responsibilities more effectively through WFF. We contend that WFF could play an important role in improving the work experience of employees in mixed-sex dyads for two reasons. First, 57% of the current US labour force are dual-earner households (Kelleher, 2007), suggesting that WFF plays a critical role in improving organizationally and individually relevant outcomes for both sexes (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005). Second, more and more employees and employers emphasize the importance of balancing work and family in today’s hectic and highly stressful work environment, as evidenced by the heightening promotion of family-supportive supervision (Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, & Hanson, 2009) and implementation of family-friendly practices by many companies (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011).

Integrating work-family enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) and conservation of resources (Halbesleben, 2006; Hobfoll, 1989, 2001) theories informs us that (1) people become burned out when their resources become depleted and (2) WFF can help to augment resources or limit their depletion. Consequently, it stands to reason that high levels of WFF could act as a buffer against the previously proposed debilitating effects of supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity on feelings of burnout. Specifically, when employees perceive that skills and experience they obtain at work facilitate their family life, the enhanced experience at home may help offset the negative experience of working for a dissimilar boss by providing a refuge for recovery and coping. This prospective coping mechanism, in conjunction with the more tangible resources (e.g., useful skills) WFF provides, should counter the tendency for dissimilar subordinates to feel mistreated and unsupported, leading to relatively higher levels of burnout than those resembling...
their superiors. This leads us to anticipate that the degree of WFF perceived by an employee moderates the first stage of the supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity→burnout→ICB indirect relationship.

_Hypothesis 3:_ The interactive effects of sex dissimilarity and work-family facilitation on ICB is mediated by burnout, such that the mediated effect of sex dissimilarity on ICB through burnout is stronger for low levels of WFF and weaker for high levels of WFF.

**Method**

**Sample and procedure**

Participants were 215 pairs of full-time working adults and their supervisors spanning a wide range of industries (e.g., health care, food industry, law enforcement, etc.) and occupations (e.g., sales associate, legal assistant, veterinary technician). Focal employees, whose participation was solicited in classes at a large, urban southern US university, asked their supervisors to complete a questionnaire about their subordinates’ performance. Upon questionnaire completion, supervisors used enclosed (addressed and stamped) return envelopes to seal their surveys and mailed them to the principal investigator. We collected the data from the main participants (i.e., employees) in a similar fashion. Of 600 distributed surveys, 223 surveys were completed by the main participants (response rate = 37.2%) and 220 surveys were filled out by their supervisors (response rate = 36.7%). The participants were 160 women (74%) and 55 men (26%), who were on average 25 years old (\(M = 24.71, SD = 6.75\)). The sample varied in ethnicity (33% White, 26% Hispanic, 21% Black, 15% Asian, and 5% other), and the mean organizational tenure was 3 years (\(M = 2.76, SD = 2.68\)). In terms of familial status, 77% were single, 16% were married, and 7% were divorced; 18% had at least one child at home.

Supervisors were 112 women (56%) and 89 men (44%), and 14 who did not report their sex, therefore, were excluded. The average age was 39 years (\(M = 38.63, SD = 11.30\)), the group was racioethnically diverse (53% White, 18% Hispanic, 17% Black, 10% Asian, and 2% other ethnicities), and the mean tenure was roughly 10 years (\(M = 9.70, SD = 7.70\)); 58% were married. On average, supervisors knew their subordinates for 3 years (\(M = 3.20, SD = 4.50\)) and felt relatively close to them (\(M = 6.96, SD = 1.88\)), using a 10-point scale with 1 = _not close at all_.

**Measures**

Unless otherwise noted, all measures used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (_strongly disagree_) to 5 (_strongly agree_).

**Sex dissimilarity**

Consistent with prior research (e.g., Lankau, Riordan, & Thomas, 2005), we created sex dissimilarity from the answers to demographic questions presented to subordinates and their supervisors. Based on these responses, we dummy-coded sex dissimilarity with ‘0’ indicating a match in sex between a subordinate and a supervisor (\(n = 130\)), and ‘1’ denoting a mismatch (\(n = 71\)).
Burnout
We measured burnout with the 16-item scale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). It has three dimensions: (1) emotional exhaustion (e.g., ‘I feel emotionally drained from my work’; $\alpha = 0.89$), (2) detachment (e.g., ‘I just want to do my job and not be bothered’; $\alpha = 0.77$), and (3) reduced personal accomplishment (e.g., ‘In my work, I feel confident that I am effective at getting things done’, reverse coded; $\alpha = 0.71$). We asked participants to rate each item on a 7-point frequency scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (every day).

Work-family facilitation
We used the 4-item subscale of WFF (Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004) to assess the extent to which participation in work activities improves one’s family life (e.g., ‘The skills I use on my job are useful for things I have to do at home’). The reliability analyses indicated that one item (‘Having a good day on my job makes me a better companion when I get home’) should be eliminated, thereby increasing internal consistency from $\alpha = 0.69$ to $\alpha = 0.76$.

Interpersonal citizenship behaviour
We measured ICB with the 8-item subscale of task-focused ICB (Settoon & Mossholder, 2002). Consistent with prior research (Grant & Mayer, 2009; Settoon & Mossholder, 2002; Taylor, Klueumper, & Mossholder, 2010), we asked supervisors to indicate the extent to which their subordinates assist their co-workers with task-related issues (e.g., ‘Helps coworkers with difficult assignments, even when assistance is not directly requested’; $\alpha = 0.92$). Because these behaviours are work-related and regularly assessed by superiors (Johnson, 2001) and given that the supervisors in our sample worked with their subordinates relatively closely, we feel confident that they were able to provide valid assessments of these behaviours.

Controls
As is typical in relational demography research (Gong, Farh, & Chattopadhyay, 2012; Tsui & Oreilly, 1989), we included subordinate and supervisor gender. Further, research suggests that the salience of demographic characteristics is more pronounced in heterogeneous than homogenous organizations (Martins, Miliken, Wiesenfeld, & Salgado, 2003). Additionally, race similarity influences a number of outcomes such as liking and the type of mentoring (Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Thomas, 1990; Turban et al., 2002). Based on these studies and given that our research participants were employed in racially diverse organizations, we also included subordinates’ and supervisors’ race as control variables.

Results
Table 1 displays means, standard deviations, and correlations. Hypotheses 1–2 predicted direct and indirect relationships between sex dissimilarity and ICB, with the latter mediated by the three dimensions of burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion, detachment, and reduced personal accomplishment). To test these hypotheses, we ran a multiple
mediation model, utilizing Hayes’ (2012) PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 4). Using the SPSS macro, we entered the controls as covariates, sex dissimilarity as an independent variable (IV), and the three dimensions of burnout as the mediators. Overall, our model accounted for 17% of the variance in ICB.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations among all variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Female subordinate&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>2. Female supervisor&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.28&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>3. Black subordinate</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
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<td>4. Asian subordinate</td>
<td>–0.02</td>
<td>–0.02</td>
<td>–22&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Hispanic subordinate</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>–30&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–25&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Black supervisor</td>
<td>–0.05</td>
<td>–0.01</td>
<td>0.38&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–0.06</td>
<td>–0.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Asian supervisor</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>–0.08</td>
<td>0.35&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–0.09</td>
<td>–15&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–</td>
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<td>8. Hispanic supervisor</td>
<td>–0.03</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>–17&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.27&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–21&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–16&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>–49&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–14&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>–13</td>
<td>–0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Emotional exhaustion</td>
<td>–0.01</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>–0.05</td>
<td>0.15&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–0.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Detachment</td>
<td>–1.11</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>–0.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>–0.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Reduced personal accomplishment</td>
<td>–0.04</td>
<td>–0.07</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>–0.08</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>–0.02</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Work-family facilitation</td>
<td>–1.04</td>
<td>–0.09</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>–10</td>
<td>–0.02</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. ICB&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.30</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Female subordinate&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Female supervisor&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Black subordinate</td>
<td>–1.16</td>
<td>–0.03</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Asian subordinate</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.47&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hispanic subordinate</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.18&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.36&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Black supervisor</td>
<td>–1.17</td>
<td>–1.11</td>
<td>–0.11</td>
<td>–0.01</td>
<td>0.25&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–32&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Asian supervisor</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>–17&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Hispanic supervisor</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 201.

<sup>a</sup>0 = male, 1 = female.

<sup>b</sup>Interpersonal citizenship behaviour (ICB).

*<sup>p</sup> < .05; **<sup>p</sup> < .01.
In step 1, we regressed ICB on sex dissimilarity and, as expected, observed a significant negative effect ($B = -0.24, SE = 0.12, t = -1.95, p = .05$, see Table 2), thereby supporting Hypothesis 1. This indicates that working for a supervisor of the opposite sex corresponded with less helping of one’s co-workers with work-related issues. In the second step, we tested the relationship between sex dissimilarity and the three dimensions of burnout. Neither emotional exhaustion ($B = 0.05, SE = 0.18, t = 0.30, p = .77$) nor detachment ($B = 0.16, SE = 0.15, t = 1.02, p = .31$) was related to sex dissimilarity. Conversely, sex dissimilarity was related to reduced personal accomplishment in the expected direction ($B = 0.26, SE = 0.10, t = 2.63, p = .01$). Consistent with Hypothesis 2, working for a dissimilar supervisor corresponded to subordinates reporting a reduced sense of professional accomplishment. In the third step, we tested the link between the burnout dimensions and ICB. All the links were significant and in the expected direction: Emotional exhaustion ($B = -0.16, SE = 0.06, t = -2.83, p = .01$), detachment ($B = 0.17, SE = 0.07, t = 2.46, p = .01$), and reduced personal accomplishment ($B = -0.42, SE = 0.10, t = -4.41, p < .001$). These results showed that burned out employees are less likely to help their co-workers with task-related issues.

Finally, we tested the full mediation model with multiple mediators. In the presence of the mediators, the relationship between sex dissimilarity and ICB became non-significant ($B = -0.15, SE = 0.12, t = -1.27, p = .21$), supporting the full mediation model. However, of the three dimensions of burnout included in the model, only reduced personal accomplishment significantly mediated the effects of sex dissimilarity on ICB (indirect effect $= -0.11$, 95% CI $= -0.23, -0.02$). Because the confidence interval (CI) does not include zero, the indirect effect is significant at $\alpha = .05$, thereby supporting the fully mediated model through reduced personal accomplishment. There was no evidence of statistically significant mediation by either emotional exhaustion (indirect

### Table 2. Indirect effect of supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity (X) on interpersonal citizenship behaviour (Y) through multiple mediators (i.e., emotional exhaustion [M₁], detachment [M₂], and reduced personal accomplishment [M₃])

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct and total effects</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b (female supervisor)</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (female subordinate)</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (Black subordinate)</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (Asian subordinate)</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (Hispanic subordinate)</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (Black supervisor)</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (Asian supervisor)</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (Hispanic supervisor)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (YX)</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-1.95*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (M₁X)</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (M₂X)</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (M₃X)</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>2.63**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (YM₁X)</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-2.83**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (YM₂X)</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>2.46**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (YM₃X)</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-4.41**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (YXM)</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-1.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 199.  
*p < .05; **p < .01.
Effect = -0.01, 95% CI = -0.07, 0.05) or detachment (indirect effect = 0.03, 95% CI = -0.02, 0.11). These findings indicate that sex dissimilarity between subordinates and supervisors corresponded to subordinates perceiving diminished professional accomplishment and, ultimately, engaging in less ICB. Thus, Hypothesis 2 received partial support.

We tested our hypothesized moderated mediation model (Hypothesis 3) with Hayes’ (2012) PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 7). It allows testing conditional indirect effects in moderated mediation models with multiple mediators by obtaining bias-corrected bootstrapped CIs (using 5,000 bootstrap samples) for conditional indirect effects. As can be seen from Table 3, the results of the moderated mediation model (Edwards & Lambert, 2007; Hayes, 2012) indicated that WFF moderated the indirect link between sex dissimilarity and ICB, which is mediated by two dimensions of burnout (i.e., stage 1): Reduced personal accomplishment ($B = -0.28$, $SE = 0.08$, $t = -3.29$, $p < .001$) and emotional exhaustion ($B = 0.53$, $SE = 0.16$, $t = 3.38$, $p < .001$); WFF did not moderate the indirect link via detachment ($B = 0.20$, $SE = 0.13$, $t = 1.46$, $p = .15$). As Table 4 illustrates, CIs for the indices of moderated mediation did not include zero for reduced personal accomplishment (conditional indirect effect = 0.12, 95% CI = 0.05, 0.22) and emotional exhaustion (conditional indirect effect = -0.08, 95% CI = -0.18, -0.02); whereas CIs contained zero for detachment (conditional indirect effect = 0.03, 95% CI = -0.01, 0.13). This indicates statistically significant moderated mediation model through emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment.

Table 3. Summary of moderated mediation analysis predicting interpersonal citizenship behaviour (ICB)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>1st stage DV</th>
<th>2nd stage DV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exhaustion</td>
<td>Detachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$B$</td>
<td>$SE$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female supervisor</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female subordinate</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black subordinate</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian subordinate</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic subordinate</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black supervisor</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian supervisor</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic supervisor</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex dissimilarity</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhaustion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detachment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inefficacy$^a$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFF$^b$</td>
<td>-.35**</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex dissimilarity $\times$ WFF</td>
<td>0.53**</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>2.60**</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $^a$Reduced personal accomplishment.  
$^b$Work-family facilitation (WFF).  
*p < .05; **p < .01.
The direction of the conditional indirect effect of sex dissimilarity on ICB via reduced personal accomplishment was as expected. In particular, at lower levels (i.e., $-1 SD$) of WFF, it was negative and significant ($-0.21, 95\% CI = -0.38, -0.10$); and it was positive and non-significant at higher levels (i.e., $+1 SD$) of WFF ($0.01, 95\% CI = -0.10, -0.11$). This pattern of findings revealed that working with an opposite-sex supervisor discouraged people from engaging in ICB because of feelings of reduced personal accomplishment, a pattern that was particularly pronounced when WFF was lower (Figure 2).

The pattern of conditional effects of sex dissimilarity on ICB via emotional exhaustion was not as expected. Specifically, these effects were positive and significant ($0.07, 95\% CI = 0.00, 0.20$) at lower levels of WFF, but were negative and significant at higher levels of WFF ($-0.09, 95\% CI = -0.21, -0.02$). These findings indicated that unexpectedly, supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity corresponded with greater emotional exhaustion and subsequent lowered ICB when WFF was higher (Figure 3). Thus, Hypothesis 3 received partial support.

**Supplemental analyses**

Some researchers (e.g., Chattopadhyay, Tluchowska, & George, 2004; Tsui et al., 2002) have suggested that examinations of workplace demographic dissimilarity should consider the possibility of asymmetrical effects for majority and minority members. They argued that the effects of demographic dissimilarity may be driven not just by social categorization processes, but rather by whether members of lower status category groups (e.g., Blacks, women) supervise those in higher status group (e.g., White men). For
example, White subordinates working with Black supervisors (but not vice versa) reported the highest level of role conflict and ambiguity (Tsui & Oreilly, 1989). Further, male supervisors with more childcare responsibilities provided greater family support to their supervised female employees; these effects were not observed for female supervisors working with male subordinates (Li & Bagger, 2011). To explore these...
possibilities for gender in our proposed model, we tested whether the gender of the supervisor or subordinate influences the effects of sex dissimilarity. The results of the moderated regression analysis showed that none of the interaction terms involving supervisor or subordinate gender with sex dissimilarity significantly predicted ICB or any of the dimensions of burnout (all $p$-values were $>.12$; specific results are available from the first author).

**Discussion**

This study asked three important yet understudied questions involving relational demography research: (1) does supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity discourage employees from helping their co-workers, (2) if so, why would such an effect occur, and (3) are there factors that serve to minimize these undesired effects of sex dissimilarity on work behaviours? To answer these questions, we built on prior theory (Tsui & Oreilly, 1989; Tsui et al., 2002) purporting that supervisors tend to treat their opposite-sex subordinates less favourably than their same-sex subordinates, thereby resulting in lower quality relationships wherein dissimilar subordinates are denied equal access to resources. This relative lack of resources appears to manifest itself in the form of reduced personal accomplishment that corresponds with employees engaging in less ICB. Finally, building on the work-family enrichment model (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), we showed that this mediation applied only to those employees who perceived less WFF. We now discuss the implications of these results.

**Implications**

From a theoretical perspective, we added to the relational demography literature by demonstrating that the effects of supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity extend to employee ICB. Past research demonstrated that dyadic sex dissimilarity leads to a host of negative mentoring outcomes such as reduced trust, liking, and relationship quality (e.g., Avery, Tonidandel, et al., 2008; Loi & Ngo, 2009; Thomas, 1990; Turban et al., 2002; Vecchio & Brazil, 2007). It also showed that sex and other types of similarity (e.g., race, dialect) result in positive consequences such as willingness to disclose personal information (Gong et al., 2012), more frequent contact with one’s mentor (Ensher & Murphy, 1997), greater family support (Foley et al., 2006), and psychological safety to manage impressions about one’s job (Barsness, Diekmann, & Seidel, 2005).

Yet, the potential of relational demography to influence extra-role behaviours such as ICB has been neglected with the exception of a few studies exploring the links between demographic dissimilarity and other extra-role behaviours, such as altruism in dyads (Chattopadhyay, 1999) and among team members (Perry, Kulik, & Zhou, 1999; Van der Vegt & Van de Vliert, 2005). Although considerable knowledge has accumulated about outcomes of relational demography, more research is needed to explore ‘the mechanisms through which this process occurs’ (Turban et al., 2002, p. 258). In response to this call, we theorized that superiors would offer more emotional and instrumental resources to demographically similar than dissimilar subordinates (David et al., 2010; Foley et al., 2006; Winfield & Rushing, 2005) and that this resource discrepancy would manifest itself in employees exhibiting higher levels of burnout (reduced personal accomplishment). In turn, these burned out employees would be unlikely to engage in ICB because their feelings of inefficacy would leave them feeling unwilling (i.e., why would I help my
supervisor look good or make his/her job easier?) and unable to provide meaningful help to their peers. Our results provided some support for this theory.

Our study also contributes to the work-family enrichment paradigm by integrating it with the relational demography framework and underscoring the importance of WFF on the well-being and performance of demographically dissimilar employees. In particular, Greenhaus and Powell (2006) encouraged researchers to examine ‘whether (and, if so, why) men and women experience different levels of enrichment’ (p. 87). We respond to this call by demonstrating that a lack of WFF is detrimental for all employees who work for supervisors of the opposite sex. It appears that perceiving limited opportunities to accumulate the requisite resources to balance work and family demands effectively has disastrous consequences for both men and women in diversified supervisory relationships. In particular, low levels of WFF exacerbate feelings of reduced personal accomplishments stemming from sex dissimilarity, thereby diminishing ICB. As such, our study extends other research on factors that may attenuate the negative impact of dissimilarity on outcomes (Avery et al., 2012; Vecchio & Bullis, 2001) by exploring how the extent to which family and professional domains may buffer these effects on burnout and ICB. By showing that low levels of WFF exacerbate the deleterious effects of sex dissimilarity on burnout and subsequent ICB, we might help reconcile some mixed findings in the relational demography literature (Bauer & Green, 1996; Liao et al., 2004; Vecchio & Brazil, 2007).

Though many of our hypotheses received support, it is noteworthy that the mediating effects were inconsistent across the forms of burnout. A possible explanation may be based on the theory of planned behaviour, suggesting that conceptually related attitudes are best predictors of behaviour (Ajzen, 2001). This explanation is also in line with the thematic correspondence hypothesis, wherein the most theoretically relevant burnout dimension becomes the most proximal predictor in the burnout sequence for the outcome of interest (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). Of the three dimensions of burnout, reduced professional accomplishment appears to be conceptually closest to ICB. In particular, task-focused ICB is a discretionary work behaviour that requires willingness to extend professional capacities to help co-workers with task-related concerns (Settoon & Mossholder, 2002). Emotional exhaustion and detachment reflect the depletion of personal (e.g., emotional, physical) and interpersonal (e.g., connectedness to co-workers) resources, respectively. Conversely, reduced professional accomplishment refers to perceived lack of work-related capabilities that are a prerequisite for successful performance of task-oriented ICB. In support for our arguments, meta-analytic evidence showed that reduced personal accomplishment had the strongest correlation with contextual performance among the three forms of burnout (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010).

Another unexpected finding was that WFF seemed to intensify the effect of supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity on ICB through emotional exhaustion. It appears that WFF has differential impact on affective (i.e., emotional exhaustion) and cognitive (i.e., reduced personal accomplishment) reactions to working with a supervisor of the opposite sex. Specifically, higher levels of WFF attenuate the negative impact of sex dissimilarity on reduced personal accomplishment, presumably because people rationalize that they have enough resources to effectively accomplish their jobs. However, higher levels of WFF amplify the negative impact of dissimilarity on emotional exhaustion, presumably because employees experience ambivalent emotions. Working with an opposite-sex supervisor likely elicits negative affect (e.g., disliking; Ensher & Murphy, 1997), whereas WFF should correspond with greater positive emotions (Carlson, Kacmar,
Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006). The coexistence of both positive and negative emotions represents an emotionally demanding situation, which has been linked to greater emotional exhaustion (Bakker et al., 2004). Future research should directly measure affect to determine its role in our proposed model.

From a practical standpoint, these findings provide some guidance for organizations striving to effectively promote diversity and sustain high levels of helping behaviours among their employees. First, managers should be aware of possible interpersonal attraction biases originating from sex similarity when relating to and motivating their subordinates of the opposite sex. They should be cognizant of the deleterious effects of these biases on their resource allocation decisions. If managers strive to promote citizenship among their subordinates, they must try to distribute resources (tangible and intangible) equally to all employees, irrespective of demographic differences. Further, supervisors (regardless of their gender) should be aware of the beneficial effects of WFF for their subordinates’ psychological health and productivity. This could entail awareness training promoting managerial awareness of common familial obligations of employees belonging to the opposite sex and consideration of strategies designed to help them balance competing work and family demands. Our findings also have important societal implications. In modern society, people need to balance the demands of multiple roles (work, parenthood) and their ability to do it well impacts the quality of their personal and professional lives. As this research indicates, the fulfilment of this need may attenuate some negative consequences of sex dissimilarity for both working men and women. Organizations that implement and promote WFF help their demographically diverse employees be productive and happy both in and outside of the workplace.

Limitations, future research, and conclusion
Before discussing possible limitations of our research, we should note its strengths. To minimize percept–percept bias, we utilized multisource data by measuring sex dissimilarity objectively and using supervisor ratings of their subordinates’ performance. Nonetheless, there were some limitations. For instance, although some employees and their supervisors mailed their surveys at different times, the two were distributed together making the paper-and-pencil survey design cross-sectional and, therefore, prohibiting us from drawing definite causal conclusions. Furthermore, the characteristics of our sample (predominantly relatively young women) may raise concerns over its generality to other working populations (e.g., older men). Finally, we used supervisor ratings to measure ICB. The nature of these behaviours and supervisor familiarity with their supervised employees suggests that supervisors have had enough opportunities to observe these actions. Yet, recipients of ICBs (i.e., peers) likely provide unique insight into these behaviours that may be above and beyond that of supervisor accounts.

Limitations notwithstanding, the results of our study offer some potentially promising avenues for future research. First, the competition to maintain a cutting-edge advantage in today’s volatile marketplace is stronger than ever. Employees can help their organizations achieve this competitive edge by being creative and adaptive. If, as our study demonstrated, demographic dissimilarity potentially hinders helping behaviours, will it have similar effects on other organizationally valued activities such as creativity and adaptive performance? Second, it would be worthwhile in future research to examine whether our study’s results are applicable in non-Western contexts where women are less active and visible in the workplace and are also (stereotypically) expected to take on family responsibilities. It is possible that supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity will
have a more deleterious effect on employees’ well-being and helping than in the Western society context of the present research. Likewise, the provision of family-related assistance may have a different impact on men and women in the non-Western marketplace. Third, what other factors may attenuate the negative effects of sex dissimilarity on ICB? Will family-supportive supervision that constitutes a supervisor’s sensitivity, empathy, and flexibility in achieving work-life balance (Foley et al., 2006) strengthen the positive effects of WFF in buffering the negative impact of dissimilarity on outcomes? Finally, research is needed in unpacking other mechanisms underlying the sex dissimilarity–ICB link. Can distrust and negative affect be some other manifestations of poor-quality relationships in cross-sex dyads that result in reduced ICB? Future research should explore these assertions.

In this study, we asked if supervisor–subordinate sex dissimilarity discourages helping behaviours and, if so, why this would be the case. Not only did we find evidence of such a relationship, but by integrating relevant theories, we showed that reduced personal accomplishment helps to explain it. Working for a dissimilar boss can be a stressful experience that may result in burnout. To the extent that this occurs, one result may be a decreased willingness and ability to help others in the workplace. Perhaps more importantly, however, we found that facilitating work-family balance helps organizations minimize the potentially deleterious effects of diversified employment relationships on employees’ professional efficacy, thereby enhancing their job performance.

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References


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