Conflict During Adolescence: Exploring Affect and Regulation as Predictors of Conflict

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Dedication

I would like to thank the following people and acknowledge their dedication and hard work to this project: First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Daniel Seguin for his patience, guidance, and moral support during this project. For, without his leadership, this research could not have taken place. I would also like to thank Dr. Anne MacCleave for her guidance in this program and inspiring my curiosity in—and desire to complete—educational research. I would also like to give my wholehearted thanks and love to my family for their support during this process. Without their support, I would have never dared to dream so large. Lastly, to my friends and colleagues: I would like to thank all of you for indulging me in all of the side conversations that have contributed to this research.

Abstract

This study investigated the correlations between affect and regulation to see if they act as viable predictors of how adolescent students (ages 12-15) approach conflict and handle conflict resolution. Affect, in this study, is composed of positive affect and negative affect, as outlined by Watson and Tellegen (1988). This study examined regulation through two component factors: attention and inhibitory control. Three different scales—and their subscales—were used to measure these factors. Statistical analysis of the data included T-tests, Pearson correlations, and multiple regressions. Results are discussed in terms of statistical correlations to conflict and showed affect had strong statistical significance in how adolescents approached conflict, whereas regulation did not have the same statistical weight. Results were interpreted through the use of current research in the fields of conflict, affect, and regulation.

*Keywords***:** conflict, conflict resolution, affect, negative affect, positive affect, regulation, attention, inhibitory control, correlation

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflict is inevitable because it occurs within and between all forms of life. For humans, conflict transcends all social-cultural boundaries, and is a source of internal and external suffering (Fourali, 2009). Despite the potentially harmful effects of conflict, the intensity and amount of conflicts that plague contemporary history—for example, the Gaza Strip, the war on terrorism, the tenuous political state of North Korea—continue to progress while there appears to be no resolutions in sight. Education, as an institution, has a key role to play in helping to transform the understanding of conflict and the procedures to deal with it.

One of Education's many objectives is to help people develop knowledge that will empower and transform. Educational professionals work with developing minds to help foster knowledge. Currently, education systems in North America function by following set goals or curriculum outcomes that help develop core skills in fundamental areas of knowledge: English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, and Health. Following pre-established curricula focuses on developing "products" of learning or students with certain academic knowledge and behaviors. Such an approach to education is short sighted; it does not help students to develop refined life skills, specifically when dealing with conflict.

Educators would benefit reviewing literature in the areas of conflict and conflict resolution. Of interest might be research on conflict that identifies different styles of conflict resolution (Kimsey & Fuller, 2003). Other areas associated with conflict are emotions or affect (Watson, Tellegin, & Clarke, 1988) and regulation (Rothbart et al., 1998; 2000).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine if conflict can be predicted from affect and regulation within a sample population of adolescents. Specifically, the intention of this study is to better understand conflict as it occurs in classrooms and how it may influence the day-to-day learning activities that occur in such settings. The focus on content knowledge, as opposed to life skills like conflict management, further perpetuates conflict. Helping educational professionals to identify and understand the predictors of conflict will help them to educate their students on how to develop knowledge about conflict. Having a better understanding of conflict will ameliorate knowledge development and relationships that contribute to developing safe learning environments.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it adds to the current research and understanding of conflict (resolution), affect, and regulation. Currently, there is a lack of research that examines the relationships between these variables, especially for the adolescent age group. Moreover, this study adds to the growing examination of bullying that occurs within schools.

Conflict

As inevitable as conflict is, it is difficult to define because it is dependent on context; it changes depending on the agents taking part as well as on surrounding environmental factors. Although conflict is difficult to define, I argue that conflict is a process; it is a process that promotes change within and between people. Researchers like Westlund et al. agree insofar as they claim that conflict follows a predictable pattern (Westlund, Horrowitz, Jansson, Ljungberg, 2008, p. 1535). As such, I present Gustav Freytag's model as a starting point from which to examine conflict (see figure 1). To help illustrate the notion of conflict as a process, I refer to

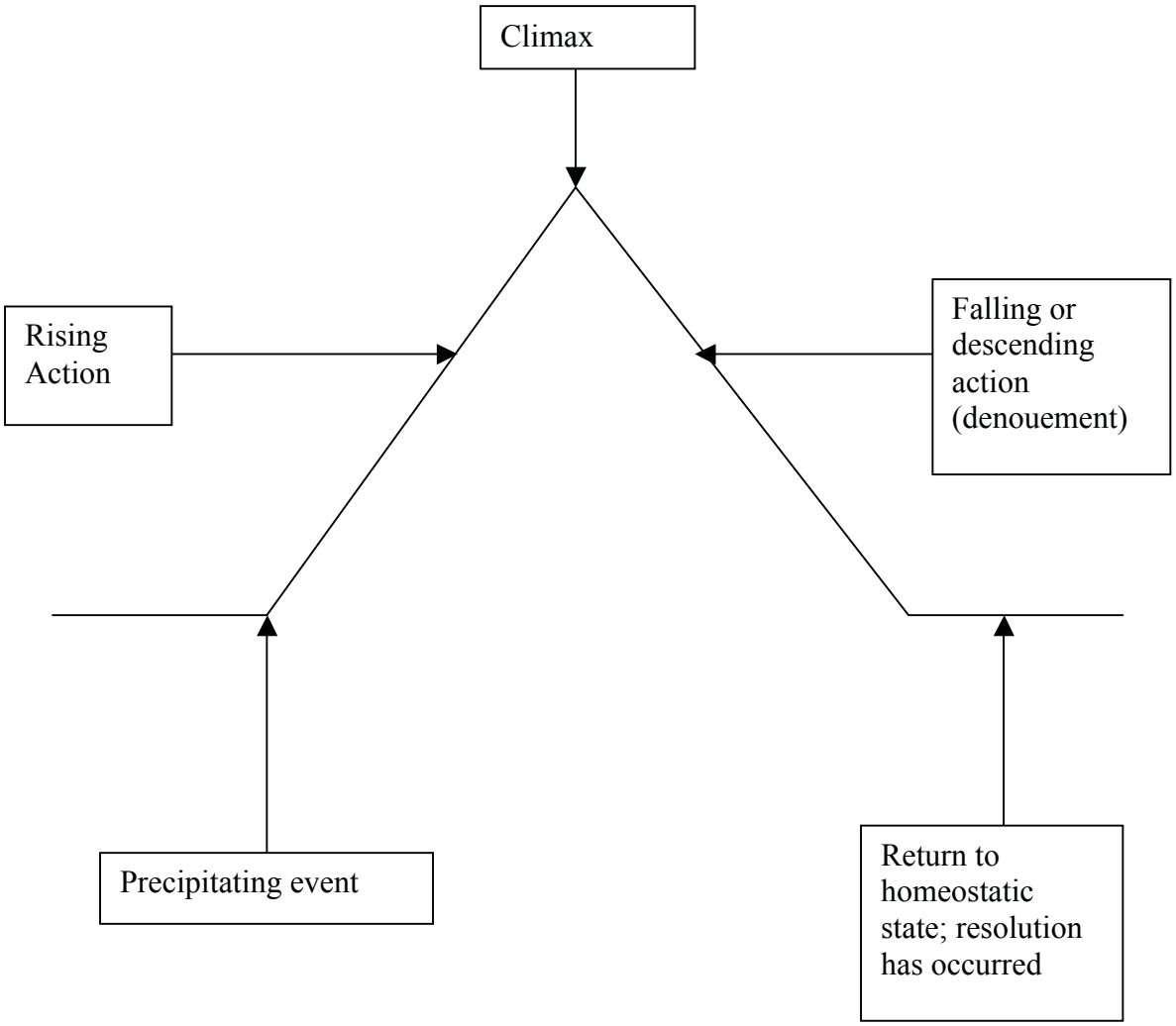

Figure 1: Diagram of Freytag's Model

Freytag's (1863) narrative plot schematic as described by M. H. Abrams (1999). Abrams states that Freytag "described the typical plot of a five-act play as a pyramidal shape, consisting of a rising action, climax, and falling action" (Abrams, 1999, p. 227).

Following Freytag's model, I propose conflict follows a similar structure: first there is a period of initiation or pre-conflict. The pre-conflict stage provides a base-line function, from which the participants will move. The base-line ends at the precipitating point, which is an initial factor that begins the conflict process. From the point of precipitation, there is a gradual build up of emotions. At this point, the oncoming conflict begins to reveal itself to any parties involved.

Following the pre-conflict stage, there is the initial stage. This stage is characterized by an escalation of emotion as the conflict progresses. Emotions build more quickly than in the pre-conflict or initiation stage. It is during this stage that the initial tones of the conflict are set and will loosely dictate how and when the resolution will occur. The importance of this stage cannot be underestimated because of its potential for harm.

Part of conflict's tendency to escalate is its ability to dehumanize its agents—those of whom it engages. When humans do not recognize each other's dignity as humans, it is easier to attack the "other" as some thing that is truly "Other." When we fail to recognize the other's humanity, it is easier to forget that the other has feelings, values, people for whom they care and have care about them. Instead, the other becomes an embodied "it," that can incite our basic "fight or flight" drives.

Next, there is a climax. Emotions are at their most intense during the climax. Abrams defines the climax as "an ascending sequence of importance" (p. 20). This stage is when the central stimuli become apparent to all parties. The climax stage influences the direction of the conflict—the potential for the conflict to continue unresolved or begin to enter the resolution

stage. The direction in which the conflict will proceed depends on whether or not all affecting variables are apparent to all parties involved. It is only when all active issues are revealed that the conflict can begin to be resolved.

The resolution stage follows the climax. The stimuli for the conflict begin to resolve while relational connections between parties begin to rebuild as emotions begin to stabilize. There is no guarantee that all of the emotions incited during the initial stages of conflict will resolve calmly; there may be some emotional residue that remains. Such residual emotions may be cause for continuing conflict if all parties involved do not address them.

Following the resolution state, the parties return to a homeostatic state. This state is not the same as the state prior to the conflict. The ontological position of the participants may be lateral in relation to where they began, or there may be an increase (or decrease) of positive or negative affect. The relationship of the participants has changed as a result of the conflict. When the conflict happens within a person's own psyche, the subject also experiences changes, be it in thoughts, beliefs, or behaviors.

Despite the utility of Freytag's model, Abrams notes there have been many criticisms made against it. Abrams claims that since the 1920's, many authors have attempted to exploit or rupture this model, stating:

> Since the 1920's, a number of writers of prose fiction and drama […] have deliberately designed their works to frustrate the expectations of chronological order, coherence, reliable narration, and resolution that the reader or auditor has formed by habituation to traditional plots; some writers have even attempted to dispense altogether with a recognizable plot. (p. 227).

Abrams implies that Freytag's model is not concrete; he notes that there is a fluidity to the paradigm if authors can manipulate, rupture, or transform traditional plot formations. Following

is a discussion of the polymorphic qualities of the model of conflict I present, which I use to examine its plasticity.

Conflict Resolution

It is important to note that an analysis of conflict would be incomplete without an analysis of conflict resolution. Currently, researchers (Bell & Song, 2005; Kimsey & Fuller, 2003; Gabrielidis, Ybarra, Dos Santos Peasrson, & Villareal, 1997) suggest that there are different behavioral approaches or "styles" to conflict resolution. Bell and Song demarcate each style according to whether the subject(s) has a high concern for self or a high concern for the other. The self/other dyad becomes a sliding scale.

Aggressive Style. The first style that Bell and Song discuss is a dominating or aggressive strategy. Bell and Song characterize this strategy in terms of a zero-sum perspective; only one party can "win" the conflict, not both. The term "win"—and its implied opposite, "lose"—highlights a competitive, binary mode of thinking. Such behavior continues conflict since it does not actively seek to resolve the other's feelings regarding the situation; thus, the aggressive approach to conflict resolution remains high on the self side of the scale, with no concern for the "other." Bell and Song claim, "When one party is perceived to be in the wrong and responsible for a conflict, the conflict tends to be seen as a zero-sum prospect in which resolution would require unilateral concession from the responsible party" (2005, p. 33). This is a self-centered style of approaching conflict resolution because the focus is on the self with the only consideration given to the other is his or her role in causing the conflict.

A person who approaches conflict in an aggressive style may have a brief initial or pre-conflict phase, choosing to address the problem head-on. The rising action is short in duration because of the quick, intense escalation of emotional energies (see figure 2). In the initiator's

mind (see DiPaola, Roloff, & Peters, 2010), the other is clearly responsible for the conflict; therefore, little time needs to be given to analyze the situation.

Since the aggressive style is a self-centered approach, the conflict may appear to deescalate, particularly for the one person who "wins." However, for the person who "loses," the conflict continues; therefore, the conflict never truly becomes resolved so long as one person "loses." Referring back to the model (see figure 1), the conflict does not have the pyramidal shape. I hypothesized that it is possible to reach a "breaking point"—a moment in which a person's resources are so drained that the body and mind collapses. There is a sudden drop in arousal as the person experiences a form of "reset" prior to entering into another series of rising actions and plateaus (see figure 3).

Instead of equating indefinite to *ad infinitum*, I propose a different meaning: inability to clearly see or predict an end. In this sense, the aggressive model of conflict does allow conflict to continue to build indefinitely. Because the original conflict does not resolve, any new conflicts begin at already heightened states of arousal. Each succeeding conflict will build on the last until the biological limits are reached and the "reset" occurs (see figure 3).

Problem Solving. The second style of conflict resolution that Bell and Song (2005) describe is an integrating or problem-solving style. According to Bell and Song, this strategy is "characterized by a desire to achieve mutually beneficial goals and the maximization of outcomes for both parties" (p. 32). This style ranks high on concern for both self and other. People who demonstrate this mode of conflict resolution are less likely to attribute blame to one particular party. Instead, they are likely to examine the existing problem(s) and work with any other party(s) to reach a mutually benefiting resolution.

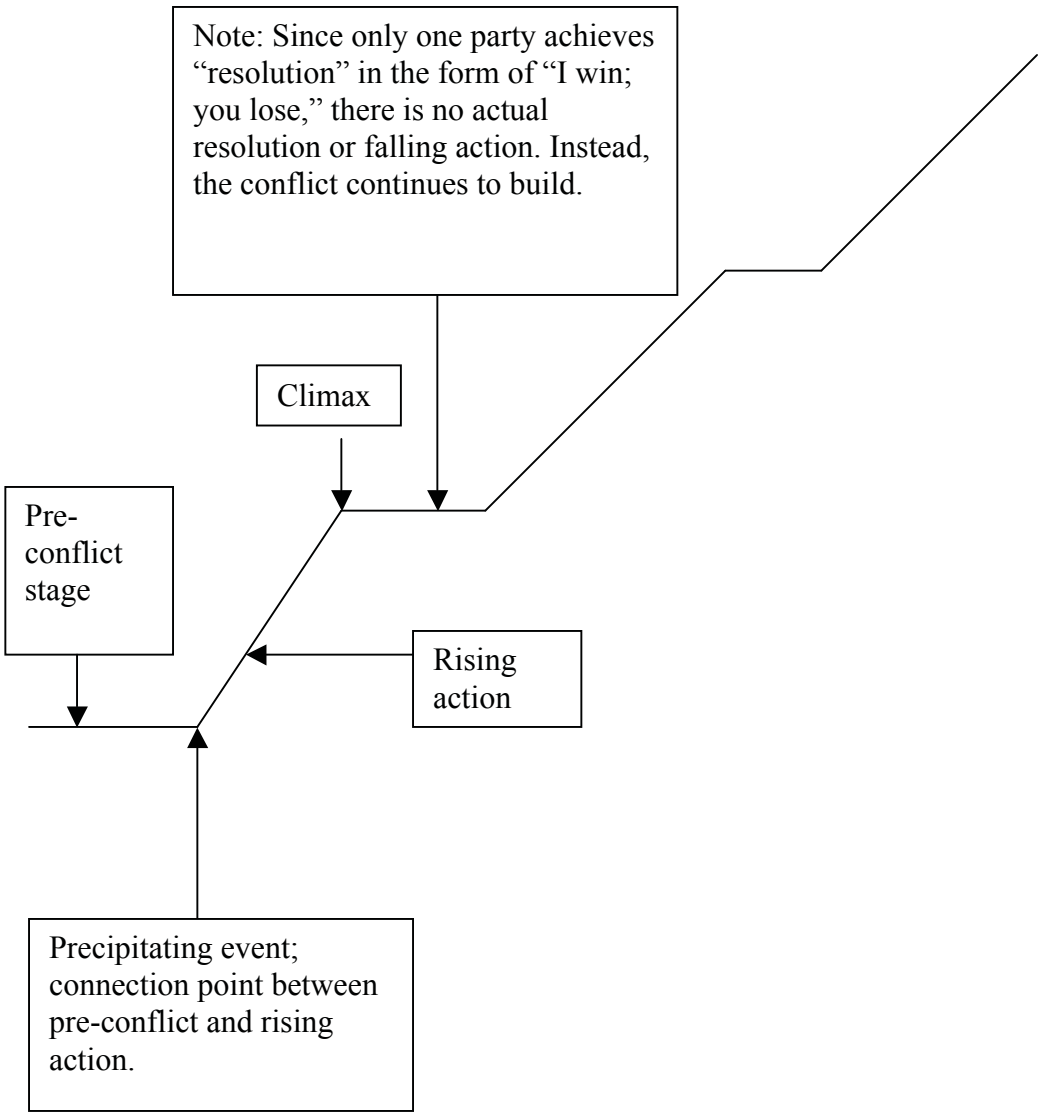

Figure 2: Manipulation of Freytag's model representing an aggressive approach to conflict resolution

Of all styles of resolution that Bell and Song present, the problem-solving style is the one that will most likely resemble Freytag's pyramidal shape. Blame is replaced by concern, and since both parties display equal concern for the other's well-being, the conflict process is likely to be regulated; the rising action is less likely to be as drastic or intense as compared to the aggressive model. Likewise, there is an increased likelihood that there will be a denouement following the climax as the parties work to resolve the conflict. This style of conflict resolution is characterized by compromise because both parties partake in a "give and take" approach to achieve mutually acceptable outcomes (p. 32). This style of conflict resolution achieves more of a resolution than the aggressive approach since both parties have the others' concerns, even if it is only a moderate consideration. However, the resolution may not be as definitive as the original model (see figure 1) because the compromise that characterizes this approach suggests that not all needs are met. This may be reason for residual conflict to continue to exist.

Compromising Style. If the conflicted parties demonstrate moderate concern for both self and other's interest, then they demonstrate a compromising style to conflict resolution. This style of conflict resolution achieves more of a resolution than the aggressive approach since both parties have the others' concerns, even if it is only a moderate consideration. However, the resolution may not be as definitive as the original model (see figure 1) because the compromise that the characterizes this appraoch suggests that not all needs are met. This may be reason for residual conflict to continue to exist.

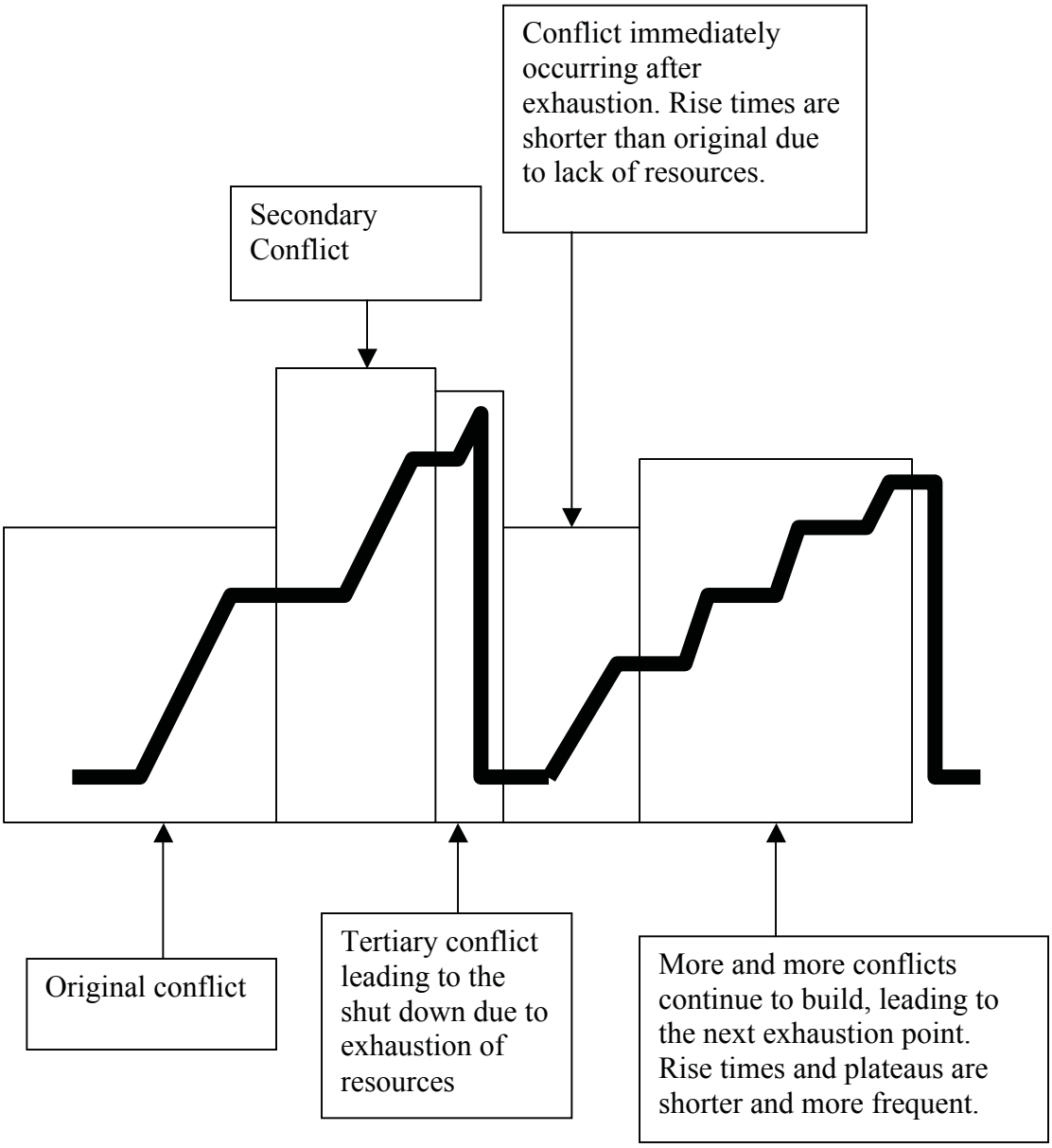

Figure 3: Manipulation of Freytag's model to represent an indefinite conflict

Conflict and Affect

It is necessary to understand the relationship between conflict and emotion because conflict inherently involves emotion (Bell & Song, 2005, p. 31). However, to integrate this research into a larger body of knowledge and understanding, I will refer to *affect* instead of referring to "emotions." Affect refers to a state a person may experience from an interaction with an object, another person, or situation (Duncan & Barrett, 2007). It also refers to a biological base that directs an individual's abilities for experiencing and expressing emotional processes; therefore, affect is universal insofar as it is biologically based. This construct is in contrast to "emotions" since the term "emotion" connotes social interpretations or constructions of affect.

Researchers (e.g. Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) indicate that there are two forms of affect that work in tandem: positive affect and negative affect. Watson et al. (1988) describe positive affect as "[reflecting] the extent to which a person feels enthusiastic, active, and alert" (Watson et al., 1988, p. 1063). Someone who exhibits a high level of energy and enthusiasm demonstrates a high rating on a positive affect scale. Conversely, someone who rates low on a positive affect scale is characterized by sadness, lethargy, lack of energy, and motivation.

Running parallel to the positive affect scale is the negative affect scale. Someone who rates high on the negative affect scale is characterized by "a general dimension of subjective distress and unpleasurable engagements that [consist of] aversive mood states, including anger, contempt, disgust, guilt, fear, and nervousness" (p. 1063). The predisposition to negative emotional experiences continues even when negative external stimuli or stressors are not present (Lagace-Seguin, 2001). In contrast, if someone rates low on the negative affect scale, they demonstrate "a state of calmness and serenity" (p. 1063).

Currently, researchers (Duncan & Barrett, 2007) distinguish between general affect and core affect. The term *core affect* assumes that there is an inherent baseline of emotional processes within an individual; however, the baseline will change and develop over an individual's lifespan as new patterns of thought and behavior are learned. Duncan and Barrett (2007) describe core affect as, "a basic, psychologically primitive state that can be described by two psychological properties: hedonic valence (pleasure/displeasure) and arousal (activation/sleepy)" (Duncan & Barrett, 2007, p. 1185). According to Duncan and Barrett, core affect is directly connected with humans' fundamental psychological processes of pleasure/pain and fight/flight. They liken core affect to a barometer that measures an individual's relationship to the environment at any given moment in time (p. 1187).

In accordance with Duncan and Barrett (2007), the notion of core affect is an underlying assumption in this research. Following their lead, I assume that every person is born with a certain degree of affect (both positive and negative), which will develop over the life span, given one's particular experiences. However, despite my predisposition to agree with the idea of core affect, this study measured general affect, such as Watson, Clark, and Tellegen describe in their 1988 study.

The reason that this study measured general affect—as opposed to core affect—is because studying general affect requires fewer resources than studying core affect. To study core affect would demand a longitudinal study, which would require a constant source of time, money, and other resources to complete. This study follows a cross-sectional design; it will account for the same variables in multiple population groups. A cross-sectional design lessens the strain on resources while still presenting a comprehensive picture of affect and related variables.

Conflict, Temperment, and Regulation

The last variable involved in this study is regulation. The terms *affect* and *regulation* are discussed frequently in tandem in the psychological studies of personality. Although the general construct of personality is not a central inquiry in this study, it is useful to examine some of its related variables—namely affect and regulation—to understand how conflict occurs within and amongst individuals. However, prior to discussing how regulation operates, I will discuss *temperament* and its relation to regulation.

Currently, researchers (Rothbart, Ahadi, & Evans, 2000) define temperament as the foundation on which experience builds, and one of its outcomes is the development of the adult personality. They claim that temperament is based in biology, stating, "temperament arises from our genetic endowment" (Rothbart et al., 2000, p. 122). Temperament, however, is not one thing or process. According to Rothbart et al., temperament is dynamic, composed of "individual differences in reactivity and self-regulation" (p. 122).

Reactivity, according to Rothbart et al., "refers to the exciteablility, responsivity, or arousability of the behavioral and physiological systems of the organism" (p. 123). Rothbart et al. demarcate reactivity as an individual's predisposition to becoming aroused by various stimuli that exist in both internal and external environments. If an individual is constantly in a state of arousal, then they risk "sensory overload" where the demand on their physiological and psychological resources is too great; therefore, the individual's resources may become depleted limiting any ability to "cope" with the incoming stimulus (see Khunle et al., 2010, p. 252). Regulation, therefore, provides the balance to reactivity.

Regulation refers to the processes by which one monitors and controls his or her own behaviors or emotions. According to Rothbart et al., "self-regulation refers to neural and

behavioral processes functioning to modulate [any] underlying reactivity" (p. 123) Regulation is a metacognitive process insofar that it allows one to reflect upon the emotional processes as they occur. Currently, research proposes two forms of regulation: emotional regulation and behavioral regulation. For the purposes of this research, I will approach regulation as a function of emotion. The choice to approach regulation as an emotional or affective function is based on the premise that emotions are *a priori* to behaviors—behaviors develop out of emotional responses.

Regulation is important to conflict processes because it will limit or regulate how the conflict manifests itself. Referring back to Freytag's model (see figure 1), regulation will influence all parts of the model: it will influence the gradient of the rising action. This is to say that regulation will keep escalating emotions in check. Without regulation, there is a possibility of moving from homeostasis directly to the climax of conflict without any gradual climb. The problem with this sort of situation is two fold: first, there would be no distinction between homeostasis and climax of emotional reactivity. A person existing in this state would not be able to differentiate between appropriate moments for emotional display and emotional inactivity. A person could be over-reactive during inopportune moments, while being under-reactive or indifferent in moments when emotional energies would be expected or needed. Secondly, the movement between climax—or, heightened emotional reactivity—and homeostasis could switch at any given movement. A person without regulatory capabilities would be quick to anger and quick to please; their personality and resulting behaviors would be unpredictable.

Referring back to Freytag's model (see figure 1), regulation also works on the denouement or descending action. Regulation prevents a person from instantaneously moving between the climax back to homeostasis—or, reduced emotional reactivity. The declining gradient acts as a buffer zone while moving away from heightened states of arousal (i.e. climax

of conflict). If a person moved directly between climax to a state of lesser emotional reactivity without a gradual come-down, he or she would risk "crashing"—experiencing an instantaneous depletion of resources.

Rothbart et al. Model of Temperament Reactivity

Freytag's model provides a point of departure for examining regulation because it follows closely to a theoretical model that Rothbart et al. propose for temperament reactivity (Rothbart, Ahadi, & Evans, 2000; see figure 4). When represented schematically, it is possible to note the similarities between the two models. Both models share the same pyramidal shape with the climax or peak intensity occurring at the very top. Both models share a rise time or rising action.

The most significant differences between the two models are that Rothbart et al. account for the overall rise from equilibrium. Their model accounts for the overall intensity of reactivity, whereas Freytag's model does not take this into consideration. Also, Rothbart et al.'s model looks at the *area* between the climax and return to homeostasis whereas Freytag looks specifically at the de-escalation from the climax. Freytag's model contrasts Rothbart et al.'s paradigm of temperament reactivity insofar as Rothbart et al. clearly link their model to biological processes: from various systems (e.g. behavioral, endocrine, and autonomic) to physiological responses (e.g. increased heart rate, motor activity etc.). Therefore, Rothbart et al.'s model is more concrete insofar as it has biological basis. Although I recognize the biological basis for conflict and conflict resolution, I propose that there is also utility in regarding the model of conflict offered in this research as a fluid model, capable of changing over time and context.

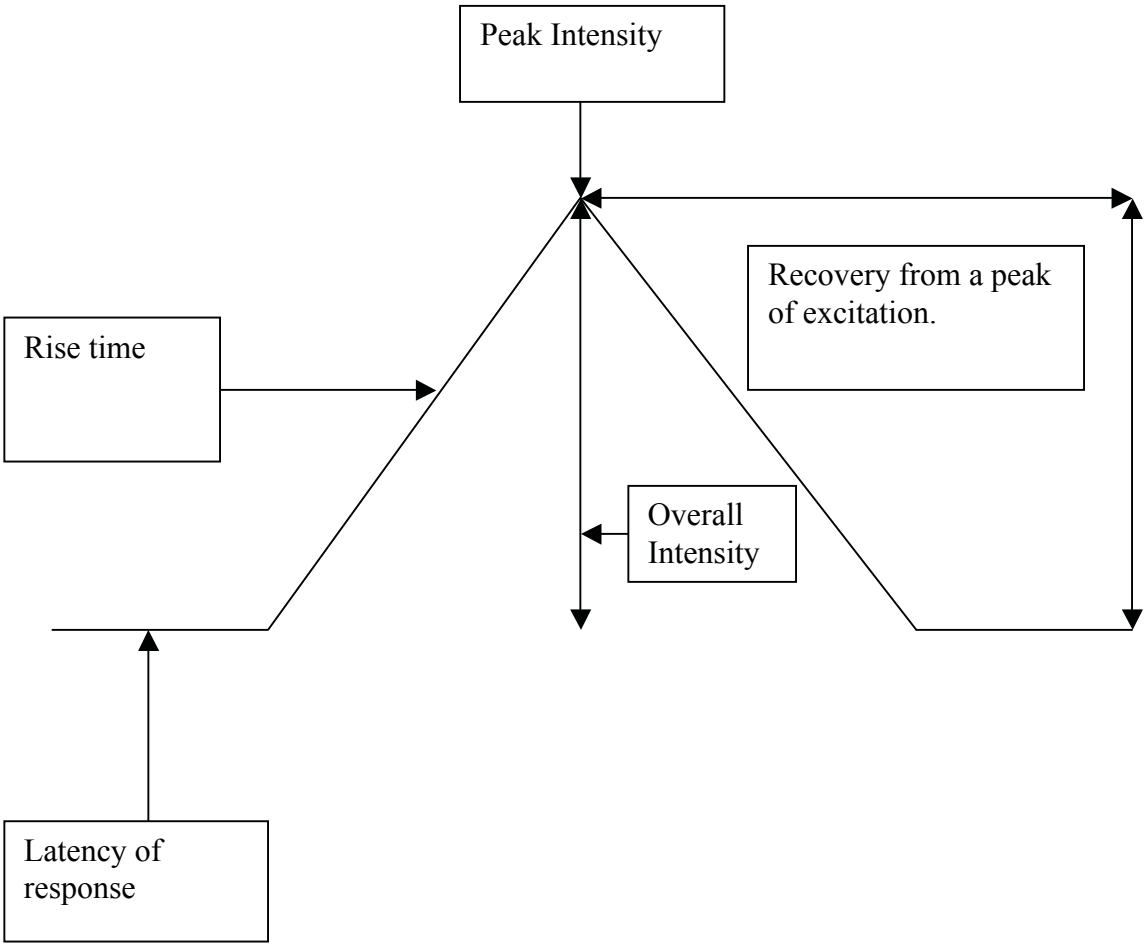

Figure 4: Rothbart, Ahadi, and Evans' Model of Temperment Reactivity

CHAPTER 2:

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This study included 99 adolescent student participants, between the ages of 12-15 years. These junior high school students were enrolled in an accredited junior high school in the Valley Regional School Board (VRSB) (Nova Scotia) and in New Brunswick's District 2 School Board during the 2012-2013 academic school year. Participants were recruited on a volunteer basis, with the permission of parents or legal guardians and school officials. Prior to taking part in the study, participants were required to provide an informed consent form that was signed by both the participants themselves and their legal guardians.

Procedure

All measures and procedures in this study were approved by the Mount Saint Vincent University Research Ethics Board for research involving human subjects. Prior to conducting the research, the participating school boards (i.e VRSB and District 2) were contacted to gain permission to conduct the research. Following approval of the school boards, each of the principals from the chosen schools were contacted to gain permission to enter their respective schools and contact teachers to gain permission to conduct the study with their students. Students were given an introduction letter to describe the research project and an informed consent form to bring home to their respective guardians before the research began. Both students and legal guardians signed the informed consent form.

Once informed consent was returned, I entered the participants' classrooms to inform students how to complete each of the scales/questionnaires. To maintain confidentiality, participants were instructed not to write their names on the questionnaires; participants were

identified solely according to a randomized identification number. Informed consent forms and questionnaires were collected in separate envelopes and sealed within the presence of the participants. All questionnaires were completed in a quiet classroom setting at the start of a class (e.g. English Language Arts, Personal Development and Relationships, Social Studies, etc) chosen between the lead researcher and the supervising principal responsible for the participants. The questionnaires took approximately one (1) hour to complete.

If they chose, participants, legal guardians, and/or school (board) staff are able to obtain a summary of the findings once the study is complete by filling a request for information form (see Appendix J).

The identity of every participant was protected during this research. Regarding consent, each participant was allocated a randomized number to which is the only way participants are referred. The allocation of randomized numbers was clearly discussed in the introduction letter that was sent home. All records are saved to a locked and password protected computer. All hardcopy documents are filed in a locked cabinet in the supervising professor's office. No individual scores are—nor will be—referenced in the publication or any other release of study findings. The lead researcher will continue to have access to the data collected from the participants. The supervising professor, Dr. Daniel Seguin, will also have access to any and all data collected. Data will be retained for as long as it remains useful for further work regarding this initial study. If follow-up studies occur, findings from this study may prove useful for drawing other analysis. Once again, all electronic data will be saved on a locked and password protected computer, whereas all hardcopy information will be destroyed by using a paper shredder to ensure participants' anonymity.

Further Ethical Considerations

The safety and well being of participants was—and continues to be—a central concern for this study. Under the guidance of their legal guardians and teachers, students chose for themselves whether or not they wanted to participate in the study. It was clearly communicated with everyone involved that students were not to incur any form of punishment if they chose not to participate. Likewise, it was also communicated that students would not be rewarded outside of a "thank you" for participating. Communication occurred in the forms of letters sent home to legal guardians, followed by face-to-face contact between the principal researcher and research participants prior to beginning the research.

Regarding the chosen measures, the scales chosen for this study appeared safe to use with young adolescents. The EATQ-R and CONFLICTALK have been developed specifically to target young audiences. As such, the language used on these scales was appropriate for my proposed research participants. Secondly, these scales did not ask personal information such as traumatic events, family finances, or religious values. Lastly, these scales and PANAS have been previously peer reviewed and psychometrically tested; therefore, students who chose to participate were not submitted to any measures or procedures that carry unknown risks.

Lastly, an attempt was made to establish proper safety protocols that students could follow should something within the research arouse difficult feelings or emotions. Contact with the school's administration was maintained following data collection. In addition, students, legal guardians, and school faculty had any necessary contact information for all parties from Mount Saint Vincent University who were involved in the guidance and supervision of this research project.

Measures

CONFLICTALK. CONFLICTALK was the scale by which conflict coping styles amongst early adolescents were measured. The CONFLICTALK was developed specifically to address adolescent populations. Kimsey and Fuller (2003) argue that existing models of conflict and conflict resolution are adult centric. These established tools lose their validity and reliability if applied to younger populations because, as Kimsey and Fuller note (2003), they were constructed with an adult audience in mind; and therefore, such pre-established scales use an adult language (Kimsey & Fuller 2003, p. 70). Kimsey and Fuller argue that using a scale that uses adult language is "disingenuous; it is an authoritative turn-off" (p. 70). Implicit in Kinsey and Fuller's claim is that for accurate and authentic assessment to occur, you must give adolescents an opportunity to report their ideas in their own language. As such, Kimsey and Fuller developed CONFLICTALK using adolescent language in hopes to create a genuine assessment piece.

CONFLICTALK consists of three subscales to measure adolescent conflict resolution strategies: self-focus, problem-focus, and other-focus (Kimsey & Fuller, 2003). Kimsey and Fuller describe *self-focus* as being self-centered. Participants in the conflict want their own way. This approach to conflict is aggressive and is unlikely to achieve a resolution (p. 71). Secondly, Kimsey and Fuller describe *problem-focus* as showing concern for the cause of the conflict; participants are interested in finding the best solution while working cooperatively (p. 71). Of the three forms of conflict resolution that Kimsey and Fuller describe, the problem-focus approach is the most likely to achieve resolution. Lastly, Kimsey and Fuller characterize the *other-focus* approach as a passive approach. Parties involved in this approach to conflict believe that conflict is bad and are concerned only with the other's happiness.

The scale presents subjects with eighteen phrases or statements that might be expressed in a conflict situation. Students are asked to rate each phrase on a scale of 1 to 5 (Likert-type scale), indicating that they "never say things like this" to "almost always say things like this." These ratings are then calculated and scored to indicate the subjects' habitual patterns of conflict management.

The demarcation of various conflict management styles parallels Bell and Song's work. Whereas Kimsey and Fuller describe three types of conflict management styles (p.71), Bell and Song describe five different styles. Bell and Song list their models of conflict management as follows: dominating or forceful, integrating or problem-solving, compromising, obliging, and avoiding. Although it appears that Bell and Song's models are more comprehensive for analyzing conflict processes, there are reasons to choose Kimsey and Fuller's models for the purposes of this study: first, Kimsey and Fuller developed CONFLICTALK specifically for an adolescent population. Bell and Song derived their model(s) of conflict management from a conflict scale developed to assess organizational conflict management styles (Rahim & Magner 1994). The primary audience of the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI) is adults. Following Kimsey and Fuller's assumptions, the RCOI would not be an authentic measurement for adolescents because it uses adult/authoritarian language and not adolescent language.

Furthermore, CONFLICTALK is a current measure (2003), whereas the copyright for the RCOI is 1983. The target audience and the recent publication date make the CONFLICTALK more suitable given the design of this study. Lastly, I chose to use the CONFLICTALK inventory over the RCOI—as reported by Bell and Song—to help keep operating costs to a minimum. The RCOI is only available by purchased order from current copyright owners, whereas the CONFLICTALK is published within the public domain.

Kimsey and Fuller report that the psychometrics for CONFLICTALK appear stable, particularly when used with children in both the elementary and junior high levels. According to Kimsey and Fuller, "Construct validity for students in grades six, seven, and eight appears stable with just under 55 percent of the variance accounted. […] the instrument appears to be valid and reliable" (p. 76). The solid psychometric properties of CONFLICTALK made the scale ideal, particularly because the ages of the research participants ranged between 12-15 years old—which corresponded with the age range of the populations used to develop of the psychometric properties for CONFLICTALK.

Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS). Of the three scales proposed for this study, the PANAS is the oldest and longest standing. Its goal is to measure the degrees to which people exhibit both positive and negative affect. The scale consists of twenty words that describe different feelings or emotions. Participants were asked to rate each word according to how they feel in general—as opposed to how they feel during a particular moment. Beside each word, participants identified how prevalent a particular feeling or emotion is in their lives by writing "1" (very little) to "5" (extremely). Some example items from the PANAS include: interested, distressed excited, upset, strong, guilty, scared, hostile, enthusiastic, and proud.

According to Watson, Clark, and Tellegen, the PANAS demonstrates both valid and reliable psychometric properties. To measure the PANAS' reliability and validity, Tellegen et al. used a test-retest model where they surveyed college students. Tellegen et al. claim, "these 10-item scales are internally consistent and have excellent convergent and discriminant correlations […] They also demonstrate appropriate stability" (Tellegen et al., 1988, p. 1069). Given that (core) affect is biologically based (see Duncan & Barrett, 2007), people of any age should be able to demonstrate their affective tendencies using the PANAS. Furthermore, to view the

PANAS in light of Kimsey and Fuller's arguments—that scales should be constructed using the language of the target audience—I argue that the PANAS is equally effective to use with the target population of 12-15 year olds because the wording of the scale uses single words; the single terms that the PANAS uses should not evoke meaning that requires explanation because the scales' meanings are "too young" or "too old."

Early Adolescent Temperament Questionnaire-Revised (EATQ-R). The *Early Adolescent Temperament Questionnaire-Revised (EATQ-R)* contains 12 sub-scales. Not all of these scales pertained to this study of conflict, affect, and regulation; however, certain sub-scales lend themselves to the current study. The subscales chosen for this study are: *attention* and *inhibitory control*. Rothbart defines the two subscales as follows: attention is the capacity to focus attention as well as to shift attention when desired; inhibitory control is the capacity to plan, and to suppress inappropriate responses.

The attention scale was used to measure students' abilities to engage with learning activities when other stimuli may interfere. Some examples of questionairre statements from the attention scale are:

- I find it hard to shift gears when I go from one class to another at school.
- When trying to study, I have difficulty tuning out background noise and concentrating.
- I am good at keeping track of several different things that are happening around me.
- I tend to get in the middle of one thing, then go off and do something else.

These items demonstrate a student's ability to focus on the task at hand without becoming distracted from surrounding stimuli. For the purposes of this study, "surrounding stimuli" means any social, emotional or affective, physiological, and psychological stimuli that detract a student's attention from learning activities or school work. The student can encounter such

disruptive stimuli both inside and outside of the classroom. There are differences between strengths of severity for various stimuli; thus, some stimuli will require more psycho-emotional and physical resources from the adolescent in order to be resolved than others. On one hand, there are temporary or short-term stimuli, such as missing breakfast, having an argument with a sibling, having a cold, to name a few.

On the other side of the spectrum exist more extreme disruptions to learning: severe poverty, living in an abusive or dysfunctional family, severe illness, and so forth. All of these factors pose conflicts to learning insofar as they redirect necessary mental, emotional, and physical resources to deal with the problems at hand. The greater the problem, the more resources must be directed away from learning. Likewise, the greater the frequency a particular conflict or problem occurs, the less resources students have to use to focus on other things and activities, like learning (Gross, 1999). The attention scale should suggest students' abilities to redirect resources onto a particular focus—such as learning—rather than have their energies taken away by specific conflicts or problems.

The inhibitory control subscale is the primary scale for measuring regulation tendencies within students. Questionnaire statements pertaining to the inhibitory control subscale include the following:

- When someone tells me to stop doing something, it is easy for me to stop.
- The more I try to stop myself from doing something I shouldn't, the more likely I am to do it.
- It's easy for me to keep a secret.
- I can stick with my plans and goals.

Hypotheses

The central hypothesis that underlies this research was that there are definite correlations between conflict, affect, and emotional regulation. I proposed that conflict follows specific patterns or pathways (see figures 1-5), which in turn are influenced according to affective and regulatory styles. Specifically, I aimed to examine the correlates between conflict, affect, and regulation as follows:

1) Anyone who scores high on the positive affect scale and low on emotional regulators will tend to engage in conflict. Their approach to conflict will follow the aggressive style, which Bell and Song describe (2005).
2) Anyone who scores high on the negative affect scale and high on the emotional regulation scale will handle conflict situations with relative ease and little emotional distress. Providing the negative affect does not make them apathetic to their conflict situations and their partners in the conflict, those who fall under the high negative affect/high emotional regulation matrix will be able to focus on the problem at hand and work at solving it while maintaining their social connections with their partner(s) in tact.
3) It is possible to view the model borrowed from Freytag in an inverse position; hypothetically speaking, if any person who is high on the negative affect scale and low on the positive affect scale, then the pyramidal shape of the Freytag's model could become inversed (see figure 5). This inversion would indicate someone who is largely indifferent and/or apathetic to the conflict with which they engage. Instead of a rising action, participants who enter into the inverse conflicted situation would encounter a denouement first instead of a rising action. Once these participants reach the lowest

point—an anti-climax—then they would be faced with rising out of the conflict.

Participants must work through a rising action prior to finishing or exiting the conflict.

This last hypothesis runs counter to what Bell and Song argue. According to Bell and Song:

> Research on the effects of mood or affect in conflict has generally found that positive affect is associated with prosocial cognitions and behavior, and cooperative or integrating strategies [… whereas] negative affect may lead to mere competitive and exploitive conflict behaviors, potentially producing inefficient joint outcomes. (Bell & Song, 2005, p. 34)

Bell and Song hypothesize that someone who rates high on a negative affect scale will be more likely to exhibit a pattern of conflict similar to figure 1 or, in a more extreme scenario, exhibit an aggressive approach (figure 4). I hypothesized that someone who rates high on a negative affect scale will demonstrate a pattern similar to figure 5; they will ignore or otherwise avoid the conflict at hand. This is not to say that people who rate high on a positive affect scale will always approach a conflict in a manner similar to figure 1. It is possible that people who have high positive affect may attempt to avoid or ignore a conflict. However, I see such people resorting to this manner of progressing through conflict as a last resort used for self-preservation purposes rather than a habitual pattern of dealing with conflict.

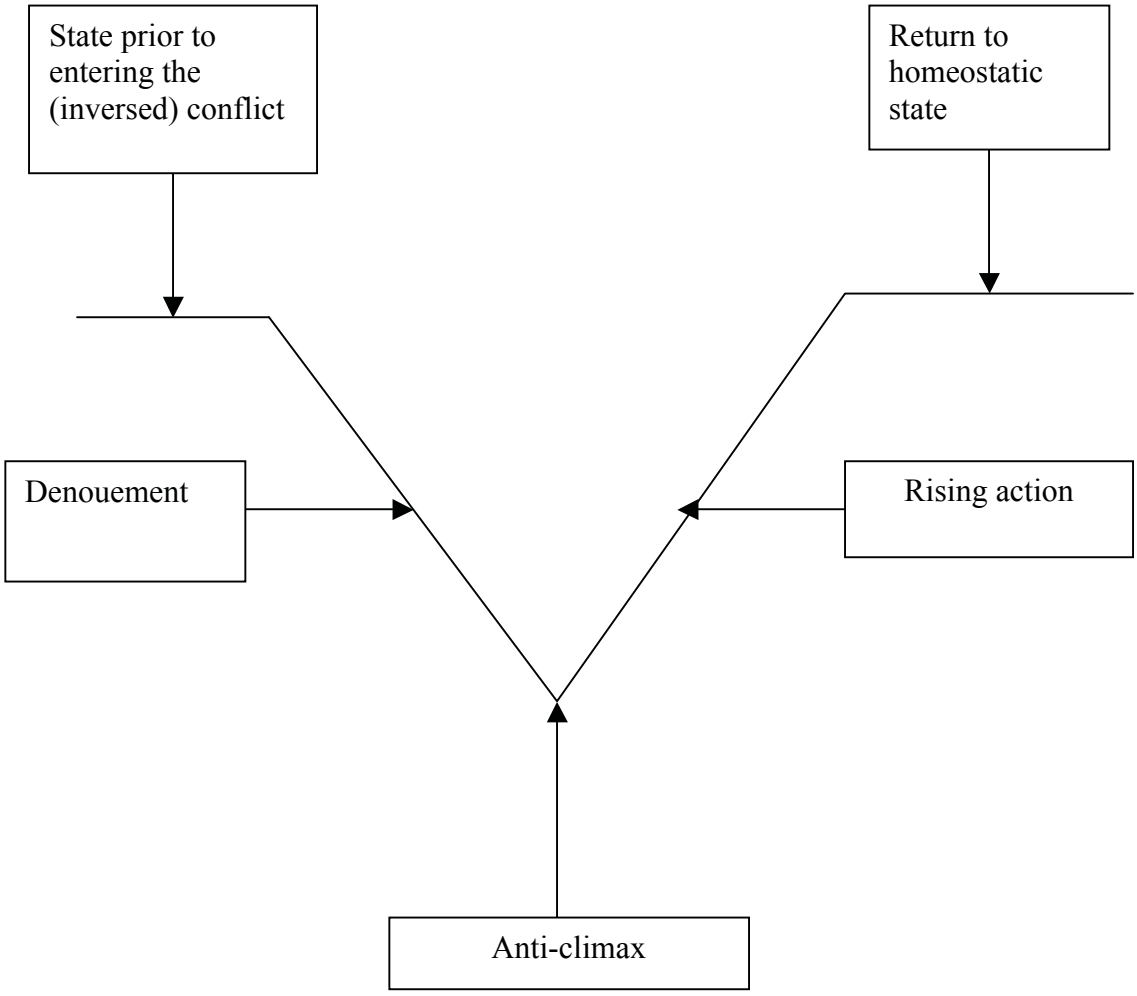

Figure 5: Manipulation of Freytag's Model: An Inverse Model of Conflict

Statistical Analysis

Assumptions. All assumptions pertaining to correlational design and statistics were examined. Assumptions were tested to examine whether multiple regression and Pearson correlations were appropriate for this research design. All assumptions were satisfied. These assumptions included linearity, homogeneity of variance, the existence of a normal distribution, and an examination of outliers.

Means and Standard Deviations. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for perceived conflict management styles and personality variables such as affect—positive and negative—and regulation (see Table 1). The means of different variables and males and females within the same variable were compared.

T-Tests. T-tests were used to compare the means of the differences between sexes for each variable.

Pearson Correlations. Pearson correlations were used to examine the associations between all variables. Pearson correlations were computed for all paired combinations of conflict styles and personality variables (affect and regulation). There appeared to be no multicollinearity based on the correlational values.

Multiple Regression. Multiple regression was used to determine the best predictors of conflict resolution styles based on personality traits (affect and regulation). Separate regressions were run to predict locus of control from the perceived conflict and personality variables.

For this research population, all three scales and their subscales were checked for reliability and were found to be in an acceptable range.

CHAPTER 3:

RESULTS

This section represents the data analysis in the following order: means and standard deviations, t-tests, correlations, and lastly, multiple regressions to answer questions posed earlier in this study.

Data analysis began with the means and standard deviations for each of the subscales. Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for each of the questionnaire sub-scales: CONFLICTALK, the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS), and the Early Adolescent Temperament Questionnaire-Revised (EATQ-R). The information is broken down according to male and female values. A t-test was run to examine sex difference on all variables. One significant sex difference was found for self-focus ($t(72)=2.23$, $p=0.03$); however, no other significant sex differences were found. See table 1 for means and standard deviations.

Next, correlations between all variables were run (see table 2). Eight statistically significant correlations were discovered. As indicated in table two, significant correlations occurred between selected conflict resolution styles. Other-focus and self-focus were significantly correlated to each other at the 0.05 level ($p>0.05$). A stronger correlation existed between problem-focus and self-focus, but this correlation was a negative one. That is, as self-focus increases, use of problem-focus decreases.

Four statistically significant correlations occurred between affect and conflict resolution styles. Specifically, positive affect was positively correlated to problem-focus and negatively correlated to negative focus ($p>0.01$). Negative affect was significantly correlated to both self and other focus. Both of these correlations reached the 0.01 level of significance.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and t-test.

Variable	Sex	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value
Self-focus	M	34	2.00	0.75	2.23*
	F	65	1.63	0.82	
Other-focus	M	34	2.31	0.74	0.18
	F	65	2.28	0.68	
Problem-Focus	M	34	2.98	1.09	-0.67
	F	65	3.13	1.00	
Positive	M	34	3.69	0.61	1.68
	F	65	3.48	0.58	
Negative	M	34	1.99	0.57	-1.63
	F	65	2.21	0.79	
Attention	M	34	2.85	0.72	0.52
	F	65	2.77	0.71	
Inhibitory Control	M	34	3.25	0.40	0.51
	F	65	3.21	0.42	

* $p<0.05$

Table 2: Pearson Correlation

	Self-Focus	Other-Focus	Problem-Focus	Positive	Negative	Attention	Inhibitory Control
Self-Focus	1						
Other-Focus	0.256*	1					
Problem-Focus	-0.364**	.004	1				
Positive	-0.162	-0.297**	0.270**	1			
Negative	0.301**	0.285**	0.040	-0.141	1		
Attention	0.018	0.216*	0.062	-0.018	0.159	1	
Inhibitory-Control	-0.062	-0.142	0.149	0.147	-0.218*	0.031	1

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

Two significant relationships at the 0.05 level were found between regulation variables (attention and inhibitory control) and negative affect. Compared to the other significant correlations, these variables exhibited significant correlations that were fewer in number and weaker in magnitude.

Multiple regressions were completed in order to discern whether problem-focus, self-focus, or other-focus coping styles can be predicted by inhibitory control, attention, and positive and negative affect. First, the multiple regression for self-focus coping was statistically significant ($F(4,98)=2.8$, $p=0.03$, $r^2adj=0.07$).

The individual significances of the predictor variables were: positive ($t(98)=-1.25$, $p=0.214$), negative ($t(98)=2.87$, $p=0.005$), attention ($t(98)=-0.321$, $p=0.749$), and inhibitory control ($t(98)=0.20$, $p=0.838$). The multiple regression for problem focus coping was statistically significant ($F(4, 98)=2.6$, $p=0.044$, $r^2adj=0.06$). The individual significances of the predictor variables were: positive ($t(98)=-2.66$, $p=0.009$), negative ($t(98)=0.96$, $p=0.340$), attention ($t(98)=0.47$, $p=0.638$), inhibitory control ($t(98)=-1.29$, $p=0.202$). The multiple regression for other focus coping was statistically significant ($F(4,98)=5.3$, $p=0.01$, $r^2adj=0.15$). The individual significances of the predictor variables were: positive ($t(98)=-2.69$, $p=0.009$), negative ($t(98)=2.11$, $p=0.037$), attention ($t(98)=1.91$, $p=0.059$), inhibitory control ($t(98)=-0.68$, $p=0.497$).

CHAPTER 4:

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

This discussion section will begin by exploring the study's original hypothesis. Following an examination of the hypotheses, this discussion will explore related ideas that have developed over the course this research and data analysis.

Hypothesis

At the beginning of this project, four hypotheses were given: the first of which delineated that anyone who demonstrates high on the positive affect scale and low on emotional regulators will tend to engage in conflict. Their approach to conflict will follow the aggressive style, which Bell and Song (2005) describe in their article. What the data indicates is that there does not appear to be any statistically significant correlations between positive affect and emotional regulation—which was defined in this study as both attention and inhibitory control. What this suggests is that people who rate high with positive affect do not use or need high levels of regulation to progress through the conflict.

It appears that positive affect acts as a protective factor for those in conflict. Current researchers (Garland et al., 2010) claim that positive affect helps to "expand people's mindsets," "speed cardiovascular recovery from anxiety and fear," and "lead to optimal functioning and enhanced social openness" (Garland et al., 2010, p. 850-851). Having expanded mindsets suggests that people who rate high with positive affect have a greater likelihood of drawing upon multiple resources to help them resolve conflicts, as opposed to people who rate high with negative affect whose respective resources are comparatively limited.

In the second hypothesis it was alluded that anyone who demonstrates high on the negative affect scale and high on the emotional regulation scale will handle conflict situations

with relative ease and little emotional distress. The data analysis presented an alternative view to conflict than what was described in the second hypothesis. What the analysis showed was a likelihood that one would focus on one's self during a conflict with another person or group of people. There was a strong, positive correlation between the negative affect and self-focus style of conflict resolution. This finding suggests that the higher one rates on a negative affect scale, the more likely he or she is to focus on the self during a conflict. This speaks to a person's inclination for self-preservation insofar as the focus during the conflict is to meet one's own needs and wants.

Garland et al. (2010) speak to this second finding in their examination of affective structures. Garland et al. look at the spiraling patterns that affect—both positive and negative—follows. In their review of negative affect, Garland et al. note, "When negative emotions accrete into downward spirals of defensive behavior, focus on threat, and feelings of inefficacy, these self destructive, vicious cycles can lead to impoverished life experiences, and potentially devastating psychopathology" (Garland et al., 2010, p. 860). There are several relevant points to this study in what Garland et al. claim.

First, it is important to note the behaviors Garland et al. associate to negative affect: defensive behavior, focus on threat, and feelings of inefficacy. These behaviors relate to the notion of self-preservation and demonstrate an activated "fight" response. One who approaches conflict under the influence of negative affectivity is likely to continue in conflict since he or she is likely to be on the offensive. This situation relates back to Rahim et al.'s (1995) postulation of an aggressive style approach to conflict.

Secondly, note the second half of Garland et al's claim, that the downward spiral of negative affect leads to 'self-destructive, vicious cycles" which, in themselves, "lead to

impoverished life experiences" (2010, p. 860). Garland et al. claim that people whose affective trait qualities remain negative run the risk of living impoverished life experiences, which can lead to severe health concerns. Interestingly, Garland et al.'s discussion of resources relates back to the model of *indefinite conflict* mentioned earlier in this research (see p. 10-12).

Garland et al.'s claims could illuminate the relationship between positive affect and problem-focus style of conflict resolution. For Garland et al, positive affect "[broadens] thought and action repertoires, increases mental flexibility, augments meaning-based coping, and motivates engagement in novel activities and social relationships" (2010, p. 852). For Garland et al., positive affect supports psychosocial resources, whereas negative affect restricts such resources. People whose trait affective qualities are positive have more resources with which to deal when they encounter conflict, as opposed to working to preserve the self and the comparatively limited resources that someone who identifies as having negative affect.

Moving from the highlighted relationship between negative affect and self-focus, there is a strong, positive correlation between negative affect and the other-focus style of conflict resolution, which presents a couple of interpretations. The first interpretation mirrors the notion of self-preservation; one will attack the other in order to protect the self. The other becomes a focus or locus of aggression. This scenario presents conflict as a source of combat where the solution results in a win/lose situation.

The second interpretation of the relationship between negative affect and other focus is that one is willing to accommodate the other at the risk of negating the self. People who demonstrate this style of conflict resolution are likely to want to please the other before looking after their own interests. What is interesting to note is that there is a stronger statistical correlation between negative affect and other focus than what there is between negative affect

and self-focus. This finding leads to the question if adolescents have stronger tendencies to want to please or support others during a conflicted situation before they look after their own needs and desires.

The data indicates that there is a statistically significant negative correlation between inhibitory control and negative affect. A possible explanation for this relationship could be that the higher people rate on the negative affect scale, the less likely they are able to control their emotional processes. This relationship could account for emotional outbursts and "melt downs." Indeed, Bridgett, Oddi, Laake, Murdock, and Bachman (2013) indicate that poor or low self-regulatory abilities leads to the demonstration of externalizing behaviors in children and adolescents.

Speaking to the lack of self-regulation in children and related externalizing behaviors, Bridgett et al. claim that low self-regulation has been related to developmental psychopathology. They state:

> Across many domains, self-regulation has been identified as a contributor to adaptive and adverse outcomes in children, adolescents, and adults. For example, children's self-regulation has been implicated in developmental psychopathology […] with compromised self regulation placing children and adolescents at risk for externalizing problems. (Bridgett et al., 2013, p. 47)

Originally, I postulated that students who rate high on the positive affect scale (PANAS) would have difficulty handling a conflicted situation. However, the data indicates the opposite is true: students who rate high on negative affect are more likely to have difficulty with conflicted situations because as their negative affect increases, then their regulatory processes decrease. This suggests a relationship between personality profiles (i.e. affect and regulation) and externalizing behaviors or "melt downs."

The third hypothesis stated that it was possible to invert Freytag's narrative plot schematic (see figures 1 and 5) to represent how someone who is largely indifferent or apathetic to the conflict process. First, the collected data did not align itself in a way that I can represent it schematically. Freytag's narrative plot schematic appears to only have served as a point of inspiration for this research. However, the idea of an indifferent/apathetic participant can still be examined, particularly in the light of Kimsey and Fuller's scale, CONFLICTALK.

The CONFLICTALK scale is described at length earlier in this research. During the explanation, I note that Kimsey and Fuller (2003) characterize the other focus as a passive approach to conflict resolution. The data indicates that other-focus has strong negative correlations with problem-focus styles of conflict resolution and positive affect. However, it has strong positive correlations with negative affect and attention.

The negative correlation between other-focus and problem-focus highlights that as the focus on the other person during a conflict increases, the ability for one to focus on the root problem of the conflict decreases. This suggests that problem-focus and other-focus styles of coping are mutually exclusive and that they cannot occur simultaneously. However, there is a positive correlation between other-focus and self-focus styles of conflict resolution. This suggests that as levels of self-focus go up, so do levels of other focus (and vice versa). From this, it is plausible that to focus on people in a conflict—as opposed to focusing on the root problem—creates a divisive situation, which leaves the central concern unresolved. An important point to note here is that self-focus and other-focus share the common denominator of negative affect. It is possible that the effects of negative affect allow for self-focus and other-focus to exist in a mutually supporting environment.

The last thing to note about the other-focus style of conflict resolution is that demonstrates a statistical correlation with attention, which was a subscale of regulation. Of all the variables, inhibitory control and attention appeared to have the least significance with conflict and conflict resolution. With this said, it is interesting to note that other-focus correlates with attention. It appears that one must be able to focus their mental energies on the other in order to use the other-focus style of conflict resolution. Research (Simonds, Kieras, Rueda, & Rothbart, 2007) supports this notion, citing:

> [The] process of regulating […] emotional reactions relies in part on the ability to shift one's attention away from a stimulus that induces an undesired emotional state […]. The attention system is thus considered to be a mechanism underlying the ability to regulate the emotion in order to behave in a socially appropriate manner. (Simonds et al., 2007, p. 476)

According to Simonds et al., attention—and by extension, regulation—appears to hold significance when in a social context. This association speaks to a (statistical) relationship between attention and the other-focus style of conflict resolution.

My last hypothesis stated that someone who rates high on a negative affect scale will demonstrate patterns of conflict avoidance (see figure 5). Although the data does not lend itself to be represented schematically, it does indicate that negative affect is a dominant factor in conflict and conflict resolution. It appears to be the variable that leads to the most negative outcomes. For example, negative affect has strong, positive correlations with self-focus, other focus, and a significant negative correlation with inhibitory control (regulation). Whereas, people who demonstrate higher ratings on the positive affect scale are also more likely to demonstrate higher ratings on problem-focus styles of conflict resolution. Words that characterize the positive subscale of the PANAS like, "interested, "strong," "proud," "inspired," and "determined" (etc.) connote someone who is confident and certain. Such qualities allow one to spend fewer

resources on self-preservation, and attend to the central problem of the conflict. This statistically significant correlation suggests that a higher positive perception of one's self may act as a protective factor for those in conflict, increasing the likelihood the problem or conflict will be solved in mutually satisfactory ways. Problem-focus and self-focus styles of conflict resolution appear to be reciprocal factors of each other: as ratings for self-focus increase, the self-reported ratings for problem-focus decrease.

Limitations and Future Studies

Before discussing the possibilities for future studies it is necessary to examine the limitations of this research. Data collection can be a challenge across many research designs. Persistence and organization helped to overcome this difficulty. There were multiple levels of administration that had to be contacted prior to interacting with students. To facilitate communication, a combination of emails, telephone calls, and post (snail mail) were used. When contacting the school boards and principals, a pre-made package of materials for them to review was e-mailed. Having all necessary materials (e.g. Ethics certificate, thesis proposal draft, introductory letters, sample scales etc) helped to create an atmosphere of trust and facilitated communication. Every person with whom communication was had was thanked —whether they participated in the research or not.

Earlier in the discussion section, it was mentioned that trust could act as a protective factor against harmful outcomes while in a conflict. Indeed, the notions of trust and conflict are well documented in current research (Parayitam & Dooley, 2009; Curçeu & Schruijer, 2010; Malhotra & Lumineau, 2011). For the purposes of this research, trust is defined as the willingness of one person to be vulnerable to the actions and intentions of another person. Such trust is based on positive expectations in regards to the other person's motivations and behaviors

(Malharta & Luminaeau, 2011, p. 982). In short, trust allows one to expect that another person will not cause harm in his or her actions.

Parayitam and Dooley (2009) delineate two forms of trust: cognition-based trust (competence) and affect based trust (attributions based on relationships) (2009, p. 790). According to Parayitam et al., each type of trust relates to a specific type of conflict: cognitive or task based conflict and affective or relationship based conflict. Cognitive conflict is discordance that develops between people over the content and process of how to complete a task (2009, p. 790). Parayitam et al. describe cognitive conflict as, "The conflict arising from the judgmental differences about the task on hand" (2009, p. 790). They argue that cognition based conflict provides opportunity for growth and is "related to positive outcomes" (2009, p. 790). Quoting other research, Parayitam et al. state, "Cognitive conflict, as noted by Pelled et al. (1999), 'fosters a deeper understanding of task issues and an exchange of information that facilitates problem-solving, decision making and the generation of ideas'" (2009, p. 790). In relation to the theoretical models of conflict used in this research, cognitive-based conflict most closely aligns itself to problem-focused conflict, as noted by Kimsey and Fuller (2003) and Rahim (1995).

Affect-based conflict contrasts with cognitive-based conflict. According to Parayitam et al., affect-based conflict is more likely to produce negative or harmful outcomes than cognitive-based conflict. Parayitam et al. describe affective conflict as "concerned with person-related disagreements that include 'tension, animosity, and annoyance among the team members" (2009, p. 790). They continue to state that affective conflict develops because of personality clashes and continued, unresolved cognitive disagreements that may develop tension and animosity among group members. Unlike cognitive-based conflict, which focuses on the task or problem at hand,

affective conflict aligns closely to self and other focus styles of conflict resolution because it becomes inherently personal.

The notion of trust within conflict could be examined by using self-report surveys, similar to how data was gathered to examine conflict, affect, and regulation. Prayatim and Dooley measured both cognitive-based and affect-based trust using a seven point Likert-type scale developed by D.J. McAllister (1995) (2009, p. 792). In terms of research design, continued use of a quantitative, correlational design with self-report surveys would be advisable. However, there is also the possibility of approaching examining students' conceptions of conflict through a qualitative study as well. A quantitative design such as this study allows one to begin recognizing patterns within a target population—in this case, junior high school students. A qualitative study would allow researchers to examine students' lived experience with conflict at a greater depth.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand conflict. As the result of the data collected and analyzed, the study proposes that conflict is a process that has both biological and socio-cultural (contextual) components. Indeed, researchers (Bridgett, Oddi, Laake, Murdock, & Bachmann, 2013) highlight the biological, psycho-social, and cultural connections to regulation. Similarly, Watson, and Tellegen (1988) note the biological basis for affect. Noting the correlations between affect, regulation, and conflict, it appears that conflict may have extensions to biology as well.

There are different types of conflicts and conflict resolution styles. The current literature (Bell & Song, 2005; Kimsey and Fuller, 2003; Gabrielidis, Ybarra, Dos Santos Peasrson, and Villareal, 1997) suggests that there are common patterns of conflict resolution, with the four most prominent patterns being: aggressive, problem-solving, accommodating/compromising, and avoidant. The data indicates strong, correlations between conflict resolution styles and affective traits. Specifically, the data draws correlations between negative affect and the self-focus and other-focus styles of conflict resolution; whereas, data indicates a relationship between positive affect and the problem-focus style of conflict resolution.

Lastly, another intention for this study was to examine how conflict operates within educational settings like the classroom. If conflict operates in predictable patterns or processes, then knowledge of such patterns can be used to manipulate the outcomes of conflict. Educators can use this knowledge to ameliorate learning environments, increasing the efficiency of learning-teaching dynamics. Ideally, this will increase students' motivation towards life-long learning while also giving them life-skills that will help them to confidently move through challenges they encounter in life.

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Appendix A

This image (figure 1) represents the structure of a narrative plot line, to which I equate how conflict operates. Reading this diagram from left to right:

1. Pre conflict stage: the flat line on the far left of the image represents a homeostatic state. It is this stage that is prior to conflict. Involved parties may begin to develop a sense of the oncoming conflict but are generally unaware of what is to come. At the very end of the pre-conflict stage is the precipitating point, which moves the homeostatic state into the next stage of the conflict.
2. Initial stage of conflict (a.k.a. rising action): Central issues of the conflict begin to reveal themselves. Emotions begin to build at this point. This stage (up to and including the climax) requires the most emotional work.
3. Climax: All central issues are apparent to all agents involved in the conflict. Emotions are felt to be strongest at this point. This is the key stage that determines in which direction the conflict continues (i.e. conflict continues on a plateau or begins to descend into a resolution).
4. Resolution (a.k.a. descending action or denouement): The participants begin to resolve the conflict. Emotional responses are still present; however, their intensity begins to return to a homeostatic level or nature.
5. Post conflict stage (flat line to far right): Participants move on from the conflict. Note that the position leaving the conflict is not the same place as the position entering the conflict. Graphically, participants may move laterally or vertically, which indicates a indicates the types of change that the conflict creates.

Appendix B: CONFLICTALK

KIMSEY-FULLER CONFLICTALK©

The following list includes comments that people sometimes say when they are having an argument. Think about each one. Does it sound like something that you might say? The words might not be exactly the same, but how close are they to what you might say in an argument? There are no right or wrong answers.

Give each statement a rating of 1 to 5 in the space provided according to the following scale. Use only one number for each statement.

When I am in an argument or a conflict situation, I . . .

1	2	3	4	5
Never	**Don't Very Often**	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**Almost Always**
say things	say things	say things	say things	say things
like this	like this	like this	like this	like this

__ 1. "Can't you see how stupid you are?"

__ 2. "I'm no good at this. I just don't know how to make you feel better."

__ 3. "What's going on? We need to talk."

__ 4. "I'm no help to you, I never know what to say . . . (silence) . . . "

__ 5. "We need to fix this."

__ 6. "I wish we could just avoid the whole thing."

__ 7. "Let's talk about this and find an answer."

__ 8. "Shut up! You're wrong! I'm not going to listen."

__ 9. "It's your fault! And, I'm never going to help you."

__10. “You will do as I say; I’m going to make you!”

__11. “It will work if we work together.”

__12. “We will work this thing out.”

__13. “Okay, I give up, whatever you want.”

__14. “I don’t want to do this anymore, let’s quit and leave it alone.”

__15. “This isn’t going anywhere, let’s just forget the whole thing, okay?”

__16. “If you won’t do it, forget you; I’ll just ask someone else.”

__17. “We need to figure out what the problem is together.”

__18. “You can’t do anything. Get out of my way and let me do it!”

19. Are you (circle one): a. female b. male

20. What is your grade level (circle one):

a. 4-5th grade b. 6-8th Grade c. 9-12th Grade d. College Grade

KIMSEY-FULLER CONFLICTALK©

Scoring and Analysis

Instructions: Place the selected number (1-5) you marked for each statement in the space indicated below. Add the scores for each column and divide by 6. This will give you an average score for each conflict style.

Self-Focus (rhino)	Problem-Focus (dolphin)	Other-Focus (ostrich)
1. _____	3. _____	2. _____
8. _____	5. _____	4. _____
9. _____	7. _____	6. _____
10. _____	11. _____	13. _____
16. _____	12. _____	14. _____
18. _____	17. _____	15. _____

TOTAL ___ / 6 = ___ TOTAL ___ / 6 = ___TOTAL ___ / 6 = _____

Average Scores: Generally speaking, an average score indicates the likelihood of using a particular conflict style. For instance, scores can be interpreted as follows: 1 = you never use that conflict style, 2 = you don't very often use that conflict style, 3 = you sometimes use that conflict style, 4 = you often use that conflict style, and 5 = you almost always use that conflict style.

Conflict Styles

Self-Focus (rhino): This choice of conflict style is self-centered and does not think much about the other person or their needs. The issue or subject of the dispute is less important than the fact that this person wants their way, even if their way is not the best solution. People using this style usually try to act "aggressively," like a rhino.

Problem-Focus (dolphin): This choice of conflict style shows most concern for whatever is the cause of the conflict. The person using this approach tries to understand the reason for the conflict and is interested in finding the best solution or way to resolve the conflict. People using this style usually try to act "cooperatively," like a dolphin.

Other-Focus (ostrich): This choice of conflict style selected by persons who think that any conflict is a bad thing. This approach used when the person feels that the other person must be made happy, no matter what, even if it means that they are unhappy or that the conflict isn't really solved. People using this style usually try to act "passively," like an ostrich.

Appendix C: The Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS)

The Positive and Negative Affect Scale

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Reach each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you generally feel this way, that is, how you feel on the average or most often (not once, and once only). Use the following scale to record your answers.

1	2	3	4	5
very little	**a little**	**moderately**	**quite a bit**	**extremely**

---

interested	_____	irritable	_____
distressed	_____	alert	_____
excited	_____	ashamed	_____
upset	_____	inspired	_____
strong	_____	nervous	_____
guilty	_____	determined	_____
scared	_____	attentive	_____
hostile	_____	jittery	_____
enthusiastic	_____	active	_____
proud	_____	afraid	_____

Appendix D: The Early Adolescent Temperament Questionnaire-Revised

(EATQ-R)

Following is a series of statements that people might use to describe themselves. The statements refer to a wide number of activities and attitudes.

For each statement, please write a number that best describes how true each statement is **for you**. There are no best answers. People are very different in how they feel about these statements. Please write the first answer that comes to you in the space beside each statement.

You will use the following scale to describe how true or false a statement is about you:

Write number:	**If the statement is:**
1	Almost always untrue of you
2	Usually untrue of you
3	Sometimes true, sometimes untrue of you
4	Usually true of you
5	Almost always true of you

1) _____ It's hard for me not to open presents before I'm supposed to.
2) _____ When someone tells me to stop doing something, it is easy for me to stop.

3) _____ The more I try to stop myself from doing something I shouldn't, the more likely I am to do it.

4) _____ It's easy for me to keep a secret.

5) _____ I can stick with my plans and goals

6) _____ It is easy for me to really concentrate on homework problems.

7) _____ I find it hard to shift gears when I go from one class to another at school.

8) _____ When trying to study, I have difficulty tuning out background noise and concentrating.

9) _____ I am good at keeping track of several different things that are happening around me.

10) _____ I pay close attention when someone tells me how to do something.

11) _____ I tend to get in the middle of one thing, then go off and do something else.

Appendix E: Demographic Survey

Demographic Survey

1) Please check one to identify if you are:

a) Male _____

b) Female _____

c) Transgender _____

d) Other _____

e) No response (would rather not answer) _____

2) How old are you? _____

3) What grade are you in? _____

4) What city or town do you live in (the general area)? _____

5) What is the **highest** level of education your *mom* has (please circle **one only**):

a) Elementary

b) Junior High

c) Some High School

d) Graduated from High School / GED

e) Some College

f) College diploma or degree

g) Some university

h) An undergraduate degree

i) A professional degree (e.g. a teacher's degree, a lawyer's degree, a medical doctor)

j) A graduate degree (e.g. masters or Ph.D.)

k) No response (would rather not answer or don't know)

6) What is the **highest** level of education your *dad* has (please circle **one only**):

a) Elementary

b) Junior High

c) Some High School

d) Graduated from High School / GED

e) Some College

f) College diploma or degree

g) Some university

h) An undergraduate degree

i) A professional degree (e.g. a teacher's degree, a lawyer's degree, a medical doctor)

j) A graduate degree (e.g. masters or Ph.D.)

k) No response (would rather not answer or don't know)

Appendix F: Scales formatted together to create one piece for students to complete

Instructions:

Following is a three part survey: Part A, Part B, and Part C. Please be sure to read the instructions for each part carefully and complete all questions.

Part A:

The following list includes comments that people sometimes say when they are having an argument. Think about each one. Does it sound like something that you might say? The words might not be exactly the same, but how close are they to what you might say in an argument? There are no right or wrong answers.

Give each statement a rating of 1 to 5 in the space provided according to the following scale. Use only one number for each statement.

When I am in an argument or a conflict situation, I . . .

1	2	3	4	5
Never	**Don't Very Often**	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**Almost Always**
say things like this	say things like this	say things like this	say things like this	say things like this

__ 1. "Can't you see how stupid your are?"

__ 2. "I'm no good at this. I just don't know how to make you feel better."

__ 3. "What's going on? We need to talk."

__ 4. "I'm no help to you, I never know what to say . . . (silence) . . . "

__ 5. "We need to fix this."

__ 6. "I wish we could just avoid the whole thing."

__ 7. “Let’s talk about this and find an answer.”

__ 8. “Shut up! You’re wrong! I’m not going to listen.”

__ 9. “It’s your fault! And, I’m never going to help you.”

__10. “You will do as I say; I’m going to make you!”

__11. “It will work if we work together.”

__12. “We will work this thing out.”

__13. “Okay, I give up, whatever you want.”

__14. “I don’t want to do this anymore, let’s quit and leave it alone.”

__15. “This isn’t going anywhere, let’s just forget the whole thing, okay?”

__16. “If you won’t do it, forget you; I’ll just ask someone else.”

__17. “We need to figure out what the problem is together.”

__18. “You can’t do anything. Get out of my way and let me do it!”

19. Are you (circle one): a. female b. male

20. What is your grade level (circle one):

a. 7th grade b. 8th Grade c. 9th Grade

Part B:

This section consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Reach each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you generally feel this way, that is, how you feel on the average or most often (not once, and once only). Use the following scale to record your answers.

1	2	3	4	5
very little	**a little**	**moderately**	**quite a bit**	**extremely**

---

interested	_____	irritable	_____
distressed	_____	alert	_____
excited	_____	ashamed	_____
upset	_____	inspired	_____
strong	_____	nervous	_____
guilty	_____	determined	_____
scared	_____	attentive	_____
hostile	_____	jittery	_____
enthusiastic	_____	active	_____
proud	_____	afraid	_____

Part C:

Following is a series of statements that people might use to describe themselves. The statements refer to a wide number of activities and attitudes.

For each statement, please write a number that best describes how true each statement is **for you**. There are no best answers. People are very different in how they feel about these statements. Please write the first answer that comes to you in the space beside each statement.

You will use the following scale to describe how true or false a statement is about you:

Write number:	If the statement is:
1	Almost always untrue of you
2	Usually untrue of you
3	Sometimes true, sometimes untrue of you
4	Usually true of you
5	Almost always true of you

1) _____ It's hard for me not to open presents before I'm supposed to.

2) _____ When someone tells me to stop doing something, it is easy for me to stop.

3) _____ The more I try to stop myself from doing something I shouldn't, the more likely I am to do it.

4) _____ It's easy for me to keep a secret.

5) _____ I can stick with my plans and goals

6) _____ It is easy for me to really concentrate on homework problems.

7) _____ I find it hard to shift gears when I go from one class to another at school.

8) _____ When trying to study, I have difficulty tuning out background noise and concentrating.

9) _____ I am good at keeping track of several different things that are happening around me.

10) _____ I pay close attention when someone tells me how to do something.

11) _____ I tend to get in the middle of one thing, then go off and do something else.

Part D:

Demographic Survey

1) Please check one to identify if you are:

a) Male _____

b) Female _____

c) Transgender _____

d) Other _____

e) No response (would rather not answer) _____

2) How old are you? _____

3) What grade are you in? _____

4) What city or town do you live in (the general area)? _____

5) What is the **highest** level of education your *mom* has (please circle **one only**):

a) Elementary

b) Junior High

c) Some High School

d) Graduated from High School / GED

e) Some College

f) College diploma or degree

g) Some university

h) An undergraduate degree

i) A professional degree (e.g. a teacher's degree, a lawyer's degree, a medical doctor)

j) A graduate degree (e.g. masters or Ph.D.)

k) No response (would rather not answer or don't know)

6) What is the **highest** level of education your *dad* has (please circle **one only**):

a) Elementary

b) Junior High

c) Some High School

d) Graduated from High School / GED

e) Some College

f) College diploma or degree

g) Some university

h) An undergraduate degree

i) A professional degree (e.g. a teacher's degree, a lawyer's degree, a medical doctor)

j) A graduate degree (e.g. masters or Ph.D.)

k) No response (would rather not answer or don't know)

Appendix G: Information letter to students

Dear Students,

My name is Mr. Donegani. I am a student at Mount Saint Vincent University and am looking for help to finish a project. I would like to see if people have different ways of how they deal with fights and other conflicts in their lives or if everyone deals with conflicts in the same way.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. You will be asked to fill out three short surveys or questionnaires: one questionnaire will see what your conflict resolution style is. The second survey will see what your emotion style is like, while the last survey will see how you keep your emotions from taking over your thinking. All of the survey questions should take you about 30 minutes to complete. If you agree to participate, you can choose to skip any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. Please remember that doing these surveys is completely voluntary; you can stop participating any time you want and there will not be any punishment for stopping. **Completing these surveys is YOUR CHOICE and I will respect whatever decision you make**.

If you choose to participate in this study, please do not put your name on any of the surveys. I would like to make this confidential (or secret) so no one can say, "Oh. Mr. Donegani is talking about little Johnny" (as an example).

If you would like to help in this study, please bring the attached letters and forms to your parents to read and sign. I would also like you to sign the form for students. I will need you to return the student form and the parent or legal guardian form before we can begin the study.

If you, your parents, or legal guardians have any questions, please call my teacher (supervisor/boss), Dr. Daniel Lagace-Seguin at (902) 457-6460. If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved in the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, at (902) 457-6350 or via email at research@msvu.ca.

If you would like to participate in this study, please sign the student sheet and discuss this with your parents or legal guardians.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Mr. Donegani

Dr. Daniel Lagace-Seguin, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology
Thesis Supervisor

Appendix H: Information Letter to Parents and/or Legal Guardians

Dear Parents and/or Legal Guardians,

My name is Colin Donegani. I am a student in the Master of Arts in Educational Psychology program at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU). I am currently working under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Lagace-Seguin, who is a professor in the Department of Psychology. I am currently investigating the relationship between conflict styles, emotional (affective) processes, and emotional regulation. More specifically, I am looking to see if one can look at aspects of adolescents' temperaments and abilities to monitor their own behavior to predict how they handle conflict.

I wish to invite your child/children to participate in the present study. They will be required to fill out three short questionnaires: a questionnaire that examines personal conflict styles, another to investigate affect, and lastly, a questionnaire designed to investigate how adolescents monitor their own emotions.

Participation in the research is strictly on a volunteer basis. If you choose to allow your child/children to participate, he/she/they may skip any question which may make him/her/them feel uncomfortable. Likewise, you and/or your child/children may choose to withdraw participation from this study at any point without fear of penalty or retribution.

All responses are confidential. To ensure confidentiality, I will ask that participants do not write their names on any survey. If your child/children would like to participate, please complete the attached informed consent form along with your child/children and hand it in prior to completing the surveys. You may keep this letter for your own records. Summarized results will be made available to you if you wish to have a copy. Please fill out your contact information on the next page if you would like a copy. The information obtained from the consent forms will be used to send a summary of results. Benefits of allowing your child/children to participate in this study include (but are not be limited to) allowing you to learn more about how conflict may be influenced by temperament and the ability to monitor one's own emotions (and by extension, behaviors). After the completion of the study, all identifying information will be destroyed to ensure confidentiality.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Daniel Lagace-Seguin at (902) 457-6460. If you have any questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved in the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, at (902) 457-6350 or via email at research@msvu.ca.

If you and your child agree with the above, please sign the informed consent form on the next page.

Sincerely,

Colin Donegani
MA Student

Dr. Daniel Lagace-Seguin (Associate Professor)
Thesis Supervisor, Department of Psychology

Appendix I: Participant Consent Form(s)

Student/Participant Consent Form

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY IN **INK**

I, _____ (print first and last name) have read the information sheet and have discussed my participation in this study with my parents and/or legal guardians. By signing this form, I agree to participate in the present study concerning conflict, affect, and regulation styles.

_____ _____

Date Signature

Parental/Legal Guardian Consent Form

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY IN **INK**

I/We, _____ (print first and last name[s]) have read and discussed the information sheet with my child/children. By signing this form, I/we give our consent for my/our child/children to participate in the present study concerning conflict, affect, and regulation styles.

_____ _____

Date Signature

_____ _____

Date Signature

Appendix J: Research Results Summary Request Form

Please fill out any necessary contact information if you would like a copy of the summary of the final results from this research.

_____

Name

Mailing Address:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

OR

_____

Email Address