

How do emotion regulation, attachment related anxiety and attachment related avoidance impact on the ability to resolve conflict in adolescence?

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Doctorate Portfolio in Counselling Psychology

Title: How do emotion regulation, attachment related anxiety and attachment related avoidance impact on the ability to resolve conflict in adolescence?"

By Kellie Hitchens

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: The current research explored the impact of attachment related anxiety, attachment related avoidance and emotion dysregulation upon conflict resolution style in adolescence. **Methods:** A mixed methods, sequential design was employed. Part one employed a quantitative methodology. Four multiple regression analyses were employed to assess the impact of attachment related anxiety, attachment related avoidance and emotion dysregulation upon four conflict resolution styles: positive problem solving, conflict engagement, compliance and withdrawal. Participants were 192 adolescents, aged 14 to 17 and were recruited from five secondary schools. Part two employed a qualitative methodology to further explore the themes that emerged from part one. Specifically the interviews aimed to explore in further detail the influence of attachment on choice of conflict resolution style. Overall, ten adolescents aged between 14 to 17 were recruited from one secondary school. **Results:** Overall quantitative results demonstrated that the DERS scores (emotion dysregulation) consistently impacted upon all conflict resolution styles. The DERS demonstrated positive relationships with the resolution styles of conflict engagement, compliance and withdrawal but a negative relationship with positive problem solving. The attachment variables however, did not consistently have an impact on all resolutions styles. Particularly, ECR-RS avoidance only made a significant contribution to resolution styles of compliance and positive problem solving demonstrating negative relationships. ECR-Anxiety made no significant contribution to any conflict resolution styles. The qualitative part of the study revealed three main themes, Relationship efficacy, Individual differences and Social constraints. **Conclusions:** Overall the current research highlighted that attachment and emotion dysregulation may contribute to the choice of conflict resolution styles in

adolescents. Results indicated that attachment security may manifest in different ways for different individuals and thus their following conflict resolution styles. In addition to this, findings highlighted that both individuals within the conflict interaction may impact upon the conflict experience and behaviours utilised. Both the adolescent and the person they are in conflict with can be responsible for escalating or de-escalating the emotions of the other. The qualitative part of the research highlighted other factors such as diagnosis and social constructs including authority/consequences that may contribute to responses during conflict outside of attachment and emotion dysregulation. Overall, therapeutic work targeting better conflict resolution with adolescents should seek to understand the adolescent's individual conflict experience and the factors within their own narrative to understand specific targets for appropriate intervention work.

CONTENTS PAGE

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| Chapter one: Introduction..... | 10 |
| 1.1. Introduction to the research area..... | 11 |
| 1.2. Scope of the current research..... | 12 |
| 1.3. Thesis structure..... | 12 |
| Chapter Two: Literature review..... | 14 |
| 2.1. Introduction to the literature review..... | 15 |
| 2.2. Conflict resolution in adolescents..... | 16 |
| 2.2.1. Defining conflict and conflict resolution..... | 17 |
| 2.2.2. Conflict Resolution styles..... | 18 |
| 2.2.3. Clinical importance..... | 21 |
| 2.2.3.1. Impact of conflict engagement..... | 22 |
| 2.2.4 . Conflict during adolescence..... | 24 |
| 2.2.5. Summary..... | 26 |
| 2.3. Emotions and Emotion regulation during conflict..... | 27 |
| 2.3.1. Emotions and affect..... | 28 |
| 2.3.2. Emotion dysregulation and Adolescence..... | 29 |
| 2.3.3. Emotions and emotion dysregulation during conflict..... | 32 |
| 2.3.4. Summary..... | 37 |
| 2.4. Attachment and emotion regulation..... | 38 |
| 2.4.1. Attachment Theory..... | 38 |
| 2.4.2. Individual differences in attachment and emotion regulation..... | 41 |
| 2.4.3. Attachment during adolescence..... | 43 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 2.4.4. Attachment, emotion and conflict resolution..... | 44 |
| 2.4.5. Summary..... | 48 |
| 2.6. Current research aims and objectives..... | 48 |
| Chapter Three: Methodology..... | 52 |
| 3.1. Methodology..... | 53 |
| 3.2. Methodological approach..... | 53 |
| 3.2.1. Methodological approach: Sequential explanatory design..... | 55 |
| 3.2.2. Ontological and Epistemological underpinnings..... | 55 |
| 3.2.3. Conclusion..... | 57 |
| 3.3. Part one: Quantitative..... | 57 |
| 3.3.1. Participants..... | 57 |
| 3.3.1.1. Participant demographics..... | 57 |
| 3.3.1.2. Participants: Inclusion and exclusion criteria..... | 60 |
| 3.3.2. Materials..... | 61 |
| 3.3.3. Design..... | 64 |
| 3.3.4. Ethical considerations regarding consent..... | 65 |
| 3.3.5. Procedure..... | 66 |
| 3.4. The integration of a mixed methods design: Introduction to part two..... | 68 |
| 3.5. Part two: Qualitative..... | 70 |
| 3.5.1. Materials: Semi-structured Interview..... | 70 |
| 3.5.2. Thematic analysis..... | 72 |
| 3.5.3. Participants and saturation..... | 74 |
| 3.5.4. Participant demographics..... | 76 |
| 3.5.5. Procedure..... | 77 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 3.5.6. Thematic analysis steps and how these were achieved..... | 78 |
| 3.5.7. Reliability..... | 81 |
| 3.5.8. Risk management and ethical considerations..... | 82 |
| 3.5.9. Confidentiality..... | 83 |
| 3.5.10. Feedback of results..... | 84 |
| 3.5.11. Summary..... | 84 |
| Chapter Four: Results..... | 85 |
| 4.1. Results..... | 86 |
| 4.2. Quantitative Results..... | 86 |
| 4.2.1. Data entry and handling..... | 86 |
| 4.2.2. Test of normality..... | 87 |
| 4.2.3. Introduction to Data analysis..... | 87 |
| 4.2.4. Descriptive statistics..... | 88 |
| 4.2.5. Regression analysis 1: CRSI – Positive problem solving..... | 90 |
| 4.2.6. Regression analysis 2: CRSI – Conflict engagement..... | 91 |
| 4.2.7. Regression analysis 3: CRSI – Withdrawal..... | 92 |
| 4.2.8. Regression analysis 4: CRSI – Compliance..... | 93 |
| 4.2.9. Summary and introduction to part 4.1.3 Qualitative results..... | 94 |
| 4.3 Qualitative results..... | 95 |
| 4.3.1. Overview of derived themes..... | 95 |
| 4.3.2. Overall themes and subthemes..... | 98 |
| 4.3.2.1 Relationship Efficacy..... | 98 |
| 4.3.2.1.1. Relational Strategies..... | 99 |
| 4.3.2.1.2. The influence of relationship closeness and security upon conflict resolution styles..... | 106 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 4.3.2.2. Individual differences..... | 112 |
| 4.3.2.3. Social constraints..... | 116 |
| 4.3.2.3.1. Level of authority and consequences..... | 116 |
| 4.3.2.3.2. Social norms and desirability..... | 118 |
| 4.3.3. Part one and part two results: Synthesis of findings..... | 123 |
| 4.3.4. Conclusion..... | 129 |
| Chapter Five: Discussion..... | 130 |
| 5.1. Discussion of findings..... | 131 |
| 5.2. Implications for counselling psychology..... | 147 |
| 5.3. Limitations and directions for future research..... | 150 |
| 5.4. Conclusion..... | 153 |
| Chapter Six: Critical appraisal..... | 154 |
| 6.1. Introduction to critical appraisal..... | 155 |
| 6.1.1. Reflections upon the research area..... | 155 |
| 6.1.2. Developments as a researcher..... | 156 |
| 6.1.3. Reflections upon client work and clinical practice..... | 158 |
| 6.1.4. Conclusion..... | 160 |
| References..... | 161 |
| Appendices..... | 181 |
| Appendix 1 – Invitation letter to school..... | 182 |
| Appendix 2 - Information sheet for school..... | 184 |
| Appendix 3 – Consent sheet for school..... | 186 |
| Appendix 4 – Adolescent information sheet..... | 188 |
| Appendix 5 – Adolescent consent form..... | 192 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Appendix 6 – Demographics sheet..... | 191 |
| Appendix 7 – DERS..... | 192 |
| Appendix 8 – CRSI..... | 194 |
| Appendix 9 – ECR-RS..... | 195 |
| Appendix 10 – Debrief sheet..... | 196 |
| Appendix 11 – Interview schedule..... | 197 |
| Appendix 12 – Examples of coding..... | 200 |
| Appendix 13 – Regression assumptions..... | 202 |
| Appendix 14 – Table of participants within each theme and sub-theme..... | 208 |
| Appendix 15 – Submission of research paper..... | 209 |

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Introduction to the research area.

Adolescence is notably characterised as a developmental opportunity to learn social skills (Larson et al., 2002). In contrast to adulthood, it could be argued that during adolescence there is greater time to understand and grasp social etiquette and experiment with relationships (Larson et al., 2002). In particular, risk is often higher for this age group regarding difficulties in interpersonal communication with people who they are not familiar with (Glenn et al., 2019). One social experience or a feature of communication during adolescence that can frequently occur is conflict (Latipun et al., 2012). Given its place in adolescence, it is clear why there is an increased interest in research exploring how adolescents navigate through conflict and the impact of its engagement. Conflict engagement in adolescence for instance can relate to many detrimental effects. Some of these include, internalising problems (Little et al., 2019), externalising problems (Little et al., 2019; Timmons & Margolin, 2015), elevated negative mood, problems within school (Timmons & Margolin, 2015), alcohol use (Chaplin et al., 2012) and maladjustment (Weymouth et al., 2016).

The aforementioned highlights the importance of exploring conflict resolution further. In doing so, researchers have endeavoured to understand why adolescents engage in certain conflict resolution styles, particularly the contributions of attachment and emotion regulation (e.g. Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009; Creasy & Ladd, 2004 and Lopes et al., 2011; Vater & Schroeder-Abe, 2015, respectively). Whilst various attachment styles/differing attachment dimensions and aspects of emotion dysregulation have been shown to contribute to differing conflict resolution styles, results have been mixed regarding their relationships (i.e. Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009; Creasy & Ladd, 2004 ; Creasey et al., 1999). These inconsistencies may

demonstrate a gap in knowledge that may not be fully understood yet or may otherwise be understood further through qualitative exploration. It is important that information is acquired and expanded upon within various areas of an adolescent's social development (Larson et al., 2002). This information can help understand the interpersonal world of adolescents and contribute towards building practices that may help support them for later life (Larson et al., 2002). Additional research is therefore required in an attempt to explain or understand the relationships between attachment and emotion dysregulation and conflict in greater detail.

1.2. Scope of the current research.

The current research aimed to explore the impact of attachment related anxiety, attachment related avoidance and emotion dysregulation upon conflict resolution style in an adolescent population. The research takes a mixed methods approach in the form of a sequential design. Part one takes the design of a quantitative methodology and part two qualitative. The quantitative aspect explores the impacts of attachment related anxiety, attachment related avoidance and emotion dysregulation upon four separate conflict resolution styles. The qualitative part of the research then aimed to explore in further detail the trends occurring in part one.

1.3. Thesis structure.

The report is organised into four separate sections. In chapter two research will be first be explored in great detail regarding the research variables of attachment, emotion dysregulation and conflict resolution. The current research rationale will also be discussed. Chapter three discusses the mixed methods sequential design utilised. Chapter four will

discuss both parts one and two of the results followed by their triangulation. The discussion in the final chapter, chapter five, will elaborate on the results from both parts one and two and discuss in greater detail its interpretation, relevance to current literature and research limitations.

Chapter Two

Literature review.

2.1. Introduction to the literature review.

This section of the report will review the literature regarding attachment, emotion dysregulation and the relationship these variables have with conflict resolutions style. The current literature review was conducted exploring a range of research articles, journals and E-books from online databases, including the University library and Google Scholar. In order to find further resources, references within published texts were also explored. Within the search various terms were utilised. Some examples included: Conflict, conflict resolution, conflict resolution styles, attachment, attachment styles, emotion regulation, emotion dysregulation, emotion, affect, adolescence. Search terms were used in various combinations. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for literature included within this section of the thesis were identified. Literature that contributed towards the understanding of and the measurement of the current research variables were included. This also included any literature that related to the age group of adolescence. Literature that specifically identified developmental related information for age groups that were not relevant to the research question were not included, i.e. developmental features of elderly. Literature that explored the relationship between the research variables were also included. Literature that discussed the relationships between attachment, emotion dysregulation and conflict resolution with other variables were not included such as conflict resolution and war, unless relevant to understanding the current research question. The researcher stopped reviewing literature when it was deemed that the literature search had been exhausted. Literature was deemed to be exhausted when there were no additional new and relevant literature being drawn from the search.

The first section of the review will start by defining the constructs of conflict and conflict resolution styles. Conflict will be explored with regards its clinical importance as a research area within adolescence and the impact conflict engagement can have upon this population. Discussion will also be presented regarding the research around why adolescence may engage in certain resolution styles during this developmental period.

The second part of the literature review will define emotion and emotion dysregulation. Emotion regulation during adolescence will also be discussed followed by the literature regarding the relationship between emotions/emotion dysregulation and the choice of behaviours engaged in during conflict.

The last part of the literature review extends upon the emotion dysregulation section, theoretically exploring attachment as the basis for emotion regulation development. The theory of attachment will be discussed with specific focus upon individual differences within attachment styles and emotion regulation. This section will also discuss the developmental milestones of attachment during adolescence. This then leads onto the end of the review that invites discussion around the literature regarding the relationship between attachment, emotion regulation and conflict resolution styles. The current research aims and objectives will be outlined.

2.2. Conflict resolution in adolescents.

The ways in which conflict is managed during adolescence can have a significant impact upon the psychological wellbeing of those involved. The following section discusses

these consequences further and the development of conflict resolution strategies over life span. Firstly, the definition of conflict and conflict resolution will be discussed.

2.2.1. Defining conflict and conflict resolution.

Established as an unavoidable occurrence within human experience, conflict can be rooted in various social contexts or levels, including organisational, political or international, and intergroup or interpersonal (Fisher, 2000). Despite these variations, the conceptualisation of conflict arguably involves three main interconnected components: cognition, emotion and behaviour (Hartwick & Barki, 2004; Mayer, 2010). Cognitively characterised, the individual's interpretations of personal beliefs or values are incongruent to that of others. Emotionally however, the situation may bring about differing feelings for the individual. These emotions may include disgust, unease, animosity and anger, causing the individual to believe they are in conflict. Behaviourally, individuals may act in a way to convey their emotions in order to accomplish their own needs, whilst reducing the likelihood of the other individual meeting theirs (Hartwick & Barki, 2004; Mayer, 2010). The complexity of conflict is demonstrated through the impact each component may have upon the others and the tendency of change to occur throughout the conflict process. A fundamental principle reflected here, is that conflict occurs only when the individual is situated within at least one component (Mayer, 2010). Definitions therefore vary from author to author, with most reflecting at least one of the above interconnected components or their amalgamation (Hartwick & Barki, 2004).

Moed et al. (2014) stress the importance of the emotional experience during the exchange, with conflict existing when there is "reciprocal exchanges of negative emotion" (p.

1607). Rahim (1992) alternatively draws upon the cognitive perspective, highlighting indifference between parties as a main feature of conflict. Conflict thus occurs where intercommunication is grounded in opposition or difference of views. A more behavioural definition is offered by Adams and Laursen, (2007), outlining conflict as “overt behavioral opposition, [...which] is typically operationalized in terms of disagreement or incompatible behaviors” (p. 445). Nonetheless, Hartwick and Barki (2004), express how it is essential all elements are incorporated when defining the construct. Similar to definitions of conflict, defining the ways that people react to conflict, can also differ between academics. Reactions to conflict by individuals involved, can be clustered into styles (Rahim, 1992).

2.2.2. Conflict Resolution styles.

Ting-Toomey et al. (2000) expand upon how styles are characterised. Within their description they present styles as “patterned responses to conflict in a variety of situations” (p. 48). There are multiple and varying ways in which the categorisation of styles has developed overtime (Hammer, 2005). Primarily, descriptions of styles may be distinguishable through their differing theoretical foundations and the quantity of styles within their models. As there is a range of conceptualisations of resolution styles, this section will example a few to explore these differences.

One theoretical basis taken to describe and explain conflict resolution styles focuses upon how motivations are imperative to one’s choice in reaction such as in the case of Rahim’s (1992) categorisation. The core foundation of categorisation of styles is dimensional, with variations in the accumulation of these creating distinctive and individual resolution styles (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979). Along either of these dimensions is a

measurement of concern. Concern is measured across two areas, regarding the self and others and assesses the extent one wants to appease either of these (Rahim, 1992). Five styles in total can be determined (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979).

A similar structural concept to Rahim (1992) is adopted by Hammer (2005) who summarise a “four-quadrant intercultural conflict resolution style model” (p. 675). Hammer (2005) argues that it is imperative to assess the ways in which behaviours used to approach conflict situations or the accompanying emotional reactions, are engaged in, particularly those that are acquired through a person’s cultural background. The model they developed therefore has two dimensions reflecting the above, both of which are culturally informed (Hammer, 2005). They explore how the individual addresses the situation behaviourally within the exchange. Specifically, the first involves exploring their communicative methods (direct vs indirect) relating to the conflict and the second explores the extent an individual emotionally opens up regarding their feelings (expressive vs restraint) about the person involved (Hammer, 2005). Accordingly, the measure reflects inclusivity of individualist and collectivist principles.

Kurdek (1994) is another example of how conflict types can be constructed, taking an alternative perspective to presenting style differences that focus upon partnerships, specifically romantic ones. They take into consideration the organisation of different types through observations (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989), alternative to those discussed above who are reflective of theoretically driven models. Kurdek’s inventory is varied in its use. Consistency psychometrically can be reported within adult gay and lesbian relationships and adult married, or married with children, relationships (Kurdek, 1994) and adolescent relationships with peers (Buote et al., 2009; Weid et al., 2007).

Four styles are determined from the outcome of the measure based upon the behaviours engaged in; positive problem solving, conflict engagement, compliance and withdrawal (Kurdek, 1994). Conflict engagement comprises of behaviours such as making offensive comments, erupting and showing a lack of control. Positive problem solving differs, showing behaviours that are more solution focused. Articulating within both parties a middle ground and exploring the problems in a helpful and productive manor, are examples of this style. Withdrawal involves disengaging, being restrained in communication and continuing to be uninvolved. The last, compliance, is engaged in when an individual makes minimal bids to introduce their own view-point and is submissive (Kurdek, 1994).

The differences in the measurement of conflict resolution styles reflect various strengths and limitations. As discussed, Kurdek's (1994) measure of conflict resolution style (CRSI) demonstrated an internal consistency that was moderate, as well as the corroboration of findings in consistency in adolescents (Buote et al., 2009; Weid et al., 2007). Kurdek's (1994) findings were derived from longitudinal research, providing a reliable representation of the measure's stability. For instance, moderate stability in their measure was observed one year later. The measure and conceptualisation of varying styles, however, can be criticised for its lack of generalisability. Their discussions of the psychometric properties of the measure are based upon a participant group that was largely white in ethnicity. This group was also only representative of mainly well-educated individuals. The Intercultural Conflict Style (ICS) inventory offered by Hammer (2005) however, appears to be more generalisable. Their findings demonstrated that various variables such as an individual's gender or academic abilities did not impact upon the measurement of their scales. As discussed earlier, their measure is also culturally inclusive.

Overall, there appears to be varying views within the literature in how conflict and resolution styles are defined. One noteworthy aspect of conflict, that is studied during the developmental frame of adolescence, is the detrimental effect this may have on mental health. The next section will consider this further.

2.2.3. Clinical importance.

Conflict can occur within everyday communication (Adams & Laursen, 2007) and is a frequent occurrence amongst adolescents (Latipun et al., 2012). Generally, it is peer friendships and parental relationships that are more likely to be recounted as being the subject of conflict as well as the most impressionable relationships in an adolescent's life (Adams & Laursen, 2007). Conflictual difficulties amongst this age group must therefore be considered and attended to, especially given that it can, in some instances, involve violent means of management (Latipun et al., 2012). Whilst there is a predominance of author considerations around the damaging effects of conflict, its constructive management has shown positive outcomes (Tjosvold, 2006). The position commonly held is that it is specifically these conflict responses that can cause harmful consequences, not the incident of conflict itself. When managed in a constructive way, conflict can aid the development of a stronger relationship, help to develop understanding of issues, and provide more effective resolution (Tjosvold, 2006). A lack of constructive behaviours can alternatively lead to destructive outcomes, further demonstrated in the next section (2.2.3.1).

Adolescence is also a period of life involving many developmental transitions. These are inclusive of social, psychological and biological changes (Weisz & Hawley 2002). From

a social viewpoint, interpersonal communications occurring with various individuals in adolescence can help frame social development (Larson et al., 2002). In addition to this, many shifts are occurring in an adolescent's social world with the increasing emergence of social relationships with peers and the reoccurring dynamics of breakdowns and new beginnings of various types of relationships (Larson et al., 2002). Adolescence is therefore an important developmental period to focus exploration on around various developing social skills such as effective conflict management.

Research exploring social development recognises adolescence as an impressionable period. Adolescents' social development is more likely to be shaped or impacted given its heightened sensitivity. For instance, prosocial behaviours or an inclination to engage in these behaviours can be somewhat influenced or impacted through an adolescent's social environment (Crone & Achterberg, 2022). Alternatively, unhealthy interactions during this sensitive period can be internalised and contribute to the development of mental health difficulties in adolescents (Yeh, 2011). Crone and Achterberg (2022) emphasise "adolescence as a critical period for social development" (p. 220) and a time where more significance and emphasis is placed on relationships with peers. It is therefore important that therapy better target conflict management as adolescents may not possess the skills to do so effectively. Improvements in conflict resolution skills may help support healthier social interactions with peers and better social development in other areas of adolescence.

2.2.3.1. Impact of conflict engagement.

Conflict can be damaging in various ways to adolescents. Adolescents' relationships with both parental figures and close peers are viewed more negatively where same day conflict has taken place compared to none. In particular, reports of relationship satisfaction

was lower for these individuals (Van Doorn et al., 2009). Conflict itself can also be a precursor for further conflict engagement in adolescents (Chung & Fuligni, 2011). For instance, where conflicts occur within one relationship, such as family, it can lead to increases in conflict with others, such as peers. This can be the case whether this association is co-concurrent, or even one to two days later (Chung & Fuligni, 2011). Adolescent conflict engagement with parents is also linked to various aspects of an adolescent's wellbeing, showing associations with negative mood, problems within school (Timmons & Margolin, 2015) externalising problems (Little et al., 2019; Timmons & Margolin, 2015), internalising problems (Little et al., 2019), maladjustment (Weymouth et al., 2016) and alcohol use (Chaplin et al., 2012). More specifically, Laursen et al. (2016) reported how occurring affect states that are particularly negative within and after adolescent-parent conflict, was shown to negatively harm the relationship. Yeh (2011) found similar findings with parent-adolescent conflict impacting upon decreased wellbeing, such as adolescent aggressive displays and social disengagement. In their research, they highlight how the emotions adolescents experienced had a particular importance in their associations, with rage and resentment mediating these relationships, respectively.

In addition to the above, even the mere presence of family conflict can affect adolescent mental health, with increased levels of internalising symptoms (anxiety, depression and withdrawal; Davies & Lindsay, 2004), behavioural problems and issues with self-esteem (Yaacob, 2006) becoming apparent. Exposure may also elicit more complicated dynamics, with levels of depression, anxiety and withdrawal, being distinguishable between genders (Davies & Lindsay, 2004). For instance, females are affected more by the conflict exposure than males (Davies & Lindsay, 2004). Results are not limited to the above, with externalising issues (Grych et al., 2004), psychological maladjustment (Khaleque et al., 2006)

and future stressful life events (Herrenkohl et al., 2009) all predictive of conflict within the family home.

2.2.4 . Conflict during adolescence.

Conflict during adolescence can be influenced by multiple factors. These can be inclusive of the partner of conflict, dynamics of power, and the developmental phase of the individual. This section focuses particularly upon these factors within adolescent conflict.

The ways in which conflict is managed can vary considerably between relationship affiliations during the developmental phase of adolescence. Conflict behaviours such as coercion are more likely to be utilised by the adolescent with parental figures than in peer relationships (Adams & Laursen, 2001). Adams and Laursen (2001) discusses how these patterns of conflict reflected “more interconnections between neutral or angry affect afterward, power-assertion resolutions, and win-lose outcomes” (p. 107) in adolescent and parent disagreements. Conflict behaviours such as withdrawal and mitigation, however, were more likely to be utilised by the adolescent within peer relationships than with parental figures. Adams and Laursen (2001) discusses how these patterns of conflict reflect “more interconnections between friendly affect after- ward, disengaged resolutions, and equal or no out-comes” (p. 107) in adolescent and peer friendship disagreements.

In particular, Adams and Laursen (2001) discuss how the fragility of relationships and power dynamics are poignant in friend/peer and parental conflicts. For instance, adolescent and parental conflicts may be representative of coercion, as both parties believe that these action style will not impact negatively upon their relationship stability given the obligatory

nature. Similarly, as power between both parties is not equal, dominance may also be a feature of the interaction. Preservation is alternatively a common theme within friendship conflict, thus coercion is avoided to reduce negative consequences of relationship breakdown. In this instance, it does not necessarily mean these individuals will not engage in other coercion. However, given that the peer friendships offer an element of choice and are voluntary in nature, coercion is warranted with caution for adolescent peer relationships. Thus, withdrawal may be a safer option and less effort as a choice of behaviour than negotiation, where fewer stakes are at hand (Adams & Laursen, 2001). Alternatively, peers must reduce passive behaviours to uphold the chances of later rewarding interactions where higher stakes are present (Adams & Laursen, 2001; Laursen, 1993; Laursen et al., 2001).

Overall, within adolescent conflict with parental figures, relationship preservation or stability may be a lesser feature than dynamics of power, resulting in characteristics that reflect the increasing autonomy of this developmental group, such as both being passive and submissive and showing dominating behaviours (Adams & Laursen, 2001). Van doorn et al. (2011) elaborate on the above, highlighting how dominating and power exerting behaviours during disagreements are presented by parental figures. More specifically, their findings indicated that parental figures reported increased use of resolution behaviours of working towards solving the issue, as well as carrying out conflict, relative to adolescents. Parental withdrawal behaviours were also fewer in frequency but alternatively higher in adolescence (Van doorn et al, 2011). Within friendships, adolescents place more priority or emphasis upon relationship stability, taking over from dynamics of mutual power due to their advancing social and communication skills (Adams & Laursen, 2001). Adolescents therefore reflect conflict behaviours pertinent to strengthening and maintaining relationships dictated by choice (Adams & Laursen, 2001; Laursen, 1993; Laursen et al., 2001). Laursen et al.

(2001) extend this idea of behaviours reflecting the need to conserve relationships, explaining that where there is “no history of rewarding interactions ... here is little incentive to negotiate for the sake of amity.” (p. 443), such as with the case of acquaintances. Thus, the adolescent must desire preservation for this to influence behaviours.

In their meta-analysis, Laursen et al. (2001) report how the choice of conflict resolution style can be influenced by the developmental period an individual is in. Overall, their findings suggest that the gravity placed upon coercion and its use reduces as an individual increases in age. In contrast, disengagement and negotiation strategies become more highly prioritised. More specifically, for children, coercion is preferred and disengagement is not often used. Negotiation, however, is preferred during adolescence, with disengagement behaviours being utilised comparably to coercion. Negotiation is also utilised more predominantly by younger adults, with little demonstration of coercive behaviours. Research by Laursen et al., (2001) is pivotal in illustrating the developmental progress in behaviours of designment through lifespan. Overall, the utilisation of more negotiation alongside behaviours of disengagement materialising, implies positive growth in an individual’s competencies in handling conflict, and are potentially inclusive of learning to leave a conflict.

2.2.5. Summary.

Overall, current research has demonstrated that conflict can impact upon an adolescent’s wellbeing, however it is not without its limitations. For instance, some researchers rely upon retrospective measuring (Khaleque et al., 2006) when exploring outcomes. This may bring into question the validity of recall for participants (Van Doorn et al., 2009). Some studies, however, have corroborated findings with these studies whilst using

daily reporting (i.e. Van Doorn et al., 2009; Timmons & Margolin, 2015), demonstrating a more reliable picture of daily experiences of participants and the impact of conflict. Authors of some of the current research presented also express some caution with interpretation given the limits regarding causation (Van Doorn et al., 2009; Yeh, 2011). Similarly, it is also being mindful when comparing findings or making inferences given cultural difference that may be present within parenting behaviors (Yaacob, 2006).

The research presented also demonstrated that the ways in which individuals resolve conflict can develop over time. During these developmental periods, there also appears to be larger dynamics around these choices of behaviours, such as relationship preservation and power dynamics. Limitations, however, are presented similarly to the above regarding self reports and conflicts not being reported as they were experienced. Potentially due to desirability in reporting regarding appropriate conflict management there may be some discrepancies in reliable reporting (Adams & Laursen, 2001; Van doorn et al., 2011). It is also important to recognise some of the strengths of the studies presented. Van doorn et al. (2011) for instance were able to explore differences in conflict behaviours across various stages of adolescence in the same group of people given their longitudinal design. In this section, Adams and Laursen's (2001) findings on the difference in affect experienced in differing relationships was briefly reported. The next section further explores the impact of affect and emotions on conflict.

2.3. Emotions and Emotion regulation during conflict.

Emotions and affect may be displayed differently within a conflict situation. The following section explores the impact of different emotional components, such as affect, emotions and emotion regulation on conflict behaviours. Before exploring these constructs on

conflict, the term emotions and affect will be discussed followed by emotion regulation. This role of emotion regulation, like conflict resolution style, highlights specific developmental advances and this will therefore be explored in relation to adolescence.

2.3.1. Emotions and affect

Research on conflict behaviour investigates different affective states and emotions. The two concepts are similar in nature, and as they will be drawn upon in the following sections, their definitions will be discussed. Defining what constitutes an emotion or affect can be difficult given that the literature varies (Fredrickson, 2001). Keltner and Gross (1999) however describe emotions as “episodic, relatively short-term, biologically based patterns of perception, experience, physiology, action, and communication that occur in response to specific physical and social challenges and opportunities” (p. 468). Whilst emotions reflect more short-term responses, affect is a broader phenomenon that involves one’s feelings that are consciously attainable. Affect can be viewed as the subjective element attached to the experienced emotions. Alongside its existence with emotion, affect can also encompass moods and physical sensations (Fredrickson, 2001).

Emotions have many functions. Informed through appraisals, emotions provide understanding around social interactions and govern one’s choice in reaction. Identities can be developed and refined regarding social groups, along with helping to support intergroup boundaries (Keltner & Haidt, 1999). Fundamentally, emotions can be informative to those around us, providing further communicative insight into the effects of events. Observations of these may then encourage empathic responses of understanding and problem solving in surrounding individuals (Stanley & Burrows, 2003). One person’s emotions can be important

in developing others' perspectives regarding their current state of mind, further to their experienced effects such as their anticipated reaction. Particularly, one's wishes to leave a situation may be indicated to another through anxious displays, or wishes to be defensive through anger (Stanley & Burrows, 2003). Culturally, emotions can inform and construct practices (Keltner & Haidt, 1999). From a biological or primitive perspective, emotion can function as a trigger for appropriate responses of protection to dangerous circumstances, or as a function of gaining nurture. Where pervasive, its expression can be indicative of clinical issues and disrupt functioning (Stanley & Burrows, 2003). Regulation of emotions is therefore important and will be discussed next, specifically identifying its position in adolescence.

2.3.2. Emotion dysregulation and Adolescence.

There are many discrepancies around the definition of emotion regulation and limited measures that effectively capture this complex variable (Gratz & Roemer, 2004; Weinberg & Klonsky, 2009). However, Gratz and Roemer (2004, p. 52) put forward their definition, highlighting the "presence of six separate (albeit related) dimensions of emotion regulation wherein difficulties may occur, including (a) lack of awareness of emotional responses, (b) lack of clarity of emotional responses, (c) nonacceptance of emotional responses, (d) limited access to emotion regulation strategies perceived as effective, (e) difficulties controlling impulses when experiencing negative emotions, and (f) difficulties engaging in goal-directed behaviors when experiencing negative emotions".

Gratz and Roemer (2004) are thorough in their classification and construction of emotion dysregulation and their measure respectively. Gratz and Roemer (2004) reflect upon

some of the current scales and inventories represented within research and how these may be restricted or limited in assessing the full extent of the construct. Difficulties may then arise for some individuals when conducting research with reliance then depending upon more than one measure. Sorman et al., (2021) however, supports the conclusion drawn from Gratz and Roemer (2004) that their measure is comprehensive. For instance, the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (Salovey et al., 1995) excludes a key factor that within a clinical context may be valuable to observe. Gratz and Roemer (2004) argue that this factor is reflective of one's capacity to employ more favourable responses when occurring emotions are more negative, one that is inclusive in their own measure. A similar discussion is raised regarding the comprehensiveness of the Generalized Expectancy for Negative Mood Regulation Scale (Catanzaro & Mearns, 1990). "Awareness, understanding, and acceptance of emotions" (p. 43) are also not recognised in Catanzaro and Mearns' measure which are deemed crucial (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). However, they are recognised by Gratz and Roemer (2004). It is important to mention the Generalized Expectancy for Negative Mood Regulation Scale is still valuable and effective as it does encompass exploring the extent an individual can draw upon an appropriate and successful repertoire of strategies for regulation.

Developmentally, progression is made with emotion regulation capabilities from childhood through to adolescence (Brinke et al., 2020; Silvers et al., 2012; Tottenham et al., 2011; Young et al., 2019). These effects also extend within adolescence itself, with the use of specific regulatory strategies, such as reappraisal, being shown to be utilised less productively by younger adolescents than their older adolescent peers (Silvers et al., 2012). Overall, an important period for acquiring effective strategies could be characterised during adolescence (Vijayakumar et al., 2014).

Arguably, during this developmental period, maladaptive changes can appear (Cracco et al., 2017; Zimmermann & Iwanski, 2014), with a reduction of some adaptive strategies and a rise of maladaptive strategies being utilised (Cracco et al., 2017). Instability of emotions and their elevated reactivity are also common, along with engagement in risky behaviours (Ahmed et al., 2015). Social-emotional challenges can also occur (Stephanou et al., 2016; Young et al., 2019), with the adolescent moving towards self-reliance of regulation in a social climate of significant change and challenges. Most importantly here is the need to be able to effectively adapt emotions accordingly (Brinke et al., 2020; Young et al., 2019). It is not surprising then, that emotion dysregulation in adolescence has become a growing contributing factor explored in mental health problems (Weinberg & Klonsky, 2009). Specifically, dysregulation of emotions shows relationships with anxiety, low mood, behavioural problems (Ahmed et al., 2015; Parise et al., 2019), increased emotional eating (Shriver et al., 2020), and social anxiety (Lougheed & Hollenstein, 2012), demonstrating a heightened vulnerability (Young et al., 2019).

Exploration of the impact of emotion regulation has become of interest given its emphasis in day-to-day life, with regulation tasks becoming a familiar occurrence in relationships (Gross, 2008). Emotion regulation therefore plays a significant and prominent role within flourishing relationships (Bloch et al., 2014; Gross, 2015), altering behaviour and communication of our emotions within a given exchange. For instance, disproportionate displays of anger can break down a relationship indefinitely. Alternatively, the capacity to distinguish and make sense of emotions can facilitate an individual to recognise social signals and inner processes in order to react appropriately in response. In doing so, those who are better regulated tend to be perceived more positively by friends in various social aspects such as sensitivity (Lopes et al., 2005). In order to have optimal social proficiency, good emotion

regulation is needed, particularly in close friendships within adolescence (Schwarz et al., 2012). One interaction that can be affected by dysregulation within peer relationships is choice of conflict resolution, with peers utilising more hostile tactics (Dumessa et al., 2020). The next section focuses upon this in greater detail, exploring how emotions and emotion dysregulation may influence conflict behaviours.

2.3.3. Emotions and emotion dysregulation during conflict.

Relationships can be altered by multiple factors, such as conflict and various experienced emotions (Darrat et al., 2017). Emotional intensity can characterise conflict, eliciting emotions including anger (Seehausen et al., 2012). Moed et al., (2014) demonstrates the influential role of emotions within disagreements, particularly focusing on the conflict continuity. Their research (mediational model) identified that increased numbers of disagreements discontinued by adolescents, as opposed to the parental figure, is related to “longer bouts of reciprocated negative emotion” (p. 1618) that subsequently related to both individuals observing or perceiving the disagreement as unfinished, without reaching some form of resolution (Moed et al., 2014). They give some interpretations regarding these findings. For instance, adolescents during this phase of their development are continuing to grow their regulatory skills as well as still not displaying as accomplished negotiation skills as their parental figures. Therefore, when the parental figure is less inclined to intervene, the conflict may continue for an extended period of time due to the adolescent being left to terminate it, resulting in disagreements being unfinished. In another perspective, the above sequence of behaviours, could then become generalisable (Moed., et al, 2014).

Other factors may also contribute, with the adolescent reducing the repercussions of negative consequences resulting from the conflict continuing, such as privileges being taken away or attention being reduced. The adolescent as a result, may stop the disagreement but still feel unhappy regarding the outcome (Moed., et al, 2014). Results evidence the nature of dysregulation and how detrimentally, conflict can endure when two individuals may be dysregulated (Moed, et al, 2014). When negative emotion is limited and termination is parent-led, conflict can promote skills to compromise. This is facilitated through the development of negotiation and assertion skills to meet one's needs and regulate negative emotions, whilst maintaining the perspectives of others (Moed et al., 2014).

Generally, where there is an increase in negative emotion being expressed (in synchronicity) within both conflicting parties, satisfaction with a verbal exchange can also decline (Main et al., 2016). Emotions and perspectives that are both heard and validated can alternatively help an exchange to be viewed as more adequately resolved (Main et al., 2016; Weid et al., 2007). This can be found when there is a pattern of taking in turns, expressed through a synchronicity or coexistence of emotions that are time-lagged, simply when an individual's emotions follow on from or precipitates the alteration of another's (Main et al., 2016). Contrary to popular belief, conflictual processes benefit from adaptive movement through a variety of emotional expressions, that being both positive and negative (Van der Giessen et al., 2014; Van der Giessen et al., 2013). Essentially, greater instances of emotional variability (concerning 'mother-adolescent dyads') can encourage adolescent openness, moderately reduce parental dominance (Van der Giessen et al., 2014) and reduce conflict frequency (Van der Giessen et al., 2013).

Those with dyadic variability may be better equipped to express their perspectives more concisely and adapt these accordingly, helping more equal dynamics to develop within their interactions. Being fixed however, within either negative or mutual/positive emotions, may reduce the likelihood of resolution, or be indicative of not “adapting well to the emotional demands of such a context” (Van der Giessen et al., 2013, p. 97). There is an implicit need for emotions to be regulated effectively during a conflict interaction. Van Lissa et al. (2017) elaborate further, providing evidence that higher levels of parent-adolescent conflict incidents was predicted by emotion regulation difficulties longitudinally. Molajafar et al. (2015) further highlight the escalation process of conflict occurring due to dysregulation in marital couples. Where skills-based interventions are implemented that directly target emotion regulation, married couples have been shown to engage in less conflict as a result. Through skills awareness, individuals can learn to alter the expression of intense detrimental emotions and reduce emotional escalation, allowing focus to be shifted back to the problem (Molajafar et al., 2015).

Lopes et al. (2011) explored the relationship between an individual’s (aged 18-41) ability to regulate their own and others’ emotions within differencing contexts. Their results indicated that those with less emotional strategies reported higher levels of conflict. Interestingly, this was not mediated by positive and negative emotions. This suggests that increasing and reducing these emotions, is not an important factor in conflict resolution. Rather, the strategic ability to assess the emotional climate of the situation and implement appropriate strategies are needed for resolution (Lopes et al., 2011). Vater and Schrooder-Abe (2015) support this notion and the influence emotion regulation has on effective conflict resolution. Their findings suggest that the regulation strategy of perspective taking in adult couples during a conflict discussion, can lead to behaviours such as problem solving and

support validation (Vater & Schrooder-Abe, 2015). Alternatively, more maladaptive strategies of emotion regulation, such as suppression, demonstrated a negative association with problem solving and support validating behaviours (Vater & Schrooder-Abe, 2015). During marital conflict, regulatory abilities to reduce negative emotions were associated with both partners' productive communication skills, such as compromising, offering solutions and problem-focused conversations (Bloch et al., 2014).

In adolescents, the presence of hostility, anger and depressed affect can even elevate the chances of peer conflict occurring the following day. Conversely, a reduction in following day conflict has also shown associations with more positive affect (Vaccucci et al., 2018). Overall, where anger is concerned, its expression may be outwardly directed in those who exhibit greater levels of trait anger or anger experiences. Cognitively, these individuals may also be limited in their control of these emotions (Kerr & Schneider, 2008). When exploring the emotion of anger in general, its expression in adolescents may alternatively be suppressed at times in order to preserve social relations and reduce consequences that are socially, negatively associated. (Kerr & Schneider, 2008).

Bell and Song (2005) explored the idea that differing emotions would relate to different styles of conflict resolution in adults. Their findings indicated that resolution styles, (specifically compromising, obliging and integrating) were predicted by relational positivity, i.e., positive emotions such as higher levels of respectfulness and sympathy. Greater negative emotion constructs characterised under hostility, self-consciousness, and fear, showed no predictive relationship for conflict resolution strategy. Where relationships were not found, the authors provide a potential explanation. They argue that manipulation of one's behaviours or expressions of emotions may occur, with the desire to influence their conflict partner in

some way. In this regard for instance, the individual may experience an emotion, but may inhibit this in order to reduce potentially undesirable responses from their conflict partner (Bell & Song, 2005). Others have also reported mixed findings with emotion regulation abilities in its influence on chosen resolution style and other associated behaviours. Rizkalla et al. (2008) found that the relationship between emotion regulation and forgiveness likelihood was mediated partially by perspective taking in adults. They argue that regulation of emotions may support an individual's abilities to observe someone else's potential perspective, encouraging a tendency to forgive.

The conflict resolution style of problem solving was also predicted by emotion regulation and perspective taking in a mediation model (Rizkalla et al., 2008). Rizkalla et al.'s (2008) model proposed that this resolution style is associated with those who do not get preoccupied with their negative emotions, rather, they are able to emotionally regulate in order to observe others' perspectives and find better ways of managing the conflict where agreement is mutual. However, engagement in lower fighting (e.g. conflict engagement for personal gain) and higher yielding (e.g. succumbing to others' needs) were better predicted by perspective taking than emotion regulation although still showing some association. Again, the important factors for these styles to be engaged with lies more with one's ability or desire to observe other people's perspectives and their demonstrations of considering others' concerns. Emotion dysregulation and the ability to take others' perspective did not predict the conflict resolution style of avoidance. Rizkalla et al. (2008) suggest that the use of different conflict resolution styles may therefore be influenced by different factors. Even within a work environment, better emotion regulation has shown associations with lower levels of conflict (Curseu et al., 2012; Jiang et al., 2013; Mulki et al., 2015).

2.3.4. Summary.

Overall, research generally reports the importance of emotions and their regulation on choices of conflict behavior. One of the strengths of research exploring the role of emotions during conflict is their dyadic designs in their methodology (i.e. Moed et al., 2014; Van der Giessen et al., 2014; Van der Giessen et al., 2013). Essentially, these studies used conflict conversations that were in real time along with using data from both parties during the conflict. However, their methodology can also be criticized given the processes in which the conflicts occurred. Conflicts were induced unnaturally given participants were prompted to talk over a prior disagreement. Thus, interactions or data resulting from these conflict situations may not reflect how conflicts would actually transpire within these dyads. However, one strength of these studies is the inclusion of data from both individuals during the conflict. Some researchers alternatively chose to employ methodologies where only one individual's self-reports regarding interactions of conflict were explored (i.e. Bell & Song, 2005 & Vaccucci et al., 2018). Results may not necessarily then account for "self-perceived appraisals, emotions, and behavior" that could potentially differ to their conflicting partners accounts (Bell & Song, 2005; p. 49). Bell and Song (2005) propose that the use of multiple methods or qualitative methodologies may help reduce some of these flaws, or help gain further information in emotion and conflict research.

As demonstrated, emotion regulation during adolescence goes through many developmental changes. One explanation regarding these changes and their ability to regulate emotions may involve one's attachment style. The next section explores attachment theory in relation to emotion regulation development and the differences in regulatory skills expressed during adolescence.

2.4. Attachment and emotion regulation

As discussed, the following sections explore attachment theory, specifically with its focus upon adolescence. Exploration of attachment theory will then succinctly lead onto research evidence looking into its influences upon conflict resolution behaviours. As attachment may relate to one's emotion regulation strategies, their relationship with conflict will also be discussed.

2.4.1. Attachment Theory.

Bowlby (1969; 1980; 1982) discusses a theory of attachment in which infants exhibit behaviours of a various nature in order to maintain and facilitate proximity to an individual, usually a parental figure, who is supportive. Proximity seeking is seen as a set of affective behaviours that, from an evolutionary perspective, provide protection to the infant and reduce their distress. Bowlby (1988) argues that security, such as feeling safe and knowing others are there to provide support, is achieved when the infant's behaviours facilitate their regulatory functions. The infant is able to, as a result of this sense of security, explore their surroundings with ease and exhibit better social engagement (Bowlby, 1988).

Zimmermann et al. (2001) highlight how attachment figures extrinsically support the emotional regulation of their infant or child. The infant or child, through their expression of attachment behaviours, such as negative emotions when distressed, learn whether their emotional demonstrations will bring about reassurance and soothing, or will be rebuffed by their caregiver. These attachment dynamics also direct the infant or child as to when and how these demonstrations of emotions should occur (Zimmermann et al., 2001). Overall, infants

and children learn frameworks around their emotional behaviour such as whether to express or inhibit their emotions and whether support seeking is worthwhile (Zimmermann et al., 2001). Despite attachment behaviours being pivotal during infancy, they persist up until after adulthood and reflect thought processes around support seeking rather than survival (Bowlby, 1988).

Bowlby (1988) described how internal working models of ourselves and others are developed and internalised, through interactions with our caregivers. Model of self involves ideas about how worthy and loveable we view ourselves, whereas model of other involves ideas about how responsive others are, their reliability and whether they can be trusted (Lopez et al., 1998). For instance, internalised working models of self and other, such as one as worthy and others as responsive, are developed through interactions with a caregiver who is supportive and caring. An unresponsive caregiver would alternatively help contribute to an internal working model of self and others that is negative (Bowlby, 1973). The primary underpinning of these models are established and contingent upon the types of interactions occurring between the child and the attachment figure. They “provide the child with a general expectation of what relationships are like and guide the child’s affect and behavior in other close relationships (e.g., friendships)” (Weimer et al., 2004, p. 103), such as the anticipatory behaviours of others (Siegel, 1999). As will be discussed in more detail in the following section, regulation of emotions and emotional expression is organised around these internal working models of attachment (Cassidy, 1994; Mikulincer et al., 2003).

Attachment systems can change during adolescence. Although the adolescent’s parental caregiver may remain as a figure of attachment (Bowlby 1969), attachment can also shift from the parental figure and be redirected towards peers (Bowlby, 1988; Donbaek &

Elklit, 2014). Other attachments developed, such as with friends or romantic partners in adolescence or adulthood, are said to be consistent with early internal working models formed (Bowlby, 1969; 1973). Thus, secure attachment relationships with caregivers play important roles (Donbaek & Elklit, 2014). Attachment during adolescence will be discussed further in section 3.6.3.

Behaviours within the attachment system can be categorised into styles (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) use a two-dimensional model inclusive of the self (sometimes referred to as anxiety) and other (or avoidance) and to derive four styles, being secure, dismissing, preoccupied and fearful. Positive or negative views are derived for each dimension, i.e., self as worthy or unworthy and others as trustworthy or untrustworthy, etc (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Whilst attachment can be conceptualised into styles and therefore form a representative basis for multiple relationships, others argue against this perspective on adult attachment (Fraley et al., 2011). There has been recent support for internal working models reflecting different or unique relationship structures, i.e., parental or friend relationships. For instance, an adult with an insecure attachment to a dismissive parental figure in childhood may have a different working model than for that of a present supportive and secure romantic relationship. One may be insecure in a parental capacity but not in the romantic domain (Fraley et al., 2011).

This conceptualisation of attachment models by Fraley et al. (2011) is reflected within their measure, accounting for the measurement of the continuity of attachment dimensions as opposed to categorisation (i.e., Adult Attachment Interview; George et al., 1996). Other theorists' work such as Bowlby (1969) has also gathered recognition and acknowledgment. Research has accelerated in various areas of interest relating to attachment such as the

motivations of individuals' behaviours and areas of well-being since his theoretical input (Ein-Dor & Hirschberger, 2016). Bowlby's ideas and other attachment related research has emphasised a focus upon security for sufficient or adaptive functioning (Vicedo, 2017). Research, however, has somewhat contested this idea, discovering beneficial factors of insecurity (Ein-Dor & Hirschberger, 2016).

There has also been debate raised regarding the presence of internal working models (i.e. Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Fraley et al., 2011) with an implicit view that they must exist. Presumptions are made that interactions impact upon internalised models, which subsequently impact upon behaviours. Each transformation or serial movement is then argued to be hypothetical or philosophical in nature given they cannot be measured (Berghaus, 2011). Other researchers such as Ainsworth and Wittig (1969) however, have objectively measured and observed "inputs and outputs". Berghaus (2011) therefore argues that "no transformations are required to explain how parental interactions with their children affect their children's behavior" (p.8). Bowlby's work has also been scrutinised for its lack of acknowledgment regarding differences in child/parent interactions in observational studies (Vicedo, 2007). The individual differences in attachment styles and emotion regulation will now be discussed.

2.4.2. Individual differences in attachment and emotion regulation.

In light of previous discussions, caregivers play an important role in the extrinsic regulation of their children's emotions. Attachment patterns or internal working models have been shown to predict a child's future abilities to regulate their emotions (Morris et al., 2007). Deactivation strategies are a common response to distressing situations that are developed

through attachment responses from caregivers that were dismissive or adverse in their reactions to an individual's expression of emotions. These avoidant individuals manage the unpleasant experience by denying the distressing event, suppressing uncomfortable emotions and valuing independence. Hyperactivation strategies, however, are responses to distressing situations that are acquired through unpredictable and inconsistent responses from a caregiver to an individual's expression of emotions. In one instance, the individual's needs are rebuffed and ignored and in others they are soothed. Hypervigilance, and over-expression of negative emotions and sensitivity are then sought by the anxious individual, at times, to gain the attention of their attachment figures. Such a reaction can ultimately cause rejection and reinforce and confirm their anxiety. In contrast to attachment insecurity, secure individuals demonstrate emotion regulation that is associated with internalised positive and functional expectations, such as lower expressions of distress and greater understanding (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2011).

Research generally supports this premise. Security has been shown to relate to lower levels of negative affect compared to that in insecure peers in adolescence. This extends to insecurity differences, with avoidant individuals displaying reduced hostility compared to those who were anxiously attached (Cooper et al., 1998). Brenning et al. (2012) provide further evidence during childhood and adolescence, with dysregulation of emotions demonstrating a unique relationship with those with an anxious style, and suppression, such as inhibiting negative emotions, related to an avoidant style. Similarly, in childhood, secure attachments with a mother can relate to perceptions of more effective and less aggressive emotion regulation strategies in children in both peer and parental (mother) situations (Waters & Thompson, 2016).

Maltreatment by parents has also been shown to cause negative effects on regulatory systems during childhood and adolescence. Suppression of emotions, elevated levels of avoidance, expressing more emotions that are negative and overall difficulties with regulating emotions is associated with such parenting behaviour (Gruhn & Compas, 2020). Skripkauskaite et al. (2015) show how the effects of parenting behaviours such as increased parental criticism on increased difficulties in regulating emotions can be bidirectional. Essentially, problems with emotion regulation in adolescents can also consequently impact the adolescent's perceptions of the levels of criticism expressed by the parent. Overall, attachment styles demonstrate different relationships with emotion regulation strategies.

2.4.3. Attachment during adolescence.

Attachment relationships with individuals other than parents, such as friends, evolve and develop within adolescence. Given that multiple attachments may be acquired during this period, the adolescent is required to systematically structure these relationships (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1969;1982). Hierarchical organisations thus develop, where the adolescent will position attachment relationships in a ranked order of supportiveness in times of attachment activation (Bowlby, 1969/1982).

Parental figures still hold some gravity in supporting the adolescents' emotion regulation, particularly in light of the increasing changes and hurdles in their social environment, i.e., schooling or romantic partnerships developing. The adolescent, however, endeavours to increase their autonomy, with other relationships, such as friends, having a significant impact. This can cause parent-adolescent relationships to change, with the parental

figure having to adjust their role, gaining harmony between their child's autonomy and the emotional support provided (Otterpohl & Wild, 2015).

As support may be increasingly provided by others during adolescence, such as friends, these new systems of emotion regulation support may be distinguishable from that of parental figures (Opitz et al., 2012). Opitz et al. (2012) suggest, for example, that "peers may be less likely than parents to encourage involvement in positive situations or to provide viable alternative interpretations to situations, putative resources for situation selection and cognitive change, respectively" (p. 146.). In their review of the literature, Morris et al. (2017) emphasise how, during adolescence, parental attachment figures still have producing effects on their child's regulation of emotions. When isolated from parents, adolescents recount fewer affective states that are positive than when in their presence, and acknowledged that their parental figures still had an impact in aiding effective regulation (Morris et al., 2017). Where hierarchies are concerned in adolescence, research generally indicates mothers have a priority position compared to peer relationships (Rosenthal & Kobak, 2010). However, Freeman and Brown (2001) found mixed results, with preference depending on attachment security. For instance, those with a secure attachment prefer their mother, those with an insecure attachment prefer to choose their romantic partner or close friend. and dismissing individuals preferred to choose themselves.

2.4.4. Attachment, emotion and conflict resolution.

Overall, research indicates relationships between emotions and their regulation on conflict, and the influence of attachment upon emotion regulation. One might argue that

attachment may therefore also be involved in the choices of conflict resolution styles by those involved in conflict.

Ben-Ari and Hirshberg (2009) found that in an adolescent population, avoidant resolution styles were significantly related with an anxious attachment style. Fears of rejection and the breakdown of friendships appeared to be a worry for individuals with this attachment style. Therefore, beliefs that they have little control over the conflict interaction means they often opt to avoid conflict with their peers. On the other hand, those with avoidant attachment styles were less likely to engage in avoiding, obliging, compromising or integrating resolution styles, rather they preferred to use dominating resolution styles.

Integrating and compromising styles were commonly used by securely attached children, whereas avoidance strategies were used less frequently (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009). Essentially, secure individuals appear to have more desire to engage in some form of discourse around the conflict. Results regarding conflict perceptions may offer some understanding around these relationships (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009). Secure individuals appeared to perceive conflict interactions as more positive, while more anxious individuals were negative. One explanation for this may reflect anxious individuals' concerns around the fragility of their relationships, contributing to the perception that conflict may only serve to harm their relationships (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009). Similarly, negative views of conflict were found in avoidant children. These children may be more inclined to view others as less dependable and threatening, and therefore view conflict as risky (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009). On the other hand, securely attached children appear to hold more trust in their peers and their own skills to achieve resolution (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009).

In another study, Creasey et al. (1999) examined the relationship between attachment, emotion regulation and conflict resolution in late adolescent (18-to 22-year-old) peer and couple relationships. The results found that secure attachments were related to better abilities to regulate emotions than insecure attachments, which in turn predicted the strategies insecure individuals employed to manage conflict. The researchers propose that an inability to regulate one's emotions may affect an individual's abilities to negotiate during conflict. Here, negative emotions may distort one's appraisals of the conflict interaction and result in the individual responding impulsively without consideration of the long-term consequences.

With regards to conflict, conflict interactions characterised by "angry, out-of-control arguments" (p. 538; Creasey et al., 1999) were more frequently reported by ambivalent individuals than other attachment styles. This is not surprising given that ambivalent individuals are likely to experience higher levels of hyperactivation strategies to manage emotions (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2011). Alternatively, avoidant individuals were more likely to engage with conflict withdrawal. Creasey et al. (1999) suggest that avoidant individuals are likely to expect attachment figures to be unavailable, and therefore it is not uncommon for these individuals to employ deactivation of emotions and thus withdraw from conflict.

Other researchers, however, have reported different findings in adolescent couples. For example, Creasey and Ladd (2004) found that higher problems in managing conflict was associated with higher levels of confidence in emotion regulation abilities. One explanation for these contradictory findings, are that dismissing individuals are likely to downplay the emotional impact of their significant experiences, such as disagreements with partners. In addition to this, dismissing adolescents may not recognise their interactions as conflict, i.e., they do not display overt behaviours that are indicative of this, such as aggression.

Alternatively, they displayed evidence of difficulties in managing conflict through passive behaviours such as “contempt, belligerence, stonewalling, and defensiveness” (p. 250; Creasey & Ladd, 2004).

Alternatively, fewer problems in managing conflict was associated with lower levels of confidence in emotion regulation abilities for preoccupied adolescents. According to Creasey and Ladd (2004), preoccupied individuals may avoid conflict for fears of relationship breakdown, and consequently withhold their feelings or thoughts. They may alternatively use venting or offloading to their peers as a coping strategy. In line with previous research, however, secure individuals reported better emotion regulation skills and consequently, better conflict strategies.

Overall, the above research regarding attachment, emotion and conflict resolution is not without any methodological critique. For instance, with attachment research there may be a risk of someone’s attachment style impacting upon their self-reporting. For instance, dismissing individuals may under report negative experiences and may report outcomes as more favorably, thus effecting the research results (Creasey & Ladd, 2004). Creasey and Ladd (2004) therefore advise alternatively utilising more than one methodology or resource. Similarly, there were more female participants included within some of the studies presented (i.e. Creasey & Ladd, 2004 and Creasey et al., 1999) with these lacking greatly in male representation. Cultural considerations also appear to have been overlooked within some of these studies, a potentially important aspect in making sense of conflict behaviours (i.e. Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009). Furthermore, Creasey et al. (1999) raise issues of causality and that assumptions cannot be made regarding the directionality of the relationships between attachment and emotion regulation given their correlational design.

2.4.5. Summary

Overall, there appears to be mixed findings with regards to the relationship between adolescent attachment styles and emotion regulation, and their impact on conflict resolution. It appears there may be many reasons for these differences, such as regulation occurring outside of the attachment figure (Creasy & Ladd, 2004), or a particular attachment style generally having differing effects on conflict resolution style. For instance, although the attachment styles presented in the previous studies were measured using different attachment measures, attachment styles underpinned by general fears of attachment figure rejection and being alone, influenced individuals differently. Here, fears of rejection may either cause people to avoid conflict (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009) or alternately become emotionally reactive (Creasey et al., 1999). These nuances in their relationships may be better explored in a mixed methods approach where these differences can be explored in further detail. Similarly, differences in measuring attachment styles, may not allow for comparability between studies.

2.6. Current research aims and objectives.

In light of the above, the current study aimed to explore the research question “How do emotion regulation, attachment related anxiety and attachment related avoidance impact on the ability to resolve conflict?” The current study utilised a mixed methods approach. Part one included a quantitative approach and part two a qualitative approach. Part one explored the impact of attachment related anxiety, attachment related avoidance and emotion dysregulation upon the conflict resolution styles of positive problem solving, conflict

engagement, withdrawal and compliance. Overall, the literature reports mixed findings surrounding attachment and its relationship with conflict resolution. It also reports that higher levels of attachment related anxiety and avoidance are associated with difficulties in regulating emotions and that difficulties in regulating emotion can contribute to conflict management. Research also reports mixed findings regarding the direction of the relationships between some of these variables. For example, with regards to emotion dysregulation, reports of higher levels of confidence in emotion regulation abilities has shown associations with higher conflict behaviours such as defensiveness (Creasey & Ladd, 2004). Others, however, have found that better emotion regulation is related to lower conflict engagement (Molajafar et al., 2015). Given these mixed findings, the direction of the hypotheses were intentionally non-directional. The following hypotheses were derived for each conflict resolution style:

- 1) Attachment related anxiety and avoidance and emotion dysregulation would have a significant relationship with positive problem solving.
- 2) Attachment related anxiety and avoidance and emotion dysregulation would have a significant relationship with conflict engagement.
- 3) Attachment related anxiety and avoidance and emotion dysregulation would have a significant relationship with withdrawal.
- 4) Attachment related anxiety and avoidance and emotion dysregulation would have a significant relationship with compliance.

Part two involved short semi-structured interviews with adolescents from part one in order to answer the question “how do adolescents experience and explain the relationship between attachment style, emotion regulation and conflict management?”. The interview

aimed to explore further the themes derived from part one of the study, allowing for further contextual aspects to be examined. Currently, research using quantitative methodologies have provided mixed results regarding attachments influence upon conflict resolution and how emotion regulation may also contribute (i.e., Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009; Creasey et al., 1999; Creasy & Ladd, 2004). A mixed methods approach, specifically a sequential design, will allow for interviews to be conducted following the quantitative part to help understand the findings from this study further, something that does not appear to have already been done within the current literature.

Overall, both parts of the research question contribute to the area of counselling psychology. As discussed in section '2.2.3.1. Impact of conflict engagement', conflict engagement can have negative consequences on the psychological wellbeing of an adolescent (e.g., Little et al., 2019; Timmons & Margolin, 2015; Weymouth et al., 2016). Understanding the factors that can impact upon how conflict is resolved, may help contribute towards future mental health interventions for helping adolescents better manage conflict. Whilst interventions for conflict management within counselling have been explored, mixed results have been found regarding their success rate (Latipun et al., 2012). For instance, Latipun et al. (2012) found conflicts were reduced utilising their intervention for some adolescents but for others was unsuccessful at helping to develop better conflict management. Various anger management approaches also exist (i.e. Cognitive behavioral anger management training, Feindler & Weisner, 2006; Teen Anger Management Education, Feindler & Gerber, 2008; Aggression replacement training, Goldstein et al., 1998) with one of their purposes being to help reduce aggression in conflict (Feindler & Engel, 2011). Feindler and Engel (2011), however, question their effectiveness to produce outcomes given flaws in methodology when researching their reliability. Similarly, researchers such as Hay et al. (2000) explored the

reliability of a conflict resolution intervention, but on outcomes other than conflict behaviours (i.e. self-concept). Others (e.g. Bosworth et al., 2006) have also found their conflict resolution intervention to be unsuccessful when utilising controls. Overall, within the current literature, it appears that there is some research regarding intervention work and conflict resolution. Whilst there is some research, it appears there is still a need for further exploration. The practical applications specifically relating to this current study are explored and reflected upon in greater depth in section “5.2. Implications for counselling psychology” of this report. This highlights the need to further develop information into understanding conflict resolution so that better intervention may be implemented. Understanding the roles that attachment and emotion regulation have on conflict management will further help identify areas to target within psychological interventions. The next section will discuss this methodology of the current study in further detail.

Chapter Three**Methodology.**

3.1. Methodology

The methodology section will outline the steps chosen to answer the research question and the justification for these choices.

3.2. Methodological approach

The current research adopted a mixed methods approach. Through exploration of the literature (section 3), there appeared to be mixed findings with regards to how attachment variables may impact upon conflict resolution style. A mixed methods approach may allow for these differences to be explored further as well as maintaining the ability to explore the contextual factors involved. Before this will be discussed further, a mixed methodology approach will be defined along with its benefits to addressing the current research question.

Johnson et al. (2007) aim to describe mixed methodology. Through both reviewing the literature and utilising definitions provided by prominent researchers within this methodology, they devised the following definition:

“Mixed methods research is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research; it is the third methodological or research paradigm (along with qualitative and quantitative research). It recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results... Mixed methods research is the research paradigm that ... relies on qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, and inference techniques combined

according to the logic of mixed methods research to address one's research question(s).” (p. 129).

Within their definition, Johnson et al. (2007) clarify when this methodology should be utilised. They explain that this methodology should be utilised where both qualitative and quantitative methodology used together may generate superior findings than either methodology in isolation. Mixed methods therefore provides many benefits. Due to not being restricted to one approach, a wider scope of research questions can be explored. Weaknesses presented in one methodology may be counteracted by the strengths of another when both are used in conjunction (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). For example, quantitative methods may overcome investigator biases that may be present when interviewing participants and analysing the data (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2014). In addition to this, the merging of results from differing approaches can contribute towards more robust evidence (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It can also encourage further information to be drawn regarding a research topic that potentially, may have not been discovered whilst using one method (Almalki, 2016; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Overall “the qualitative data [can] provide a deep understanding of survey responses and statistical analysis can provide detailed assessment of patterns of responses” (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2014, p. 5). Through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods, the researcher can collectively obtain an in depth understanding of a research topic and gain generalisable results to a group of certain individuals (Hanson et al., 2005). There are various different approaches to mixed methods (Creswell & Clark, 2011). For this current study, a sequential explanatory design was utilised and followed as outlined by Creswell and Clark (2011). This design will be discussed further in the next section.

3.2.1. Methodological approach: Sequential explanatory design.

The current study utilised a sequential explanatory design. Quantitative data is the initial focus in this design. Its analysis is completed prior to the completion of the secondary qualitative phase (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Ivankova et al., 2006). The idea is that the secondary part supplements the initial phase, providing further interpretation and expansion upon initial findings (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Creswell & Clark, 2011; Ivankova et al., 2006). Overall, procedurally, there is no fixed protocol regarding participant selection (Ivankova et al., 2006), however it is argued that participants in the qualitative part should be selected from the pool of individuals in the initial phase (Creswell & Clark, 2007) and thus the current study utilised this approach. It is the responsibility of who is conducting the research to decide where the integration of both phases will take place and how part two will explain part one (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Following the completion of part one, decisions need to be made regarding the quantitative findings and which of these will be explored further in the second phase. The qualitative phase may therefore elaborate on aspects such as significant or non-significant findings, exploration around specific variables and why these may be different for various groups of participants (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The quantitative results can therefore be used to direct “data collection protocols or instruments” in the qualitative part (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p.67). This integration phase will be explained in greater detail, further into this section of the report. Integration of findings also took place within the current research, in the discussion section of the report (Ivankova, et al., 2006). Explanation takes place here in terms of how the qualitative findings supplement phase one quantitative findings (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

3.2.2. Ontological and Epistemological underpinnings.

This section of the report takes time to consider the Ontological and Epistemological underpinnings of the current research. Firstly, considerations for positivism are discussed. Positivism draws attention to scientific and objective enquiry of knowledge and research. Testing hypotheses are the primary focus in explaining human experiences (Park et al., 2020). Thus, quantitative methodologies mutually exists with positivism, with its examination of causal relationships. Overall, “generalizable inferences, replication of findings, and controlled experimentation have been principles guiding positivist science” (Park et al., 2020, p. 690). Biases are also limited with positivist reasoning, creating a division between researcher-participant influences (Park et al., 2020). Whilst the current research draws upon positivist underpinnings within the quantitative approach adopted for the first phase, constructivism is emphasised within the accompanying second phase of the current research, providing a contrasting and oppositional stance (Mann & MacLeod, 2015).

Constructivism stresses there is not one singular reality, but rather numerous. Realities are grounded in one’s interpretations and meanings developed through prior experiences within their social surroundings (Mann & MacLeod, 2015). Differentiated from positivism further, constructivism does interfere with the divide between the subjects of research and the team of researchers when considered from a relativists perspective. It is argued that a researcher’s own knowledge or background is impressionable within research (Mann & MacLeod, 2015). Whilst either methodology has their own philosophical underpinning and accompanying limitations, when used within mixed methods they complement each other by minimising these disadvantages. When integration occurs, pluralism becomes the main underpinning epistemology (Ahmed & Sil, 2012; Miller et al., 2008). Pluralism is based upon the idea that knowing is not constrained with there being multiple valuable ways to explore

this within research. When taking into consideration this concept of multiple “valuable ways of knowing”, research can provide more success (Miller et al., 2008, p. 1).

3.2.3. Conclusion

Overall, the current research used a sequential explanatory design (mixed methods) which involved two parts. Quantitative methodology was used for part one and qualitative for the second part. The next two sections outline how part one and two of the study were implemented and how they were integrated together. The next section will firstly discuss part one, the quantitative aspect of the research, followed by part two, the qualitative.

3.3. Part one: Quantitative.

The first part of the study used a quantitative methodology. This section will discuss all aspects, such as the materials, design and procedures, involved in part one.

3.3.1. Participants.

Part one of the research involved a normative sample of 192 adolescent school students. These adolescent school students ranged from 14 to 17 years-of-age. Five different secondary schools were used to recruit within the age criteria of adolescent participants. School access supported the process of acquiring a larger pool of participants. Involvement of four of the schools was acquired during a school careers event.

3.3.1.1. Participant demographics

Tables 1, see below, outline demographic information of the adolescents who were involved in the quantitative aspect of the research. Participant's age, gender, ethnicity and whether English was their first language are all identified below. Overall, more females took part than males, with the majority of participants being white British. The mean age of adolescents was 15.39 (S.D. = 1.17) years.

Table 1

Frequency of Gender, Ethnicity and whether English is a participant's first language.

| Variable | Frequency |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Gender | |
| Male | 67 |
| Female | 121 |
| Missing | 4 |
| Ethnicity | |
| White British | 104 |
| British Pakistani | 11 |
| Mixed Race | 18 |
| British Indian | 9 |
| Irish | 1 |
| Black Caribbean | 2 |
| Black British | 3 |
| Black African | 5 |
| Other | 16 |
| Missing | 23 |
| English first language | |
| Yes | 166 |
| No | 21 |
| Missing | 5 |

3.3.1.2. Participants: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Defined within the current study were several inclusion and exclusion criteria that adolescents were selected according to. These criteria included those discussed below:

- In order to satisfy an adolescent population, participants needed to be between 13 and 17 years of age. According to the World Health Organisation, adolescence is defined as those who are between 10 to 19 years of age (WHO, n.d). This definition is used to define adolescence for the current study. Following initial communications with the main school involved however, regarding access to an adolescent population, the consent process involved and the level of potential engagement by adolescents, a purposive sample of a smaller age bracket of 13 to 17 years was decided upon. Given that access was obtained from the schools at times based on student availability to complete the study, participants included within the study had an age range of 14 to 17 years.
- Adolescents that did not have language and cognitive skills that were deemed to be adequate enough, were not included within the study. This was to help aid the process of adolescents making informed decisions around taking part, full engagement and therefore ethically, taking into consideration the principles of autonomy and justice. Meeting the national curriculum level of reading/key stage for their respective age group, was used as a requirement for participation and sufficient ability. Information regarding this was gained prior to students taking part via the school teacher. There were no exclusions however based upon this criterion.

- Considerations regarding adolescent capacity and consent was also taken into account through the use of Gillick competence. This concludes, “that children who have sufficient understanding and intelligence to enable them to understand fully what is involved in a proposed intervention will also have the capacity to consent to that intervention” (DOH, 2009; p. 33.). Again this information was gained through the responsible adult within the school.

3.3.2. Materials

This section discusses the materials used for the part one, the quantitative aspect of the research. Each of the following materials were administered to participants together in a pack of paper questionnaires, this included:

- Invitation letter to the school or organisation asking to take part (see Appendix 1)
- Information sheet and consent form given to the school or organisations taking part. (see Appendix 2 and 3)
- Information sheet, consent form and Demographics questionnaire for participating students. (see Appendix 4, 5 and 6).
- Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS; Gratz & Roemer, 2004; see Appendix 7).

The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale comprises 36 items in its measure. The scale measures the extent of dysregulation of emotions within individuals, across six distinct categories. These domains are inclusive of the following: “1) Nonacceptance of Emotional Responses (NONACCEPTANCE), 2) Difficulties Engaging in Goal-Directed Behavior (GOALS), 3) Impulse Control Difficulties (IMPULSE), 4) Lack of Emotional Awareness (AWARENESS), 5) Limited Access to Emotion Regulation Strategies (STRATEGIES) & 6) Lack of Emotional Clarity (CLARITY)” (Gratz & Roemer, 2004, p.48). By incorporating the aforementioned subscales, the overall questionnaire offers a comprehensive measurement of emotion dysregulation. Participants respond to each question using a 5-point Likert scale, with item responses ranging from ‘almost never’ at one end of the scale and ‘almost always’ at the other. The measure derives an overall score of items (eleven reverse scored), whereby higher scores demonstrate higher dysregulation of emotions. The current study utilised an overall score. The internal consistency of the measure has been shown to be high across both the populations of adults ($\alpha = .93$; Gratz & Roemer, 2004) and adolescents ($\alpha = .93$; Weinberg & Klonsky, 2009). There have been similar results regarding the measure’s subscales, showing an internal consistency that is adequate or above ($\alpha > .80$ across a sample of adult participants; Gratz & Roemer, 2004 & $\alpha > .76$ across a sample of adolescent participants; Weinberg & Klonsky, 2009).

- The Conflict Resolution Style Inventory (CRSI; Kurdek, 1994; see Appendix 8):

The Conflict Resolution Style Inventory comprises 16 items in total. The inventory was originally constructed to assess the ways adults manage conflict within relationships of a romantic capacity. Slight adaptations were made to the inventory to suit the measurement of peer conflict styles within friendships. The adapted version used within the current study is

that used by Buote et al. (2009) and Weid et al. (2007) with no further adaptations made. The current study used an ‘adolescent friendship’ version of the inventory. The inventory measures the degree to which individuals engage in each of the following four resolution styles: conflict engagement, positive problem solving, compliance and withdrawal. The inventory items are answered on a 5-point Likert scale, with the responses for each question ranging from ‘never’ at one end of the scale to ‘always’ at the other. Each resolution style is determined by using a mean score, with higher scores demonstrating a higher degree to which an individual may engage in a specific style. With regards to the measure’s efficiency in an adolescent population, the overall measure ($\alpha = .79$ & $.83$; Buote et al., 2009) and its subscales (α of $.91$, $.83$, $.88$ and $.77$; Weid et al., 2007), have shown an internal consistency that is adequate.

- The Experiences in Close Relationships - Relationship Structures Questionnaire (ECR-RS; Fraley et al., 2011; see Appendix 9):

The ECR-RS comprises nine items. The underpinning theoretical background of the measure is based upon the two attachment components, as explained in further detail in the literature review section (section 2.1) of the report (Bartholomew, 1994; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), with subscales of both anxiety and avoidance being measured. The measure is able to assess these components within various specified relationships, including either of the following: mother, father, romantic partner and best friend. The measure was slightly adapted using Donbaek and Elklit’s (2014) adaptation of the measure which asks participants to “select the parental figure you feel most closely attached to” (p. 62) in order to determine a parental figure target. No further adaptations were made to their adapted version. A Likert style response system (7-point) is utilised, with a response of ‘strongly disagree’ at the lower

end of the Likert scale, ranging up to ‘strongly agree’ at the higher end of the scale. A mean score is determined for each subscale (four scored reversely), with higher scores demonstrating higher anxiety or avoidance. Internal consistency across mother, father, romantic partner and best friend components were reported as good. The subscale alphas were as follows: .84, .87, .83, and .83 for anxiety and .91, .92, .81, and .85 for avoidance (Fraley et al., 2011). Global score alphas have been reported as good for both the attachment components ($\alpha > .80$; Fraley et al., 2011). This has also been demonstrated within a group of adolescent participants (avoidance $\alpha > .81$ & anxiety $\alpha > .86$; Donbaek & Elklit, 2014).

- Debrief for school and student (see Appendix 10).

3.3.3. Design.

Through reviewing the literature (section 2.1), it was identified that attachment related anxiety and avoidance and emotion regulation can impact upon the use of conflict resolution style. Therefore conflict resolution style was identified as the dependant variable within the current study and the attachment variables and emotion dysregulation as the independent variables. The research question thus asked “How do emotion regulation, attachment related anxiety and avoidance impact on the ability to resolve conflict in adolescence?”

In order to answer this question, four linear multiple regressions were employed to analyse the data. This allowed the researcher to comparatively explore the impact of the three independent variables named above, on an adolescent’s choice of resolution style. With regards to conducting the analysis, the predictor variables were input as the following for all regressions: attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance and emotion dysregulation. A multiple

regression was conducted for all four conflict resolution styles, resulting in a regression analysis for each of the following dependant variables: positive problem solving, conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance. Multiple regression was chosen as the analysis in order to keep the attachment variable continuous whilst simultaneously being able to explore the impact of all predictor variables. Keeping the attachment variable continuous was in line with the attachment measures underpinning theoretical background (ECR-RS; Fraley et al., 2011). A multiple regression was deemed a more appropriate choice of an analysis than a moderation/mediation analysis given the aims, research question and prior findings within the literature. The research question is concerned with the impact of attachment related anxiety and avoidance and emotion dysregulation upon conflict resolution style rather than the pathways in which emotion regulation may play a role between attachment and conflict resolution styles. Given that prior research shows there are many changes occurring to an adolescent's attachment systems and emotion regulatory abilities during this developmental phase, the part one phase aimed to explore the impact of these variables only upon conflict resolution style. This then allowed exploration of these findings in further detail in the phase two interviews. The research aimed to merely explore the impact of these variables given the changes occurring within these two related concepts. Logistically, the results from a multiple regression also helped for a less complicated follow up phase two for adolescents during interviews than exploring potential findings from a moderation/mediation analysis, but was still in line with the need for further exploration of the current literature. The next section will cover the measures and other materials utilised.

3.3.4. Ethical considerations regarding consent.

As discussed in the prior section, ‘3.3.1.2 Participants: Inclusion and exclusion criteria’, decisions regarding the current research process were made to ensure ethically sound research was being carried out. One further aspect of this regarded the consent process of the adolescent. Given that the age of some participants was 16 and below, consent was gained through a responsible adult within the institution, *loco parentis*. The BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2014) outlines how gaining consent via a school is an appropriate action. They state that “where the research procedures are judged by a senior member of staff or other appropriate professional within the institution to fall within the range of usual curriculum or other institutional activities” (BPS, 2014, p. 17), consent can be provided by the school, via a legally responsible adult within their team. A legally responsible teacher was thus used as the means of gaining consent to complete the research with their school students. Responsible adults were briefed by the researcher around the procedural aspects of being involved in the research, allowing the responsible adult to assess the appropriateness for students and whether they would want to give consent. Further, more detailed procedural aspects of this will be explained in section, ‘3.2.5. Procedure’, which is to follow. For participants who were above the age of 16, it was required that consent was obtained from the participant using a separate consent sheet (see Appendix 5).

3.3.5. Procedure

Invitation letters were distributed to schools, asking for their permission to access the school and gain consent to invite their adolescent students to participate (see Appendix 1). In addition to this, an information sheet (discussing study details such as confidentiality of information gained, study aims, how to contact the researcher, etc), a consent form including relevant information regarding what consenting entails (see appendix 2 & 3), and a debrief

sheet (see Appendix 10) were provided. The schools/responsible adults were also given a copy of an example questionnaire pack that would be offered to students, so an informed decision regarding the appropriateness for student participation could be made (as outlined in the previous section, '3.2.4. Ethical considerations regarding consent'). This included the information sheet, consent form, all four questionnaires and debrief sheet (see Appendix 4 through to 10). Discussions were also had between the researcher and teacher regarding the interviewing process (i.e. recording) and how the questions would involve asking about an adolescent's attachment style, conflict styles and how they manage their emotions. Following the responsible teacher being shown these materials, they were given the opportunity by the researcher to address any concerns or queries they had either through email or face to face. If the responsible teacher within the school was happy for their students to participate and thus give permission, they were asked to fill out the appropriate details on the consent form (Appendix 3). The researcher received the consent form before any research commenced. This process gained consent for part one questionnaires and part two interviews and the audio recording of these. The study then commenced.

All school students were provided with a separate information sheet from the responsible adult (see Appendix 4). The aim was to present the adolescents with an understanding and overview of what the research would require them to do, regarding both part one questionnaires and part two interviews (and the audio recording of these). Similarly, participation was emphasised to the adolescents as voluntary for both parts; even if students completed part one, they did not have an obligation to complete the part two interviews. Adolescents were also told that the researcher was happy to discuss all queries. It was then requested that all volunteering adolescents complete the required fields on the consent form (see Appendix 5). Part two interview consent was also obtained through this process in the

case they later volunteered. Those who were 16 and under were also asked to complete a consent sheet, despite legal consent being gained through the responsible adult, this was in the form of an assent process rather than consent. This was done to facilitate good practice providing the adolescent with a means of indicating their willingness to take part. All students and the school were told they could withdraw from taking part at any moment until data analysis, and that if they chose to do this, they did not have to offer an explanation.

Students were then directed to continue with filling out the questionnaires (see Appendix 6 to 9). Students were seated in a quiet space distanced from their peers and were reminded to complete these on their own. It was again explained to students that they did not have answer any questions they did not want to for whatever reason and that they could omit these. Students were directed to tell the researcher or a present teacher once finished, so questionnaires could be placed into an anonymous pile. Consent forms were kept in a separate pile to questionnaire packs to maintain confidentiality. A debrief sheet (Appendix 10) was then offered out to students. Again this identified the researcher's contact details, inviting the students to address any queries if needed. It was explained to those involved that when interviews were ready to commence, contact would be made. Updates were made to the consenting school regarding timescales for interviews. After data collection was completed, data were then analysed. Once data had been analysed, the integration of part two of the research then commenced. This will be discussed more extensively in the sections following.

3.4. The integration of a mixed methods design: Introduction to part two.

Following the quantitative analysis of part one, the researcher then made decisions regarding part two interviews. Given the sequential design, phase two was used to illuminate

certain findings from part one, exploring these further. The researcher decided to explore further the non-significant results that arose in part one. Although the results will be discussed further in the results section (section 4), a brief summary will be discussed here to explain the rationale for decisions regarding the interview phase and the sequential design.

In short, phase one indicated some non-significant results. With regards to the attachment variables, only avoidance had a significant impact upon some of the conflict resolution styles, with the majority having no significant impact. Emotion deregulation, however, did consistently impact upon the conflict resolution style utilised by the adolescent. The aim for part two interviews was therefore to explore further why attachment may or may not impact upon conflict resolution style, enriching these findings further.

The interviews still focused upon the potential relationship between attachment and emotion dysregulation with adolescent's conflict resolution style, however, attachment became the primary focus within the interviews, exploring this variable further. The interviews comparatively explored the potential relationship of attachment and emotion dysregulation on conflict resolution style across differing relationship structures, such as a parental figure and a friend. In doing so, the researcher was able to explore the attachment variables across two different relationships, in the hope to explore these variables during conflict further. Further to this, phase one measured the attachment variables with their parental figure and the ways the adolescents managed their conflicts with their peers. The interviews alternatively explored the impact of the attachment relationship with the person they had a conflict with, thus allowing the researcher to also explore the potential contextual aspects of the attachment relationship when managing the conflict. The research question for phase two was therefore "How do adolescents experience and explain the relationship

between attachment style, emotion regulation and conflict management?” The process of phase two interviews will be discussed further in the next section.

3.5. Part two: Qualitative.

Part two took the design of a qualitative methodology, in utilising a semi-structured interview followed by Thematic Analysis to analyse the data. The following sections will discuss all aspects of the research involved in part two, the qualitative phase.

3.5.1. Materials: Semi-structured Interview.

A semi structured interview was utilised for part two of the research. Semi-structured interviews are beneficial where topics of interest within interviews may be more complex in nature, and provides opportunities for the researcher to encourage the participant to expand upon or clarify what they have discussed. The adolescent population within this current study may have been diverse in their relational backgrounds relating to conflict experiences and therefore a standardised interview may limit exploration compared to one that is semi structured (Barriball & While, 1994). Semi-structured interviews still provide a reliable and valid approach by ensuring equivalence in meaning within questions across participants, even when exact wordings are not utilised at times. It can therefore be argued that semi-structured interviews can reflect standardisation and help with comparability (Barriball & While, 1994).

The interview schedule that was devised can be found in Appendix 11. This interview schedule was constructed based on the results from part one. As discussed in section 3.4, phase two aimed to explore the attachment results further, by exploring the relationship

between attachment, emotion dysregulation and conflict resolution within different relationship structures (i.e., parent and friend). The questions were therefore written to facilitate the process of adolescents exploring how they may describe the relationship between these variables as well as contrasting these across different relationships. For example, participants were asked to discuss how their relationship with a parental figure and a friend impacted upon how they managed conflict with each of these individuals. These questions were followed by asking the adolescents to make comparisons between their responses to either individual and why these may or may not have differed. Context was also emphasised, with adolescents being encouraged to think about and reflect upon their own experiences of conflict in the past. An example of some questions that were used to encourage discussion might include “Overall how do you think the quality of your relationship with both {x} and {x} affected the way you reacted towards them in these arguments?”, “When feeling [x] with [person 1] how in control did you feel?”, “How did your feelings of control compare to each other when in conflict?”. Although relationships structures focused on comparisons made between a parental figure and a friend, adaptations were made along the way if students could not do this. For instance, one of the adolescents discussed their experiences with their boyfriend as she characterised him as one of her friends. Some of the questions were derived by examining existing attachment and emotion regulated questionnaires/interviews, such as the Attachment interview (George et al., 1996), ECR-RS (Fraley et al., 2011) and DERS (Gratz & Roemer, 2004), etc. Where some of the questions were sourced, they were adapted to fit the context of the research question and were open ended in nature. Overall, all questions written aimed to facilitate answering the research question. As the interview was semi-structured, follow up questions could be used to seek clarification and further information, offering both flexibility and consistency. All participants were given all the interview prompts except where information had already

arisen spontaneously. A pilot interview was also conducted with the aim of improving any issues regarding the wording or understanding of the questions. This pilot was conducted with the first adolescent who volunteered to interview. Following the pilot, the researcher identified no issues and the semi-structured interview remained the same.

The recording of interviews was carried out via secure equipment (i.e. password protected), from which they would then be transcribed. The transcription process reflected more of a naturalism approach (Oliver et al., 2006). Data was transcribed verbatim and included the transcription of utterances or interjections such as “erm”. The transcription represented the exact use of words the adolescents used. Nonverbals or time of pauses however were not included within the transcription. Given the interviews were not video recorded non verbals could not be included. There were no instances where an adolescent asked to finish the interview early or withdraw. Similarly, no interview/study-related queries from the adolescents were asked before the interviews commenced. Where adolescents did ask questions, this revolved around their interest in the researcher’s academic studying and what this involved, i.e. job prospects. The researcher used this opportunity to encourage rapport building with the adolescents. It also provided the adolescent with some context regarding the reasons for the interviews. Due to variations in levels of engagement from the adolescents, there were differences in the length of the interviews. Some adolescents struggled with the process of deeper exploration providing short and brief answers. In order to try and overcome this, the researcher adapted their questioning style by using prompts to encourage further exploration. Overall, the interviews lasted between 14 and 33 minutes, with the average length of interview being 23 minutes.

3.5.2. Thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was selected for the part two interview analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe the analysis as a set of procedural steps that are used to illuminate and reveal themes within a body of text such as interviews or any other qualitative data. Thematic analysis has multiple advantages, namely offering researchers an approach to qualitative analysis that is flexible (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Theoretically, the analysis does not advocate a specific assumption, therefore it provides this flexibility whilst still equipping researchers with the capacity to gather a comprehensive and well-rounded description of participant information (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Similarly, the epistemological position is also variable and not constrained to one specified. The analysis can therefore “be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise the importance of following the outlined analytical process, while simultaneously offering flexibility in application. Balance is therefore provided between either of the two, so that thematic analysis is not too tied or fixed within certain limitations, reducing its adaptability. The application of the six steps of the analysis that Braun and Clarke (2006) advocate, is described in section 3.5.5.

Considerations were made regarding other types of qualitative analyses such as Discourse Analysis, Grounded Theory, Narrative Analyses and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Thematic analysis, however, was deemed most appropriate given the research question and aims of the mixed methods design. Discourse analysis, for instance, moves away from the experiences of the interviewee, seeking to alternatively unearth how discourses or language can impact upon a certain research area, through construction of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Willig, 2014), a focus that was not the aim of the current research. The qualitative aspect of the research also aimed to be explorative

around relationships between areas of interest following on from part one results. The research did therefore not peruse any theory development which is the intended goals and basis of Grounded Theory (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). Braun and Clarke (2021) advise that when the aims of one's research is to recognise, explain and make sense of patterns within the interview data, thematic analysis may be deemed more appropriate than grounded theory. Similarly, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis did not align with these aims with its focus being "to explore the 'lived experiences' of the research participants" (Alase, 2017, p. 9), rather than exploration around multiple areas of interest. Braun and Clarke (2021) advocate that thematic analysis is more appropriate than Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis where one of the aims of the research is to help develop practice through recommendations; more specifically where outcomes need to be developed from data that is representative of "thematic statements (shared meaning-based themes)" (p. 42). This is in line with the aims of the current research whereby the research questions are devised in order to bring forth therapeutic implications to counselling psychology. Overall, given the above considerations, Thematic Analysis was deemed to be more appropriate given the nature of the second phase of the research which aimed to follow on and explore further the results from part one.

3.5.3. Participants and saturation.

All adolescents involved in the interview phase attended the same secondary school. This was due to the available access to schools at the time of completing the research. Following a discussion between the researcher and the school involved in the interviews, the decision was made to ask adolescents if they would like to volunteer to take part in the interviews. This was again due to accessibility as adolescents teaching schedules varied daily

along with the researcher and the responsible teacher involved. Adolescents were again those who had taken part in phase one and were only selected on the basis of the inclusion and exclusion criteria as discussed in part one (see section '3.3.1.2. Participants: Inclusion and exclusion criteria'). Selection was also on a first come basis. Overall, 10 adolescents took part in the interviews phase. Whilst some researchers have established within a region of 12 interviews (Ando et al., 2014; Guest et al., 2006), 10 interviews within the current study was deemed enough to have satisfied answering the research question.

With regards to establishing a sample size for a thematic analysis, there appears to be some debate regarding how this may be quantified (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Whilst some promote the use of saturation; whether these forms are data, theme or meaning driven, others recognise problems with using these for thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). For instance, this perspective emphasises that themes are innately present within the data and ready to be discovered. This alludes to discovery becoming the aims of the analyst, moving away from how thematic analysis is conceptualised (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Rather, new understandings are always possible given that construction of themes is a reflexive process (Mason, 2010) and since the researcher is continuously engaging with the data throughout the process of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Sim et al. (2018) argue that the decisions made by the researcher are continuous throughout the process of the research and is context specific.

Braun and Clarke (2022) alternatively propose that data richness should be considered with regards to the research aims as opposed to relying upon specific rigid processes. The size of the participant sample needs to be reflective of the research purpose (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Where the research has a particular target population and where research aims are not

as broad and are more isolated, a smaller number of participants is deemed to be appropriate. This is also the case when presented with richer data extracts (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Within the current study, the aims meet the above criteria given the questions specificity and inclusion/exclusion criteria. Braun and Clarke (2022) also argue that ‘theoretical sufficiency’ can be advantageous to consider when making decisions regarding the adequacy of data. Essentially, where it is deemed that depth has been satisfied in relation to understanding for theory development, the collection of data ends (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Conceptual depth/density are also reflective of this (Nelson, 2016). Even though these approaches indicate that theory building is the main aim, focus is placed upon meaning, specifically richness is the determining factor to assess the size validity (Braun & Clarke, 2022). As indicated by Braun and Clarke (2022) “informational or meaning sufficiency seems a useful concept for the point at which to stop data collection in TA, and it is only something that can reflexively be determined in situ” (p. 34). Within the current data it was deemed that depth and density had been reached at 10 interviews and therefore data collection was stopped at this point. Data saturation, however, was not absolute in determining when data collection stopped. There were also some pragmatic aspects to stopping data collection at 10 interviews. Given that participants were drawn from a school and were selected on the basis of availability and willingness to engage, 10 interviews were deemed sufficiently feasible to obtain towards the end of data collection. A larger number of participants may have contributed towards disruption of teaching. For example, too many adolescents entering and leaving class during teaching.

3.5.4. Participant demographics

The table below (Table 2) gives the age of each adolescent interviewed, along with their gender, their pseudonym and interview number. Overall, six males and four females took part, with their ages ranging between 14 and 17 years.

Table 2

Demographics table including the age of each adolescent interviewed, their gender, their pseudonym and interview number.

| Interview | Pseudonym | Gender | Age |
|-----------|-----------|--------|-----|
| 1 | Calvin | Male | 17 |
| 2 | Samantha | Female | 15 |
| 3 | Jack | Male | 15 |
| 4 | Luke | Male | 17 |
| 5 | Thomas | Male | 14 |
| 6 | Harriet | Female | 15 |
| 7 | Holly | Female | 15 |
| 8 | Ryan | Male | 16 |
| 9 | Louise | Female | 14 |
| 10 | Daniel | Male | 17 |

3.5.5. Procedure

Interviews took place within an isolated room away from any noise. This was to ensure there was minimal disturbance and that confidentiality was upheld. Although consent was gained in part one, participants were provided with the information sheet (see Appendix

4) to remind them of the study's details. The researcher reiterated details regarding their right to withdrawal and omission of question responses, as stated in section 3.2.5. A brief introduction regarding what the interview would involve was also given by the researcher, followed by responding to the adolescents' queries. Again, although consent was gained at the earlier stage of the research process (part one, see section 3.2.5 for a reminder), for the recording of interviews verbal consent was obtained again. Once the researcher was satisfied with the adolescents' understanding of the interview process, adolescents were then asked if they wished to proceed. The interviews then commenced. The semi-structured interview schedule was utilised and adolescents were aware the researcher would be referring to this. Once completed, debriefing then took place, similar to section 3.2.5, where participants were given a debrief sheet (see Appendix 10), which included the contact details of the researcher, and any queries were responded to.

3.5.6. Thematic analysis steps and how these were achieved

The next part of the report explains the steps of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis and how the researcher achieved these within their own analysis. Given that the researcher was aware of various theoretical constructs related to attachment, conflict and emotion regulation, the analytical approach was therefore somewhat theoretically driven (theoretical/deductive). However, the researcher also aimed to maintain an objective stance in order to observe themes driven from the data, maintaining a balance between deductive and inductive analysis. Furthermore, the researcher focused on identifying themes by focusing on the "explicit or surface meanings of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006; p.13). Coding therefore took a semantic approach. As a latent approach involves aspects of interpretation of the data

(Braun & Clarke, 2006), the researcher chose a semantic approach in order to reduce the probability of making any misinterpretations or incorrect assumptions of the data.

Phase 1: Data familiarisation

In order to develop familiarity with the data, it is advised that the researcher begin entrenching themselves within the contents of the interview transcripts. This can initially be done at the transcribing phase (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through re-reading the data on multiple occasions, the researcher was provided with the opportunity to begin noticing and identifying any common patterns or themes that occur throughout the transcripts. Here the researcher paid attention to the data in order to begin shaping further meaning. Here the researcher made notes when reading through the document, noting down any early interpretations or potential codes that were to be revisited or refined when the analysis commenced.

Phase 2: Initial code generation

This phase involves the formal analysis of the data through coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Throughout the coding process, the researcher wrote notes or codes next to the transcript text. Following this, the researcher copied and pasted extracts of the interview into a separate word document in order to collate similar codes. An example of coding can be found in Appendix 12.

Phase 3: Theme searching

Once coding of the entire data set has been achieved, theme searching can commence. During this phase, identification of possible themes takes place. The researcher starts to categorise together compatible extracts by making sense of the data. Collated codes can then be arranged into overarching themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Some themes may have subthemes while others may stand alone. Here the researcher printed out the codes with a small synopsis and moved the codes around in order to compile into relevant themes.

Phase 4: Theme review

This phase comprises further refining themes to ensure that themes are distinct and clear. Refinement involves two levels; ensuring that extracts “cohere together meaningfully” into patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91) and that all themes are reflective of the overall data set. Here the researcher re-worked extracts that, upon reflection, did not fit into a particular theme by moving them to a more appropriate theme. Similarly, the researcher refined the themes by creating subthemes.

Phase 5: Theme defining and naming.

This phase involves defining each theme by developing a narrative or story about what each theme captures (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In order to do this, the researcher considered how the theme related to the research question, in particular how adolescents describe factors that contribute to conflict engagement. Here, further refinement of subthemes occurred. A part of this process ensured that there was no overlapping amongst themes. Along with defining the themes, names for each theme were identified to capture their essence.

Phase 6: Report write up.

Following completion of part 5, the report is then developed. The report provides a story or overall picture that the interviews represent. The aim of the report is to also convey a valid and authentic representation of the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher achieved this by presenting data extracts that illustrated the significance of the account or theme being discussed in the text. In addition to this, the researcher aimed to present more than one example of extracts (where permitted) for each point discussed to support its prevalence.

3.5.7. Reliability

The rigor of qualitative research can be strengthened through various procedures utilised by the researcher (Noble & Smith, 2005). The first utilised within the current research was reflexivity (Mays & Pope, 2000; Rose & Johnson, 2020). The researcher here is conscious and explorative around their life experiences or biases that could be impressionable on various methodological procedures (Mays & Pope, 2000; Rose & Johnson, 2020). In order to do this, the researcher wrote personal reflections throughout the process of conducting interviews to encourage this reflexive process. Of particular reflection here was the researcher's personal experiences of conflict within relationships. Peer debriefing was also a part of this rigor (Rose & Johnson, 2020). A party who has more qualified experience can provide guidance through encouraging reflection and critique upon methodological decisions made. As the project was overlooked by supervisors, supervisors helped the primary researcher engage in processes that encouraged justification of the research procedures (Rose

& Johnson, 2020). Triangulation, another factor of reliability (Bashir et al., 2008), was also a big part of the study's enquiry. Reductions in biases can occur when additional approaches are introduced. Within the current study and as explained in section 3.2.1, a mixed methods sequential explanatory design was utilised, whereby the quantitative analysis conducted for part one of the study was followed up by a part two qualitative phase. Validity can therefore increase with the contrast in findings (Bashir et al., 2008; Mays & Pope, 2000).

3.5.8. Risk management and ethical considerations.

No risks were foreseen by the researcher to occur directly to those involved. However, as both phases involved adolescents conversing about their relationships, emotions and conflicts, researchers were mindful some unintentional discomfort may occur. Debrief sheets (Appendix 10) that were handed out were used in these instances to direct the adolescents to the appropriate places to gain support. In this case, to their school's counselling service or GP. There was also school staff present at the time in case any issues were raised. If adolescents disclosed any personal difficulties before or during the research, the adolescent was signposted to support resources by the researcher. These adolescents were again made aware of the capacity and circumstances in which the researcher was attending the school. Similarly, if there were any potential safeguarding issues/risks, these were reported to the appropriate responsible teacher within the school and preferably with consent. One safeguarding issue arose during the completion of the research. During an interview one adolescent disclosed they sometimes self-harmed in order to manage their difficult emotions during conflict. Following completion of the interview, the researcher discussed this safeguarding with the adolescent. The student was very forthcoming with gaining support and asked about how she could seek support from mental health services. The researcher

signposted the adolescent to seek support from her GP and supporting staff within the school. The researcher reiterated the boundaries of confidentiality and how this information would need to be disclosed to the teacher helping with the research. The adolescent was happy with this and following the interview the researcher passed on this information to the teacher. The teacher informed the researcher that the adolescent later sought support from appropriate services.

3.5.9. Confidentiality

The current research obtained multiple types of data and confidential information. This included electronic information such as an SPSS data set and audio file recordings of the interviews, as well as Word documents of their accompanying transcripts. A device secured with password access stored these, and were retrievable by the project's research team only. Similarly, institution filing cabinets with protected access were used as a storage facility for paper information such as completed questionnaire packs and adolescent and teacher consent sheets. Again, this was retrievable by the project's research team only. All of the above will be retained for a minimum of three years after the thesis has been completed.

Adolescents and the consenting adults involved were made aware that the write up of the project would ensure their anonymity within the data presented. If those involved wanted to know the research outcomes, it was advised a summary would be given at the end of the project. Consent forms collected were also compiled away from completed questionnaires and interview data, removing the identities of the adolescents from the data. The researcher also removed any information that indicated the identity of the adolescents from both part one and part two data within the write up and prior to storage. Pseudonyms and anonymity codes

were assigned. Adolescents were informed that confidentiality could be broken if there was risk deemed to themselves or others.

3.5.10. Feedback of results.

Students and the schools who participated were informed they could receive a results summary. Whilst ensuring anonymity and suitability for the lay person, a synopsis was available for those who requested it.

3.5.11. Summary.

In summary, a mixed methods approach, specifically a sequential design, was employed. The next section follows on from this methodological design section, outlining the results that arose from the data analyses. First the quantitative results will be discussed followed by the qualitative results.

Chapter Four

Results

4.1. Results

The following two sections discuss the results for both phase one, the quantitative stage, and phase two, the qualitative stage of the study. The quantitative and qualitative results will be discussed in separate sections. Firstly, the quantitative results will be presented.

4.2. Quantitative Results

Presented in this section is the phase one, quantitative results. This section will outline details regarding data entry, prior tests run before the analysis and the following regression analyses.

4.2.1. Data entry and handling.

The appropriate data analysis was run utilising SPSS Version 24 and onwards. A total of 192 participants' data was entered into the data set. Where data was missing from the questionnaires, these were entered into SPSS as discrete missing value under -99. Following subscales being computed, a total of 46 missing values were entered. Once data input was completed, the data was cleaned. Participant numbers were selected at random, where the researcher would then double check the data entry with the accompanying questionnaires. Similarly, frequency graphs were used determine any errors in data entry, if any. Following any correction to errors in entry, subscales were then computed. In order to assess whether parametric assumptions were met within the data, tests of normality were run (see the next section).

4.2.2. Test of normality.

Histograms and Q-Q plots were inspected visually for each variable included within the analyses. It was identified that ECR-RS anxiety was not normally distributed, demonstrating a strong positive skew. ECR-RS avoidance also demonstrated a slight skew. Skewness and kurtosis scores also demonstrated values below 1, except for ECR-RS anxiety. Despite the skew in the ECR-RS anxiety variable, all other variables appeared to be normally distributed. All variables were therefore included within the analyses. The skewness in the ECR-RS anxiety data could not be easily rectified. Most scores fell at the lower end of the scale and may therefore just reflect a feature of the adolescent population given these were non-clinical participants, where anxiety may just be low.

4.2.3. Introduction to Data analysis

For the quantitative part of the study four multiple regressions were utilised. Before the multiple regressions were run, tests to determine whether its assumptions were met were carried out. Tests demonstrated that assumptions of normally distributed residuals of the regression (see Appendix 13 for P-P Plots), homoscedasticity (see Appendix 13 for scatter plots) and absence of multicollinearity (see Appendix 13 for correlations tables; Brace et al., 2009) were met. The variables of ECR-RS Anxiety, ECR-RS Avoidance and DERS (emotion dysregulation) scores were entered into four regressions as predictor variables. Each regression examined a different dependant variable, exploring each of the CRSI subscales: positive problem solving, conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance. Before discussing the regression analyses, descriptive statistics will be presented.

4.2.4. Descriptive statistics.

Each of the variable's mean scores and a Pearson's correlations table can be found in Tables 3 and 4, respectively. Overall, adolescents demonstrated higher mean scores for ECR-RS Avoidance than ECR-RS Anxiety. Mean scores also demonstrated that adolescents engaged in more positive problem solving and withdrawal conflict resolution styles than conflict engagement and compliance. Pearson's correlations identified that the DERS demonstrated significant positive weak to moderate relationships with conflict engagement, compliance and withdrawal conflict resolution styles and a very weak but significant negative correlation with positive problem solving. With regards to ECR-RS Avoidance, a very weak positive relationship was demonstrated with the resolution style of withdrawal and a very weak negative relationship with positive problem solving conflict resolution style. ECR-RS Anxiety demonstrated very weak to weak positive relationships with resolution styles of compliance, withdrawal and conflict engagement.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics for ECR-RS Anxiety, ECR-RS Avoidance, DERS and CRSI: Positive problem solving, CRSI: Conflict Engagement, CRSI: Withdrawal and CRSI: Compliance.

| Variable | Mean | <i>SD</i> |
|--------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| ECR-RS Anxiety | 2.28 | 1.71 |
| ECR-RS Avoidance | 3.14 | 1.37 |
| DERS | 100.72 | 26.12 |
| CRSI: Positive problem solving | 11.74 | 3.97 |
| CRSI: Conflict engagement | 10.94 | 4.23 |
| CRSI: Withdrawal | 11.23 | 3.53 |
| CRSI: Compliance | 10.11 | 3.53 |

Notes: SD = Standard Deviation; n = 181

Table 4

Pearson's correlations for ECR-RS Anxiety, ECR-RS Avoidance, DERS and CRSI: Positive problem solving, CRSI: Conflict Engagement, CRSI: Withdrawal and CRSI: Compliance.

| Variable | CRSI: Comp | CRSI: Withd | CRSI: ConEng | CRSI: PPS | DERS | ECR-RS AV | ECR-RS ANX |
|------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|---------|--------------|---------------|
| ECR-RS ANX | .136* | .281*** | .225** | -.022 | .397*** | .362*** | |
| ECR-RS AV | -.083 | .153* | .114 | -.271*** | .228** | | |
| DERS | .337*** | .592*** | .535*** | -.181* | | | |

Notes: CRSI: Comp = CRSI Compliance, CRSI Withd = CRSI Withdrawal, CRSI ConEng = CRSI Conflict Engagement, CRSI: PPS = CRSI: Positive Problem Solving, ECR-RS AV = ECR-RS Avoidance, ECR-RS ANX = ECR-RS Anxiety, DERS = DERS.

* $p < .05$. ** $p = .001$. *** $p < .0005$

4.2.5. Regression analysis 1: CRSI – Positive problem solving

Using the enter method, a multiple regression analysis was computed to explore the relationship between ECR-RS anxiety, ECR-RS avoidance and DERS scores with CRSI: positive problem solving. A significant model emerged for all three predictors, $F(3,177) = 6.96, p < .001$. The model explained 9% of the variance in problem solving (Adjusted $R^2 = .090$). The regression coefficients for each of the predictor variables are shown below in Table 5. ECR-RS Avoidance made the largest contribution displaying a significant and negative association. This was followed by the DERS which also displayed a significant and negative association. ECR-RS Anxiety, however, did not make a significant contribution.

Table 5

Unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients of ECR-RS anxiety, ECR-RS avoidance and DERS entered into the model.

| Variable | B | SE B | β |
|------------------|-------|------|----------|
| ECR-RS Anxiety | .349 | .189 | .151 |
| ECR-RS Avoidance | -.826 | .222 | -.285*** |
| DERS | -.027 | .012 | -.176* |

Notes: B = Unstandardized Beta, SE B = Standard Error, β = Standardized Beta

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .0005$

4.2.6. Regression analysis 2: CRSI – Conflict engagement

Using the enter method, a multiple regression analysis was computed to explore the relationship between ECR-RS anxiety, ECR-RS avoidance and DERS scores with CRSI: Conflict engagement. A significant model emerged $F(3,177) = 23.74, p < .001$ for all three predictors. The model explains 27.5% of the variance in Conflict engagement (Adjusted $R^2 = .275$). The regression coefficients for each of the predictor variables are shown below in Table 6. DERS made the largest and only significant contribution displaying a positive association. ECR-RS Anxiety and ECR-RS Avoidance however, made no significant contribution.

Table 6

Unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients of ECR-RS anxiety, ECR-RS avoidance and DERS entered into the model.

| Variable | B | SE B | β |
|------------------|-------|------|---------|
| ECR-RS Anxiety | .049 | .180 | .020 |
| ECR-RS Avoidance | -.044 | .212 | -.014 |
| DERS | .086 | .011 | .531*** |

Notes: B = Unstandardized Beta, SE B = Standard Error, β = Standardized Beta

**** $p < .0005$*

4.2.7. Regression analysis 3: CRSI – Withdrawal

Using the enter method, a multiple regression analysis was computed to explore the relationship between ECR-RS anxiety, ECR-RS avoidance and DERS scores with CRSI: Withdrawal. A significant model emerged $F(3,177) = 32.26, p < .001$ for all three predictors. The model explains 34.3% of the variance in Withdrawal (Adjusted $R^2 = .343$). The regression coefficients for each of the predictor variables are shown below in Table 7. DERS made the largest contribution displaying a significant and positive association. ECR-RS Anxiety and ECR-RS Avoidance, however, made no significant contribution.

Table 7

Unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients of ECR-RS anxiety, ECR-RS avoidance and DERS entered into the model.

| Variable | B | SE B | β |
|------------------|------|------|---------|
| ECR-RS Anxiety | .111 | .143 | .054 |
| ECR-RS Avoidance | .009 | .168 | .003 |
| DERS | .077 | .009 | .570*** |

Notes: B = Unstandardized Beta, SE B = Standard Error, β = Standardized Beta

*** $p < .0005$

4.2.8. Regression analysis 4: CRSI – Compliance

Using the enter method, a multiple regression analysis was computed to explore the relationship between ECR-RS anxiety, ECR-RS avoidance and DERS scores with CRSI: Compliance. A significant model emerged $F(3,177) = 9.86, p < .001$ for all three predictors. The model explains 12.9% of the variance in compliance (Adjusted $R^2 = .129$). The regression coefficients for each of the predictor variables are shown below in Table 8. The DERS made the largest contribution displaying a significant and positive association. This was followed by ECR-RS Avoidance which also displayed a significant but negative association. ECR-RS Anxiety, however, did not make a significant contribution.

Table 8

Unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients of ECR-RS anxiety, ECR-RS avoidance and DERS entered into the model.

| Variable | B | SE B | β |
|------------------|-------|------|---------|
| ECR-RS Anxiety | .130 | .164 | .063 |
| ECR-RS Avoidance | -.480 | .193 | -.186* |
| DERS | .048 | .010 | .354*** |

Notes: B = Unstandardized Beta, SE B = Standard Error, β = Standardized Beta

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .0005$

4.2.9. Summary and introduction to part 4.1.3 Qualitative results.

Overall results demonstrated that the DERS scores (emotion dysregulation) consistently impacted upon all conflict resolution styles. The DERS demonstrated positive relationships with the resolution styles of conflict engagement, compliance and withdrawal but a negative relationship with positive problem solving. The attachment variables however, did not consistently have an impact on all resolutions styles. Particularly, ECR-RS avoidance only made a significant contribution to resolution styles of compliance and positive problem solving demonstrating negative relationships. ECR-Anxiety made no significant contribution to any conflict resolution styles.

The quantitative results suggest that aspects of the attachment system did not contribute, at times, to the conflict resolution style employed by the adolescent. Given the non-significant results demonstrated with regards to attachment anxiety and avoidance

contribution to conflict resolution style, the second, qualitative phase, aimed to explore the attachment variable further. As discussed within the methodology (Section - 3.4. The integration of a mixed methods design: Introduction to part two), the qualitative interviews emphasised exploration around the attachment variable to explore further why this variable may or may not have an impact upon conflict resolution style. To reiterate what was discussed, the second phase still explored how adolescents describe the relationships between attachment, emotion dysregulation and conflict resolution style, but asked the adolescent to also make comparisons across two different relationship structures (i.e. parental figure and friend). Asking adolescents to discuss these across two different structures, helped to explore the attachment variable in more detail. The quantitative phase only explored attachment to parents and its association to the adolescent's conflict resolution style with peers, whereas the second phase allowed for an exploration of attachment with the person they were in conflict with. As discussed in section '3.2.1. Methodological approach: Sequential explanatory design', the quantitative results therefore guided the direction of the interview schedule. The next section discusses the results from the qualitative aspect of the research.

4.3 Qualitative results

The following sections discuss the results for the qualitative phase/part two of the study. Thematic Analysis was used to analyse the data. Please see below for demographics for this phase of the study along with the write up of the themes derived from the analysis.

4.3.1. Overview of derived themes.

There were three themes that emerged within the data. Below, Table 9 presents an overview of the three themes derived and the subthemes within these. The following section, 4.3.2. will discuss these themes in further detail. Please see table 10 (appendix 14) for a summary of who/how many participants were represented within each theme and sub-theme.

Table 9*Themes identified from the interviews.*

| Theme | Subtheme | Description |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Relationship Efficacy. | | The theme of relationship efficacy explores the impact of aspects of the relationship in which the conflict takes place. Two particular themes emerged emphasising the impact of relational strategies employed within the relationship dynamic during conflict and the closeness and security of these relationships upon how they managed conflict. |
| | 1.1. Relational Strategies. | Relational strategies, focuses upon the impact of the circular process on conflict styles. Essentially, the involvement of both parties' behaviours and emotion regulation involved in the conflict, contribute to the management styles used. |
| | 1.2. The influence of relationship closeness and security on conflict resolution style. | Here perceived closeness and the security placed on a relationship interlinked when making decisions about how the individual chose to approach a conflict situation and thus, the strategies they employed. |
| 2. Individual Differences | | Individual differences focuses upon specific factors unique to the adolescent themselves that may contribute to how they manage conflict. This explores how personal beliefs or passions etc. motivated certain behaviours or emotions. These were unique to the individual. |

| Theme | Subtheme | Description |
|----------------------|--|---|
| 3.Social constraints | | This theme focuses upon constraints or belief systems imposed by society such as authority and social norms. |
| | 3.1 Level of authority and consequences. | The subtheme focused on the importance of reducing consequences such as a punishment or the loss of an important opportunity. Here punishment by an authority figure or consequences of getting into trouble in school served as a deterrent to engaging in conflict. |
| | 3.2. Social norms and desirability. | This subtheme explored how social norms and the need to be right motivated adolescents' choices in conflict resolution style. |

4.3.2. Overall themes and subthemes.

This section discusses the overall themes and subthemes that emerged from the interviews with a detailed description of each, followed by their accompanying quotes. The first theme discussed will be relationship efficacy.

4.3.2.1. Relationship Efficacy.

This theme of 'relationship efficacy' explores the different influences of the relationship between the adolescent and the other person they are in conflict with upon conflict resolution style. Essentially, the ways in which both individuals involved in conflict emotionally contain each other and the closeness of their relationship was explained as a contributing factor towards the ways in which they managed conflict.

4.3.2.1.1. Relational Strategies.

Overall, the theme of relational strategies focuses on the interaction between the adolescent and the individual they are in conflict with. The theme places emphasis upon the circular processes involved. Essentially, the adolescent's own emotional regulation strategies are not solely responsible for the choice of resolution style, rather, both parties involved play a part in the process of conflict management. Behaviours of one person may escalate or deescalate the emotions of the other, impacting upon resolution style. This may also involve the use of an external figure to intervene. This will be discussed in further detail below.

Emotion regulation strategies, or their limited access to these, was also described as a contributing factor towards the escalation of conflict engagement in adolescence. Where emotions would escalate and the adolescent did not hold their own strategies towards managing their emotions, conflict would arise. Most of the adolescents described how the escalation of negative emotions often led to behaviours such as throwing insults, shouting or counting favours. They also describe how escalation of emotions and a lack of control was associated with avoidant behaviours.

“I normally get mad and really quickly and then normally just to say I hate you and walk out” (Samantha).

“Say if it was a teacher and I got really angry I’d probably just use my mouth and just walk out because like when I’m there I just like, sometimes I just black out and say things that I really do regret sometimes. Like yesterday I went mad at my teacher but like because she refused to teach me. So I just went mad, got cheesed off.” (Jack).

Some adolescents highlighted the importance of controlling the escalation of their emotions during an argument through their need to often seek or utilise external support when feeling limited in their own abilities to both regulate themselves or problem solve.

Adolescents discussed how someone external had to step in before escalation could occur.

Without this external containment, peers lack of strategies meant that they did not feel capable of using more problem solving strategies themselves. Similarly, another adolescent discussed how other family members would have to intervene to remedy the situation and emotionally contain either individual as neither of them had the ability to draw upon their own skills to manage the conflict.

“If it was like more serious then you would have to get a teacher involved so it doesn’t escalate...Because that person is probably still heated and doesn’t want to drop it.” (Samantha).

“Luckily my mate from my old school Dan was there and stopped me...Yeah he calmed me down a little bit. Because he knows how to make me laugh.” (Louise).

Similarly to this external support i.e., from a teacher or friend, the person the adolescent may be in conflict with also served as a regulatory system or strategy during conflict. Here, when the other person within the conflict served to contain the adolescent's emotions, conflict was avoided and more problem solving resolution styles were employed. Most adolescents described the other person's reactions and the circular process that occurred within the conflict situation as an important role in whether their emotions would escalate and thus, the likelihood of conflictual behaviours. Of particular importance here was how the other person's response such as 'having a go', not listening or not giving the adolescent space to cool off would cause the adolescent to internalise or take on negative perceptions about themselves. It could be that these negative perceptions then escalate the feeling of negative emotions that then influences their choice of more conflictual strategies.

"Like, if we are arguing she goes on and on and on like she don't leave me to cool off. Like that can cause me to be like more angry...They snap and obviously I snap so its like an heated and then that's basically it. There's nothing more to it...Like if they are sat there in front of me arguing with me then it's just going to make more angry." (Holly).

"I normally start off calm and if they start having a go at me and then I get mad really quickly because I started talking to you calmly and then you started shouting at me so I'm going to shout back...Unappreciated because we argue about petty things but if I'm coming to you as a civil person saying listen and then you going mad at me for no reason then I'm going to get mad" (Samantha).

"Nan she just goes on, you're ruining this whole family, because she obviously saying things she doesn't mean because she's infuriated and angry...Obviously because I feel like they

[nan] hate me so I'll be like, you don't really care anyway so I don't know why you are bothering wasting your breath, this that and the other... Yeah, I make a situation worsen than it already was" (Harriet).

Alternatively, most adolescents described ways in which their emotions have been contained and how this results in better ways of conflict management. It appears emotional containment was provided where the individual felt that the other person understood their perspective and provided them with the space for understanding and guidance. When emotionally contained or emotions have been allowed to deescalate, the adolescents appear better able to discuss their differences and problem solve.

"Yeah because I got things off my chest that I couldn't get off before...She will tell me what she thinks I'm doing wrong and then what I'm doing right. So then we go from there...Because then I can improve on my mistakes and do better." (Samantha).

"Just being there cuddling me, supporting me...Shows how much he does care and love me because sometimes I am in the wrong and you have to admit that sometimes because it's not always everyone else's fault." (Harriet).

"Just by apologising like and explaining the situation, why I said it and that. That's literally what we do. And explain why we said it, if it's like a dig and it's like a fact, we'll explain why we said it. But then if it weren't meant and it was a joke we won't explain because we just say like it was a joke we didn't mean it" (Calvin).

Some adolescents discussed how the other person's knowledge or ability to anticipate their own response during a disagreement also impacted upon the de-escalation of emotions. Where the other person during the argument could anticipate the escalation of their emotions, they would respond with behaviours such as walking away or avoiding to reduce the likelihood of conflict. An important factor here being the other person's knowledge about the adolescent's reactions and the responsiveness of their reciprocal behaviours.

"My uncle will, will just, like what I said, just tell me to go away and my mate will just walk out as well. That's the best way to deal with it with me, because if I don't walk away from the situation, they will know I'm not gonna move. Because normally if it comes to an argument I'll walk away straight away. But that's when they know I'm there for longer than five seconds, I aint gonna move and it's just going to be an argument and that's when they will just walk away." (Calvin).

"My step dad yeah. Because he can see it when I'm about to get wound up, cus I'll breath out of my nose really heavily and he like, he just stops" (Thomas).

Some adolescents also discussed their own responsibilities with having to emotionally contain the other person when having a disagreement. Here emphasis was placed upon the need to contain or deescalate the emotions of the other individual in order to achieve more problem solving behaviors within the conflict. This highlighted the circular processes involved further within conflict management and how it is also important to be able to have the skills to emotionally contain the other person. One individual discussed how he is able to remain calm in order to meet his goal of containing and calming down the other individual to reduce conflict engagement.

“ That’s what I’d try and do, I’d try and calm them down and I’d let go and I know for a fact if they’re calm they’re not gonna do anything and then they’re gonna sit down and talk to me and resolve the situation....But I always try and defuse the situation and sort the situation out.” (Calvin).

“I made him think of other people’s, my perspective....He realised what he was doing and like realised how like pathetic it was and what he was doing so yeah...Problem solved. But I made him realise what he was actually doing because he didn’t know, he just went off and was a bit moody at the time so he just went off at me and I just calmed him down in a way.” (Thomas).

Some adolescents also discussed the role of the other person’s ability to contain the escalation of their own emotions. Here, the other individual during the conflict situation, would engage in behaviours such as leaving the situation, with the aim of calming themselves down. Adolescents explained how once the other individual had calmed themselves down, they were better able to talk through the conflict and problem solve. The process of containing one’s emotions during conflict by momentarily avoiding it appears to be another important factor, regardless of which individual is involved. It also highlights the need for the adolescent to allow the other person to engage in behaviours they find useful.

“She always says, she normally gets mad and then says, get out and go to your sister’s so I go to my sister house and then she’ll phone me and says I’ve calmed down now can we have a conversation and I go back home.” (Samantha).

An extension of the above theme relates to the levels of tolerance an individual can withstand emotionally during conflict. This appeared to be relative to the individual's own level of tolerance and how this affected their responses to others during conflict. Here some adolescents described how when their level of emotional tolerance had been depleted, they were more likely to react and displace the emotional content of these onto the person they were currently in conflict with. Where emotional displacement occurred, adolescents described less control over their emotions which in turn impacted on more conflictual resolution styles. Here, abilities to control one's emotions were dependent on the emotional filter/lens the individual was using when appraising the conflict situation.

"Like, if you know me normally I'm just a normal person like when I get into an argument like it depends what mood I'm in, because if I ain't in a good mood then I'm just, I'm bursting, I'm just horrible." (Holly).

"Yeah if I have negative thought I then think negative about that person until something happy comes in my head. But then if I have a happy thought I'll think something happy about that person it's just the way that I work...Erm if I'm thinking like nasty thoughts or angry thoughts then I'll react, if someone annoys me I'll take that out on that person. Which I shouldn't but it's just the way that I work. That's just what happens." (Louise).

"I think it all depends on what kind of day you've had as well. It sounds silly but if you've had a really bad day you're going to be a bit more argumentative and probably a bit more grumpy and grouchy...But if you're having a really good day you may not want to argue as much because you are actually having a really good day and you don't want anything to ruin that...When you've had a worse day I think you're less in control of your emotions because of

everything is going against you, you are just starting to lose yourself slowly because you're just getting really annoyed and really angry at how your days going. And you'll start snapping at people because you're just totally losing control of your emotions" (Luke).

In summary the theme highlights a circular process and interaction between both parties' use of emotional strategies as a factor in their choice of conflict resolution style. It could be argued here that conflict resolution cannot solely be achieved by focusing on the adolescent's own regulatory system. Rather, there are multiple factors within the circular process that may have an impact. For example, the emotion regulation and behaviours of the person they may be in conflict with also impacts upon the emotional containment. When considered, at times conflict was either problem solved or avoided, depending on the behaviours or emotional responses of both parties involved. Escalation of emotions on the other hand, generally increased conflict engagement.

4.3.2.1.2. The influence of relationship closeness and security upon conflict resolution styles.

As described above, the other person's responses within the conflict situation serve to regulate one another's emotions. Another factor or extension of the regulatory process was the underlying or developed beliefs around the fragility or confidence the individual held about the longevity of the relationship and thus, perceived security of the relationship. In addition to this, adolescents also highlighted the overall value they placed upon these relationships as a contributor, in particular the value of closeness. Where differences within conflict management were discussed within differing relationship structures, adolescents

identified the closeness and security placed upon the relationship as an impacting factor. This will be discussed in further detail below.

Most adolescents discussed how the closeness they placed on a relationship contributed to their motivation to choose less conflictual strategies. Here the more they valued the relationship in some way, the more inclined they were to try and reach resolution.

“Overall they’re just both close to me so I’d never really argue with them...The only reason I don’t reply as like I don’t snap back or anything at him is because like... because he is nice to me, he does things for me, he takes me places so we do have a strong relationship as well. And he’s really nice to me as well.” (Thomas).

Through exploring the above further, adolescents’ beliefs around the closeness and value placed upon a relationship impacted upon the levels of control they had over certain feelings experienced during conflict. Some adolescents described how they were better able to control and contain their emotions within differing relationship structures, where they viewed the relationship as close. It appears that when adolescents hold views about the relationship as being caring and close, they are less likely to internalise negative perceptions about themselves and subsequently have more control over negative emotions they experience and their following choice of conflict management behaviours.

“When I have an argument with mom I get more chill about it when I have an argument with my friends I’ll just be like I don’t care...Because she has always been there for me, throughout everything, and then petty arguments shouldn’t really happen...I have more

control with my emotions with mom than my friends because I know deep down that she really does love me.” (Samantha).

“Like, with my mom I know her inside out is it’s like, I know she don’t mean anything she says or like stuff like with my mate it’s like I don’t care like, I do care obviously but like I know she don’t mean it, just like my mom I know she don’t mean anything she is saying...Because I hold them so close and we’ve like got a close bond so I know they would never like say something like that they mean in argument like...Like I’m just easy on them because I love them” (Holly).

Some adolescents discussed the differing emotions experienced both during and after the conflict situation. Negative emotions such as hurt, guilt and regret appeared to be experienced more where the relationship was close or valued in some way. Although negative in nature, the emotions elicited during conflict were used as a motivator to resolve the conflict, if they perceived the relationship as close.

“With my mom it hurt me more because she’s my mom, nothing more about that, it’s your mom ain’t it and with my mates it’s like I care if I lose them but at the same time like I’d rather lose them than my mom in an argument so it like...Just the fact that like, it’s my and I’ve just got a really close bond with her. Like I can tell her stuff like that I can’t tell my friends and like she’s always there for me but with my mates it’s like dunno like I just prefer to tell my mom stuff than my mates just in case it went round like” (Holly).

“When me and my friends are arguing I’ll put like one cheeky thing back you know what I mean to say like you need calm down and then like it just makes me feel like bad about myself

cus if my friends arguing it must mean he's done something to me and I've done something to him, so it still makes me feel guilt because of how close we are and if it's something bad and argue it's another strange feeling you know what I mean, cus we never really argue so... Yeah I try and resolve the problem." (Thomas).

Previously discussed was the emphasis regarding closeness and how this impacted upon their emotional control. Another important factor that contributed to resolution style was the fear of relationship breakdown. Some adolescents described how their choice in conflict resolution styles was also motivated by the underlying need to maintain the relationship with the person they were in conflict with. When the individual wanted to maintain the relationship, adolescents would choose behaviors that would facilitate the argument to come to an end such as apologising or withdrawing and reducing the amount of conflict.

"But with my mates it's like I'm the one who always has to say sorry first. Otherwise it never gets resolved...I don't know, just because I don't want to lose them." (Holly).

"Yeah because sometimes, obviously if I'm thinking my friends are actually, if I think to myself my friend might think I'm going too far with this I might actually step back because I realise that actually it's probably not worth losing my friend for something silly." (Luke).

"So, one of my friends at the table thing, if someone says something horrible to my friend, that's like no I'm not being your friend anymore, so if I accidentally said something horrible I'd have to apologise straight away or else I'd fall out with them". (Jack).

Some adolescents discussed further their need to maintain the relationship and why it was important to choose a resolution style that minimised its breakdown. Of particular importance was the need to maintain relationships that were close or valued in some way. In doing so, adolescents highlighted the differences within choice of conflict resolution style. Where the relationship was of no value or they were not as close than within other relationships, they were less likely to use more problem solving behaviours.

“Because with my friend, we can stop talking for days like with my mom I couldn’t even stop talking to her...Because we are so close if I had to not speak to her I would be lost.”
(Samantha).

“Ermm, yeah I fell out with one of my friends and I just, I just apologised, well she apologised first and then I apologised after. We were just like there’s no need for this we need each other because stuff is going on through life, we need each other...Because I just thought she was one of my close friends and that I actually needed her and to lose someone like that would be heartbreaking.” (Jack).

“I probably just wouldn’t apologise and I’d probably just fall out with them and not speak to them until they apologise to me...Because they’re, my relationship with them is, would probably be less than with my actual like friends that like I value and know is always going to be there for me.”(Jack).

Similar to the above, security held in the relationship or worries around its fragility also impacted upon behaviours. One facet of this was the element of choice held by the other individual involved in the conflict. When asked what differed between family and friends,

some of the adolescents highlighted the importance of choice and how they naturally felt closer to their parental figures due to this. Some adolescents explained that even though they felt close to their peers, there was still a fear of abandonment. Given that some adolescents believed that a friend could choose to exit the relationship, again conflict resolution styles were chosen in order to facilitate relationship maintenance. These behaviours included refraining from being as harsh and ending the conflict.

“I will have my opinion but I just won’t say it as harsh...Because at the end of the day he’s my boyfriend, they come and go but my nan is my nan...I’m like, I just don’t want him to leave me, I just want him to be happy with me” (Harriet).

“With my friends arguments can last for a few days maybe that’s because we not as you know as close or not as intimate maybe as I am with my mom...I think it’s that element of choice isn’t it really, because you have chosen your friends, you didn’t choose your mom, you’re always going to have your mom there, she’s always going to be your mom even if you have annoyed her. Whereas your friends there is that choice so you sort of have to think about the overall picture than just the argument...Yeah because obviously if an argument goes on for days you might be thinking to yourself actually I just want to finish this now because we’re still friends at the end of the day.” (Luke).

On the other hand, Holly explored how the security and closeness within her relationship with her mother meant that she could instead test the boundaries by shouting and acting out. Alternatively, she discussed how she would be easier on her friends due to fears of the relationship breaking down. This highlighted how a similar belief can motivate emotions and behaviours within adolescents in very different ways.

“With my mate I’m more like easy on them because they are my mates and my mom like a person that I can take my stuff out on but like, yeah...Because she [mom] is like close to me, than anybody so she manages it differently. She can take it and my mates can’t.” (Holly).

Overall, the theme discusses how the adolescents perceived relationship closeness and felt security impacted upon their conflict resolution styles. Closeness generally facilitated less conflictual strategies through multiple avenues. These included less negative internalisations of comments said, stronger relationship security and more motivation to maintain these relationships. There were instances where felt security also had the opposite impact, meaning that the adolescent could express themselves through conflict without fear of relationship breakdown.

4.3.2.2. Individual differences.

The theme of ‘Individual Differences’ explores how personal belief systems that may be more individualised, impacts upon conflict resolution style. This included the things such as an adolescent’s personal annoyances, individual diagnoses, interests and individual motivations. These will be described in more detail below.

Few adolescents discussed certain passions that were particularly difficult to manage their emotions around. Here adolescents were more likely to experience negative emotions around something they were passionate about, causing them to engage in more conflictual resolution styles. Here there may be particular interest or investment that may be a common topic of conflict for the individual.

“Nothing to be fair. Literally nothing. Just red basically. Just anger like, just walked off. With my mates it’s just facts about UFC and that really, it’s always comes down to UFC with my mate because he isn’t a football fan. So it’s just UFC, UFC, UFC....Ah nah its football with my uncle.” (Calvin).

“We don’t argue a lot, he don’t just get back from work and snap at me, it’s only when I play on my game too much or something that he will like say, ok, it’s time to go off and that’s what makes me angry, because I do have a lot of time on my Xbox.” (Thomas)

Similar to a passion or interest, some adolescents held their own personal annoyances that could escalate their emotions and subsequent response of either avoidance or conflict. This related to a topic that was personal to them that may then trigger negative emotions. In particular, one individual highlighted bad breath and a few others the subject of family.

“Erm to be fair, to be fair it might sound mad but the hygiene of the person. Like if you, comes to someone trying to shout in my face and their breath stinks, I’ll just turn around to them and say, can you do me a favour, go to the dentist and then come back to me. Because I can’t stand stenchy breath, like if I can smell their breath, that’s it I got, like either just walk away from him so I aint being rude or I’ll say to them in a nice way. I’ll say to them in the nicest way possible, I aint being funny mate but I’m gonna have to walk away because your breaths like kinda making me feel sick.” (Calvin).

“Because its, I don’t know that but people think it’s okay to mention your family and there’s quite a lot going on in my family like because my uncle has got cancer, my auntie has got

cancer, it's just stuff like that and at the time my Nan had cancer and this girl mentioned my Nan and I just went off on one. I couldn't control myself. And when I'm angry I cannot control my anger at all. It's just hard." (Louise).

"Because like if say like for instance Jordan was to erm be horrible and bring family into it, maybe I would get wound up even though he's my best friend." (Thomas).

Similarly, Samantha spoke about how personal beliefs were of particular importance around what influenced the ways in which they may have responded during conflict. Here the other's actions that conflicted with personal beliefs would cause the adolescent to react in a certain way that was consistent with this belief. Samantha discussed how she withdrew from arguing with a friend and subsequently disengaged from this relationship as they would not listen to their advice. She describes how this choice of disengagement related to her own beliefs that her friend will only learn from her own mistakes.

"I was angry because I wouldn't want to see my friends get hurt and then at same time they have to learn from their mistakes before I can really guide them in the right path." (Samantha).

Individual differences also included a mental health difficulty for two individuals. A diagnosis for instance, may in some way subsequently effect the ways in which the adolescent regulates their emotions and their resulting behaviours during conflict. One individual talks about his diagnosis of ADHD and autism and how he can become agitated within large crowds and how certain reactions of others such as shouting during conflict can exacerbate negative emotions. Another individual talked about ways she managed her

emotions through self-harm, redirecting the anger towards herself rather than the other person.

“I dunno, I mean I have got ADHD by the way if you didn’t know as well and I have got a little bit of autism... In some situations, I’m like that when it comes to strangers in big crowds, I am bothered about what people think of me, I hate people staring like that’s one thing I did used to hate” (Calvin).

“I tend to like hurt myself...Because like if it’s my fault then I take it out on myself.” (Harriet).

Harriet discussed her behaviours during conflict as a means of serving the function of obtaining a specific goal. She described how she aims to get her own way during the argument and will be more conflictual until she receives this.

“Like I know it’s selfish but like as long as I get my own way, I’m fine and that’s wrong it shouldn’t even be like that but that’s what I need help with...Yeah. Because she does get me everything that I want” (Harriet).

Ryan spoke about the need to take into consideration the stability of the other’s mental wellbeing. Here Ryan believed that if the other individual’s mental health may decline as a result of the conflict, that they should instead withdraw from further conflict and seek resolution.

“Like if I know that someone can handle themselves I’ll just leave them to it but if they are starting to get really nervous I’ll step in and try and help them...they might suffer with

depression or they might feel discouraged to come to school. Or they might not want to be around other people.” (Ryan).

Overall, this theme highlighted how something specific or personal to the individual such as a belief or passion impacted upon their reaction to conflicts. More specifically, this theme highlighted that it is important to take into account how personal topics may be more inclined to have an impact on conflict than others, dependent on the individual.

4.3.2.3. Social constraints

The theme of social constraints discusses the influences of power and social structures upon the choices adolescents make around resolving conflict. Here external social constraints such as authority, consequences and social norms are explored within two main subthemes: Level of authority and consequence, and social norms and desirability.

4.3.2.3.1. Level of authority and consequences.

The adolescent’s choice of conflict resolution style was also driven by the consequences of their interactions with another person. In such, the perceptions of the potential repercussions of conflict engagement may cause individuals to disengage from the situation and choose either more withdrawal or compliant strategies. Multiple consequences of conflict engagement were discussed. The first of these was the level of authority the other individual involved within the conflict held. Some adolescents discussed how the other person’s authority resulted in different choices between differing relationship structures. Here parental roles held more authority than peer relationships resulting in more withdrawal or compromising strategies with the consequences of having personal items taken away by parents. Some adolescents discussed how, alternatively, they could explore more conflictual

strategies such as engaging in swearing or more of an exchange where authority was perceived to be low.

“Just taking my phone off me and stuff like that... “I won’t do it again, I wouldn’t do it again...but you live with your family so is easier to control because you know what’s going to happen and if you don’t. Like you get consequences” (Louise).

“ First I don’t want to get punished...Yeah because like with Jordan I can just be like ah ok, right erm, if I say something back I know that he won’t be able to do anything, but with my step dad he will take something off me like my phone, my console so then it makes me feel worse like.” (Thomas).

“Mom she will just threaten to take stuff of me, tends to get more angry.” (Daniel).

It appeared that adolescents also looked at their future aspirations as a means of gauging how to respond. Where individuals held future aspirations, conflict engagement would pose a potential risk to achieving their goals in some way. Given these consequences, students felt that they were better able to control their emotions and their subsequent actions by alternatively withdrawing. Two students spoke about how conflict engagement would result in consequences that would impact upon achieving their future academic goals and thus, their motivation to disengage in conflict.

“I just get over it because I’m like they are not helping me get my grades, so I have to do what I have to do.” (Samantha).

“With my friend? I am always in control of my anger, well I’ve learnt to be in control of my anger, but I am in control of my anger really well now...I don’t react to nothing because I know I’ve got a future in the way now, I know I have actually got a future, I’ve got university there in front of me... I didn’t think I’d ever get to university so that’s why I control my anger, because of university....If I go off that track by doing anything stupid and irrational there’s no point.” (Calvin).

Overall, the theme emphasised how conflict with an authority figure or getting into trouble in school may deter them from engaging in conflict. This was intended to reduce punishment or the loss of an important opportunity.

4.3.2.3.2. Social norms and desirability.

Social norms and the subsequent need to be desirable motivated adolescents’ choice during a conflict situation. Social norms propositioned adolescents with behavioural choices they should not deviate from.

In particular, social norms around the treatment of elders and certain genders were reflected upon by some individuals. Where males in particular held beliefs around females, their behavioural choices followed accordingly within a conflictual situation. This was either due to the social norms around conflict between a man and a woman, or the stereotypical views around the discrepancies in the mindsets of women and men. Where gender roles were discussed, withdrawal and problem solving strategies were more likely to be employed. The age of those involved in conflict also encouraged adolescents to follow the norms around being more respectful for the elderly. Similarly, one adolescent’s belief systems seemed to

reflect the vulnerability of both the elderly and children when in conflict. Again, these aspects motivated similar strategies to those mentioned above.

“And actually to be honest if it was between a male, if it were a female to come at me aggressive, I’d just let them, honestly I’d just stand there, I’d let them all day I don’t care they could do anything they could punch me, slap me, push me anything I’d just stand there and let it because I’d never raise my voice to a woman, never lay my hand on a woman, never intend to so I’d just leave that situation, but if it was a lad that’s what I’d do with it, what I said originally.” (Calvin).

“I just think it’s like horrible that people do fall out cus I don’t often like it when people fall out, like say if I was watching an argument happen on the street like even if I didn’t know them, it depends if it was adults or children. If it was children or say like the elderly, I’d go and say like erm just both walk in like different directions just leave it like. If it’s like adults, I’d probably just leave it because it’s their business.” (Thomas).

“But obviously because I have a lot of more respect for my nan because she’s like my older and I have to. So erm I still do, I’m still, because I’m a mouthy person like I use my mouth a lot so I do be mouthy to my nan but not to the point where it’s really bad. (Harriet).

Some adolescents discussed an extension of the above. There also appeared to also be an implicit rule that respect should also be given to family members, particularly those who are taking a parental position.

“Ah not with a friend. Family is different because family is family you’ve got to respect the family” (Thomas).

“Obviously with my mom, it’s my mom so I have got to be a bit more respectful. With my friends I can do, like swear and do stuff like. That’s it really. That’s really the only difference, with my mom I’m more respectful.” (Daniel).

Winning the argument was also an important factor when engaging in conflict and motivated adolescents in very different ways. Some adolescents described the need to win the argument as a precipitator towards the escalation of an argument becoming heated. One adolescent elaborated on the specific behaviours involved such as getting more personal with the aims of targeting another’s weaknesses so they could win. Similarly, the need to not acknowledge one’s own wrongdoings caused more withdrawal strategies. Overall, where the individual’s need to be right was involved, the impact was either withdrawal or becoming more argumentative.

“We don’t make no contact whatsoever, we don’t text, nothing. We don’t ring, speak or nothing...Erm because we both, because, either because we both don’t want to admit that the other one was right because in some situations that’s the way it can be. See we both don’t want to admit that one of us was right and one of us was wrong.” (Calvin).

“They do and they don’t. Because say like if it’s a very good point, that’s it, my voice is raised because I wanna get a better point, because I want to try and win the debate like. So it just depends really on their valid point, if their points valid enough like for me to get a reaction, then I will react.” (Calvin).

“I don’t know really because obviously sometimes you are trying to win the argument and obviously if you know what the other person’s weaknesses you are going to try and use it against them, just so you can win. I think you sort of just go back to that primal urge to just win everything...Yeah to make them weaker so you can then win the argument.” (Luke).

The desire to be right was socially driven, with the fear of judgment from others underpinning an adolescent’s loss. Adolescents stated that they did not want to be negatively judged for losing in an argument and would therefore be encouraged to engage in more conflictual strategies to win rather than coming to a more balanced view. Embarrassment from a loss also encouraged one individual to often switch sides within an argument to a more desired view.

“Oh I can just go on at my friend, I’ll always, say like my points even wrong I’ll still will carry on and just, cus I wanna make sure I win the argument, the debate. That’s the way I’m going to be because I’ve said something now, I don’t want to look like an idiot really”.
(Calvin).

“I’ll try and argue it until the very end of it. Because then I’ll feel bit maybe embarrassed or something silly like that because I haven’t won that point...Again I think it is gratification, you know saying oh Luke yeah you’ve won, well done...Although you know I can switch sides if I need to. If somebody else joins the argument, I might switch sides if the other side’s winning. I just need to win that argument.” (Luke).

Given the desire to be right, few adolescents appeared to make more thoughtful decisions around whether it was worth engaging in an exchange of opinions given their perceived likelihood of winning. Here, where the other person within the argument was perceived as more knowledgeable or more a viable winner, they were more likely to either disengage in exchange or chose to not engage at all.

“I don’t really know I think it’s just instinct. Like because I’ve always been that way I have never stayed unless I know I can make a valid point and somehow like encourage the person, like to change their views or something. But other times I will just stay away.” (Ryan).

Some adolescents also discussed the deprivation of one’s personal integrity or self-respect. This often occurred more in situations involving a stranger, or in group situations where multiple people were involved. Where one’s dignity was compromised, the adolescents would engage in more defensive behaviours to increase their status. One individual discussed alternatively how his verbal appearance in general was something he did not want to damage and thus, disengagement was more likely within a situation where the other person was more known to him.

“Erm, I don’t want to ruin my verbal appearance let’s say as in describing a personality, like I don’t want that to be changed.” (Ryan).

“Erm like when people gang up like when I feel like more than one person is ganging up on me then...I’d just get a lot more angry, say more the tone of my voice and everything...Cus it’s just like unnecessary for them know what I mean, I just feel like you have to be

confrontational...I dunno it's just defending myself, defending my name, that's pretty much it." (Daniel).

"Say like you feel embarrassed really because say you're with all your mates and a random stranger comes up to you and starts shouting at you, you feel embarrassed and like deprived of your self respect...That'd be the only reason because you feel self-deprived of your respect and you've tried to be respectful back to sort the situation out but they don't want to listen so, that's why I'd react shouting back." (Calvin).

Overall, the above subtheme discussed how adolescents would engage in different conflict resolution styles based upon this need to be socially desirable in some way. A lot of their motivations around conflict engagement was due to the need to be right to reduce the fear of embarrassment. Similarly, they discussed their need to behave in certain ways during conflict such as withdrawing due to social norms around respecting their elders or those of the opposite gender.

4.3.3. Part one and part two results: Synthesis of findings.

This section will summarise key findings from both the quantitative and qualitative parts of the research. It will first summarise the quantitative findings followed by summarising the qualitative findings. Whilst summarising the qualitative findings comparisons will be made between the two sets of data, synthesising findings.

Overall, the quantitative results involved four multiple regression analyses, exploring the impact of attachment anxiety and avoidance with a parental figure and emotion

dysregulation upon the conflict resolution styles utilised within their friendships. The results indicated that emotion dysregulation (DERS) had significant relationships with all conflict resolutions styles. Positive relationships were found with three of the resolution styles, conflict engagement, compliance and withdrawal. The relationship with positive problem solving however was negative. The attachment variables differed in their findings. ECR avoidance demonstrated a significant negative relationship with only the resolution styles of positive problem solving and compliance. ECR anxiety demonstrated no relationship with any of the resolution styles. These results were somewhat consistent with the part two qualitative findings. Although part two alternatively explored the attachment relationships with the person they were in conflict with, it helped explain further the interplay between the variables.

Overall three main themes emerged within the data. The first theme, 'Relationship Efficacy', included two subthemes, 'Relational strategies' and 'The influence of relationship closeness and security on conflict resolution style'. The first subtheme 'relational strategies' discusses how conflict resolution behaviours were influenced by the emotion regulation strategies employed by both individuals within the conflict. The subtheme of relational strategies demonstrated some consistencies with the part one findings. For instance, within this theme, adolescents generally reported that the escalation of their emotions, and difficulties controlling these, lead to conflict engagement with behaviours such as shouting and throwing insults or withdrawal where they would avoid and walk away from the conflict. These adolescents also reported that their limited access to emotion regulation resources meant they had to rely upon external support such as friends or teachers to help calm them down in order to better resolve the conflict. This is consistent with the quantitative findings that indicated that the more emotionally dysregulated the adolescent reported (DERS scores),

the higher their engagement in the conflict resolution styles of conflict engagement, compliance and withdrawal. Within the theme of relational strategies adolescents also discussed how when they were more emotionally contained by the other person they were in conflict with, such as being shown guidance and understanding, they were better able to talk through the problem. This is again consistent with the quantitative findings which indicated that the more emotionally dysregulated the adolescent reported they were (DERS scores), the less likely they were to engage in positive problem solving with peers.

The subtheme highlighted the circular process of conflict, demonstrating that the adolescents conflict resolution style may be dependable on the conflict resolution style of the other person. For example, in the quantitative results, adolescents discuss how the other person's response during the conflict, such as shouting or not providing space to cool off, causes the adolescent to be angry and respond back with conflict. When the other person is supportive, they as a result feel better regulated and are able to talk through the problem. Adolescents also highlighted how when either individual in the conflict can anticipate what the other person needs during the conflict, this can lead to de-escalation of emotions and less conflict engagement. The current part one phase does not account for the conflict resolution style of both involved in the conflict.

Similarly, the theme explored the emotional tolerance of the adolescent. This related to the individuals own level of emotional tolerance and how this affected their responses during conflict. This indicated that when some adolescents experienced difficulties managing other emotionally difficult incidents throughout the day, they were more likely to struggle with managing other emotions related to conflict and thus respond with conflict engagement. This

was consistent with the quantitative results that indicated that emotion dysregulation (DERS) had a positive relationship with the conflict resolution style of conflict

The second subtheme ‘The influence of relationship closeness and security on conflict resolution style’ explored the role of their perceived closeness and security placed upon the relationship they were in conflict with and how this impacted upon their choice of resolution style. Within this theme, where adolescents perceived the relationship as close, they as a result felt more in control of their emotions and were more likely to engage in conflict resolution behaviours such as not saying their comments in a harsh manner and going easier on the person. These behaviours somewhat overlap with lower levels of conflict engagement. This result demonstrated that adolescents who are better able to control their emotions are less likely to engage in conflict resolution, confirming the quantitative finding which demonstrated that lower emotion dysregulation was related to lower engagement in the conflict resolution style of conflict engagement.

This subtheme also demonstrated some consistencies with the quantitative results regarding the contribution of ECR anxiety on conflict. For instance, attachment anxiety relates to worries regarding abandonment and not being cared about. Adolescents within this theme reported on what appears to relate to fears of abandonment and feelings of being cared for and thus attachment anxiety. Within this theme some of the adolescents explored how they generally feared their friends may abandon the relationship if they were involved in conflict due to an element of choice. They discuss how this element of choice related to them feeling closer to their parents given they knew they would never leave them and would always be there. Although they still described a feeling of closeness to their peers, they still worried that they may abandon them and as a result would engage in conflict resolution styles

with peers that reduced the likelihood of the relationship breaking down, such as refraining from commenting as harsh or apologising. Adolescents discussed that given they knew their parents would always be there, they knew they would not become as easily annoyed by certain comments made during the conflict meaning they were less likely to refrain from making harsh comments. One adolescent discussed how her security with her mother meant that she could push boundaries, stating that her mother could take it and knew that she would always be around. Some adolescents discussed alternatively how their beliefs of closeness and that the other person cared for them and loved them meant they were less likely to engage in conflict, becoming 'more chill and easy on them'.

Overall what appeared to be reflective of attachment anxiety within this theme appeared to impact upon the individual in different ways within a specific resolution style. For instance, those who appeared to be low on anxiety either engaged in conflict or refrained from commenting as harshly. Similarly high and low anxiety appeared to both relate to not commenting harshly but for two different reasons. These results were somewhat consistent with the quantitative results that indicated ECR anxiety scores with a parental figure had no significant relationship with any of the conflict resolution styles used with peers. Non-significant results may therefore be indicative of how ECR anxiety may manifest in very different ways within a specific resolution style depending on the individual. Similarly, ECR anxiety scores were skewed, falling on the lower end of the scale in the qualitative components, generally reporting that attachment to a parental figure was low for this population. This was consistent with the qualitative component with most adolescents generally reporting lesser abandonment fears with their parental figures.

This theme also demonstrated that where the individual appeared to have lower attachment avoidance i.e., could rely upon the other person as a source of support, they were more likely to avoid conflict engagement or apologise for fear of the relationship breaking down. It appeared that given they were dependable in times of need, they did not want to lose this source of support. These findings are similar to the quantitative findings that reported that lower avoidance was related to higher problem solving.

The second and third theme, 'social constraints' and 'individual differences' that emerged, explored factors of their social environment (i.e., authority/consequences and social norms/desirability) and individual differences unique to the adolescent (i.e., diagnosis or passions) that contributed to their choice in conflict resolution style other than attachment and emotion dysregulation alone. These two themes identified that outside of the attachment system and their emotion regulatory abilities, there were other determining factors both individually and socially that may contribute to their choice in resolution style that were not accounted for in the qualitative part of the research. These findings were not in line with part one findings given they appeared to be unrelated to the independent variables explored. For instance, taking into consideration the overarching theme of social constraints, it could be assumed that the adolescent's attachment style may not contribute to resolution style or be a priority to the adolescent if they are motivated to avoid a consequence of their conflict behaviours. The adolescent's motivation to avoid the consequence may be unrelated to their attachment style and associated more with the other person's authority status. Similarly, factors specific to the individual (i.e., theme of individual differences) may also be a priority over attachment styles or emotion dysregulation, given there may be individual diagnoses or belief systems that affect behaviours.

4.3.4. Conclusion

Overall, the results section discusses both quantitative and qualitative findings, as well as their synthesis. The next section will discuss both these results sections in further detail. In particular, the next section will make attempts to discuss the above synthesis further by making reference to the current literature and theory.

Chapter Five

Discussion

5.1. Discussion of findings

The following section will discuss the results reported for both parts one and two in further detail, with reference to the associated literature, and exploring their synthesis. The quantitative research will firstly be discussed and explored. Phase one of the study explored the impact of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance with a parental figure and emotion dysregulation upon four different conflict resolution styles with a friend.

The first and fourth multiple regressions explored the impact of attachment anxiety and avoidance and emotion dysregulation upon the conflict resolution styles of positive problem solving and compliance, respectively. These regression analyses exhibited similar results regarding the contributions of attachment. Results indicated that ECR avoidance had a significant negative relationship with the resolution style of positive problem solving and compliance. This demonstrates that as ECR avoidance increased, engagement in positive problem solving and compliance decreased.

One explanation for the contribution of ECR avoidance may reflect the internalised beliefs or internal working models of the adolescent. Higher levels of ECR attachment avoidance indicate more difficulties seeking support from a parental figure and difficulties with depending on them when in times of need (Fraley et al., 2011). If the adolescent believes they cannot rely upon the other person they are in conflict with, they may believe their attempts to talk through the problem will be dismissed (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009), resulting in the adolescent refraining from utilising problem solving behaviours. Engaging in some form of discussion regarding the conflict may pose a risk of emotional distress or further distress to the adolescent as a result of not gaining the appropriate support. These

results were consistent with previous research (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009), which found higher security in adolescence related to more inclination to problem solve. Essentially trust in the relationship may be reflective of the secure adolescent's desire to seek resolution. This may also explain why adolescents are also less likely to engage in the resolution style of compliance when higher on attachment avoidance. The adolescent may be less inclined to be submissive and conform to others within conflict if they believe that the other person is not trustworthy in their reliance. More secure individuals, however, may be more inclined to refrain from explaining their views within the conflict given they believe the other person is generally reliable. The secure individual may believe the other person may have their best interest given prior successful interaction and therefore comply. Although their ECR avoidance scores related to a parental figure, these attachment systems may generalise to friendships (Bowlby, 1969;1973; Weimer et al., 2004), causing the adolescent to have some negative anticipations regarding the other's potential response (Siegel, 1999).

An alternative explanation for the contribution of ECR avoidance upon positive problem solving may be explained also through its association with emotion regulation (Creasey et al, 1999). Consistent with previous research, attachment security shows associations with healthier regulation of emotions in childhood (Waters & Thompson, 2016), fewer regulation difficulties may then impact upon more use in problem solving behaviours (Rizkalla et al. 2008).

The results also demonstrated the DERS had a significant negative relationship with positive problem solving but a positive relationship with compliance. As the DERS increased, engagement in positive problem solving decreased and engagement in compliance increased. One plausible explanation for the contribution of emotion dysregulation could be that when

the adolescent experiences regulation difficulties, they may react to the conflict by suppressing their emotions or alternatively struggle to control their subsequent reactions when negative emotions occur (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). These difficulties may then cause the adolescent to either deny the emotional experience of the conflict or become overwhelmed by their emotions, both of which may hinder the process of engaging in more productive behaviours such as having a conversation regarding the problem. The higher levels of dysregulation reported may also be indicative of the adolescent's inability to concentrate or focus upon a problem (Gratz & Roemer 2004), in this case dysregulation may impair their ability to talk through the problem and listen to both parties' perspectives constructively. These results are in line with Rizkalla et al. (2008) who highlighted that better regulation in adults, such as being able to minimise preoccupation with negative emotions, had better abilities in attending to others' viewpoints and thus, problem solve. This may also explain why dysregulation may increase higher engagement in compliance. Emotion dysregulation may lead the individual to comply with others, in which they may deny their own emotional experience and potentially the emotional impact of the conflict. Similarly, the adolescent may not perceive themselves to have the appropriate regulation strategies to achieve their goals (Gratz & Roemer 2004), resulting in giving in to the other person as an alternative means of managing the conflict and potentially their negative emotions.

With regards to the overall regression analysis exploring positive problem solving, ECR avoidance appeared to have a larger contribution than emotion dysregulation (DERS) upon positive problem solving. ECR attachment anxiety made no contribution. One explanation for the larger contribution of avoidance may be the element of risk posed. As discussed, avoidance may otherwise be perceived as a safety strategy in which attempts to problem solve may pose a risk of further rejection. Avoidance may therefore help to reduce

an individual's further distress. Emotion dysregulation on the contrary may pose less of a personal threat to the individual. For example, if an individual denies their emotional experience, although unhealthy, this may serve to buffer against the negative effects of the conflict experience. This is consistent with current research that highlights how higher avoidance relates to adolescents' views of conflict as risky (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009).

With regards to the overall regression analysis exploring compliance, emotion dysregulation (DERS) appeared to have a larger contribution than ECR avoidance upon compliance. ECR attachment anxiety made no contribution. One explanation for the contribution of Emotion dysregulation may be that the DERS is a multifaceted construct in which individuals may exhibit difficulties in multiple areas of emotion regulation and thus, may contribute and account for more compliant behaviours. Overall, both regression analyses disconfirmed hypothesis one and four.

The second and third multiple regressions explored the impact of attachment anxiety and avoidance and emotion dysregulation upon the conflict resolution styles of conflict engagement in the second regression and withdrawal in the third. Results indicated that the DERS had a significant positive relationship with the resolution styles of both conflict engagement and withdrawal. This demonstrated that as DERS scores increased, engagement in conflict and withdrawal also increased. It could be argued that adolescents who are dysregulated may exhibit impulsiveness, whereby limited emotional control contributes to their subsequent reactions (Gratz & Roemer 2004). If the adolescent struggles to gain some form of control over their responses during the conflict, negative emotions may be followed by acting out with less effective behaviours such as shouting (conflict engagement). The adolescent may also demonstrate other aspects of dysregulation that may also contribute.

When the adolescent experiences negative emotions and reports higher impairment in their ability to focus on a specific problem (Gratz & Roemer 2004), their ability to focus upon more effective strategies that may help the conflict may be limited, resulting in more conflictual behaviours. This is in line with current literature which demonstrated that when fewer strategies for regulation are reported in adults (Lopes et al., 2011) and parent - adolescent relationships (Van Lissa et al., 2017), more incidents of conflict are reported. Similarly, the lack of control reflective of dysregulation, or the adolescent's perceptions that they do not have the abilities to regulate their emotions appropriately (Gratz & Roemer 2004), may cause the adolescent to respond by withdrawing when in conflict as a means of attempting to manage these difficulties or reduce negative consequences that may result.

ECR anxiety and avoidance did not contribute to either conflict resolution style within these regression analyses, disconfirming hypothesis two and three. These findings were inconsistent with current literature which demonstrates that attachment insecurity relates to conflict behaviours (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009; Creasey et al., 1999). One explanation for the lack of contribution within the current study could be that the attachment variables may contribute to a single style but in different or opposite ways. For instance, lower levels of attachment anxiety, such as fearing abandonment and not feeling cared for (Fraley et al., 2011) may cause the individual to either engage in higher or low levels of conflict engagement. If the adolescent feels cared for and loved, they may be less inclined to utilise conflict engagement due to the security within the relationship. Alternatively, this perceived security may instead manifest in more conflict engagement due to less fears of relationship breakdown as a result, thus demonstrating how attachment models can contribute to individuals in different ways. This hypothesis is supported by the qualitative phase of the research and will be discussed in further detail throughout the discussion.

Overall, the quantitative results indicated that attachment avoidance did not contribute to conflict resolution styles of conflict engagement and withdrawal, whilst ECR anxiety did not contribute to any of the resolution styles. One explanation could be that the attachment variables may have a lesser impact or no impact upon these particular resolution styles given the developmental phase of these individuals. As adolescents during this phase are pursuing autonomy and independence away from their parental figures (Otterpohl & Wild, 2015), they may depend less on a parental attachment figure for support. These underlying beliefs regarding their attachment may therefore hold less value, particularly as other attachment figures are being arranged into hierarchical positions regarding support (Bowlby, 1969/1982). Specifically, attachment to a parental figure was the focus of the current study given that research indicated that a parental figure was favoured on a hierarchy over peers (Rosenthal & Kobak, 2010), however the current results may indicate otherwise.

An alternative explanation may be that given attachment was explored with parental figures, these models of attachment may not generalise to peer relationships. Attachment with the person they are in conflict with may therefore be different and subsequently have a different impact upon how they may react in conflict. Although some authors highlight generalisability of these models (Bowlby, 1969;1973), others have argued that attachments may be relationship specific (Fraley et al., 2011). This however, may not fully explain why some attachment styles had an impact and others did not. Instead it could be argued that there may be external factors that contribute to conflict resolution styles outside of the attachment system that may not have been accounted for within the part one quantitative aspects of the study. Specifically, the qualitative aspect of the study appeared to exhibit further understanding around these potential explanations.

Given that attachment anxiety and avoidance did not contribute to some of the conflict resolution styles, the second qualitative part aimed to explore the impact of the attachment variable further. This was facilitated by asking adolescents to explore the relationship between the variables upon conflict resolution styles but across two different relationship structures. This helped to illuminate and focus upon the attachment variable in further detail. Qualitative results indicated that four overarching themes emerged. Theme one, 'Relationship Efficacy', discusses how aspects of the relationship with the individual the adolescent is in conflict with may impact upon conflict resolution style. Two subthemes emerged within this theme.

The first subtheme, 'relational strategies', also coincided with part one quantitative findings, illuminating the contribution of emotion dysregulation upon conflict resolution styles. In addition to this, adolescents within this subtheme reported how external support (i.e., teachers) was at times utilised given their inability to regulate and subsequently de-escalate their emotions and help resolve the problem. Part one may not account for this extraneous variable of some form of intervention. For instance, the adolescent may appear to be dysregulated, however intervention from a teacher may subsequently direct the individual to exhibit a specific resolution style when emotionally contained. Emotional containment may be facilitated through an external person and thus, still aligns with part one findings given that regulation of emotions externally affects better problem solving.

An extension of the above appeared to involve the roles of both parties within the conflict in helping to escalate or de-escalate emotions of the other person and their following resolution styles. For instance, some of the adolescent described how the other persons

behaviours such as shouting causes their own negative emotions to escalate and subsequently engage in conflict engagement themselves. Some adolescents also explored how when the other person approached the conflict in a calmer manner, they were subsequently calmer themselves and better able to problem solve. These results are consistent with research on dyadic variability in conflict (Main et al., 2016; Van der Giessen et al., 2013). Main et al. (2016) identified that when dyadic variability was minimal within mother-adolescent exchanges, such as increased negative emotion synchronicity, satisfaction was reported as lower within the exchange. When fixed in emotional states that are similar, resolution is less probable (Van der Giessen et al., 2013). Dyadic variability may highlight equal opportunity and space to explore and adapt to the conflict situation (Van der Giessen et al., 2013). This is somewhat consistent with this current theme, highlighting how both individuals' regulatory abilities are responsible for conflict resolution styles employed.

The current findings are also somewhat consistent with research by Moed et al. (2014) who found that "longer bouts of reciprocated negative emotion" (p. 1618) were found in parent-adolescent conflicts which were more often terminated by the adolescent. They argue that the continued cycles may relate to adolescents' developmental struggles or changes with their regulatory skills. Thus the findings indicated that where the parental figure does not intervene, the conflict may continue. This may explain why adolescents' conflict behaviours appeared to be reflective of the persons they were in conflict with. Lack of skills during this developmental phase may mean they become more reliant upon the other person to help emotionally de-escalate the situation.

Part one of the research does not account for the dual responsibility and reflects only the regulatory abilities of the adolescent not taking into account the emotional containment

provided by the other person during the conflict. The subtheme highlighted the circular process even further, with adolescents discussing how the anticipation of what each other needs during the conflict to calm down may impact upon resolution style. It could be argued that regardless of the adolescent's dysregulation or attachments, they may choose to engage in withdrawal resolution styles to help de-escalate the other person in order to avoid conflict engagement. However, the qualitative findings do still align with the quantitative findings given that dysregulation did generally appear to lead to more conflict engagement and less likelihood of problem-solving behaviours regardless of whether the dysregulation was triggered by the other person within the conflict. Overall both parts one and two results indicated that dysregulation of emotions did determine the choice of resolution style.

Emotional tolerance was also explored within this theme and how adolescents' experiences throughout the day may influence their response to others during conflict. Some adolescents discussed how their mood may change given other incidents during the day. The more emotionally difficult incidents they experience, the more likely they were to be unable to control their emotions when experiencing a conflict and therefore were more likely to be involved in conflict engagement. This aligns with part one findings which demonstrated a relationship between higher dysregulation (DERS) and higher conflict engagement. The results indicated that adolescents may struggle to manage negative mood states which then impact upon controlling emotions in future interactions. One explanation for the results may be cognitive theories of emotion, specifically appraisals. Essentially one's emotional response to a given situation is based upon the appraisals or interpretations made by the individual as opposed to the situation (Siemer et al., 2007). If the adolescent has already experienced negative emotions they cannot control throughout the day, these emotions may then contribute to more negative interpretations or appraisals of other situations such as conflict.

An alternative explanation may relate to displacement. The adolescent may displace the negative emotions they experience and struggle to manage onto another target (Baumeister et al., 1998), in this case potentially within the conflict experience.

The second subtheme of ‘relational efficacy’ that emerged was ‘the influence of relationship closeness and security on conflict resolution style’. Within this theme adolescents’ discussions around care and worries of abandonment appear to relate to attachment anxiety. Some adolescents explored how their worries that friends could abandon the relationship due to an element of choice, caused them to choose conflict resolution styles that minimised relationship breakdown, such as refraining from commenting as harsh or apologising. Alternatively, some adolescents explained they would be less likely to refrain from conflict engagement with a parental figure given they knew these behaviours would not harm the relationship due to knowing their parental figure would never abandon them. One adolescent explained how beliefs their parental figure cared for them alternatively encouraged them to be easier on them using lower levels of conflict engagement.

These findings appear to be consistent with Ben-Ari and Hirshberg (2009) who reported that adolescents would opt to avoid engaging in any conflict with friends where their attachment styles were anxious. Ben-Ari and Hirshberg (2009) proposed that anxious adolescents may fear rejection and relationship breakdown due to this belief of fragility and this then becomes a motivating factor for this choice of resolution style. The current findings confirm this idea given that when the adolescent appeared to hold the generalised beliefs the other person would never abandon them, they did not fear conflict engagement would result in rejection. Ben-Ari and Hirshberg (2009) furthers this explanation by discussing how anxious adolescents may experience feelings of being out of control within the interaction

and behave this way in order to gain this control back and reduce the likelihood of conflict. The current findings were also consistent with other findings by Ben-Ari and Hirshberg (2009) which demonstrated securer individuals were ok with approaching the conflict and thus able to talk through the problem.

In addition to the above, attachment theory may explain why some adolescents generally feel less anxious to their parents than peers. During adolescence, individuals aim to pursue autonomy and explore other relationships outside of parental figures (Otterpohl & Wild, 2015). Given this, adolescents may experience more opportunity for relationship breakdown with friends, with these experiences or models of fragility being internalised into their working models of attachments for peers (Weimer et al., 2004).

Adams and Laursen's (2001) findings may also give an alternative explanation as to why one adolescent during the interview discussed being more inclined to engage in conflict engagement with their parents. Adams and Laursen (2001) report that power dynamics hold more value during this developmental phase given they are pushing for autonomy, with parental relationship preservation thus holding less value. This may explain why adolescents may be more inclined to worry about the stability of their relationship with peers given stability with these individuals becomes a priority. The findings may reflect their autonomy rather than their attachments. Again, attachments may not play a role in the phase one findings given attachment to parents was measured. Although adolescents did not discuss this within their interviews, there still may be other factors that contribute to the relationships they discussed that may have not been commented on.

The current theme also highlighted how for some other adolescents aspects of lower attachment avoidance, such as being able to depend upon them in times of need, they would report how this would motivate them to avoid conflict or apologise. They describe how they placed value on these relationships given their supportiveness and thus did not want to lose a source of support. These findings showed consistency with the quantitative findings that reported that lower avoidance related to higher problem solving. This was also consistent with findings by Ben-Ari and Hirshberg (2009) who found that where security was higher, adolescents preferred to utilize problem solving. Another explanation for why these adolescents may prefer to apologise may be that they generally view the relationship as more trusting, meaning that approaching the conflict would likely be responded with offering support (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009). Similarly, the theme also reported how some adolescents who perceived the relationship as having less value were not motivated to maintain the relationship, causing them to be more likely to engage in conflict styles that did not aim to repair the relationship. One explanation for this may be that for relationships which have limited prior fulfilling interactions, incentives to engage in problem solving or amicable discussion may be a lot lower (Laursen et al., 2001).

Overall, the subtheme ‘the influence of relationship closeness and security on conflict resolution style’ explored how what appears to be reflective of security motivated the adolescent within a particular resolution style in different ways. For instance, apparent lower anxiety may impact upon the adolescent to choose either to engage in conflict or use lower levels of conflict engagement such as not commenting as harsh. In addition to this, what appeared to be high and low anxiety motivated the adolescent to refrain from commenting harshly but due to different rationales. These findings are consistent with the current literature which generally reports different findings for the impact of anxiety either causing the

individual to refrain from conflict (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009) or respond reactively (Creasey et al., 1999). The qualitative findings may therefore explain the lack of contribution of ECR anxiety to conflict resolution style in the quantitative findings given it may impact the adolescent very differently within a single resolution style.

The subtheme demonstrated that adolescents may hold different attachment models with different people, showing consistency with current research that states attachment may not be stable but alternatively a fluid concept and relationship specific (Fraley et al., 2011). Implicit within this theme was the models of attachment the adolescent may hold with the person they are in conflict with may impact upon resolution style, potentially explaining why attachment to a parental figure did not consistency impact upon conflict resolution style with friends in part one. Part one quantitative findings however, did emphasise the importance of attachment to a parental figure during adolescence. Attachment avoidance impacted upon two of the resolution styles within phase one, demonstrating that their attachments to parents may still hold some influence on behaviours during adolescence. An alternative explanation may be that given adolescence is a transitional phase (Bowlby, 1969/1982) to exploring new relationships, some adolescents may draw upon previous models of attachment to parents whilst exploring new interactions with peers. Bowlby (1988) and Donbaek and Elklit (2014) explain how attachment security to a parental figure or caregiver still remains to be an important factor in adolescence, with internalised models forming a basis from other relationships. New models may develop with more interactions occurring and the utilisation of friends as attachment figures. Overall, both part one and two findings demonstrate some consistencies in their results, highlighting how relationship specific attachment models may be important in influencing conflict resolution styles, with attachment to parents still also

having some influence, potentially given the transitional phase and exploration of new relationships outside of parents.

The second theme 'individual differences' explores how the adolescent may exhibit individual or unique factors that may impact upon the choice of conflict resolution style. Some of these individual differences included particular topics of conflict or passions, diagnosis or mental health problems and personal annoyances, etc. Particularly these factors appeared to operate outside of attachment and emotion dysregulation. Although all of these individual differences may play different roles, few will be drawn upon for the purpose of discussion to highlight the importance and contribution of individual factors. For instance, some adolescents discussed personal annoyances that triggered them to be less likely to engage in positive problem solving, but rather the adolescent was more likely to choose conflict engagement or withdrawal. Of particular importance regarding this finding was that adolescents appeared to have a narrative around why these topics were off limits. For example, one adolescent discussed his difficulties with bad breath given a childhood experience related to this. One explanation for these findings may be explained better through formulation work. From a formulation perspective, conceptualisation of behaviours may be better explained by prior history that helps build a picture or story regarding an individual's interpretation of prior events and how this currently impacts upon current behaviours such as triggers (Johnstone & Dallos, 2014). This may also help build an understanding of the individuals unique belief systems underpinning their choices. Given individuals talk about specific triggers, conceptualising conflict as being motivated by one's diverse history may explain why personal annoyances may contribute to conflict resolution style within the dynamics of themselves and the other person they may be in conflict with.

Similarly, one adolescent made reference to specific diagnoses, such as autism and ADHD, that appeared to cause a sensitivity to the conflict. Another adolescent discussed her current mental health difficulties such as self-harm as a means of managing conflict. These findings are in line with current research that shows those with a diagnosis of autism can struggle within various areas of their social development, ranging from delays or deficits (McConnell, 2002). Conflict can be construed as a form of social interaction and thus explains why autism may impact upon conflict resolution style in these adolescents. Overall the theme of individual differences highlights other factors that may contribute to conflict resolution style that may not be accounted for within the part one quantitative findings. It could be argued that the results go against part one findings or contribute towards a deeper understanding of possible extraneous variables within the relationships discussed in part one quantitative results.

The third theme 'Social constraints' also helped illuminate further contributing factors towards conflict resolution style that were not accounted for in phase one, specifically these focused upon social factors. The theme comprised two subthemes, 'level of authority and consequences' and 'social norms and desirability'. This first subtheme 'level of authority and consequences' focuses upon certain consequences that may result from their choice of conflict engagement such as having their phone taken away or ruining their chances of going to university. Of particular importance was the authority of the other person they were in conflict with, if these individuals were an authority figure, the adolescent was deterred from conflict engagement due to fears of punishment or other consequences.

These findings were consistent with Moed et al. (2014) who suggests that reduction in consequences may be the focus of adolescents within a disagreement, not the outcome. Thus

adolescents may be unwilling to push for a desired outcome, expressing feelings of being unhappy but do so for the fear of repercussions. Similarly, research by Mergler and Patton (2007) explored the concept of personal responsibility in adolescence. Their results indicated that “consequences largely moderate their behaviour” (p.64.). Conflict is a behaviour that occurs within communication and thus conflict behaviours may also be reflected within these findings. Behavioural theories may help explain these findings. Behaviourism explores the idea that reinforcement, or in the case of these adolescents, future consequences for example the removal of phones, can alter another’s behaviour (Skinner, 1984). These behaviours may be reflective of ones that are more acceptable or desired (Skinner, 1984) by authority figures such as parents or teachers. It may be that prior experiences of conflict engagement have resulted in some form of consequence and causes the adolescents to refrain from these behaviours in the future. This subtheme also highlights why there may be differences in the choices of conflict resolution style between relationship structures. Potentially, the level of authority held may be higher with a parental figure than friends.

The second subtheme ‘social norms and desirability’ explores belief systems held by the adolescents that appear to be socially driven such as treating certain individuals such as the elderly a certain way and the need to be right. The need to be right may motivate adolescents to be conflictual and less likely to admit any wrong doings. One explanation for this may relate to social desirability. Social desirability refers to one’s own wishes and desires to achieve social approval (Mo, 2019). Adolescence can be defined as a developmental phase where approval within social contexts is heightened (Mo, 2019; Tremolada et al., 2022). Being in control of one’s impressions are particularly important for adolescents in a social environment, given they help develop social relations and achieve status amongst peers (Mo, 2019). Acknowledgement and gratitude by others is desired by

adolescents to help develop their self-confidence, which in turn can help the adolescent achieve other developmental tasks (Tremolada et al., 2022). Tremolada et al. (2022) provide more insight into this heightened period of social desirability for the developmental period of adolescence. They demonstrate that as age increased from early adolescence (14-16 years) onwards, social desirability decreased. They highlight how as the adolescent develops, “these values normalize as one approaches complete maturity” (p. 13.). It appears that the current theme indicated that adolescents’ need to be right was motivated by embarrassment. Given adolescence is a heightened period for acceptance from others, embarrassment may also be a heightened response resulting from being perceived as wrong and thus their unfulfilled social acceptance. This may also explain why adolescents are particularly motivated to respect social norms regarding how to treat elders and the opposite gender. Overall, the theme again explored aspects of social constraints that may not be accounted for in the part one quantitative aspect of the research.

Overall findings from this current study appear to illuminate or explain some of the reasons why adolescents may engage in specific conflict resolution styles. Understanding these contributions may help towards developing better psychological interventions towards better conflict management. This will be discussed further in the next section.

5.2. Implications for counselling psychology

The current findings indicated that conflict may be a dynamic process whereby varying factors may contribute towards conflict behaviours but for very different reasons for different individuals. It appears there are many factors both individual to the adolescent and socially that may impact upon their choice of behaviours. Given the diversity in

contributions, it could be suggested that within a therapeutic setting, the adolescent's individual experiences need to be explored to assess their individual motivations around conflict. It may be that certain contributing factors hold more weight for certain individuals than others. These formulations will help better target areas for intervention (Johnstone & Dallos, 2014).

Another important finding that may better inform intervention work is the dual responsibilities of both participants within the conflict dynamic. Future interventions may benefit from more systemic work, particularly where parent/parental figure and adolescent conflicts are concerned. For instance, it could be argued that assumptions cannot be made regarding the adult being solely responsible for both their own and the adolescent's emotional containment during a conflict interaction. The results revealed that the adolescent also needs to be considerate of their parents' needs to engage in regulatory strategies in order to reduce the likelihood of conflict occurring. This highlights an area for possible intervention work where the dynamic of the interaction could be broken down to explore the current needs of both the parental figure and the adolescent during a time of conflict. It could be argued that emphasis could be placed upon both the parental figure and the adolescent for emotional containment and de-escalation given the adult may also struggle with own regulatory abilities. If the adolescent can also engage in these behaviours as well as the parental figure, it may result in better problem solving and thus, their emotional containment for both parties involved. Therefore, discussions of needs appear to be particularly important as these may differ between individuals and may not be explicit within the interactions. These discussions may also be better explored outside a conflict interaction in order to tease out any issues that may arise when providing these needs and come to a plan regarding conflict management in the future.

It could also be argued that as the results implied adolescents often rely upon others such as teachers to help navigate conflict, there may be room for intervention work via other responsible adults. For instance, teachers may benefit from a repertoire of skills that could help facilitate them in educating their students in better conflict management as opposed to taking the lead in remedying the conflict situation themselves.

The results also suggested that the attachment of the adolescent may motivate the adolescent's behaviours during conflict. Most importantly, these attachment systems may be similar across various adolescents but may motivate the adolescent's behaviours during conflict in different ways. Similarly, the attachment models held also appeared to at times be different depending on who the adolescent was interacting with. Therapy may therefore benefit from exploring the underlying attachment beliefs of the adolescent separately for differing relationship structures before deciding upon intervention work. Specifically, how the adolescents belief systems may motivate them within this singular relationship they are struggling with and why.

Other work may also involve educating adolescents regarding boundaries and the implications of their own behaviours during conflict. For instance, it appeared from the results that adolescents who feel unheard or not contained may experience negative thoughts that the other person does not care for them. It could be implied from this finding that the adolescent's own avoidance of approaching conflict due to fears of fragility for instance, may alternatively reinforce or maintain this belief that the other person is unwilling to listen and thus, does not care for them. The adolescent may benefit from exploring their own behaviours regarding this.

Given that adolescence is a key stage of development with regards to the formation and maintenance of social relationships, and the multiple factors identified within the current research as contributing towards conflict behaviours within this population, the need for early intervention could be critical in helping adolescents develop better skills at working through conflict. Given the influence of attachment styles and emotion dysregulation on adolescents' conflict behaviours, these could be targeted areas to work on within therapy. If the adolescent is encouraged to recognise underlying difficulties with emotion dysregulation or their attachment concerns, they may be able to develop skills within therapy to manage these and their subsequent behaviours. Early intervention may help reduce or avoid maladaptive behaviours surrounding conflict from escalating into more severe forms of interpersonal aggression in future relationships.

5.3. Limitations and directions for future research

Overall the current findings provide some insight into the motivations behind adolescents' conflict resolution styles. The current research however is not without any limitations. Phase one of the research did not account for external factors that may also contribute towards conflict resolution style, such as consequences or other external emotion regulation strategies. Although phase two interviews helped to illuminate other factors outside of attachment and emotion dysregulation that may impact upon conflict, the interviews may not have fully explored potential extraneous variables such as trauma history. The directionality of the relationship within phase one may also struggle to account for the cause and effect between variables. For instance, attachment styles may distort the perceptions of the conflict or their attachment styles causing adolescents to over report the conflict interaction or deny their experiences. For instance avoidant individuals have been

reported to deny their emotional experiences (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2011) and this may impact upon their perceptions or interpretation. The other person's behaviours within the conflict interaction may also impact upon attachment style. Alternatively, interactions of conflict within a relationship may instead shape the individual's attachment style, contributing to internalised beliefs about the reliability of the attachment figure during these conflict interactions (Weimer et al., 2004). Thus, the direction of the relationship between attachment and conflict resolution styles may not be clear. In addition to the above, the adolescent's attachment style may have interfered with disclosures during the interview given that the interviewer was someone they were unfamiliar with. For instance those with an insecure attachment style may withhold from discussing their true conflict experiences due to a lack of perceived trust with the researcher. Similarly, adolescent reports of conflict resolution styles may be indicative of their perceptions only and not necessarily reflective of their actual behaviours (Van Lissa et al., 2017).

With regards to emotion dysregulation, the current research did not explore the individual facets. It could be that individual aspects of emotion dysregulation may have a larger impact upon certain resolution styles, but lower scores on other facets may reduce this impact. The exploration of attachment within phase one also explored attachment to a parental figure the adolescent felt closest to. This was done as a means of reducing discrimination given some adolescents may not be able to draw upon a specific attachment figure such as their mother. One limitation of this is that the current study did not allow for potential differences between different parental figures, i.e., father and mother, to be explored. Moreover, the current study does not account for the communication methods in which conflict takes place such as phone, text or face to face. Current research highlights how digital media has advanced with these alterations reflecting different desires for both its usage

and communication preferences in adolescence (Tremolada, et al., 2022). For instance, research by Tremolada et al. (2022) indicated differences in favourable digital platforms for positive and negative arguments. These differences may be indicative of differences in conflict styles and thus different motivations that may be important to understand.

Another limitation was that the current research did not present a breakdown of the individual quantitative results for the 10 participants who took part in interviews. During the interview phase, the researcher did not ask participants for their previous participant numbers and therefore could not identify their prior responses. This information would have been helpful to present within the current research. Further information regarding the representation of the participants involved in the interview phase could have been drawn upon to help with the understanding and corroboration of both phase one and phase two findings. During the interviews it may have also been possible that some of the adolescents' level of disclosure and exploration may have been affected by knowing their teachers were aware of their involvement. Some adolescents may have been discouraged from full participation for fear of their teachers learning about certain disclosures. Although adolescents were aware information was to remain anonymous, they were still aware that abstracts of their interviews would be drawn upon when writing up the research and this may have caused some discouragement for adolescents. Finally, it is important to note that the current findings are indicative of the adolescent population that took part in the study and are not necessarily generalisable to an adolescent population as a whole.

Future research may benefit from exploring dynamics between the adolescent and the other person they are in conflict with to corroborate or validate the conflict experience and explore further the interplay between their behaviours (Weid et al., 2007). Research may also

benefit from exploring the platforms in which conflict may occur given the increasing developments and usage of social media platforms and how this may affect their conflict behaviours.

5.4. Conclusion.

Overall the current research highlighted that attachment and emotion dysregulation may contribute to the choice of conflict resolution styles in adolescents. Results indicated that attachment security may manifest in different ways for different individuals and thus their following conflict resolution styles. In addition to this, findings highlighted that both individuals within the conflict interaction may impact upon the conflict experience and behaviours utilised. Both the adolescent and the person they are in conflict with can be responsible for escalating or de-escalating the emotions of the other. The qualitative part of the research highlighted other factors such as diagnosis and social constructs, for example authority/consequences, that may contribute to responses during conflict outside of attachment and emotion dysregulation. Overall therapeutic work targeting better conflict resolution with adolescents should seek to understand the adolescent's individual conflict experience and the factors within their own narrative to understand specific targets for appropriate intervention work.

Chapter Six

Critical appraisal

6.1. Introduction to critical appraisal.

A critical and reflective appraisal is addressed within this section. I explore certain aspects of the research process whilst reflecting upon my learning and progress made over the course of its completion. I reflect upon the areas of difficulty I experienced and barriers I had to overcome. The area of research is also explored such as how my interest in the area developed and the impact its completion has on my client work.

6.1.1. Reflections upon the research area.

Key areas of the current research involved attachment, emotion dysregulation and conflict resolution. These became key areas of interest through my client work on both placements throughout the course and through previous work roles such as inpatient and secondary care settings. In particular, my first placement involved working within schools, providing one to one psychological support for adolescents. These individuals struggled to emotionally regulate themselves and found it difficult to maintain relationships, frequently engaging in a conflict. When working with these clients, it became evident they had difficult attachment histories resulting in their current difficulties with trust and forming secure positive relationships. This was also reflected in my client work with adults, particularly those with diagnosis of emotionally unstable personality disorder and those with a history of abuse.

Given my interest in this area and observing these difficulties clients would have with managing conflict, I wondered about the prospects of exploring conflict as a research topic further. Through exploration of the literature, there appeared, to my knowledge, to be more

focus upon adult romantic relationships, something I also found quite interesting within my client work. Through my placement with adolescents, it did appear that these individuals would at times have more stigma directed towards them due to their conflictual behaviors than would adults. More specifically, these children or adolescents would be labeled as difficult or disruptive, whereas with adults, there was more emphasis on their mental health and diagnosis by others around them. It appeared there was more acceptance around these behaviours within adults regarding gaining appropriate support and mental health interventions. For instance, adolescents within a school setting may have their conflict behaviours responded to with detention or suspension, rather than focusing on why the student may repeatedly engage in these behaviours. This did trigger an interest in exploring an adolescent population further. I believed that more could be understood and explored about adolescent conflict behaviors and the factors that may have contributed to these. More importantly, completing a qualitative aspect to the research allowed the adolescents to have a voice regarding this research area, specifically when querying further the 'whys' regarding the gaps in the literature.

6.1.2. Developments as a researcher

The process of completing the research was challenging in various aspects of the research. One particular challenge involved data collection given the target population. As the participant group were adolescents, I was initially worried about achieving the required sample size given the consent process and having to gain this via a responsible adult. I worried that having to go through a parental figure could cause difficulties with achieving responses and an interest to take part. Through exploration of my options with those involved in previous research involving adolescents,, I learnt that I could gain consent via a

responsible teacher within a school, making the recruitment process easier. Although this did reduce my anxieties initially, given that schools could provide the opportunity for a large pool of adolescents to take part, getting schools to agree then became another hurdle that I had to overcome. The task of contacting schools to see if there was any interest in taking part within my research was a very difficult and long process. I contacted many schools where I would have to go through secretaries before speaking to the responsible teacher for the students. I would then often be informed that they would pass my information along, which the majority of the time resulted in a lack of responses. After contacting numerous schools, I did start to lose hope and the prospect of completing research within an adolescent population became daunting. Although eventually was lucky in being able to obtain a sample of participants, I do understand why research on adolescents may pose some issues for researchers.

As a researcher I also faced another hurdle with my current population. Some of the adolescents who volunteered to take part, struggled to be explorative. The adolescents appeared to struggle with gaining a level of depth in their exploration or would in some cases go off topic. I had to quickly become flexible and adaptive with my interviewing skills to help certain individuals explore in further detail. Given my prior work with adolescents, I often noticed that these individuals opened up more throughout the development of our therapeutic relationship. I had to accept that this is a part of the research process, thinking of other ways I could overcome these barriers. For instance, developing rapport with the adolescent could evolve through explaining the research process to them and giving some information about my educational background, such as the doctorate and the research being a part of this. I learnt through the data collection process that there are many challenges you may come across and that data collection may not be as straight forward as anticipated.

I believe I have also developed as a researcher within my research skills throughout completing the project. Prior to this research project, I had never completed a mixed methodology, creating different anxieties for me. The concept of mixed methodology was something I was unfamiliar with, meaning I was tasked with researching what different types of mixed methods were available. Completing a mixed methodology also forced me to explore further other analyses such as qualitative I did not have a lot of experience with. Again, completing a project with multiple areas of unfamiliarity encouraged me to learn and develop areas of my knowledge regarding research skills. The project pushed me to do research in areas that are needed, rather than sticking with what I felt competent or comfortable with. It could have been easy for me to avoid these areas of my competency that needed to be developed further to create an easier research journey, but alternatively I decided to challenge myself. I had to gain acceptance that my research journey may take longer than some of my other peers given the sequential design. It was also important for me to have self-compassion around not comparing my journey to others and feeling disheartened by my lack of progress. Although my anxieties were exacerbated due to having two separate streams of data collection and analysis, I am thankful for pushing my own boundaries to encourage and help develop my learning process. If I did not challenge myself, I may have not enhanced the research findings regarding the question.

6.1.3. Reflections upon client work and clinical practice.

The process of completing the research has helped me to develop and reflect further my own sessions with clients and other aspects of my clinical practice. Though exploring the literature and reading upon the research topic in greater detail, I have gained more

understanding and theoretical knowledge of the variables being addressed within this research. This increased knowledge and awareness has allowed me to reflect more upon attachment and conflict dynamics with my own clients, facilitating further understanding regarding their presentations and formulation. The results of the research have also encouraged me think more about the clients' individual narratives around their conflicts stories and why they specifically may engage in certain behaviours. Specifically, it has encouraged me to think about why it may be specific individuals they struggle to manage conflicts with, and why and how this can then be reflected within their therapeutic interventions.

In addition to this, I became more aware of my own communicative skills and the impact this can have upon an individual's narrative and exploration. In particular, listening to my interview recordings and reflecting upon my interviewing skills, I discovered aspects of my communication that could discourage or encourage depth in the adolescents' exploration. Similarly, reflexive engagement within the qualitative parts of the research encouraged me to be more attentive and mindful of my own personal life story and specific biases. This reflexive awareness that was encouraged within my research allowed me to get back in touch with this reflexive process also within my own client work. It can be easy to forget about our own personal influences within the therapeutic work at times so getting back in touch with this aspect of the self was a useful reminder.

Overall through reflecting upon research with adolescents, it has highlighted the importance of completing more research within this population to encourage further understanding regarding their behaviours and ways of working with these clients and therefore early intervention.

6.1.4. Conclusion.

Overall the process of completing the research has encouraged me to develop my skills and knowledge both when conducting research and within my client sessions. I have also developed as an individual, becoming more reflective about my own personal role I play within the research process and how it is important to be aware of these anxieties and personal influences to facilitate good research.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix 1 – Invitation letter to school

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Kellie Hitchens,
Student on the Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology,
University of Wolverhampton,
Wulfruna Street,
Wolverhampton,
WV1 1LY

Dear [school/organisation]

As part of my course, The Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology at the University of Wolverhampton, I am proposing to conduct a research project into emotion regulation, attachment and conflict resolution. To do this I would like to invite you to support/help with the recruitment of participants aged between the ages of 13 and 17. If you agree to take part this will involve your students taking part in a small sample of questionnaires that will take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. Participants will then be invited to take part in an interview if they wish to do so. The interview will take no longer than 45 minutes to complete. All the information gathered from participants in this study will be kept confidential. Only the researchers working on the project will have access to the information. Participants will not be identifiable in any publication or report as the data will be grouped together and all identifying information will be removed.

One potential benefit of this research is that it will provide a further understanding into the ways individuals act in conflict situations. I hope this will help psychologists and educators develop better ways of helping young people through adolescence.

I am therefore writing to seek your permission to conduct this study within your organisation with your students and enclose a copy of the research protocol for your information.

If you have any questions about this study, I will be happy to arrange to speak with you. You are also welcome to contact my Research Supervisors if you prefer.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Researcher: Kellie Hitchens [e-mail address redacted].

Research Supervisors: Dr Robin Gutteridge [e-mail address redacted] & Dr Tracey Platt [e-mail address redacted].

Researcher's signature

Appendix 2 -Information sheet for school

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INFORMATION SHEET for School

Study title: How does emotion regulation, and attachment related anxiety and avoidance impact on the ability to resolve conflict?

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet. My name is Kellie Hitchens and I am currently a student on a Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology. I would like to invite your students to contribute to the research I am conducting as part of my academic qualification. I am interested in how best to support healthy emotional development in young people.

What is the purpose of the study?

The study aims to explore the connections between your students emotional attachments and their social behaviour. I will be investigating the links between attachment, how they manage emotions and how they might act in situations of conflict. Attachment can be described as various behaviours or interactions that occur between a parent/guardian and their child. This includes the Childs views on how reliable, trustworthy and dependable they feel their attachment figures (parent/guardians) are along with how they perceive themselves in response to this.

Do my students have to take part?

It is up to you and your student to decide whether or not to take part. If you both do decide to take part, your students will be given an information sheet like this to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form. If your student decides to take part, they are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without any implications for their education or care.

What will happen if my students takes part?

If your student chooses to take part, the study will involve answering three short questionnaires. Overall these should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. Your student will be asked to think about the questions before answering. No role playing or activity is needed for this aspect of the study. Following this your students will be asked to take part in a short one to one recorded interview with the researcher if they wish to do so. This will be to explore further your student's attachment, how they manage emotions and how they might act in situations of conflict. This should take no longer than 45 minutes to complete.

What are the potential benefits and risks of taking part?

I hope your student may enjoy the process and the idea of contributing to research. They will be helping me understand, the ways individuals act in conflict situations. I hope this will help psychologists and educators develop better ways of helping young people through adolescence

Before being included in the study potential participants will be carefully screened to minimise any risk of distress from taking part. However, if at any stage your students would like to stop, they can choose to do so. Taking part or not has no effect on any services they may be receiving.

Will your students taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes. All the information about your student's participation in this study will be kept confidential. The completed questionnaires and recorded interview (audio only) will be stored on a password protected computer and a locked filing cabinet. Only the researchers working on the project will have access to the information. Your students will not be identifiable in any publication or report as the data will be grouped together and all identifying information will be removed.

What will happen at the end of the research study?

The findings from this study will form part of a research report. I will be happy to send a summary of the research findings if you request this

What if I have a problem or concern?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please speak with the researchers who will do their best to answer your questions. You are welcome to contact my research supervisor direct

Contact information:

Researcher: Kellie Hitchens [e-mail address redacted].

Research Supervisors: Dr Robin Gutteridge [e-mail address redacted] & Dr Tracey Platt [e-mail address redacted].

If you are happy for your students to continue, please read and sign the consent form provided.

Thank you for your time.

Appendix 3 – Consent sheet for school

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CONSENT FORM

Study title: How does emotion regulation, and attachment related anxiety and avoidance impact on the ability to resolve conflict?

Researcher: Kellie Hitchens (Supervisors: Dr Robin Gutteridge & Dr Tracey Platt)

Informed consent sheet

- I have read the information sheet and have had opportunities to clarify any concerns that I have had about the study.
- I have been informed of the activities that the students will complete in the study.
- I am assured that students' taking part in this study is voluntary and they can withdraw at any point. They will be given clear instructions on how to withdraw from the study during its completion.
- I understand that no personal identifiable information will be recorded for this study.
- I understand that individual performance in the activities will not be communicated in any form to ensure confidentiality. Only the group summary will be reported.
- I understand that the anonymous information recorded for this study will be securely sorted for three years and then be securely disposed off.
- I have been informed that the results of the study will be reported at conferences and published in journals. I give consent for the anonymous results to be disseminated through reports and publications.
- I give permission to the researchers to conduct this study at the school.

School: _____
 Print Name: _____
 Position: _____
 Signature: _____
 Date: _____

Researcher Name: _____
 Researcher Signature: _____
 Date: _____

Contact information:

Researcher: Kellie Hitchens [e-mail address redacted].

Research Supervisors: Dr Robin Gutteridge [e-mail address redacted] & Dr Tracey Platt [e-mail address redacted]

Appendix 4 – Adolescent information sheet.

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INFORMATION SHEET FOR ADOLSCENTS

Study title: How does emotion regulation, and attachment related anxiety and avoidance impact on the ability to resolve conflict?

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet. My name is Kellie Hitchens and I am currently a student on The Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology. I would like to invite you to contribute to the research I am conducting as part of my academic qualification. I am interested in how best to support healthy emotional development in young people.

What is the purpose of the study?

The current study aims to explore the connections between your emotional attachments and social behaviour. I will be investigating the links between attachment, how you manage emotions and how you might act in situations of conflict. Attachment can be described as various behaviours or interactions that occur between a parent/guardian and their child. This includes the Childs views on how reliable, trustworthy and dependable they feel their attachment figures (parent/guardians) are along with how they perceive themselves in response to this.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without any implications for your education or care.

What will happen if I decide to take part?

If you choose to take part, the study will involve answering three short questionnaires. Overall these should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. You will be asked to think about the questions before responding. No role play or activity is needed. Following this you will be asked to take part in a short one to one recorded (audio only) interview with the researcher if you wish to take part. This will be to explore further your attachment, how you manage emotions and how you might act in situations of conflict. This should take no longer than 45 minutes to complete.

What are the potential benefits and risks of taking part?

I hope you enjoy the process and the idea of contributing to research. You will be helping me understand the ways individuals act in conflict situations. I hope this will help psychologists and educators develop better ways of helping young people through adolescence.

If at any stage you would like to stop, you can choose to do so. Taking part or not has no effect on any services you may be receiving.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes. All the information about your participation in this study will be kept confidential. The completed questionnaires and recorded interview will be stored on a password protected computer and locked filing cabinet. Only the researchers working on the project will have access to the information. You will not be identifiable in any publication or report as the data will be grouped together and all identifying information will be removed.

What will happen at the end of the research study?

The findings from this study will form part of a research report. I will be happy to send a summary of the research findings if you request this.

What if I have a problem or concern?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please speak with the researchers who will do their best to answer your questions. You are welcome to contact my research supervisor direct.

Contact information:

Researcher: Kellie Hitchens [e-mail address redacted].

Research Supervisors: Dr Robin Gutteridge [e-mail address redacted] & Dr Tracey Platt [e-mail address redacted].

If you are happy to continue, please read and sign the assent form provided.

Thank you for your time.

Appendix 5 – Adolescent consent form

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ASSENT FORM FOR ADOLSCENT

Title of Project: How does emotion regulation, and attachment related anxiety and avoidance impact on the ability to resolve conflict?

Name of Researcher: Kellie Hitchens

- | | Please tick |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time/up until commencement of data analysis, without giving any reason. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that my data will be stored securely and confidentially and that I will not be identifiable in any report or publication | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I understand that if I choose to take part in the follow up interview that this will be recorded (audio only). | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I understand that the researcher may wish to publish this study and any results found, for which I give my permission | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I agree to take part in the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| Name | Date | Signature |
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| Researcher | Date | Signature |
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Contact information:

Researcher: Kellie Hitchens [e-mail address redacted].

Research Supervisors: Dr Robin Gutteridge [e-mail address redacted] & Dr Tracey Platt [e-mail address redacted].

Appendix 6 – Demographics sheet**Participant Demographic information****Age:** _____**Gender:** *Male* *Female* **Ethnicity:** _____

Appendix 7 – DERS

Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS)

Please indicate how often each of the items apply to yourself. Responses range from 1 to 5, where 1 is almost never, 2 is sometimes, 3 is about half the time, 4 is most of the time, and 5 is almost always. Please circle your answer.

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| I am clear about my feelings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I pay attention to how I feel. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I experience my emotions as overwhelming and out of control. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have no idea how I am feeling. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have difficulty making sense out of my feelings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I am attentive to my feelings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I know exactly how I am feeling. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I care about what I am feeling. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I am confused about how I feel. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I acknowledge my emotions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I become angry with myself for feeling that way. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I become embarrassed for feeling that way. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I have difficulty getting work done. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I become out of control. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I believe that I will remain that way for a long time. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I believe that I'll end up feeling very depressed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I believe that my feelings are valid and important. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I have difficulty focusing on other things. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| When I'm upset, I feel out of control. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I can still get things done. | 1 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I feel ashamed with myself for feeling that way. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I know that I can find a way to eventually feel better. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I feel like I am weak. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I feel like I can remain in control of my behaviours. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I feel guilty for feeling that way. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I have difficulty concentrating. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I have difficulty controlling my behaviours. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I believe that there is nothing I can do to make myself feel better. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I become irritated with myself for feeling that way. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I start to feel very bad about myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I believe that wallowing in it is all I can do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I lose control over my behaviours. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I have difficulty thinking about anything else. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, I take time to figure out what I'm really feeling. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, it takes me a long time to feel better. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I'm upset, my emotions feel overwhelming. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendix 8 – CRSI

The conflict resolution style inventory (CRSI)

Instructions: Using the scale 1=Never and 5=Always, rate how frequently you use each of the following styles to deal with arguments or disagreements with a friend.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Launching personal attacks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Focusing on the problem at hand. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Remaining silent for long periods of time. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not being willing to stick up for myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Exploding and getting out of control. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Sitting down and discussing differences constructively. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Reaching a limit “shutting down”, and refusing to talk any further. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Being too compliant. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Getting carried away and saying things that aren’t meant. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Finding alternatives that are acceptable to each of us. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Tuning the other person out. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not defending my position. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Throwing insults and digs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Negotiating and compromising. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Withdrawing, acting distant and not interested. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Giving in with little attempt to present my side of the issue. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendix 9 – ECR-RS

The Experiences in Close Relationships - Relationship Structures Questionnaire (ECR-RS)

Select the ‘parental figure’ you feel most closely attached to either: mother, father, stepmother, stepfather, or other. If you feel equally attached to more than one of the alternatives, e.g., both of your parents, please select one at random.”

Please state chosen attachment figure: _____

Please answer the following questions about the selected figure

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I usually discuss my problems and concerns with this person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I talk things over with this person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| It helps to turn to this person in times of need. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I find it easy to depend on this person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I prefer not to show this person how I feel deep down. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I don't feel comfortable opening up to this person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I'm afraid this person may abandon me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I worry that this person won't care about me as much as I care about him or her. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I often worry that this person doesn't really care for me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Appendix 10 – Debrief sheet for school and adolescents

University logo removed – Unable to gain permission to use

DEBRIEF.

Thank you for your participation in the study of “How does emotion regulation, and attachment related anxiety and avoidance impact on the ability to resolve conflict?” The aim of the study was to explore how an individual’s relationship with their parents/parental figures and how they control their emotions impacts on how they act in situations of conflict.

During this study, you were asked to consider your relationship with your parents/parental figures, the ways in which you manage your emotions and how you deal with situations of conflict. If you have found this difficult or uncomfortable you may want to contact your GP or refer to the following source:

School counsellors name and details

If you would like to know the results of the study, or have any questions, please contact the researcher, Kellie Hitchens [e-mail address redacted] or the research supervisors, Dr Robin Gutteridge [e-mail address redacted] & Dr Tracey Platt [e-mail address redacted]. Please note that individual results will not be disclosed, however you can request an overview of general results once the study is complete.

Thank you for your time

Kellie Hitchens

Appendix 11 – Interview schedule

Interview schedule

Hi I'm Kellie, I'm a student doing some research and interested in how people your age may act when in an argument with others. So I'm looking at different things that may affect this such as what we do with certain feelings or emotions we have. I would like to ask a few questions about this. The interview will take around half an hour or so, depending on what you decide to say. You can end the interview whenever you want and you don't have to give a reason for this. Your name will be changed when writing up the interview so no one will know its you. So I've given you an information sheet, have you had a read of this? Are there any questions you have? Are you happy to sign the consent sheet and go ahead with the interview?

[Demographic]

I'd like to know a little bit about you first:

The name I've been given (x), is this what you like to be called? (if not, what do you prefer? Is it okay if I use this name?) That sounds like a [boy/ girl] name. Is that how you see yourself, as a [boy/ girl]?

Explore more if needed

How old are you?

Could you explain who you live with?

Is there anyone else who is important to you? A friend, parent, grandparent, pet

Who do you get on best / worst with in your life?

-So you've discussed a few of your relationships, I'm wondering if you could tell me little bit about how you would usually react when in conflict with them.

[Statement]

Some people think that when arguing we may act differently depending on who the person is that we are arguing with. Some people however disagree with this. What do you think?

[Conflict prompts]

-What's your personal experience of this?

-Can you give me an example, maybe when you have had an argument with a parent/guardian and a friend?

-So I'm wondering if you could tell me a little about how the way your reactions compared when arguing with [x] and [x]?

-Why do you think made you react the way you did with [x] and [x]?

-How do you usually react when in conflict?

[Emotion regulation prompts]

-When having this argument with [x] and [x] how did the way you feel compare?

(other questions that may help explore their emotions)

-So as an example for instance, some people may feel pleasure or some people may feel sad.

-What happens in your body when you feel [x]

-Is there maybe a song that could describe how you felt or a movie scene or even a colour or physical feelings in your body?

-What made you feel [x] with [person 1]?

-What made you feel [x] [person 2]?

-If they these feeling were different, what do you think makes a difference to your feelings when in conflict?

-How do you usually feel when in conflict with someone?

-When feeling [x] with [person 1] how in control did you feel?

- When feeling [x] with [person 2] how in control did you feel?

-How did your feelings of control compare to each other when in conflict?

-How did feeling [x] and [x] affect the way you reacted with both of them?

-How did these feelings and your following actions compare to each other?

[Attachment prompts]

-So I'm also interested now in a little bit about your relationships with both [x] and [x]. So how would you describe your relationship with [person 1]?

-How well do you get along?

- So how would you describe your relationship with [person 2]?

-How well do you get along?

-How would you compare your relationship with both of them?

(other questions that may help explore their relationship)

- What words or phrases would describe or tell me about your relationship?

- If you were upset about something, how helpful are they at making you feel better?

-So when having this argument with [person 1], did they make you feel better?

-If they did make you feel better, how did they do this?

-What about when having this argument with [person 2], did they make you feel better?

-If they did make you feel better, how did they do this?

-How would you compare the ways they ways they made you feel better?

-When having this argument with [person 1] what did you need from the other person?

-What would you have wanted them to have done when having the argument?

-What about when you were having an argument with [person two], what did you need from them?

-What would you have wanted them to have done when having the argument?

-How do you think what you needed from both of them compared to each other?

-How did they both react towards you?

-How different or the similar were their reactions towards you?

-How did their reactions affect the way you responded to them when arguing?

-What do you think they were both thinking about you in this argument?

-How different or similar do you think their thoughts about you were?

-How did these thoughts affect the way you reacted towards both of them when in this situation?

-What were you thinking about both of them when having this argument?

-What made you think this about both of them?

-How different or similar were your thoughts about them?

-How did your thoughts about them affect the way you reacted towards both of them?

-Overall how do you think the quality of your relationship with both {x} and {x} affected the way you reacted towards them in these arguments?

-How would you compare the two relationships and your reactions when arguing?

So we've finally come to the end. Thanks again for giving me some of your time to answer all the questions. you've been really helpful. I hope you've enjoyed having a discussion about it all. Just before you go, do you have any questions about what we've just been chatting about?

Appendix 12 – Examples of coding

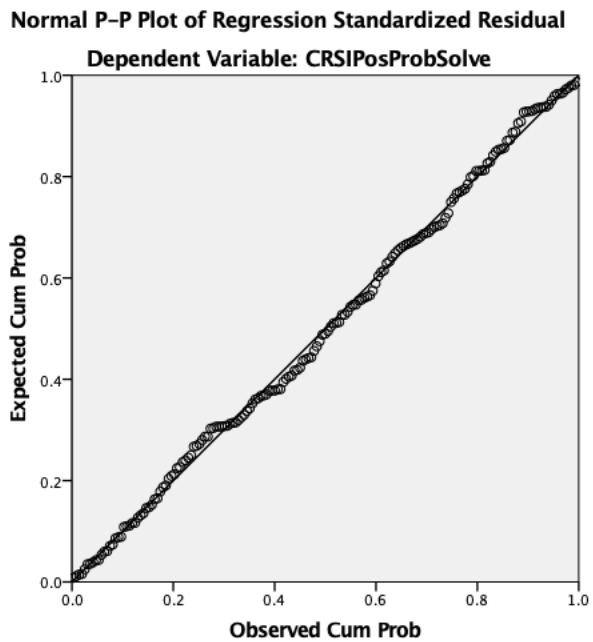
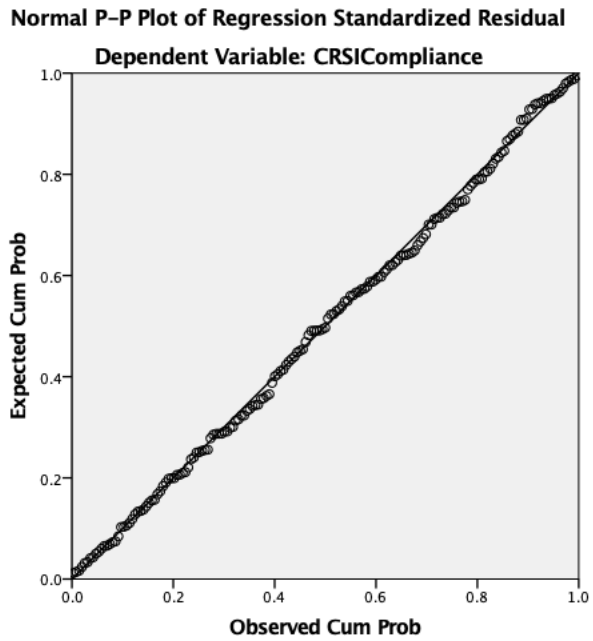
Interview 3 example.

Interview 3 example removed due to confidential/sensitive information.

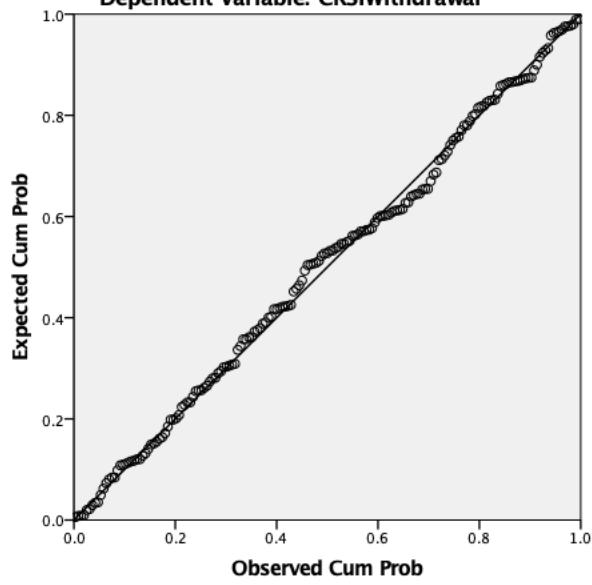
Interview 9 example.

Interview 9 example removed due to confidential/sensitive information.

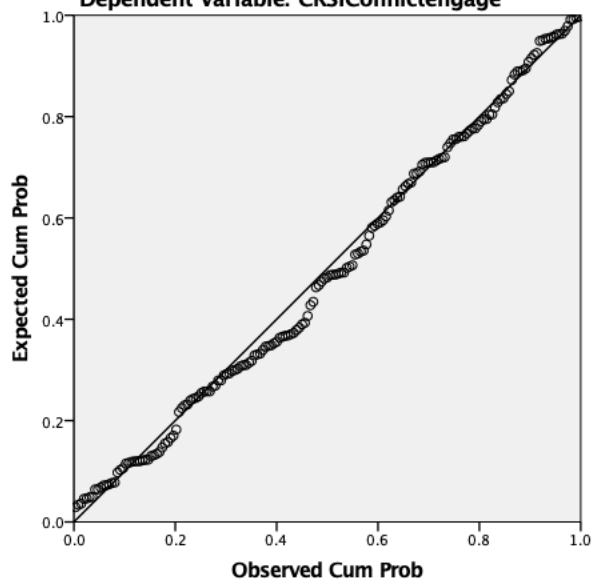
Appendix 13 – Regression assumptions

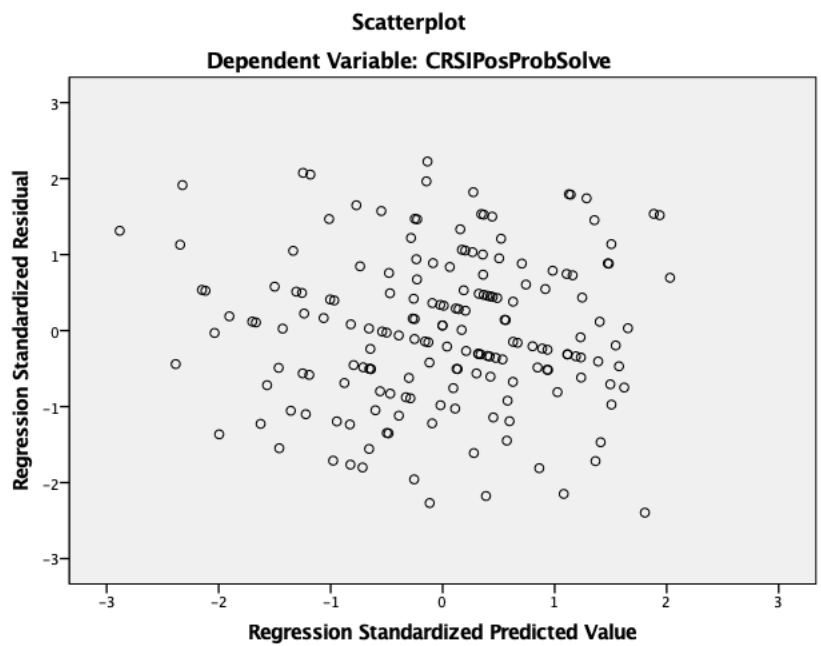
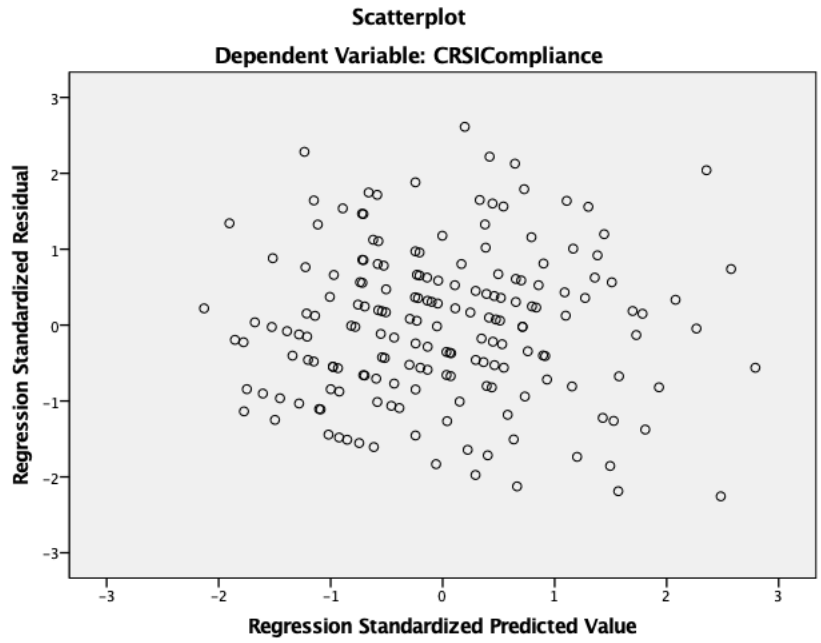


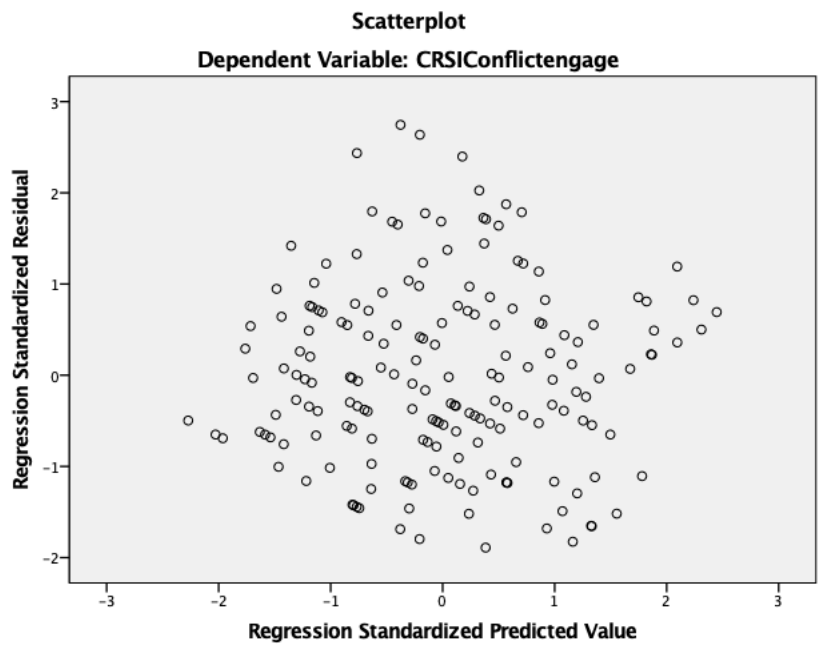
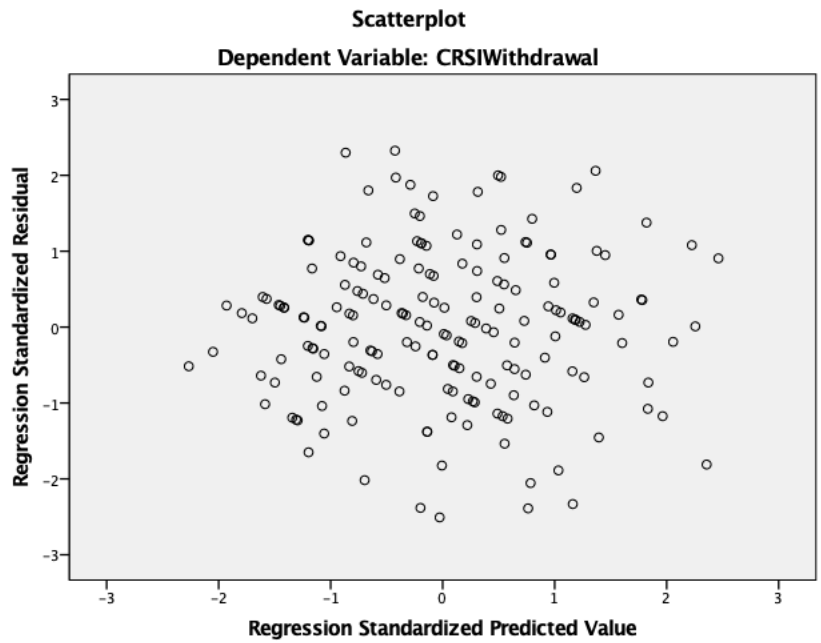
Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual
Dependent Variable: CRSIWithdrawal



Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual
Dependent Variable: CRSIConflictengage







Correlations

| | | CRSIWithdrawal | DERSTotal | ECRAnxiety | ECRAvoidance |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|------------|--------------|
| Pearson Correlation | CRSIWithdrawal | 1.000 | .592 | .281 | .153 |
| | DERSTotal | .592 | 1.000 | .397 | .228 |
| | ECRAnxiety | .281 | .397 | 1.000 | .362 |
| | ECRAvoidance | .153 | .228 | .362 | 1.000 |
| Sig. (1-tailed) | CRSIWithdrawal | . | <.001 | <.001 | .020 |
| | DERSTotal | .000 | . | .000 | .001 |
| | ECRAnxiety | .000 | .000 | . | .000 |
| | ECRAvoidance | .020 | .001 | .000 | . |
| N | CRSIWithdrawal | 181 | 181 | 181 | 181 |
| | DERSTotal | 181 | 181 | 181 | 181 |
| | ECRAnxiety | 181 | 181 | 181 | 181 |
| | ECRAvoidance | 181 | 181 | 181 | 181 |

Correlations

| | | CRSIPosProbSolve | DERSTotal | ECRAnxiety | ECRAvoidance |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------|------------|--------------|
| Pearson Correlation | CRSIPosProbSolve | 1.000 | -.181 | -.022 | -.271 |
| | DERSTotal | -.181 | 1.000 | .397 | .228 |
| | ECRAnxiety | -.022 | .397 | 1.000 | .362 |
| | ECRAvoidance | -.271 | .228 | .362 | 1.000 |
| Sig. (1-tailed) | CRSIPosProbSolve | . | .007 | .382 | <.001 |
| | DERSTotal | .007 | . | .000 | .001 |
| | ECRAnxiety | .382 | .000 | . | .000 |
| | ECRAvoidance | .000 | .001 | .000 | . |
| N | CRSIPosProbSolve | 181 | 181 | 181 | 181 |
| | DERSTotal | 181 | 181 | 181 | 181 |
| | ECRAnxiety | 181 | 181 | 181 | 181 |
| | ECRAvoidance | 181 | 181 | 181 | 181 |

Correlations

| | | CRSICompliance | DERSTotal | ECRAnxiety | ECRAvoidance |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|------------|--------------|
| Pearson Correlation | CRSICompliance | 1.000 | .337 | .136 | -.083 |
| | DERSTotal | .337 | 1.000 | .397 | .228 |
| | ECRAnxiety | .136 | .397 | 1.000 | .362 |
| | ECRAvoidance | -.083 | .228 | .362 | 1.000 |
| Sig. (1-tailed) | CRSICompliance | . | <.001 | .034 | .135 |
| | DERSTotal | .000 | . | .000 | .001 |
| | ECRAnxiety | .034 | .000 | . | .000 |
| | ECRAvoidance | .135 | .001 | .000 | . |
| N | CRSICompliance | 181 | 181 | 181 | 181 |
| | DERSTotal | 181 | 181 | 181 | 181 |
| | ECRAnxiety | 181 | 181 | 181 | 181 |
| | ECRAvoidance | 181 | 181 | 181 | 181 |

Correlations

| | | CRSIConflicte ngage | DERSTotal | ECRAnxiety | ECRAvoidanc e |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|
| Pearson Correlation | CRSIConflictengage | 1.000 | .535 | .225 | .114 |
| | DERSTotal | .535 | 1.000 | .397 | .228 |
| | ECRAnxiety | .225 | .397 | 1.000 | .362 |
| | ECRAvoidance | .114 | .228 | .362 | 1.000 |
| Sig. (1-tailed) | CRSIConflictengage | . | <.001 | .001 | .064 |
| | DERSTotal | .000 | . | .000 | .001 |
| | ECRAnxiety | .001 | .000 | . | .000 |
| | ECRAvoidance | .064 | .001 | .000 | . |
| N | CRSIConflictengage | 181 | 181 | 181 | 181 |
| | DERSTotal | 181 | 181 | 181 | 181 |
| | ECRAnxiety | 181 | 181 | 181 | 181 |
| | ECRAvoidance | 181 | 181 | 181 | 181 |

Appendix 14 - Table of participants within each theme and sub-theme.**Table 10***Table of participants within each theme and sub-theme.*

| | 1 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 2 | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 |
|-----------------|----------|------------|------------|----------|----------|------------|------------|
| Harriet | X | X | X | X | X | | X |
| Samantha | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Jack | X | X | X | X | X | | X |
| Louise | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| Holly | X | X | X | | | | |
| Calvin | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| Thomas | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Luke | X | X | X | | X | | X |
| Daniel | X | X | X | | X | X | X |
| Ryan | X | | X | X | X | | X |

Notes: 1 = Relationship efficacy, 1.1 = Relationship efficacy - Relational strategies, 1.2 =

Relationship efficacy – The influence of relationship closeness and security in conflict

resolution style, 2 = Individual differences, 3 = Social constraints, 3.1 = Social constraints –

Level of authority and consequence, 3.2 = Social constrains – Social norms and desirability.

Appendix 15 – Submission of research paper.

Submission of paper for Journal of Adolescence – Quantitative paper.

1) Title page

How do emotion regulation, attachment related anxiety and attachment related avoidance impact on the ability to resolve conflict in adolescence?"

Word count: 4990

2) Abstract

Introduction: The current research explored the impact of attachment related anxiety, attachment related avoidance and emotion dysregulation upon conflict resolution style in adolescence. **Methods:** A quantitative methodology was utilised. The cross-sectional study involved administering questionnaires to adolescence. Four multiple regression analyses were employed to assess the impact of attachment related anxiety, attachment related avoidance and emotion dysregulation upon four conflict resolution styles: positive problem solving, conflict engagement, compliance and withdrawal. Participants were 192 male and female adolescents, aged 14 to 17 and were recruited from one secondary schools in England.

Results: Overall results demonstrated that the DERS scores (emotion dysregulation) consistently impacted upon all conflict resolution styles. The DERS demonstrated positive relationships with the resolution styles of conflict engagement, compliance and withdrawal but a negative relationship with positive problem solving. The attachment variables however, did not consistently have an impact on all resolutions styles. Particularly, ECR-RS avoidance only made a significant contribution to resolution styles of compliance and positive problem solving demonstrating negative relationships. ECR-Anxiety made no significant contribution to any conflict resolution styles. **Conclusions:** Overall the current research highlighted that attachment and emotion dysregulation may contribute to the choice of conflict resolution styles in adolescents. Overall, therapeutic work targeting better conflict resolution with

adolescents should seek to understand the adolescent's individual conflict experience and the impact of their attachment and emotion dysregulation upon their behavioural choices to understand specific targets for appropriate intervention work.

Key Words: Attachment, Conflict, Conflict resolution, Emotion, Dysregulation, Adolescence.

3) Introduction

There are many definitions of conflict. Rahim (1992) draws upon the cognitive perspective, highlighting indifference between parties as a main feature of conflict. Conflict thus occurs where intercommunication is grounded in opposition or difference of views. A more behavioural definition is offered by Adams and Laursen, (2007), outlining conflict as “overt behavioral opposition, [...which] is typically operationalized in terms of disagreement or incompatible behaviors” (p. 445). Similar to definitions of conflict, defining the ways that people react to conflict, can also differ between academics. Reactions to conflict by individuals involved, can be clustered into styles (Rahim, 1992). Ting-Toomey et al. (2000) present styles as “patterned responses to conflict in a variety of situations” (p. 48). There are multiple and varying ways in which the categorisation of styles has developed overtime (Hammer, 2005). Primarily, descriptions of styles may be distinguishable through their differing theoretical foundations and the quantity of styles within their models (E.g., Hammer 2005; Kurdek 1994; Rahim, 1992).

3.1. Clinical importance.

Adolescence is also a period of life involving many developmental transitions. These are inclusive of social, psychological and biological changes (Weisz & Hawley 2002). From a social viewpoint, interpersonal communications occurring with various individuals in adolescence can help frame social development (Larson et al., 2002). Conflict can occur within everyday communication (Adams & Laursen, 2007) and is a frequent occurrence amongst adolescents (Latipun et al., 2012). A lack of constructive behaviours can lead to destructive outcomes (Laursen et al., 2016; Yeh 2011). Adolescent conflict engagement with parents is linked to various aspects of an adolescent's wellbeing, showing associations with negative mood, problems within school (Timmons & Margolin, 2015) externalising problems (Little et al., 2019; Timmons & Margolin, 2015), internalising problems (Little et al., 2019), maladjustment (Weymouth et al., 2016) and alcohol use (Chaplin et al., 2012).

3.2 Emotions and Emotion regulation during conflict.

Gratz and Roemer (2004, p. 52) put forward their definition of emotion dysregulation, highlighting the “presence of six separate (albeit related) dimensions of emotion regulation wherein difficulties may occur, including (a) lack of awareness of emotional responses, (b) lack of clarity of emotional responses, (c) nonacceptance of emotional responses, (d) limited access to emotion regulation strategies perceived as effective, (e) difficulties controlling impulses when experiencing negative emotions, and (f) difficulties engaging in goal-directed behaviors when experiencing negative emotions”. Developmentally, progression is made with emotion regulation capabilities from childhood through to adolescence (Brinke et al., 2020; Silvers et al., 2012; Tottenham et al., 2011; Young et al., 2019). These effects also extend within adolescence itself, with the use of specific regulatory strategies, such as reappraisal, being shown to be utilised less productively by younger adolescents than their

older adolescent peers (Silvers et al., 2012). Overall, an important period for acquiring effective strategies could be characterised during adolescence (Vijayakumar et al., 2014).

Arguably, during this developmental period, maladaptive changes can appear (Cracco et al., 2017; Zimmermann & Iwanski, 2014), with a reduction of some adaptive strategies and a rise of maladaptive strategies being utilised (Ahmed et al., 2015; Cracco et al., 2017). In order to have optimal social proficiency, good emotion regulation is needed, particularly in close friendships within adolescence (Gross, 2008; Lopes et al., 2005; Schwarz et al., 2012). One interaction that can be affected by dysregulation within peer relationships is choice of conflict resolution, with peers utilising more hostile tactics (Dumessa et al., 2020). Reciprocal negative emotions can impact satisfaction during conflict (Main et al., 2016; Moed et al., 2014) and cause individuals to be less equipped to express their perspectives (Van der Giessen et al., 2013). Higher conflict is also indicative of emotions dysregulation (Molajafar et al., 2015; Lopes et al., 2011; Van Lissa et al., 2017). Similarly, regulatory abilities have been linked to specific conflict resolution styles (Bell and Song, 2005; Rizkalla et al., 2008).

3.3. Attachment and emotion regulation

Bowlby (1969; 1980; 1982) discusses a theory of attachment in which infants exhibit behaviours of a various nature in order to maintain and facilitate proximity to an individual, usually a parental figure, who is supportive. Bowlby (1988) described how internal working models of ourselves and others are developed and internalised, through interactions with our caregivers. For instance, internalised working models of self and other, such as one as worthy and others as responsive, are developed through interactions with a caregiver who is

supportive and caring. An unresponsive caregiver would alternatively help contribute to an internal working model of self and others that is negative (Bowlby, 1973).

Although the adolescent's parental caregiver may remain as a figure of attachment (Bowlby 1969), attachment can also shift from the parental figure and be redirected towards peers (Bowlby, 1988; Donbaek & Elklit, 2014). Given that multiple attachments may be acquired during this period, the adolescent is required to systematically structure these relationships (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1969;1982). Parental figures still hold some gravity in supporting the adolescents' emotion regulation (Morris et al., 2017). The adolescent, however, endeavours to increase their autonomy, with other relationships, such as friends, having a significant impact. (Otterpohl & Wild, 2015). As support may be increasingly provided by others during adolescence, such as friends, these new systems of emotion regulation support may be distinguishable from that of parental figures (Opitz et al., 2012). Where hierarchies are concerned in adolescence, research generally indicates mothers have a priority position compared to peer relationships (Rosenthal & Kobak, 2010).

Other attachments developed, such as with friends or romantic partners in adolescence or adulthood, are said to be consistent with early internal working models formed (Bowlby, 1969; 1973). Behaviours within the attachment system can be categorised into styles (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) use a two-dimensional model inclusive of the self (sometimes referred to as anxiety) and other (or avoidance) and to derive four styles, being secure, dismissing, preoccupied and fearful. There has been recent support however for internal working models reflecting different or unique relationship structures, i.e., parental or friend relationships (Fraley et al., 2011). Attachment patterns or internal working models have been shown to predict a child's future abilities to regulate their

emotions (Morris et al., 2007; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2011). Security has been shown to relate to lower levels of negative affect compared to that in insecure peers in adolescence (Brenning et al., 2012; Cooper et al., 1998; Waters & Thompson, 2016).

3.4. Attachment, emotion and conflict resolution.

Ben-Ari and Hirshberg (2009) found that in an adolescent population, avoidant resolution styles were significantly related with an anxious attachment style. Fears of rejection and the breakdown of friendships appeared to be a worry for individuals. On the other hand, those with avoidant attachment styles were less likely to engage in avoiding, obliging, compromising or integrating resolution styles, rather they preferred to use dominating resolution styles. Integrating and compromising styles were commonly used by securely attached children, whereas avoidance strategies were used less frequently (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009). Secure individuals appeared to perceive conflict interactions as more positive, while more anxious individuals were negative. One explanation for this may reflect anxious individuals' concerns around the fragility of their relationships, contributing to the perception that conflict may only serve to harm their relationships (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009). Similarly, negative views of conflict were found in avoidant children. On the other hand, securely attached children appear to hold more trust in their peers and their own skills to achieve resolution (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009).

In another study, Creasey et al. (1999) found that secure attachments were related to better abilities to regulate emotions than insecure attachments, which in turn predicted the strategies insecure individuals employed to manage conflict. With regards to conflict, conflict interactions characterised by “angry, out-of-control arguments” (p. 538; Creasey et al., 1999)

were more frequently reported by ambivalent individuals than other attachment styles. Alternatively, avoidant individuals were more likely to engage with conflict withdrawal.

In adolescent couples Creasey and Ladd (2004) found that higher problems in managing conflict was associated with higher levels of confidence in emotion regulation abilities. One explanation for these contradictory findings, are that dismissing individuals are likely to downplay the emotional impact of their significant experiences. They displayed evidence of difficulties in managing conflict through passive behaviours such as “contempt, belligerence, stonewalling, and defensiveness” (p. 250; Creasey & Ladd, 2004). Alternatively, fewer problems in managing conflict was associated with lower levels of confidence in emotion regulation abilities for preoccupied adolescents. According to Creasey and Ladd (2004), preoccupied individuals may avoid conflict for fears of relationship breakdown, and consequently withhold their feelings or thoughts. Secure individuals reported better emotion regulation skills and consequently, better conflict strategies.

3.5. Current research aims and objectives.

The current study explored the impact of attachment related anxiety, attachment related avoidance and emotion dysregulation upon the conflict resolution styles of positive problem solving, conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance. The following hypotheses were derived:

- 5) Attachment related anxiety and avoidance and emotion dysregulation would have a significant relationship with positive problem solving.

- 6) Attachment related anxiety and avoidance and emotion dysregulation would have a significant relationship with conflict engagement.
- 7) Attachment related anxiety and avoidance and emotion dysregulation would have a significant relationship with withdrawal.
- 8) Attachment related anxiety and avoidance and emotion dysregulation would have a significant relationship with compliance.

4) Materials and methods

4.1. Participants.

The research involved a normative sample of 192 adolescent school students. These adolescent school students ranged from 14 to 17 years-of-age. One secondary school was used to recruit within the age criteria of adolescent participants. Overall, more females ($n=121$) took part than males ($n=67$). The mean age of adolescents was 15.39 (S.D. = 1.17) years.

4.2. Participants: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Defined within the current study were several inclusion and exclusion criteria that adolescents were selected according to:

- Participants needed to be between 13 and 17 years of age.

- Adolescents that did not have language and cognitive skills that were deemed to be adequate enough, were not included within the study. Meeting the national curriculum level of reading/key stage for their respective age group, was used as a requirement.
- Gillick competence (DOH, 2009).

4.3. Materials

Each of the following materials were administered to participants:

- Invitation letter to the school
- Information sheet and consent form given to the school.
- Information sheet, consent form and Demographics questionnaire for participating students.
- Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS; Gratz & Roemer, 2004)

The DERS comprises 36 items in its measure. The scale measures the extent of dysregulation of emotions within individuals, across six distinct categories. These domains are inclusive of the following: Nonacceptance, Goals, Impulse, Awareness), Strategies & Clarity (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). Participants respond to each question using a 5-point Likert scale, with item responses ranging from ‘almost never’ at one end of the scale and ‘almost always’ at the other. The measure derives an overall score of items (eleven reverse scored), whereby higher scores demonstrate higher dysregulation of emotions. The current study

utilised an overall score. The internal consistency of the measure has been shown to be high across both the populations of adults ($\alpha = .93$; Gratz & Roemer, 2004) and adolescents ($\alpha = .93$; Weinberg & Klonsky, 2009).

- The Conflict Resolution Style Inventory (CRSI; Kurdek, 1994):

The CRSI comprises 16 items in total. The inventory was originally constructed to assess the ways adults manage conflict within relationships of a romantic capacity. Slight adaptations were made to the inventory to suit the measurement of peer conflict styles within friendships, as demonstrated by Buote et al. (2009) and Weid et al. (2007). The current study used an ‘adolescent friendship’ version of the inventory. The inventory measures the degree to which individuals engage in each of the following four resolution styles: conflict engagement, positive problem solving, compliance and withdrawal. The inventory items are answered on a 5-point Likert scale, with the responses for each question ranging from ‘never’ at one end of the scale to ‘always’ at the other. Each resolution style is determined by using a mean score, with higher scores demonstrating a higher degree to which an individual may engage in a specific style. With regards to the measure’s efficiency in an adolescent population, the overall measure ($\alpha = .79$ & $.83$; Buote et al., 2009) and its subscales (α of $.91$, $.83$, $.88$ and $.77$; Weid et al., 2007), have shown an internal consistency that is adequate.

- The Experiences in Close Relationships - Relationship Structures Questionnaire (ECR-RS; Fraley et al., 2011):

The ECR-RS comprises nine items measuring the subscales of both anxiety and avoidance. The measure is able to assess these components within various specified

relationships, including either of the following: mother, father, romantic partner and best friend. The measure was slightly adapted using Donbaek and Elklit's (2014) adaptation of the measure which asks participants to "select the parental figure you feel most closely attached to" (p. 62) in order to determine a parental figure target. A Likert style response system (7-point) is utilised, with a response of 'strongly disagree' at the lower end of the Likert scale, ranging up to 'strongly agree' at the higher end of the scale. A mean score is determined for each subscale (four scored reversely), with higher scores demonstrating higher anxiety or avoidance. Global score alphas have demonstrated within a group of adolescent participants (avoidance $\alpha > .81$ & anxiety $\alpha > .86$; Donbaek & Elklit, 2014).

- Debrief for school and student.

4.4. Design.

In order to answer the research question, four linear multiple regressions were employed to analyse the data. The predictor variables were input as the following for all regressions: attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance and emotion dysregulation. A multiple regression was conducted for all four conflict resolution styles, resulting in a regression analysis for each of the following dependant variables: positive problem solving, conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance.

4.5. Ethical considerations regarding consent.

A legally responsible teacher was used as the means of gaining consent to complete the research with their school students for participants 16 and below. Responsible adults were

briefed by the researcher around the procedural aspects of being involved in the research. For participants who were above the age of 16, it was required that consent was obtained from the participant using a separate consent sheet.

4.6. Procedure

Invitation letters were distributed to schools. An information sheet, consent form, and a debrief sheet were provided. The schools/responsible adults were also given a copy of an example questionnaire pack that would be offered to students. Following the responsible teacher being shown these materials, they were given the opportunity by the researcher to address any concerns or queries they had either through email or face to face. If the responsible teacher within the school was happy for their students to participate and thus give permission, they were asked to fill out the appropriate details on the consent form.

All school students were provided with a separate information sheet from the responsible adult. Participation was emphasised to the adolescents as voluntary. Adolescents then completed the required fields on the consent form. Those who were 16 and under were also asked to complete a consent sheet, this was in the form of an assent process rather than consent. All students and the school were told they could withdraw from taking part at any moment until data analysis. Students were then directed to continue with filling out the questionnaires. Following this, questionnaires were placed into an anonymous pile. Consent forms were kept in a separate pile to questionnaire packs to maintain confidentiality. A debrief sheet was then offered out to students with appropriate places to gain support if any distress occurred.

5) Results

5.1. Data entry and handling.

The appropriate data analysis was run utilising SPSS. A total of 192 participants' data was entered into the data set. Where data was missing from the questionnaires, these were entered into SPSS as discrete missing value under -99. Following subscales being computed, a total of 46 missing values were entered. Subscales were then computed.

5.2. Test of normality.

Histograms and Q-Q plots were inspected visually for each variable included within the analyses. It was identified that ECR-RS anxiety was not normally distributed, demonstrating a strong positive skew. ECR-RS avoidance also demonstrated a slight skew. Skewness and kurtosis scores also demonstrated values below 1, except for ECR-RS anxiety. Despite the skew in the ECR-RS anxiety variable, all other variables appeared to be normally distributed. All variables were therefore included within the analyses. The skewness in the ECR-RS anxiety data could not be easily rectified. Most scores fell at the lower end of the scale and may therefore just reflect a feature of the adolescent population.

5.3. Introduction to Data analysis

Four multiple regressions were utilised. Before the multiple regressions were run, tests to determine whether its assumptions were met were carried out. Tests demonstrated that assumptions of normally distributed residuals of the regression (P-P Plots),

homoscedasticity (scatter plots) and absence of multicollinearity (correlations; Brace et al., 2009) were met. The variables of ECR-RS Anxiety, ECR-RS Avoidance and DERS (emotion dysregulation) scores were entered into four regressions as predictor variables. Each regression examined a different dependant variable, exploring each of the CRSI subscales: positive problem solving, conflict engagement, withdrawal and compliance.

5.4. Descriptive statistics.

Each of the variable's mean scores and a Pearson's correlations table can be found in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for ECR-RS Anxiety, ECR-RS Avoidance, DERS and CRSI: Positive problem solving, CRSI: Conflict Engagement, CRSI: Withdrawal and CRSI: Compliance.

| Variable | Mean | SD |
|--------------------------------|--------|-------|
| ECR-RS Anxiety | 2.28 | 1.71 |
| ECR-RS Avoidance | 3.14 | 1.37 |
| DERS | 100.72 | 26.12 |
| CRSI: Positive problem solving | 11.74 | 3.97 |
| CRSI: Conflict engagement | 10.94 | 4.23 |
| CRSI: Withdrawal | 11.23 | 3.53 |
| CRSI: Compliance | 10.11 | 3.53 |

Notes: SD = Standard Deviation; n = 181

Table 2

Pearson's correlations for ECR-RS Anxiety, ECR-RS Avoidance, DERS and CRSI: Positive problem solving, CRSI: Conflict Engagement, CRSI: Withdrawal and CRSI: Compliance.

| Variable | CRSI: Comp | CRSI: Withd | CRSI: ConEng | CRSI: PPS | DERS | ECR-RS AV | ECR-RS ANX |
|------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|---------|--------------|---------------|
| ECR-RS ANX | .136* | .281*** | .225** | -.022 | .397*** | .362*** | |
| ECR-RS AV | -.083 | .153* | .114 | -.271*** | .228** | | |
| DERS | .337*** | .592*** | .535*** | -.181* | | | |

Notes: CRSI: Comp = CRSI Compliance, CRSI Withd = CRSI Withdrawal, CRSI ConEng = CRSI Conflict Engagement, CRSI: PPS = CRSI: Positive Problem Solving, ECR-RS AV = ECR-RS Avoidance, ECR-RS ANX = ECR-RS Anxiety, DERS = DERS.

* $p < .05$. ** $p = .001$. *** $p < .0005$

5.5. Regression analysis 1: CRSI – Positive problem solving

Using the enter method, a multiple regression analysis was computed to explore the relationship between ECR-RS anxiety, ECR-RS avoidance and DERS scores with CRSI: positive problem solving. A significant model emerged for all three predictors, $F(3,177) = 6.96, p < .001$. The model explained 9% of the variance in problem solving (Adjusted $R^2 = .090$). The regression coefficients for each of the predictor variables are shown below in Table 3. ECR-RS Avoidance made the largest contribution displaying a significant and negative association. This was followed by the DERS which also displayed a significant and negative association. ECR-RS Anxiety, however, did not make a significant contribution.

Table 3

Unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients of ECR-RS anxiety, ECR-RS avoidance and DERS entered into the model.

| Variable | B | SE B | b |
|------------------|-------|------|----------|
| ECR-RS Anxiety | .349 | .189 | .151 |
| ECR-RS Avoidance | -.826 | .222 | -.285*** |
| DERS | -.027 | .012 | -.176* |

Notes: B = Unstandardized Beta, SE B = Standard Error, **b** = Standardized Beta

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .0005$

5.6. Regression analysis 2: CRSI – Conflict engagement

Using the enter method, a multiple regression analysis was computed to explore the relationship between ECR-RS anxiety, ECR-RS avoidance and DERS scores with CRSI: Conflict engagement. A significant model emerged $F(3,177) = 23.74, p < .001$ for all three predictors. The model explains 27.5% of the variance in Conflict engagement (Adjusted $R^2 = .275$). The regression coefficients for each of the predictor variables are shown below in Table 4. DERS made the largest and only significant contribution displaying a positive association. ECR-RS Anxiety and ECR-RS Avoidance however, made no significant contribution.

Table 4

Unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients of ECR-RS anxiety, ECR-RS avoidance and DERS entered into the model.

| Variable | B | SE B | b |
|------------------|-------|------|----------|
| ECR-RS Anxiety | .049 | .180 | .020 |
| ECR-RS Avoidance | -.044 | .212 | -.014 |
| DERS | .086 | .011 | .531*** |

Notes: B = Unstandardized Beta, SE B = Standard Error, **b** = Standardized Beta

*** $p < .0005$

5.7. Regression analysis 3: CRSI – Withdrawal

Using the enter method, a multiple regression analysis was computed to explore the relationship between ECR-RS anxiety, ECR-RS avoidance and DERS scores with CRSI: Withdrawal. A significant model emerged $F(3,177) = 32.26, p < .001$ for all three predictors. The model explains 34.3% of the variance in Withdrawal (Adjusted $R^2 = .343$). The regression coefficients for each of the predictor variables are shown below in Table 5. DERS made the largest contribution displaying a significant and positive association. ECR-RS Anxiety and ECR-RS Avoidance, however, made no significant contribution.

Table 5

Unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients of ECR-RS anxiety, ECR-RS avoidance and DERS entered into the model.

| Variable | B | SE B | b |
|------------------|------|------|----------|
| ECR-RS Anxiety | .111 | .143 | .054 |
| ECR-RS Avoidance | .009 | .168 | .003 |
| DERS | .077 | .009 | .570*** |

Notes: B = Unstandardized Beta, SE B = Standard Error, **b** = Standardized Beta

*** $p < .0005$

5.8. Regression analysis 4: CRSI – Compliance

Using the enter method, a multiple regression analysis was computed to explore the relationship between ECR-RS anxiety, ECR-RS avoidance and DERS scores with CRSI: Compliance. A significant model emerged $F(3,177) = 9.86, p < .001$ for all three predictors. The model explains 12.9% of the variance in compliance (Adjusted $R^2 = .129$). The regression coefficients for each of the predictor variables are shown below in Table 6. The DERS made the largest contribution displaying a significant and positive association. This was followed by ECR-RS Avoidance which also displayed a significant but negative association. ECR-RS Anxiety, however, did not make a significant contribution.

Table 6

Unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients of ECR-RS anxiety, ECR-RS avoidance and DERS entered into the model.

| Variable | B | SE B | b |
|------------------|-------|------|----------|
| ECR-RS Anxiety | .130 | .164 | .063 |
| ECR-RS Avoidance | -.480 | .193 | -.186* |
| DERS | .048 | .010 | .354*** |

Notes: B = Unstandardized Beta, SE B = Standard Error, **b** = Standardized Beta

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .0005$

6) Discussion

The current study explored the impact of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance with a parental figure and emotion dysregulation upon four different conflict resolution styles with a friend. The first and fourth multiple regressions explored the impact of attachment anxiety and avoidance and emotion dysregulation upon the conflict resolution styles of positive problem solving and compliance, respectively. These regression analyses exhibited similar results regarding the contributions of attachment. Results indicated that ECR avoidance had a significant negative relationship with the resolution style of positive problem solving and compliance. This demonstrates that as ECR avoidance increased, engagement in positive problem solving and compliance decreased.

One explanation for the contribution of ECR avoidance may reflect the internalised beliefs or internal working models of the adolescent. Higher levels of ECR attachment avoidance indicate more difficulties seeking support from a parental figure and difficulties with depending on them when in times of need (Fraley et al., 2011). If the adolescent believes they cannot rely upon the other person they are in conflict with, they may believe their attempts to talk through the problem will be dismissed (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009), resulting in the adolescent refraining from utilising problem solving behaviours. Engaging in some form of discussion regarding the conflict may pose a risk of emotional distress or further distress to the adolescent as a result of not gaining the appropriate support. These results were consistent with previous research (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009), which found higher security in adolescence related to more inclination to problem solve. Essentially trust in the relationship may be reflective of the secure adolescent's desire to seek resolution. This may also explain why adolescents are also less likely to engage in the resolution style of compliance when higher on attachment avoidance. The adolescent may be less inclined to be submissive and conform to others within conflict if they believe that the other person is not trustworthy in their reliance. More secure individuals, however, may be more inclined to refrain from explaining their views within the conflict given they believe the other person is generally reliable. The secure individual may believe the other person may have their best interest given prior successful interaction and therefore comply. Although their ECR avoidance scores related to a parental figure, these attachment systems may generalise to friendships (Bowlby, 1969;1973; Weimer et al., 2004), causing the adolescent to have some negative anticipations regarding the other's potential response (Siegel, 1999).

The results also demonstrated the DERS had a significant negative relationship with positive problem solving but a positive relationship with compliance. As DERS increased,

engagement in positive problem solving decreased and engagement in compliance increased. One plausible explanation for the contribution of emotion dysregulation could be that when the adolescent experiences regulation difficulties, they may react to the conflict by suppressing their emotions or alternatively struggle to control their subsequent reactions when negative emotions occur (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). These difficulties may then cause the adolescent to either deny the emotional experience of the conflict or become overwhelmed by their emotions, both of which may hinder the process of engaging in more productive behaviours such as having a conversation regarding the problem. The higher levels of dysregulation reported may also be indicative of the adolescent's inability to concentrate or focus upon a problem (Gratz & Roemer 2004), in this case dysregulation may impair their ability to talk through the problem and listen to both parties' perspectives constructively. These results are in line with Rizkalla et al. (2008) who highlighted that better regulation in adults, such as being able to minimise preoccupation with negative emotions, had better abilities in attending to others' viewpoints and thus, problem solve. This may also explain why dysregulation may increase higher engagement in compliance. Emotion dysregulation may lead the individual to comply with others, in which they may deny their own emotional experience and potentially the emotional impact of the conflict. Similarly, the adolescent may not perceive themselves to have the appropriate regulation strategies to achieve their goals (Gratz & Roemer 2004), resulting in giving in to the other person as an alternative means of managing the conflict and potentially their negative emotions. Overall ECR attachment anxiety made no contribution the resolution style of positive problem solving or compliance. Overall, both regression analyses disconfirmed hypothesis one and four.

The second and third multiple regressions explored the impact of attachment anxiety and avoidance and emotion dysregulation upon the conflict resolution styles of conflict engagement in the second regression and withdrawal in the third. Results indicated that the DERS had a significant positive relationship with the resolution styles of both conflict engagement and withdrawal. This demonstrated that as DERS scores increased, engagement in conflict and withdrawal also increased. It could be argued that adolescents who are dysregulated may exhibit impulsiveness, whereby limited emotional control contributes to their subsequent reactions (Gratz & Roemer 2004). If the adolescent struggles to gain some form of control over their responses during the conflict, negative emotions may be followed by acting out with less effective behaviours such as shouting (conflict engagement). The adolescent may also demonstrate other aspects of dysregulation that may also contribute. When the adolescent experiences negative emotions and reports higher impairment in their ability to focus on a specific problem (Gratz & Roemer 2004), their ability to focus upon more effective strategies that may help the conflict may be limited, resulting in more conflictual behaviours. This is in line with current literature which demonstrated that when fewer strategies for regulation are reported in adults (Lopes et al., 2011) and parent - adolescent relationships (Van Lissa et al., 2017), more incidents of conflict are reported. Similarly, the lack of control reflective of dysregulation, or the adolescent's perceptions that they do not have the abilities to regulate their emotions appropriately (Gratz & Roemer 2004), may cause the adolescent to respond by withdrawing when in conflict as a means of attempting to manage these difficulties or reduce negative consequences that may result.

ECR anxiety and avoidance did not contribute to either conflict resolution style within these regression analyses, disconfirming hypothesis two and three. These findings were inconsistent with current literature which demonstrates that attachment insecurity relates to

conflict behaviours (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009; Creasey et al., 1999). One explanation for the lack of contribution within the current study could be that the attachment variables may contribute to a single style but in different or opposite ways. For instance, lower levels of attachment anxiety, such as fearing abandonment and not feeling cared for (Fraley et al., 2011) may cause the individual to either engage in higher or low levels of conflict engagement. If the adolescent feels cared for and loved, they may be less inclined to utilise conflict engagement due to the security within the relationship. Alternatively, this perceived security may instead manifest in more conflict engagement due to less fears of relationship breakdown as a result, thus demonstrating how attachment models can contribute to individuals in different ways.

Overall, the results indicated that attachment avoidance did not contribute to conflict resolution styles of conflict engagement and withdrawal, whilst ECR anxiety did not contribute to any of the resolution styles. One explanation could be that the attachment variables may have a lesser impact or no impact upon these particular resolution styles given the developmental phase of these individuals. As adolescents during this phase are pursuing autonomy and independence away from their parental figures (Otterpohl & Wild, 2015), they may depend less on a parental attachment figure for support. These underlying beliefs regarding their attachment may therefore hold less value, particularly as other attachment figures are being arranged into hierarchical positions regarding of support (Bowlby, 1969/1982). Specifically, attachment to a parental figure was the focus of the current study given that research indicated that a parental figure was favoured on a hierarchy over peers (Rosenthal & Kobak, 2010), however the current results may indicate otherwise.

An alternative explanation may be that given attachment was explored with parental figures, these models of attachment may not generalise to peer relationships. Attachment with the person they are in conflict with may therefore be different and subsequently have a different impact upon how they may react in conflict. Although some authors highlight generalisability of these models (Bowlby, 1969;1973), others have argued that attachments may be relationship specific (Fraley et al., 2011). This however, may not fully explain why some attachment styles had an impact and others did not. Instead it could be argued that there may be external factors that contribute to resolution styles.

6.1. Limitations and directions for future research

The current research however is not without limitations. The research did not account for external factors that may also contribute, such as consequences. The directionality of the relationship may also struggle to account for the cause and effect between variables. For instance, attachment styles may distort the perceptions of the conflict or their attachment styles causing adolescents to over report the conflict interaction or deny their experiences (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2011). Moreover, the current study does not account for the communication methods in which conflict takes place such as phone or face to face. Research by Tremolada et al. (2022) indicated differences in favourable digital platforms for positive and negative arguments. These differences may be indicative of differences in conflict styles and research may benefit from exploring this further in the future. Future research may also benefit from exploring dynamics between the adolescent and the other person they are in conflict with to corroborate or validate the conflict experience and explore further the interplay between their behaviours (Weid et al., 2007).

7) Conclusion

Overall attachment and emotion dysregulation may contribute to the choice of conflict resolution styles in adolescents. Therapeutic work targeting better conflict resolution with adolescents should seek to understand the adolescent's individual conflict experience and the impact of their attachment and emotion dysregulation upon their behavioural choices.

8) References

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