

Student Conflict and Peer Mediation in the Multi-ethnic schools of Macedonia

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Abstract – The aim of the present research study was determine the difference in student and staff member attitude towards conflict with peers by determining difference in student and staff member conflicts styles between schools in Macedonia where peer mediation training programs were implemented and schools where no training programs were implemented. In addition, differences in conflict style between students and staff members who were trained as part of the peer mediation program and those who were not trained were examined. A sample of 62 staff members (M age = 36) and 263 students (M age = 16) was drawn from five multi ethnic high-schools from municipalities where peer mediation training programs had been implemented, including one control group. Data were collected by means of the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory—II (ROCI-II) (Rahim & Magner, 1995), measuring the five conflict style subscales: integrating, dominating, avoiding, obliging and compromising. The results show that students scored significantly different on the integrating, dominating and avoiding conflict style subscale between schools who had peer mediation training programs implemented and schools who had not. Students who had participated specifically as part of the peer mediation training scored higher on the integrating subscale than students who had not participated. No difference was found on any conflict style subscale between staff members from the different schools, or who had and had not participated in the training program. This implies that students from schools where training is present have adopted a more constructive approach, and posses a more diplomatic attitude, towards conflict with peers. In addition, these students tend to use less forcing methods and address conflict more often instead of avoiding it.

Samenvatting – Het doel van dit onderzoek is het meten van een verschil in de attitude van studenten en stafleden in Macedonië van scholen waar peer mediation trainingprojecten zijn geïmplementeerd en van scholen waar geen peer mediation trainingprojecten zijn geïmplementeerd, inclusief een controlegroep. Daarnaast werd gemeten of er een verschil in conflict stijl is tussen studenten en stafleden die geparticipeerd hebben aan training als onderdeel van de peer mediation projecten, en zij die niet geparticipeerd hebben. Het sample van 62 stafleden (M = 36 jaar) en studenten 263 (M = 16 jaar) is verzameld uit vijf verschillende middelbare scholen uit minicipalities waar peer mediation projecten aanwezig waren. De data was verzameld doormiddel van de Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory—II (ROCI-II) (Rahim & Magner, 1995), welke een meting geeft van de vijf conflictstijlen, integratief, forcerend, ontwijkend, toegevend en comprimerend. De resultaten laten zien dat studenten uit scholen waar peer mediation traingprojecten aanwezig waren significant verschillend scoorde op de integratieve, forcerende, ontwijkende conflict stijl, van studenten die op scholen zaten waar peer mediation traingprojecten afwezig waren. Studenten die specifiek hadden geparticipeerd aan

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training als onderdeel van de peer mediation projecten scoorde hoger op de integratieve conflictstijl subschaal dan studenten die niet aan de training hadden meegedaan. Er zijn geen verschillen gevonden in de conflictstijl subschalen van stafleden van verschillende scholen, noch tussen zij die wel en niet specifiek aan de training geparticipeerd hebben. Dit impliceert dat studenten afkomstig uit scholen waar peer mediation projecten aanwezig zijn een meer constructieve houding hebben en een meer diplomatieke aanpak hebben met betrekking tot conflicten met mede studenten. Daarnaast blijken deze leerlingen conflict op een minder forcerende manier te benaderen, en benoemen zij het conflict vaker in plaats er van weg te lopen.

Keywords: students, mediation, conflict, school, students, FYROM

Literature study

A Brief Explanation of the Macedonian Situation

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (henceforth referred to as Macedonia) is a small landlocked country bordering Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Albania. After the decomposition of communist Yugoslavia It was officially declared independent on the eight of September in 1991 (Kim, 2001).

Since ancient history Macedonia has been home to many different cultures and ethnicities. A census conducted by the Macedonian State Statistical Office [MSSO] in 2002 shows that the multi-ethnic population of Macedonia is currently made up of a two-third Macedonian majority, a quarter Albanian minority and smaller minorities of Turks, Serbs, Roma and Vlachs. In contrast, Albanians form the majority and Macedonians the minority in the northeastern region of the country (MSSO, 2002). A census in 2004 depicts the composition of the Macedonian population being about two-thirds of ethnic-Macedonians, one quarter ethnic-Albanians and the remnants percentages being Roma, Turks and others (Petroska-Beska & Najcevska, 2004).

Due to its geographical location, Macedonia was faced with the wars in the Western Balkan and experienced an influx of Albanian refugees fleeing from Kosovo in 1999 (Green & Dreier, 2009; Myhrvold, 2005). Prior to this, during the period of 1991 to 2001, there had been a lot of tension between the ethnic-Macedonian and ethnic-Albanians (Atanasov, 2003; Myhrvold, 2005). Macedonia was struggling with the large ethnic-Albanian population who had stated to experience marginalization. The sudden influx of Albanian refugees from the war in Kosovo in 1999 attributed to this, as at this time Macedonia was dealing with unrest amongst it's minorities as well as great strain on its national economy (Green & Dreier, 2009; Ortakovski, 2001).

On the 16th of February in 2001 an incident in the village of Tanuševci eventually instigated an open conflict between Albanian rebels, called the Albanian Liberation Army, and state security forces. The rebels stated to fight for basic human rights for the ethnic-Albanians in Macedonia, though the group was reported to originate from outside the country of Macedonia itself. The conflict lasted about 8 months, claimed roughly 100 lives, and ended when the Ochrid-Framework agreement was signed under stress by international parties (Czapliński, 2008).

The Agreement was designed to facilitate a more respective attitude towards the different nationalities and allows for more autonomy within the ethnic and cultural groups present in Macedonia. It focused on equal rights for the ethnic-Macedonian en ethnic Albanian population.

In regards to inter-ethnic tension the Agreement was an attempt to support the desire for a decrease in marginalization for the ethnic minorities in Macedonia, especially the Albanians. An integral part of the agreement's design was the element of decentralization which was implemented to facilitate devolution of administrative power with the intention of giving a stronger voice to minorities (Atanasov, 2003; Stanisevski & Miller, 2009).

Segregation in School

The implementation of decentralization has had consequences for the educational system in Macedonia. The most relevant change is that of allowing children of different ethnicities to follow education in their own language. It is important to note that laws regarding the protection of ethnic, cultural and religious identity, and the freedom of the Macedonian, multi-ethnic citizens to express this identity, had officially existed in Macedonia long before the Agreement was signed. However, the reforms implemented as part of the Ohrid Agreement cemented the rule that specifies that languages used by at least 20 percent of the population in units of local-self government, must be recognized as an official language within that local self-government (OSCE, 2013). Within the scope of this research this rule implies that multi-ethnic municipalities in which an ethnic minority of greater than 20 percent uses a specific language, children and students of this ethnicity have the right to receive education in that specific language in primary and middle-school. Acknowledging the high prevalence of ethnic-Albanians in Macedonia, this dual language education system primarily relates to a division of Macedonian and Albanian students, as both groups receive education separately in their own language. In addition, students do not like to partake in classes with members of opposing nationalities. Today there is a serious division of Albanian and Macedonian education in primary school. In High school this segregation is not complete, however (Atanasov, 2003; Myhrvold, 2005).

Today many different high schools in Macedonia can be roughly divided into three different categories. The first category has Macedonian language classes with students of all ethnicities. These are usually in areas where only a small percentage of the population consists of minorities. The second category is that of fully physically segregated schools, where students of different ethnicity study in separated premises. School staff consists of teachers of different ethnicity who, just like the students of opposing ethnicity, sometimes have little to no interaction with one another. The last category refers to a 'two schools under the same roof' system. In these ethnically mixed schools all students study the same venue but are separated along ethnic lines. Notable interaction does not take place, even though the schools are on the same premises. Moreover, a shift system takes place where students of different ethnicity follow

classes during different periods of time to separate the ethnicities and reduce chances of conflict (Myhrvold, 2005).

The central aim for the reformation in education is to allow students of different ethnicity to be taught in their own language. However, Myhrvold (2005) stipulates that it is tempting to assert that the divide between students of different ethnicity in the education sector constitutes as one of the major contributors to the de facto separation of Macedonian and ethnic Albanian communities. Ethnic Albanian students are being taught in separate classes, reinforcing mutual stereotypes between students. Even mixed inter-ethnic schools, joint curricula and extracurricular activities are relatively absent. This segregation is not only confined to students, but also exists for teachers. Professional co-operation is limited and interaction is practically non-existent (Myhrvold, 2005). However, the fact that inter ethnic tension has been present within the country of Macedonia long before the changes in its national education system in 2001, cannot be ignored. Taking into account both these considerations, it can be stated that though the separation of students of different ethnicity is in no way the cause of inter-ethnic tension, it does not facilitate social cohesion between the young ethnic groups either.

Conflict in Schools

In the past few years violence and conflict in schools has become a prevalent problem and a political issue in Macedonia. Reports show that regarding school conflict Macedonia ranks at the top of European countries, and when it comes to violent conflict in schools Macedonian comes 5th in the world (Georgievski, 2008; Unicef, 2006).

School conflicts reported by the media appear to be mainly between Ethnic-Macedonian and ethnic-Albanian youths. The violence is often quite severe, where groups of one ethnic group abuse a member of the other group in public, using weapons (Marusic, 2012). Many incidents have taken place over the past few years and political advocates as well as members of the OSCE and other NGO's have called for preventive measures (Marusic, 2012).

Considering this data it raises the question of why these students engage in (violent) conflict. A survey by OSCE amongst students in secondary school shows that the ethnic-Macedonian and ethnic-Albanian students are not well disposed towards each other. One-third of the Albanian students reports to have positive feelings for the Macedonian students, where only 13% of the latter share these same feelings for Albanians. In addition, more than half of the Macedonians (53.7%) stated that they have negative feelings for Albanians, and more than one-third (37.6%) of the Albanian students reported negative feelings for the Macedonians OSCE (2011). It appears that an ethnic divide plays a role in the (violent) conflicts between students.

Peer mediation training programs in Macedonian high schools

Another survey by OSCE (2012) shows that 43.4% of all parents believe the school to be unsafe. One of the main reasons was perceived to be violence by schoolmates/bullying by 42.3% of all parents. A smaller percentage (35.6%) believed third party violence affected the safety of their children in schools. Research indicates that 68% of the parents believe that family upbringing accounts for tension and upset in schools. Next in line are media (44.7%) and political parties (44.1%). Smaller percentages of parents believe that cultural differences (32.2%) and classmates' influence (30.4%) account for tension in schools (OSCE, 2012).

This information shows that schools are perceived to be unsafe. Cultural background and ethnicity play a role in how students perceive each other, and are viewed to play a role in conflicts and tension in and around schools. It is argued that there is a distinct degree of ethnic tension between inter-ethnic students, possibly resulting in violent conflict. According to the data the main reason for this tension seems to be caused by family, politics, media and the environment in school. This implies that violent conflict in and around schools is a serious community issue.

Bronfenbrenner's Socio-Ecological Model and The Role of Schools in the Community

Ethnic tension is perceived to be a serious issue in Macedonia. Schools are viewed to be unsafe, and part of the tension and violence is attributed to ethnicity. The implementation of the laws as part of the Ohrid Agreement was aimed to deal with the ethnic-tensions within Macedonia. Despite this, the tension remains. In addition, the separation of students of different ethnicity can be seen as an (unintentional) facilitator of the ethnic tension in schools, but also within society.

The official reforms that separate students of different ethnicity can be viewed as a reaction to the demand of society, but in turn effect and shape society itself. By accommodating to the demand for the expression of ethnic and cultural identity, students are denied the interaction with peers from other ethnicities, possibly enforcing stereotypes. To better understand this transactional process the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner will be used (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). The model will be briefly explained and applied to the segregation within education in Macedonia.

Bronfenbrenner stipulates how different dimensions or 'systems' of the child's environment influence it's perception of society and how the child is socialized into being a (psychological) individual and adequate citizen. Bronfenbrenners socio-ecological model can be generally understood as a depiction of four dimensions of a child's surrounding that influence its behavior, and are influenced by the child in return. The first system (microsystem) relates to the

direct environment of the child. It refers to individuals the child interacts with face to face, such as: parents, siblings, peers and teachers. The second system (mesosystem) includes the child's neighborhood, school and home. The third system (exosystem) refers to elements the child cannot influence directly, such as: the local government, parent's workplace and local industry. The last system (macrosystem) is that of the dominant beliefs and ideologies upheld by the society wherein the child exists (Bronfenbrenner, 1989).

The most relevant part of Bronfenbrenner's model is that of the transactional processes within and between the different systems. For example, ideologies and governmental policies about ethnic equality affect national school policy, which affects school board decisions, which change the school setting, and eventually affect the child's interactions with peers. However, this also works the other way around, where parent interactions affect peer interactions, which affect school setting and lead to educational policy changes and possible national dominant beliefs (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). This explanation of the relation between children and society may also be seen as an argument for the school as a microcosmos of society. Student interaction can be understood as a representation of the social climate on a national level, as well as students being considered agents in shaping their society (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

Bronfenbrenner's model (1989) shows that in the setting of Macedonia there is a transactional relation between student behavior and school policies. The initial implementation of segregation of ethnic youth, either by separate premises or different shifts of classes, was designed to support equality, tolerance towards ethnic diversity, and also reduce ethnic tension. However, the segregation has possibly led to the reinforcement of stereotypes and increases animosity between inter-ethnic students. Considering the fact that students make up the next generation of citizens of Macedonia, this implies that stereotyping will persist, and will be enforced by adults who learned to divide between ethnicities when they were young. Though this may appear a demoralizing finding, it also indicates a positive element. According to transactional processes students and schools can be motivated and empowered to diminish inter-ethnic tension in schools, and by doing so, inter-ethnic tension in the country (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; OSCE, 2012).

As a reaction to the predicament of tension and the lack of safety in schools, many schools and NGO's have developed methods and programs that try to include the local community to deal with these conflicts and make Macedonian schools safer (Anger, van 't Rood, Gestovska, 2010; Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia, 2010; OSCE & ZFD 2012; UNICEF, 2008). This approach of including the community is consistent with

the ideas inherent to Bronfenbrenner's (1989) socio-ecological model, where different systems in the child's environment effect, and are effected by, the child.

Peer Mediation and Dealing with Conflict in Schools

Throughout the years many different projects have been used in Macedonia as means of countering the prevalence of in- and around-school conflict and improving school safety. Most of these projects focus on children's rights and facilitating a more democratic approach towards education. By finding creative ways for children and students to voice their opinion, motivating them to collaborate and work together, and empowering them within an accepting environment, an attempt is made towards a more peaceful climate (Anger, van 't Rood, Gestovska, 2010; Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia, 2010; UNICEF, 2008).

A popular type of interventions found in Macedonia towards facilitating safer schools is that of peer-mediation training programs. In short, peer mediation focuses on training school staff and students a variety of social skills and mediation techniques to deal with conflict, reducing violence, and teaching students to resolve differences in a peaceful and constructive way. These interventions are sometimes provided by NGO's, others are an initiative of the schools themselves. The exact content of these courses differs between specific program design and location. Due to decentralization, there is a diversity in school organizations in Macedonia, and thus by default also in the training programs. For example, training can be provided as a temporal module or might be aimed at sustainability and incorporated into the school curriculum. Mostly school staff members such as teachers, councilors and pedagogues are involved, as well as students. Many programs require parent and community participation as well (Anger, van 't Rood, Gestovska, 2010; Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia, 2010; OSCE & ZFD 2012; UNICEF, 2008: Y-PEER, 2005).

There have been many different forms to implementing peer mediation in schools. However, in and around Macedonia but also in many other countries the specific design of the peer mediation interventions differ in approach, procedure, method and underlying theory (Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Y-PEER, 2005).

Many studies display peer-mediation to be an effective intervention to diminish school conflict, improving wellbeing and increasing a positive school climate (McWilliam, 2010). As of yet, there are no general data about the effectiveness of peer-mediation programs in Macedonia specifically. In addition, in their meta-analysis Johnson & Johnson (1996) mention the wide variety of specific elements that are measured as means of determining effectiveness, and the different methods of data collection that are used in general. They explain that this difference in

approach makes it difficult to ascertain a form of general knowledge about peer mediation results. In addition, though it was found that many participants of educational projects in Macedonia appreciate and value the projects, on a school wide and societal level it is harder to determine whether the implementations are effective at all (Anger, van 't Rood & Gestovska, 2010). So, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of peer-mediation programs one must understand the underlying elements of peer-mediation, and the presiding ways of measuring the effects of peer-mediation interventions (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

In the next part of this research the concepts and definitions that are relevant to understanding the workings of peer-mediation are explored. First, the concept of conflict as relevant within the scope of this research, will be defined. Second, the working of (peer) mediation is explained. Lastly, the different methods of indicating and measuring peer mediation interventions will be explored.

Considering the definition of Conflict and Student Conflict Behavior

To find effective and measurable ways of resolving conflict in schools one first needs to define and understand conflict behavior of children and how students deal with different types of conflict. According to Burton, interpersonal conflict (henceforth referred to as 'conflict') can be understood as an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals. This view is based on the theory of functionality and Maslow's model of *Hierarchy of Needs*. This model divides human needs into a structure starting with the physiological needs of humans as organisms, (such as food, water and sleep). Building upon these basic needs the model progresses its way up to the more sophisticated categories of needs, being safety (resources), belonging (relations with others), esteem (status and respect of, and by others) and self actualization (morality). When the needs of one individual are viewed to be jeopardized by (the needs of) someone else, these individuals are considered to be in conflict with one another. So a conflict can constitute two or more parties wanting the same item, title, or having fundamentally different stances regarding ethics or ideology. For these scenarios to be actual conflicts, at least one party must perceive this interference or incompatibility as obstructing the achievement of its goals (Polkinghorn, 2000).

To gain a better understanding of conflict and its related behavior one must distinguish between the concepts of conflict itself, and that of having an argument. An argument takes place when two or more individuals or parties engage in a discourse representing opposing propositions (Leung, 2002). Considering the concept of conflict as defined by Burton, an

argument is a discussion originating from a conflict. Note that this definition does not describe an argument to be *about* the conflict. Also, an argument does not necessarily need to be based on logical reasoning. In contrast, argument can be seen as an interactive process between two or more participants. Alternatively, this may constitute an aggravated conflict event of name calling, where two individuals represent the propositions of the other person being a 'jerk', while not addressing the original conflict of needs, nor doing so in a constructive or logical manner (Leung, 2002).

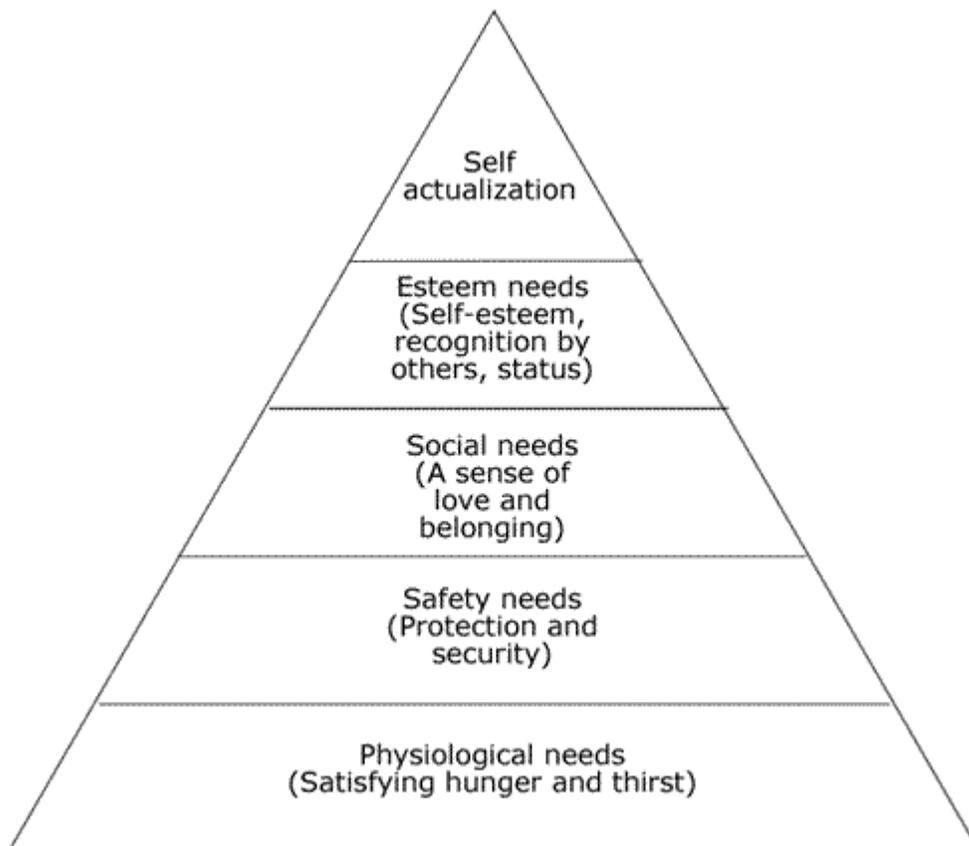


Figure 1. Pyramid depicting Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Conflicts and arguments can also escalate into physical violence. Theory regarding violence in conflict are mostly regarding a wider sociological context, dealing with in- and out-group thinking and the element of dehumanization (Rothbart & Korostelina, 2006). However, when we consider student behavior on a smaller scale one may attribute the escalation of conflict into violence to a lack of inhibition. It is important to note that findings in studies of

children involved in arguments demonstrate how they often do not take up opportunities for resolution but instead continue in their efforts to maintain the dispute. A common interpretation is that instead of attempting to resolve the conflict, the display of aggravated and disagreement violence is an important feature of peer culture (Leung, 2002).

Within this definition a distinction is made between the three concepts of *conflict*, an *argument* and *violence*. The most relevant about this separation is that conflict does not necessarily imply hostile actions or violent behavior. A conflict itself is the perceived stalemate by one party, feeling denied access to possessions, acceptance, rights or respect by another party. This conflict in turn may result into many different interactions such as a constructive argument based on logical reasoning or simply a social interaction of blaming and shaming and/or violence.

How Students Deal with Conflict

How students approach conflict differs between age, personalities and what the conflict is about. It can be argued that the ways of approaching conflicts by students differ between cultures as well, but there has been no research conducted in regard to this subject. Different inquiries in countries such as the USA and Australia used certain methods of measuring differences in the way high school students deal with conflicts with peers in schools. We will briefly discuss these findings and acknowledge how they were measured.

Conflict between primary, middle- and high-school students transpires for a large variety of reasons. The main form conflict is usually hassling, name calling, hitting and teasing (Cameron & Depuis, 1991). Reasons for conflict vary from relationship issues, possession or access (to facilities or services) and ethnic-conflict. There is no conclusive evidence about a specific set or origins for conflicts between students as many findings possess contradictory data, use different factors and theoretical constructs, and apply diverse methods of measuring (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

Another study on conflict 'strategies' used by students, is that of DeCecco and Richards (1974). Though these findings are quite dated, the amount of 8000 student and 500 teacher respondents who were interviewed may make the findings valid even today. Data show that conflicts amongst students are perceived to be left unresolved or resolved through avoiding the conflict and overpowering the opposition. In many cases students tend to resort to coercion or manipulation when confronted with conflict. There are usually no signs of perspective taking. In addition, another strategy was to involve teachers or other parties with a degree of authority. This tactic was used more by younger students and was less prevalent amongst high school

students. When we consider Leung's concept of having an *argument*, students seem to primarily apply pressure on the other party within the social interaction or refrain from engaging in the argument altogether, leaving the conflict unaddressed (Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Leung, 2002).

Another way of measuring students' approach to conflict is the one based on the dual concerns theory. This theory posits that there are two major concerns in conflict resolution: (a) concern about reaching one's goals and (b) concern about the goals of the other party. This second concern refers to the attempt to please, and maintain an appropriate relationship with the other person. It is argued that both the parties' goals and relationships can be of differing importance. The degree of importance can determine which of five inter-personal conflict strategies or styles a person will use: (1) integrative, problem solving negotiations (both goals and relationships are important), where one tries to reach an agreement that ensures both parties reach their goals and that negative feelings are resolved; (2) compromise (when both goal and relationship are moderately important and neither party can get what they want), in which both parties sacrifice part of their goals to reach an agreement and to mend, or minimize strain on, their relationship; (3) smoothing (applied when the goal is less important than the relationship), in which the party gives up their goal in an attempt to maintain a positive relationship; (4) withdrawing (when the goal nor the relationship is experienced to be worth the conflict, or the conflict is simply too stressful) in which the disputant gives up his/her relationship and goals simply to avoid the conflict altogether; and (5) forcing (when the need of achieving the goal is perceived to be more important than the relationship), in which the disputant tries to achieve his goals by applying pressure to force the other party to yield (Johnson & Johnson, 1997). Regarding the categorization of inter-personal conflict styles different terms are used to refer to the same definitions. Examples are the terms: integrating; compromising; obliging; avoiding and dominating. These terms remain based on the dual-concern theory and are interchangeable with the five definition as explained here (Rahim & Magner, 1995).

The different conflict strategies or styles can be used to determine how students deal with conflict. A survey in an inner city high-school in the USA indicated that 97% of the students use forcing as a means to resolve a conflict. An additional collection of data in the same school in the next year shows that 100% of the conflicts mediated in the school included verbal and/or physical forcing. Furthermore, data collected from suburban area's depicted students using primarily forcing, compromising or withdrawal strategies. In this research it becomes evident that students tend to be focused on achieving their goals and discard efforts to sustain the relationships, or abandon their goals to mend the relationships at all costs. In this research there is no clear mentioning of the use of violence (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

Why students engage in conflict is uncertain and to measure from where conflict originates is difficult. As explained an argument is not necessarily logical, nor actually *about* the conflict (Leung, 2002). There are many different tools to classify conflict and identify its causes, but many types of measurement are not compatible with one another. This makes it difficult to generalize data relating to the subject. However, according to research, most prevalent conflict behavior of students is a tendency to avoid arguments, or force their way unto others. A way of measuring this conflict behavior is by using the dual concern theory's conflict styles. Seeing as it measures a general attitude towards conflict based on behavior in, and the experience of, conflict situations, widespread measurements regarding conflict styles used by students may give a clear, consistent perspective on how students act when in dispute with other people.

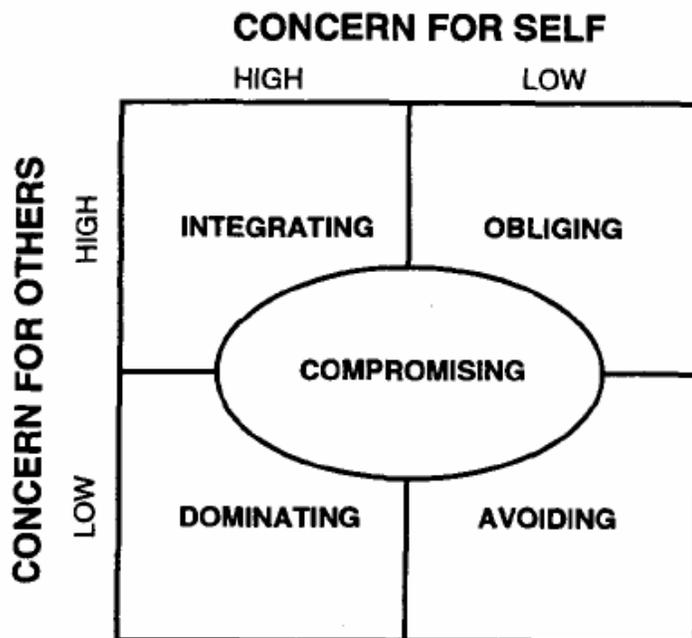


Figure 2. A two-dimensional model of the styles of handling interpersonal conflict according to the dual concern theory.

Theory of Mediation

It was mentioned that many schools in Macedonia use peer mediation programs in an effort to deal with the tension and conflict in schools. Mediation has become a popular term, yet it is not always clear to what it implies exactly. In this part of the research the theory of mediation will be explained. First, the core elements of mediation will be explored. After this the peer mediation

training program used in several schools in Macedonia, as designed and implemented by the NGO *Zivilier Friedensdienst*, will be discussed.

Mediation as an intervention can be explained in two ways. The first way is by stating that mediation is a way of intervening in a conflict by a third, neutral party, in an attempt to aid in negotiations and identify the true interests of both parties, to reach a solution that is most beneficial to both parties (Moore, 1996). The second explanation refers to mediation as a social process in which the mediator attempts to increase the quality of the interaction and tries to improve communication (Della Noce, Bush, & Folger, 2002). The first explanation states mediation to be a negotiation process, focused on problem solving and is referred to as the 'facilitating approach'. The second explanation describes mediation as an exercise to improve the communication between parties in an attempt to improve the parties' understanding of the situation and allowing them to make more sound decisions. This is called the 'interactional approach'. Both these approaches are widely adopted within the mediation world, and both define the core meaning mediation (Prein, 2007).

Another very important element of mediation is the parties' autonomy and self-determination. Parties are always dependent of one another in the sense that at least one party perceives the other party as interfering itself in achieving its goals (Polkinghorn, 2000). However, mediation is based on the idea that any party is free to walk away at any time during the mediation process. Participation in the mediation process is voluntary, and the only resolution to the conflict in question is the one formed willingly, by all parties involved. In addition, parties are free to make the decisions they wish. A mediator cannot tell any party what to do and has no authority regarding the content of the conflict, except for setting rules regarding communication or conduct within the mediation process. The mediator does not pick sides nor give judgment regarding the conflict itself. It remains impartial, and focuses on improving communication, gaining insight into the conflict, and aids in attempting to find a solution that is agreeable to both parties (Prein, 2007).

When we consider peer mediation we must take into account that students are being trained to function as mediators between their peers. Considering the approaches to mediation that have been discussed, it is important that students learn skills and remain impartial.

The NGO *Zivilier Friedensdienst* uses peer mediation training projects in Macedonia. ZFD's peer mediation training programs are focused on allowing students, to train and be trained, by fellow students. The focus lies on training staff members to become suited trainers, creating a sustainable members of skilled trainers within the school, aiming to incorporate the training program into the school curriculum. These trained staff members will train students to

become peer mediators. Those students will train other students in turn. The goal is to get everyone involved and to provide a consistent group of mediators present within the schools throughout the progressing school years (Y-PEER, 2005).

In addition, the underlying theory suggests that students prefer to be taught by their fellow students (peers) and adopt the taught information more effectively. Seeing their fellow students active as peer mediators, and participating in peer mediation practice, motivates students to commit to mediation as well (Y-PEER, 2005).

Peer mediation projects consist of training staff members to train students to become peer mediators. By allowing students to train each other they are empowered to take control of their own situation. Students who experience a conflict can address a peer mediator that is of his/her own age, gender and nationality, to help them solve their issue. By involving the whole school the use of peer mediation is promoted, reducing violent conflict, and improved school climate.

Measuring the Effects of Peer Mediation Programs

Despite the many claims that peer mediation is effective, there is no congruent measurement of the effects of peer-mediation in Macedonian schools. Though the theory suggests positive results, and students and staff members praise the program, it is unclear if, and how student behavior and school climate is affected. To measure the effects of peer mediation, it must first be identified how peer mediation training in schools is expected to affect students and staff members. To gain insight several ways of measuring peer mediation will be discussed.

McWilliam (2010) states that peer mediation is significantly affected by the quality of mediation training. It is explained that good training improves outcome because a skilled peer mediator is capable of dealing with more diverse problems and is quicker in addressing the underlying issues. Most importantly, unskilled mediators tend to 'police' the issue and resort to methods of arbitrage, where they coerce or force students into reconciliation or call in favor of one of the disputing parties. This not only leaves the true conflict unresolved, but also puts peer-mediation in a bad light for the duped party, reducing the chances of conflict being addressed to peer mediators in the future (Lantieri & Patti, 1996; McWilliam, 2010).

However, Bickmore (2001) states that good training is not enough. She addresses the attributes of leadership, prestige and diversity amongst peer mediators. Bickmore mentions that it is important that peer-mediators possess an amount of authority and that student believe in the mediator and trust him/her to be skilled and fair. In addition, it is explained that peer mediators need to be culturally or ethnically diverse. Not only does this cover the element of students being

more comfortable with addressing a mediator they consider to belong to their group or culture, but it also shows the underlying aspect of equality and fairness that is part of the mediation approach. This is especially relevant regarding the inter-ethnic sources underlying the violent conflicts in schools in Macedonia (Bickmore, 2001).

It was said that the benefits of peer-mediation depend on how well the program is planned and carried out. In addition, to be most effective peer mediation needs to be part of a whole school effort as well. Teachers and administrators need to understand and support the goals and processes of such a program. By including members of the school staff the mediation approach and process is constituted and supported within the school, motivating teachers and students to participate, and also empowering those who resort to a mediation approach (Lantieri & Patti, 1996).

Though these factors are regarded to determine peer-mediator training projects effectiveness, they are difficult to measure. The skills of trained peer mediators do not indicate school safety. In contrast, the diversity amongst mediators present in schools does not guarantee good mediated conflicts. Also, measuring school participation does not imply an improvement in the school climate.

One way of measuring the effects of peer mediation is by registering the outcomes of mediated conflict. A meta-analysis by Burrell, Zirbel, and Allen (2003) shows that within reported conflict, peer mediation succeeded in reaching a 93% agreement rate and that 88% of the participants were satisfied with the agreements reached. A drawback of this measurement is that the results only refer to reported conflicts. It can be argued that unreported conflicts, while peer mediated, might not have been resolved successfully. Non reported conflict is by definition not subject to mediation, the same way an unreported crime cannot be resolved through police action. This may give a distorted image of the total conflicts in school, as well as conflicts actually being resolved outside of mediation practice (Burrell, Zirbel & Allen, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

In addition, many students in high-schools choose to evade conflict and practice the withdrawing conflict strategy, which implies that most conflict may not even be addressed, as students may reason that the conflict is not significant enough to be dealt with through mediation. When the prevalent forcing strategy is considered, many students seem not to care about the other party's needs and value the relationship secondary to reaching their own goals. As mediation focuses on beneficiary outcomes for both parties and on preserving and sustaining the relationship, many students may not feel the necessity to address a peer mediator to deal with their disputes and may simply resort to bullying or violence – leaving conflict prevalent, but

unaddressed (Burrell, Zirbel & Allen, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Taking these considerations into account, neither the total number of mediated conflicts, nor the agreement rate of peer mediated conflicts may constitute as good indicators of the effectiveness of peer mediation programs in school.

A survey conducted closer to Macedonia is that of Hrničić (2008) in Serbia. The goal was to measure social competence of students who participated in a GTZ conflict resolution and youth empowerment program. The different indicators that were used consisted of: general activism, general social competence and social skills: empathy/decentering, tolerance and problem-solving skills. The questionnaire that was used included items such as: '*I positively influence my friends*' and '*I can earn trust of other students and teachers for the right thing*'. These items appear somewhat biased, implying a negative trait for students who score low on these items. However, seeing as these items were translated straight from the Serbian language it could be argued that language accounts for the dubious formulation of the questions (Hrničić, 2008). In addition, it can be argued that a dominant person might be very socially competent, but may resort to intimidating or forcing styles of managing conflict. Therefore social competence may not be an adequate indicator for successful effects of peer-mediation training.

Several tools of evaluation have been discussed. Measuring the degree of agreement and satisfaction may not be the most accurate way of determining the effect of peer mediation in schools. Though it depicts the effectiveness of peer mediation in actual mediation sessions, it does not account for the improvement in school safety or the behavior of mediators outside the measured mediation sessions. The results of the social competence questionnaire may not be related directly to the effects of peer-mediation training either, making it difficult to establish conclusive results based on the method of measuring.

The Conflict Styles and Dual Concern Theory

Found to be the most prominent element of peer-mediation, however, is that of *integrative negotiation vs. distributive negotiation* (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). When we take into account the two elements of the dual-concern theory: (a) concern about reaching one's goals and (b) concern about maintain an appropriate relationship with the other person, mediation focuses on achieving mutual agreements that are beneficial to both parties. Priorities are satisfying the needs of both parties, but also trying to nurture the relationship between the disputants. This approach of conflict is called *integrative negotiation* (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

Integrative negotiation can best be understood in contrast with *distributive negotiation*. Where *integrative negotiation* is adopted to achieve the goals of both parties and preserve the

relationship, *distributive negotiation* orientates on achieving only the goals of one party, and viewing the value of the relationship as a secondary priority. This discrepancy between negotiation strategies is rooted in difference in notions whether one can or cannot achieve their own goals without achieving the goals of the other party. Individuals who use *distributive negotiation* perceive their actualization of their own needs to be dependent on the denial of the needs of the other party (e.i. for themselves to *win*, the other party must *lose*). A different perception of negotiation strategies determines attitude and behavior. Individuals who use *distributive negotiation* tend to see conflict as a contest and force others into giving in to their needs, while *integrative negotiation* entails a more democratic approach and predicts the attempt of an individual to cover the needs of both parties, the exploration of possibilities through dialog and taking into account what the aftermath of the conflict will mean to the relationship (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

In mediation the integrative approach to negotiation is used. The aims are to identify the needs of the parties involved and strive towards a positive and most beneficiary outcome for both/all parties in a conflict or dispute. Though this is not always possible, a mediator does not abolish or disapprove of the conflict and acknowledges both parties' aims and emotions. A mediator tries to identify the interests underlying the different goals or claims of the parties and stimulates a civilized and productive dialog in which good conduct and respect play a significant role (Prein, 2007). Considering the definitions of a conflict and an argument, the mediator regulates the argument, allowing the parties themselves to deal with the conflict (Leung, 2002; Polkinghorn, 2000). A mediator functions mainly as a referee: it helps the parties approach the conflict in a specific way, but only partakes as a facilitator to allow the parties to eventually resolve the dispute themselves (Prein, 2007).

After the implementation of peer-mediation programs students tend to implement means of *integrative negotiation* (Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, Ward, & Magnuson, 1995). It was found that consecutive to mediation training school wide, over 40% of the experimental group had implemented *integrated negotiation* in school and at home, compared to a minimal percentage prior to training. This effect was found by measuring conflict styles and using the integrating style as an indicator for constructive negotiation strategy. Seeing as the effects were measured within a period of a few months, regarding multiple sources and types of conflicts, and in different settings, it can be stated that peer mediation training had a sustainable effect on the conflict behavior of students (Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, Ward, & Magnuson, 1995). In long-term relationships, integrative negotiation procedures tend to be most constructive for managing conflict. It is shown that peer-mediation truly changes behavior, instead of only stating mediated

conflict outcome (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

Seeing as *integrative negotiation* is strongly related to the two major concerns in the dual-concerns theory, it may also be measurable by means of an inter-personal conflict style questionnaire. The integrative conflict style/strategy focuses on trying to reach an agreement that ensures that both parties in a conflict reach their goals and that negative feelings are resolved (Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, Ward, & Magnuson, 1995). As explained earlier in this paper it was also shown that before mediation training students almost never applied *integrative negotiation* tactics and primarily displayed avoiding of forcing types of behavior. After training 40% of the experimental group applied the integrative approach (Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, Ward, & Magnuson, 1995). This constitutes as a valid argument that the integrative conflict style is an indicator for the effectiveness of mediation training on the behavior of students and their attitude towards conflict, by discerning the use of *integrated negotiation* methods by participants.

However, when considering the context of Macedonia, a few other aspects may contribute to the possibility of implementation and the effects of peer mediation. As there is a large diversity in the different approaches to mediation, there may also be a large variety in ways and the quality of student training. Also, as integrative negotiation is a rather democratic and empathic way of communication which requires both parties to eventually relate to one another. It is hard to adopt if it is not taught, and may be contra-intuitive for students who are used to avoid a conflict, or prefer forcing their views on others. Many of the prior research has been conducted in the West, especially in the USA, and mostly in urban areas. This entails that it requires careful consideration when comparing the mentioned results in regard to the situation in Macedonian schools (Burrell, Zirbel & Allen, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

The unique amount of ethnic-tension may also prove to be a great threshold for the successful implementation of peer-mediation. As explained, mediation is partially based on the desire to preserve the relationship. In a strongly segregated society where students live in separate worlds, they may not feel any need for a sustainable relationship, decreasing the necessity for *integrative negotiation*. Despite this, the aim of the intervention is to bind students together, and mediated agreements may be the place to start (Anger, van 't Rood, Gestovska, 2010; Atanasov, 2003; Myhrvold, 2005; OSCE, 2011).

Lastly, is the issue of the degree of violent conflict. Although prior research mentioned was conducted in urban areas, much of the student conflicts were not mentioned to involve the severity of violence supposedly present in the conflicts between students in Macedonia today. This does not imply that peer mediation will not work, but it does stipulate the seriousness of the

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conflicts. Considering this, it must be underlined that peer mediation will not be effective in 'soothing' things over and must be applied to address serious issues of student (inter-ethnic) conflict, further stressing the importance of good training.

Research

Research Question

Following the theory and data mentioned in this paper it raises the question whether peer-mediation training programs implemented in Macedonian schools is effective in reaching its goals? The projects focus on improving school safety, by teaching students and staff members, and facilitating them in finding a constructive ways of dealing with conflict. To determine whether peer mediation training programs are effective one can measure how peer mediation affects the attitude of participants, towards conflict.

The aim of this research is to determine whether conflict style differs between schools where peer mediation training has been implemented, and schools where these training programs are not implemented. Additional questions regarding the difference in conflict styles between staff members and students who have and have not been trained are considered as well. Other between group comparison were also be performed regarding the possible difference between students and staff member conflict styles inherently, as well as between age, gender and ethnicity will be dealt with as well. Therefore the central research question and its sub-questions will be:

Is there a difference in student and school professional conflict styles in Macedonian high schools where peer-mediation training is implemented compared to student and school professional behavior in high schools in which no peer mediation training was implemented?

Additional sub questions are:

- Is there a difference in student and school professional conflict styles between high schools that have a different extend of peer mediation training implemented?
- Is there a difference between the conflict styles of students and staff members who have, and who have not been trained?
- Is there a difference between conflict styles of students and school professionals who were trained by different people?
- Is there is difference between conflict styles and between gender, age and ethnicity?

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Considering the theoretical background it is expected within the context of this research, that the implementation of peer mediation interventions will affect conflict behavior of students and staff members in schools. The hypothesis as followed:

H0: There will not be a difference in student and school professional conflict styles in Macedonian high schools where peer-mediation training is implemented as part of a peer mediation program compared to students and school professional in high schools in which no peer mediation training was implemented.

H1: There will be a difference in student and school professional conflict styles in Macedonian high schools where peer-mediation training is implemented as part of a peer mediation program compared to students and school professional in high schools in which no peer mediation training was implemented.

Methodology

The research focuses on school professionals and students of high schools where peer-mediation training programs have, and have not been conducted. In the spirit of consistency the research was conducted within schools in municipalities where a specific approach of peer-mediation training programs have been implemented. In this particular case the approach of the NGO Zevelier Friedendienst (ZFD) will be researched, and data will be collected from high schools in the municipalities of Kicivo, Struga and Skopje respectively. The different schools that are selected within the municipalities are as follows: Struga: high-school Dr. Ibrahim Temo, Niko Nestor; Kicevo: high-school Mirko Nileski, Orita; and Skopje: high-school Arseni Jovkov. For both municipalities where training was implemented it is important to note that the different schools reside within the same premises within those municipalities.

These schools were selected based on the fact that they are in the two multi-ethnic areas where ZFD is active (Kicevo and Struga), including one control group (Skopje). In addition, the two municipalities where training programs have been implemented differ in the extensiveness of the peer mediation program. This extensiveness relates to the amount of peer mediation trained school professionals and students compared to the entire school population. The schools in Kicivo have a smaller number of trained mediators. The exact figures of trained peer mediators in Kicivo are not clear, but it may be argued that this in itself is an argument for a less extensive implementation of the peer mediation program. For the research a comparative equal amount of recipients from all three different municipalities was selected.

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Research group

The total sample consists of 327 students and staff members. In total the group contained 119 males and 206 females, with two missing values. The 327 respondents were divided into 263 students and 62 staff members.

Staff members are were aged 24 to 59, with a mean of 36.75 ($sd = 9.11$). Of all staff members 16 were male, 43 were female. There were 23 staff members who have been part of the peer mediation training program, 36 had not been trained and 3 did not know whether they had been trained. Of all the staff members who had partaken in the peer mediation training program, 22 of the staff members who reported to have been trained were trained by a professional mediation trainer, 1 does not know who trained him/her. Trained staff members had had partaken in training sessions 1 to 6 times, with a mean of 3,83 ($sd = 1,95$).

Students were aged 14 to 19, with a mean of 16,28 ($sd = 1,61$). Of all students 103 were male, 160 were female. There were 46 students who reported to have been trained as part of the peer mediation training program, 197 had not been trained and 20 students do not know whether they have been trained. Of all the students who had partaken in the peer mediation training program, 28 had been trained by a professional mediator trainer, 11 had been trained by a teacher, and 2 do not know who trained them. Students. Trained students had partaken in training sessions 1 to 6 times, with a mean of 2,76 ($sd = 1,87$).

Operationalization of the concepts

To measure school professional and student behavior the inter-personal conflict style questionnaire Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory—II (ROCI-II) was used (Rahim & Magner, 1995). This questionnaire consists of 28 items which measures five styles of handling interpersonal conflict—integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising—with superiors, subordinates, and peers. The 28 questionnaire items have been minimally altered to be more comprehensible for students and will be formulated in the Macedonian and Albanian language. In addition, 11 questions have been added regarding the student's/school staff's age, background and whether they were trained in regard to the peer mediation program.

The questionnaire focuses on how the respondent deals with certain conflict situations. The respondents were asked how he or she would act when in conflict with a relevant peer (referring to students if the respondent is a student, and referring to a staff member if the respondent is a staff member). The different items are connected to one out of the five specific conflict styles and measure a total score which help distinguish which conflict styles is used

primarily by the respondent. All items allow for five answers ranging from 'I totally disagree' to 'I totally agree' (Likert scale).

The main goal of measuring conflict style as behavior is to distinguish between styles of approaching conflict. The dependent variables are a conflict styles of a more democratic and peaceful nature, compared to a more (verbally) aggressive and dominance based way of resolving disputes. The conflict style that is considered to be related to mediation training is that of 'integrating conflict style', which focuses on finding a way to negotiate between two (or more) parties and integrate the wishes of the different groups to reach a joint agreement. It is therefore hypothesized that this conflict style may be more prevalent amongst trained school professionals and students.

Procedure

The inter-personal conflict style questionnaire Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory—II (ROCI-II) (Rahim & Magner, 1995) was evaluated and minimally altered to be more accessible to students, yet to remain accurate in its measurements. Both an Albanian and Macedonian translation were constructed, focusing on properly translating the more western concepts of 'conflict' and terms such as 'issue' and 'compromise' within the context of the questionnaire. This aspect of the research design required extra attention because Macedonian is a more descriptive language, making it difficult to alter the more direct English/American formulation.

Three different areas were selected in which to conduct the research. These areas were Struga, Kicevo and Skopje. The main reason for this selection was that the municipalities of Struga and Kicevo were the two inter-ethnic locations where ZFD was active. As explained earlier it was deemed appropriate to select the peer mediation training projects as designed by ZFD to remain consistent in the research design, and allow for a more accurate analysis, a better generalization within the mediation program and decrease the chance of a type I error. The third municipality Skopje was selected as a control group. Skopje was deemed appropriate because it is also an inter-ethnic area and school, and staff members and students reside in relatively the same situation as those in the prior two municipalities.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 was used for analyzing the results. All tests were run with a .05 alpha level.

Factor Analysis

First a confirmatory factor analysis with an orthogonal rotated factor solution was performed to verify the five subscales as factors from the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory—II (ROCI-

II), namely the conflict styles integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising. As a requirement for the factor loading of items a loading of minimal .30 is generally seen as adequate loading (Field, 2005). Five items were found with a factor loading of less than .30. These items were judged to be insufficient in measuring the related conflict style subscale. The respective items were item 1: 'I try to get more information about an issue so I can find a solution that is acceptable for both of us.'; item 15: 'I negotiate with the other to reach a compromise'; item 16: 'I try to stay away from disagreement with the other'; item 20: 'I try to make the other give in a bit by giving in a bit myself as well, so we can reach a compromise'; and item 25: 'I sometimes use my power to win in a conflict'. These items were removed. After the items were removed a new factor analysis was performed. Six factors were found with an eigenvalue of more than 1. This constituted more factors than the expected five conflict style subscales. Upon inspection of the scree-plot 4 factors were selected. The four factors accounted for 40.93% of the total common variance explained: factor 1, integrating (13.19%), factor 2: dominating (10.35%), factor 3: avoiding (9.80%), and factor 4: obliging (7.59%). No factor for the compromising conflict style was identified. This can be explained on basis of the fact that item 15 and 20 were both considered indicators for the compromising conflict style. The removal of these items would make it impossible to account for accurate measurements of the respective conflict style.

All items expected to be indicators for the integrating conflict style loaded between .38 and .62. The items for the dominating conflict style loaded between .65 and .77. The items for avoiding loaded from .43 to .61. Two items, namely 26 'I try to keep my disagreement to myself in order to avoid anybody being hurt (emotionally)'; and item 27 'I try to avoid unpleasant interactions with the other', were removed because they loaded less than .30 on the factor of their respective conflict style (Field, 2005). The items for obliging loaded from -.35 to -.38: a negative correlation. This negative correlation indicates that the items were calculated as measuring a factor negatively related to the obliging conflict style. The items were all scaled on a Likert-scale and could not be transformed. This resulted in the finding that the fourth factor was removed, leaving the three factors Integrating, dominating, and avoiding.

Based on the factor analysis these three conflict styles will be used to determine if there is a difference in attitude towards conflict between trained and untrained staff members and students.

Between group comparison

An analysis was conducted to determine possible differences in conflict style. The background variables: staff members and students, gender, school, school year, and ethnicity were selected as independent values. After this, a MAN(C)OVA was conducted, comparing a possible statistical difference in conflict style, applying whether students and staff members have and have not been trained as the independent value. The possible effects of the background variables (staff members and students, gender, school, school year, and ethnicity) on conflict style were integrated as possible covariates, decreasing the chance of a type I error. Due to the amount of data only significant results will be mentioned.

An AN(C)OVA is a statistical test used to determine whether the means of several groups are statistically equal on two or more dependent variables, and where the control of concomitant continuous independent variables (covariates) is required. To perform a AN(C)OVA several conditions need to be met. First, the criteria of a random sample drawn from a normally distributed population. Second, the condition of homogeneity of variance. Third, that of independent observations. To check for homogeneity of variance separate Levene's test was executed for the different AN(C)OVA analysis and the significant results will be mentioned for the independent tests (Field, 2005).

The assumption of a random sample and that of independent observations have been met in the research design. A normal distribution implies that the scale's distribution is centered relatively equally on both sides of the mean and there are not many extremely high or low values (Field, 2005). To account for a normal distribution in a sample larger than 200, the skewness and kurtosis of the respective scale need to be close to 0. The scale allows for a score between -1 and 1. Both the dominant scale and the avoiding scale meet the requirement of normal distribution. The Integrative scale violates the assumption of normal distribution ($M = 4.12$, $sd = .50$, $skewness = -1.17$, $kurtosis = 3.12$). These results indicate a left-distributed sample, and a heavy tailed distribution. After computing a boxplot a set of outliers were found in the right end of the distribution, explaining the high kurtosis. A histogram of the integrating subscale is given in figure 3. The violation of the assumption of normal distribution limits the generalization of the research's findings. However, the findings are still relevant regarding this particular sample. For this reason further analysis will be executed normally.

.85) than students ($M = 3,88$, $sd = .68$). There was no homogeneity of variance found for the dominating conflict style subscale regarding being a student or staff member ($p = .014$). No significant difference on the conflict styles was found regarding gender. A difference was found between ages on the dominating conflict style subscale $F(33, 307) = 2,856$, $p = .000$. No Post Hoc analysis could be executed due to the fact that one age group had less than 2 cases. In addition, no homogeneity of variance was found on the dominating conflict style subscale regarding age ($p = .043$). There was a difference found on the integrating conflict style subscale between schools $F(2, 247) = 2,468$, $p = .033$. The Post Hoc analysis indicates a difference between Mirko Nileski ($M = 4,24$, $sd = .38$) and Arseni Jovkov ($M = 3,99$, $sd = .76$) $p = .038$. No homogeneity of variance was found on the integrating conflict style subscale ($p = .020$). No difference was found on the conflict style subscales between school years attended by students. A difference was found on the dominating conflict style subscale between ethnicities $F(2, 308) = 2,154$, $p = .047$. Albanian respondents scored higher on this conflict style subscale ($M = 3,88$, $sd = .72$) than Macedonian respondents ($M = 3,56$, $sd = .84$) $p = .011$.

After the first round of between group comparison it was found that students scored higher on the dominating conflict scale than teachers. In addition, it was found that there was a difference on this same subscale between ages. It could be argued that there is a correlation between the difference in the dominating conflict style regarding age difference, and whether participants were students or staff members. An ANCOVA was executed to determine the difference in the dominating conflict style subscale between age, implementing the student and staff member variable as a covariate. No difference was found on the dominating conflict subscale between the different ages when accounting for the student staff member variable as a covariate. Considering this, the age variable was not integrated as a covariate in further analysis. In addition, the sample was divided into students and staff members. Between groups analyses were executed for the students and staff members separately in order to receive more accurate findings and reduce the chance of a type I error.

A difference was found on the integrating conflict style subscale between the schools. Participants attending Mirko Nileski high school scored significantly higher than participants from Arseni Jovkov. This could be explained on the basis that there was a peer mediation training program present in Mirko Nileski, but not in Arseni Jovkov. According to the research's hypothesis the scores on the integrating conflict style subscale would be higher amongst participants trained as part of a peer mediation program, compared to untrained participants. No training programs were present in Arseni Jovkov, which may explain the difference in conflict style scores. An ANCOVA was executed to determine the difference in the integrating conflict

style subscale between schools, implementing the trained or untrained variable as a covariate. No difference was found on the integrating conflict style subscale between schools with the integrating conflict style subscale as covariate. This implies that the difference between schools was mainly attributed to the difference in scores of trained and untrained respondents. For this reason, school was not implemented as a covariate in further between-group analysis.

Finally, a difference was found in the dominating conflict style subscale between the Macedonian and Albanian ethnicities. To check for the possible influence of participation in peer mediation training programs amongst the participants scores regarding ethnicity, an ANCOVA was executed to determine the difference in the dominating conflict style subscale between ethnicities, implementing the trained or untrained variable as a covariate. A difference was found between the two aforementioned ethnicities, with Albanian respondents scoring higher on the dominating conflict style subscale ($M = 3.88$, $sd = .72$) than Macedonian respondents ($M = 3.56$, $sd = .84$) when accounting for training participation, $p = .038$. As a last measurement the covariate of the student or staff member was implemented and a between group analysis was executed to determine the difference in the dominating conflict style subscale between ethnicities. No difference was found. Albanian respondents still scored higher as Macedonian respondents, but not significantly so. It appears that the difference in the dominating conflict style subscale regarding ethnicity can be attributed mainly to Albanian teacher's scores deviating from Macedonian students' scores on this particular subscale. Considering the aforementioned division of the research sample into students and staff members in future analysis, ethnicity was not adopted as a covariate.

Trained or Untrained

To determine how training effects the three remaining conflict style subscales a between-group analysis was executed. Prior to this measurement, several analyses were performed to identify external factors and covariates that may be effecting conflict style subscale scores of the respondents. No covariates were found, except for the student of school staff variable. Based on this finding the sample was divided into students and staff members. Comparisons between trained and untrained respondents will be performed for the student and staff members separately. The problem that emerged is that a total of 23 staff members ($n = 23$) within the sample participated in the peer mediation programs. This is a considerably small sample, reducing the external validity to which the research's findings can be generalized.

To determine any possible between-group differences on the scores of the three remaining conflict style subscales (integrating, dominating, avoiding) several analyses were

performed. First, a one-way ANOVA was executed to determine differences between trained and untrained students and staff members separately. A difference was found on the integrating conflict style subscale between the trained and untrained students $F(1,231) = 5.47, p = .020$. Students who had participated in training as part of the peer mediation program scored higher ($M = 4.26, sd = .35$) than untrained students ($M = 4.05, sd = .59$). The assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated, decreasing the extent to which the findings can be generalized ($p = .035$). No differences were found on the dominating or avoiding conflict style subscales between trained and untrained students. No between group differences was found on the three conflict style subscales amongst trained or untrained staff members.

After determining a deviation on the scores on the integrating conflict style subscale amongst trained and untrained students a MANOVA was performed to identify the possible differences between students who had been trained by different trainers and how often they had attended peer mediation training sessions. Seeing as 28 had been trained by a professional mediator trainer and 11 students had been trained by a teacher it must be acknowledged that the sample is extremely small. The item that was designed to measure the training session variable distinguishes between one to five training sessions and a last option of 'more than five sessions'. The total respondents for one training session ($n = 15$), two training sessions ($n = 8$), three training sessions ($n = 4$) four training sessions ($n = 4$), five training sessions ($n = 3$) and more ($n = 5$), with a total of 8 missing values. Because of the small sample the findings regarding the number of training sessions cannot be generalized, but may give an indication of the effect of different trainers and how the frequency of training session attendance may determine variation in conflict style scores.

A difference was found on the dominating conflict style subscale between the number of training sessions attended by students. Students who had attended four training sessions ($M = 2.68, sd = .33$) scored significantly lower than all the other students except the ones who had attended three sessions. The significance value including the descriptives for the five relevant groups are as follows: one training session ($M = 3.77, sd = .26, p = .023$), two training sessions ($M = 3.92, sd = .24, p = .033$), five training sessions ($M = 4.56, sd = .40, p = .021$), and more ($M = 4.46, sd = .38, p = .004$). However, considering the noticeably small size of the sample and the different groups, these scores are viewed to be unreliable.

To measure whether reported conflict styles differ between schools that have incorporated peer mediation training programs to a different extent, a final MANOVA was conducted. The analysis was performed to identify possible differences in conflict style subscales school wide. The predicting value was that of the extent to which the peer mediation

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training program was implemented. As mentioned earlier, this separates the schools into thoroughly implemented: Dr. Ibrahim Temo, Niko Nestor; normally implemented: high-school Mirko Nileski, Orita; and unimplemented: high-school Arseni Jovkov. The sample remained split between students and staff members.

First, a between group analysis will be performed using the student data. A difference was found on the integrating $F(2, 242) = 5.04, p = .007$, the dominating $F(2, 242) = 5.01, p = .007$ and avoiding $F(2,242) = 6.05, p = .003$ conflict style subscales. Differences on the integrating conflict style subscale were found between schools where the peer mediation program was thoroughly implemented ($M = 4.17, sd = .07$) and unimplemented ($M = 2.96, sd = .11$) $p = .045$, as well as between normally implemented ($M = 4.11, sd = .09$) and unimplemented ($M = 2.96, sd = .11$), $p = .01$. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated for the integrating conflict style subscale, decreasing the extent to which the findings can be generalized ($p = .003$).

Table 1.

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations divided by Conflict Style Subscales of the Students from schools where peer mediation programs have been Thoroughly Implemented, Normally Implemented or Unimplemented

	Integrating		Dominating		Avoiding	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
thoroughly implemented	4.17*	.07	4.11*	.09	2.96*	.11
normally implemented	4.18*	.05	3.75*	.07	3.39*	.08
unimplemented	3.95*	.05	3.88	.07	3.42*	.09

* $p < .05$

Differences on the students' dominating conflict style subscale were found between schools where the peer mediation program was thoroughly implemented ($M = 4.18, sd = .05$) and normally implemented ($M = 3.75, sd = .08$), $p = .005$. Differences on the avoiding conflict style subscale were found between schools where the peer mediation program was thoroughly implemented ($M = 3.96, sd = .06$) and normally implemented ($M = 2.96, sd = .07$) $p = .007$, as well as between thoroughly implemented ($M = 3.96, sd = .06$) and unimplemented ($M = 3.42, sd = .09$), $p = .004$. The numbers are represented in table 1.

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When reviewing the data it becomes clear that there the extensiveness of the implementation of the training program does not predict a linear relation regarding conflict style scores. None the less, there seems to be a consistent difference between the conflict subscale scores between students who had any form of peer mediation programs implemented in their schools, and students who had no program implemented at all.

After analyzing the student data, a between-group was performed for the staff member data. No significant differences were found on any of the three conflict style subscales.

Conclusion & Discussion

A difference was found on the integrating conflict style between trained and untrained students. In addition, students attending schools that had peer mediation training programs implemented scored significantly higher than students attending a school where peer mediation training programs have not been implemented. There was no difference in the scores on the integrating conflict style subscale scores regarding the extend of the implementation of peer mediation training programs. There was no difference on the integrating conflict style subscale scores between trained or untrained staff members. No differences were found on integrating conflict style subscale scores between staff members from schools who differed in the extend of the implementation of peer mediation training programs.

No difference was found on the dominating conflict style subscale between students and staff members who had and had not been trained. However, students who had attended four training sessions as part of the peer mediation training program scored significantly lower on the dominating conflict style subscale than students who had attended less, or more training sessions, except for students who had attended three training sessions.

Students' scores on all three conflict style subscales differed significantly between schools who had thoroughly and normally implemented, and had not implemented peer mediation training programs. Both the students' scores in schools where peer mediation was implemented to a greater and a lesser extend scored higher on the integrating conflict style subscale, and lower on the avoiding conflict style subscale, than students from a school where no peer mediation training program was present. The students' scores on the dominating conflict style subscale differed between schools which enjoyed extensive training and normal training, but not between either of these schools and schools where training was absent. The implications of this finding are unclear. Mainly the high dominating scores amongst students from schools with thoroughly implemented training programs is vexing. No clear explanation could be found at this time and further research is advised.

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Differences on the students' dominating conflict style subscale were found between schools where the peer mediation program was thoroughly implemented and normally implemented. There were also significant differences on the avoiding conflict style subscale scores between schools where the peer mediation program was thoroughly implemented and normally implemented, as well as between thoroughly implemented and unimplemented. In addition, there was only a linear connection between the severity of the implementation of peer mediation programs and the avoiding conflict style subscale. This makes it difficult to determine whether the severity of the implantation attributes to a more desired effect of the program.

Taking into account all data the H0 hypothesis is partially rejected. Students who had been trained, and are part of schools that have peer mediation training programs implemented, scored higher on the integrating conflict style subscale, and lower on both the dominating and avoiding conflict style subscale. This implies that students who have been trained have adopted a more constructive approach, and posses a more diplomatic attitude, towards conflict. In addition, these students tend to use less forcing methods and address conflicts more often instead of avoiding them.

However, neither training itself, nor the implementation of the program in itself, affected the conflict style subscales of staff members. The reason for this is unclear. It may be hypothesized that staff members perceive the training to be focused on student behavior, and do not view their own ways of dealing with conflict subject to the content of the training programs. Seeing as the peer mediation training programs focus on between-students conflict, this makes sense. However, it may be considered to address staff member behavior as influential to school climate. It was explained earlier that the success of peer mediation is based on the efforts of students and staff members school wide. Staff members occasionally function as role models, their participation and involvement in peer mediation training programs may motivate students to apply themselves more (Lantieri & Patti, 1996). Also, the integrating conflict style is based on a democratic and inclusive approach to problem solving in which all parties involved can contribute to the argument. If staff members wish to teach students behavior and techniques that accompany this conflict style, it is important that they display this behavior themselves as well. This is another reason to address the importance of including staff members in the training programs, and to contemplate effective ways of influencing staff member behavior and conflict styles.

No differences were found on any of the staff members' subscales. The effects on conflict styles, attributed to peer mediation training programs seem of no influence on staff member scores. However, a difference on the dominating conflict style subscale was found

between students and staff members. Considering the effect that to western standards the relation between students and staff members is relatively hierarchical, this difference is surprising. Staff members demand respect and students are expected to conform and follow the staff members' instruction. This would imply a high dominating conflict style subscale score by staff members, in contrast to the scores of students. However, the conflict style subscale relates to conflict specifically, and all respondents were informed to consider their behavior in conflicts with peers. This implies that staff members related to conflicts with fellow staff members and/or other adults. Seeing as staff members are adults with relative social competence relating to their profession, it may be expected that staff members are less passionate or aggressive in their approach to conflict, scoring lower on the dominating conflicts style.

The main criticism regarding this research is the minimal extend of generalization. Considering the occasional lack of homogeneity of variance, the small sample size and the abnormal item score distributions, there is a consistent violation of the assumptions of ANOVA testing. Though the research design was constructed to meet these assumptions, practical implications resulted in a smaller sample size regarding the trained staff members, and a decreased homogeneity of variance.

The skewness of the distributions score regarding the integrating conflict style subscale could be attributed to the selection of high scores regarding more virtuous and socially acceptable behavior choices. Taking this into account on future tests is important. An adaptation of the questionnaire that is more applicable to Macedonian and Albanian language is therefore desired.

It is important to note that the difference in conflict style subscales found between students who had and had not been trained, as well as from different schools, does not imply that peer mediation 'works'. What can be concluded is that good peer mediation training changes the attitude of students towards a more diplomatic and constructive approach to conflict. Students learn to listen to others, consider their point of view and take into account their interests. Peer mediation does not remove conflicts from schools, nor inherently makes schools safer. Peer mediation training teaches students to deal with this conflict in a peaceful and democratic manner, making room for more social cohesion and a more peaceful climate in schools.

Considering all the findings of this research, it is concluded that peer mediation training program effectively changes students attitude and behavior regarding conflict with peers. It is therefore valid to recommend peer mediation as a violence prevention intervention focused on teaching

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students and staff members more constructive ways to deal with conflict. In addition, peer mediation increases the extent to which students adopt the integrating conflict style specifically. This implies that students become more aware of the emotions, motives and interests of others. Mediation training supports students to engage in dialog with others and be open minded about their views. This is a major contribution to social cohesion, and may improve school cohesion between students of the same, and different ethnicities.

Peer mediation training programs seem to have little effect on staff member attitudes and behavior. It can be stated that this is not surprising as the program as an intervention is focused specifically on between student conflict. However, staff members greatly affect student behavior and school climate. Considering Bronfenbrenner's ecological model it suffices to say that staff members influence students, and are influenced by students in return (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Staff member behavior is exemplary to students and it is therefore important that students see the integrative conflict style enforced by their elders. The involvement of the entire school is important for the success of peer mediation training programs, and peer mediation as a valid method for students to resolve conflict autonomously requires the endorsement of staff members and school authorities. Students need to be motivated and empowered and staff members play an integral role in achieving this goal (Lantieri & Patti, 1996). Lastly, staff members need to understand what peer mediation is and why it is trained. Peer mediation as a school wide effort will not succeed if implemented as a method to *hush* conflict, or evade complicated issues. A large part of successful mediation is that of addressing big issues that fuel the conflicts between students. Staff members need to understand and support this. Above all, staff members must trust their students to deal with these issues, and view the students as competent autonomous agents in this attempt. Staff members are therefore an integral part in the effort of changing school climate and should be included in the training programs, and need to be involved in peer mediation as a school, and community wide effort.

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Attachments

Attachment 1. *Conflict styles questionnaire*

Conflict Style Questionnaire

In front of you is a form called a 'conflict style questionnaire'. This is a questionnaire designed to identify your conflict style. This style refers to the kind of behavior that people have, or use, when dealing with confrontations with other people. There is no right or wrong way of dealing with conflict because everyone tries to solve their problems in a different way.

How to fill in the form

The first questions are about your background, including your age and what school you are in. After that follow questions about the way people behave in conflict. Think of a situation where you have a conflict with a (fellow) student/colleague. This doesn't necessarily mean you are verbally or physically fighting with him or her, but that you may have a disagreement, an argument, or disappointment with a student/colleague from your school or another school. In every question in this questionnaire an example of a certain type of behavior or way of thinking is given that you might use when you are in a conflict with someone else, in this case a student/colleague. It is up to you to select how you feel about that example and if it relates to you.

The questionnaire contains 28 examples of how someone could act in a conflict. You may select if you agree with the example and if you think you would or would not act the same way by selecting that you: 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', you are 'neutral' about it, you 'agree', or 'strongly agree'.

Make sure you answer every question and read the questions carefully. Select only one answer per question.

To select an answer, just draw a cross through the little square, like so:



There is no right or wrong answer, what matters is what you feel.

Try to answer as honestly as possible.

Don't think too long about a question, follow your first impression.

All data are strictly confidential and will remain anonymous. That means that nobody will know which answers you have given, that's between you and us.

When you are finished, check once again if you have answered all questions.

Good luck!

Part I

Questions about your background:

1. Are you a student or a staff member?

- Student Staff

2. What school are you in?

.....

3. Are you a male or female?

- Male Female

4. What is your age?

I am years old.

5. What is your profile (or subject if you are a teacher)?

.....

6. In what year are you?

Year:

- 1
 2
 3
 4

7. In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be:

- Macedonian
 Albanian
 Turkish
 Roma
 Serbian
 Bosnian
 Vlach
 Other, namely _____

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8. Do you know if there is a peer mediation training program in your school?

- Yes No I don't know

9. 9. As a student or staff member, have you been part of the training of the peer mediation program?

- Yes No I don't know

10. If you were part of the mediation training, who was it that trained you?

- Professional trainer
 Teacher
 Student
 Don't know
 Other, namely:

11. If you were part of the mediation training, how many training sessions did you have?

- 1
 2
 3
 4
 5
 more, namely:.....

Part II

Questions about how you feel and act in conflict situations.

Think of a situation where you have a conflict with a (fellow) student/colleague. This doesn't necessarily mean you are verbally or physically fighting with him or her, but that you may have a disagreement, an argument, or disappointment with a student/colleague from your school or another school. In every question in this questionnaire an example of a certain type of behavior or way of thinking is given that you might use when you are in a conflict with someone else, in this case a student/colleague. It is up to you to select how you feel about that example and if it relates to you.

1. I try to get more information about an issue so I can find a solution that is acceptable for both of us.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

2. I usually try to give the other one what they need.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

3. I prefer not to open about what I feel and keep conflicts to myself.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

4. I try to integrate my ideas with those of others to come up with a decision we both agree on.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

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5. I try to work together with others to find a solution that works for the both of us.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
6. I usually avoid open discussion of my differences with the other.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
7. When I can't reach an agreement with student else I try to find a compromise in which we both give and take.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
8. I use my influence to get what I want.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
9. I use my authority to make a decision that I think is best.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
10. I usually try find a way to get the others what they want.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

11. I give in to the other's wishes.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

12. I try to be honest and open about a conflict so we can solve a problem together

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

13. To solve a conflict I'll accept only part of what I originally wanted, so it will be over.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

14. When the other person and I get stuck on an issue I propose a middle ground solution and meeting each other halfway.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

15. I negotiate with the other to reach a compromise.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

16. I try to stay away from disagreement with the other.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

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17. I usually avoid open discussion of my differences with the other.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

18. I use my talking and social skills to make a decision that is good for me.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

19. I often go with the other's suggestions.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

20. I try to make the other give in a bit by giving in a bit myself as well, so we can reach a compromise.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

21. I generally try to get what I want.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

22. I try to bring all the concerns of the conflict into the open so that the issue can be resolved in the best possible way.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

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23. I try to think together with the other person to come up with a decision that we both think is good.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

24. I generally try to satisfy the other's needs.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

25. I sometimes use my power to win in a conflict.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

26. I try to keep my disagreement to myself in order to avoid anybody being hurt (emotionally).

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

27. I try to avoid unpleasant interactions with the other.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

28. I try to work together with the other to figure out why there is a conflict and what is really the problem.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree