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**THE CAUSES OF ADOLESCENT PEER CONFLICT:
SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW**

Research work

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**THE CAUSES OF ADOLESCENT PEER CONFLICT: SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE
REVIEW**

Abstract

A systematic literature review was carried out with the purpose of examining what kind of conflicts between teenagers' peers have, how those have been studied and find possible literature gaps. The most important result was that research based on the causes of conflicts considers relationship issues as a most typical cause of conflict. Also, autonomy, behavior, differences of idea, material objects and sharing were other discovered causes of conflicts. Research is mainly done with the help of questionnaires. As a gap in the literature is clear that relatively little research has been done on this topic. The causes of conflicts should be studied more to better understand the conflict phenomenon.

Keywords: conflict, disagreement, adolescent, teenager, peer, causes

**TEISMEALISTE EAKAASLASTE KONFLIKTI PÕHJUSTE KOHTA:
SÜSTEMAATILINE KIRJANDUSE ANALÜÜS**

Kokkuvõtte

Süstemaatiline kirjanduse ülevaade viidi läbi eesmärgiga uurida, millised konfliktid teismeliste eakaaslaste vahel on, kuidas neid on uuritud ja leida võimalikke kirjanduslünki. Kõige olulisem tulemus oli see, et konfliktide põhjustel põhinevad uuringud peavad suhete probleeme kõige tüüpilisemaks konflikti põhjuseks. Samuti olid konfliktide teised avastatud põhjused autonoomia, käitumine, ideede erinevused, materiaalsed objektid ja jagamine. Uurimistööd tehakse peamiselt küsimustike abil. Lünka kirjanduses on selge, et seda teemat on uuritud suhteliselt vähe. Konflikti nähtuse paremaks mõistmiseks tuleks rohkem uurida konfliktide põhjuseid.

Märksõnad: konflikt, mittenõustumine, nooruk, teismeline, eakaaslane, põhjused

Conflict can be defined as a disagreement that occurs between individuals when their behaviors or views are opposite or incompatible (Laursen & Hafen, 2009). The conflict situation is like a play – the play has participants; protagonist and antagonist, theme; which is the subject of conflict, complication; which is the beginning of the conflict situation, the action; which manifests itself in the behavior of the parties, a climax or a crisis; the resolution of the conflict and the outcome of the conflict, which is the conclusion of the play (Shantz 1987, cited in Laursen & Hafen 2009).

Conflict is a multi-layered term that is often confused with other parallel concepts. Namely, conflict is often used colloquially as a synonym for bullying and aggressiveness. For example, James & Owens (2005) studied girls' experiences with victimization and aggressive behavior and considered girls' means of dealing with aggression to reflect their conflict resolution strategies. In other words, they used aggressiveness and conflict as synonyms. Conflict is its own concept, is not dependent on *bullying* or *aggressiveness* and should be distinguished from these terms (Shantz, 1987) and is thus distinguished from these terms in this study.

Laursen et al. (2001, p. 423) describe that “*disagreements between peers represent a critical developmental challenge.*” Conflicts and disagreements often cause unnecessary stress, which, especially if prolonged, can lead to feelings of anxiety – however, conflict can also have positive effects (Laursen & Hafen, 2009). According to Laursen & Hafen (2009) conflicts between peers are important for an individual's cognitive and socio-cognitive development. The individual learns important interaction skills, also from conflict situations, and conflicts with a peer can be rewarding, because it can be easier to identify with the other party's situation and new behavior patterns can be learned from putting oneself in the other's situation (Laursen & Hafen, 2009). In this study, the purpose is to look more closely at the causes of conflicts and to break down the most typical causes of conflicts among teenage peers.

Teenage peers as a target group are important because, in adolescence, young people are in the greatest turmoil, both physically and mentally, so conflicts as an additional factor bring additional stress and anxiety to youth (Larson & Ham, 1993). In addition, according to Erikson, human life consists of different stages of development and human growth takes place through different conflict solutions. Resolving the conflicts of youth promotes future well-being and success (Erikson 1968, cited in Powell 2004).

Powell (2004) states that at a young age, self-esteem and well-being depend a lot on the acceptance of peers, as well as on relationships that are safe to rely on. For young people to feel connected to other people, their peers and to be able to show their own identity is important. In adolescence, breaking away from parents and family is a normal age-appropriate activity so that the individual can achieve independence, which is more successful if peers are supporting the activity and encouraging the individual in self-expression (Powell 2004). It is essential to know more about conflicts between young peers, because as Powell (2004) expressed, for young people the acceptance of peers and getting along with them is very important for self-esteem and well-being, so to promote these things, it is important to supreme what kind of factors can cause conflicts between young peers and risks getting along.

It is necessary to study the conflicts between teenagers' peers, because teenagers' conflicts with other relationships (e.g., with parents, teachers, siblings) are presumably different and it is essential to understand what kind of factors are specifically related to conflicts between peers. According to Laursen et al. (1996) conflict is treated differently depending on the type of relationship; conflict behavior and their resolution also presumably depend on the received benefits and future harms. Young people tend to negotiate more with their peers, so that benefits are greater than the losses. Behavior and solutions are guided by emotional investment, the importance of the other party affects the action (Laursen et al., 1996). Adams & Laursen (2001) found out that there are similarities in a young person's conflicts with friends and family, but the dynamics of conflict between friends and family differ significantly. The clearest difference was that parent-child conflicts involved more coercion to resolve the conflict, while among friends it was easier to end up in more equal or no-win situations. So, can it be assumed that the causes of conflicts are different between teenagers, if the ways of solving them also have differences depending on the meaning of the relationship? Examining conflicts between peers among teenagers will presumably provide an answer to the causes of conflicts of teenage group.

Conflicts have been studied mostly related to conflict solutions. Laursen is one of the central references of the study, because of his extensive material about the theme of conflict. For example, Laursen et al. (1993) explored conflicts, their causes and solutions among all the individual's daily relationships. In 2001, Adams & Laursen again studied everyday disagreements with parents and friends. Laursen et al. (2001) in their article "*A developmental meta-analysis of peer conflict resolution*" consider how peers resolve conflicts, do the means

of resolution differ in different age groups and does the resolution depend on the relationship and evaluation procedures.

To better understand conflicts, it is important to also focus on their topics, i.e., their causes. As noted by Shantz (1985), a conflict event is like a play, and one essential part of which is also the cause of the conflict, so to be able to study conflict as phenomenon, it is essential to know the topic of the conflict. According to Laursen et al. (1996), the cause of conflict is experiencing inequality or injustice in interaction. Conflicts have been studied a lot, but very little comprehensive research has been done on them, especially on the causes of conflicts. In this study, teenage is defined as the age between 10 and 18 years old. A more specific research question is: over what issues do adolescents' conflicts among peers occur? The purpose is to systematically review empirical studies on causes of adolescent peer conflicts. More specifically, which conflict issues are common between adolescent peers and how it has been examined. In addition, the aim is to identify possible gaps in literature. I use systematic literature analysis as a research method. By compiling the results, the purpose is to find possible generalizations in conflicts between peers. Systematic literature analysis provides an overview of the research work done on the theme and presumably answers the predefined research question with the help of the research done. The essential part of the method is the systematic and clear presentation of the results, and the step-by-step explanation of how the work is progressing. (Siddaway et al., 2019.)

Method

Material to qualitative synthesis was collected from two electronic databases on 12.2.2023. I used Scopus and Ebscohost as a database. The keywords used in the literature search were **conflict*, **argue*, **dispute*, **disagreement*, **peer*, **teenagers*, **adolescents*, **causes* and **reasons*. The language of the material searched and used was in English.

Besides the search words, other limitations were *open access/full text*, so that article is possible to fully read and use, *academic journal*, so that it is guaranteed that the source is academically qualified and *English* as language. Scopus offered a total of 50 hits and EBSCOhost 110 hits. EBSCOhost databases included: Academic Search Complete, Central & Eastern European Academic Source, Communication & Mass Media Complete, eBook

Collection (EBSCOhost), E-Journals, ERIC, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, Teacher Reference Center.

Also, a profitable way to find suitable articles turned out to be that when one suitable article was found, the reference list of that article was reviewed, from which more suitable articles were found, and the same was repeated for the following articles.

The founded material was initially reviewed based on the title. The theme of conflict is studied in a lot of different contexts, related to working life, politics and war which is not what this study focuses on, and when these issues were already evident from the title, they were excluded from the study. Defining the conflict was also a clear factor in the choice of material. The research included studies where conflict was defined as "as a disagreement that occurs between individuals when their behaviors or views are opposite or incompatible (Laursen & Hafen, 2009)." Naturally, conflict has not been defined word to word in the same way in every study, but in practice, conflict was perceived as a disagreement between individuals, a difference in behavior or viewpoints.

Studies clearly related to bullying or aggression, in which the word conflict was omitted, were excluded from the study, if the words were clearly used as synonyms for each other, and conflict was not defined in the desired way. Conflicts are also often studied between child and parent or child and teacher, which was one exclusion criteria, since this study is focusing on conflicts between peers. If the study examined several groups at the same time and peers were one of them, it was included in the study.

After the elimination based on the title was made, I focused on the research abstract. The age distribution and median age of the participants in the study were often stated in the abstract, so studies under 10 and over 18 were excluded based on them. Several studies examined several age groups at the same time. If most the study sample concerned the desired age group, it was included in the study. The abstracts also often revealed the research subjects in more detail, if it was not readable from the title of the study, and based on this, conflict studies other than peer relationships were excluded.

If abstract seemed suitable, the entire study was systematically reviewed. When going through the whole texts, three articles were left out because they were not studies, but reflective articles on the theme of conflict. When going through entire texts, the main reason for exclusion was that the study did not address the reasons of conflict, but that the study only examined the solutions to the conflict or the attitude towards the conflicts.

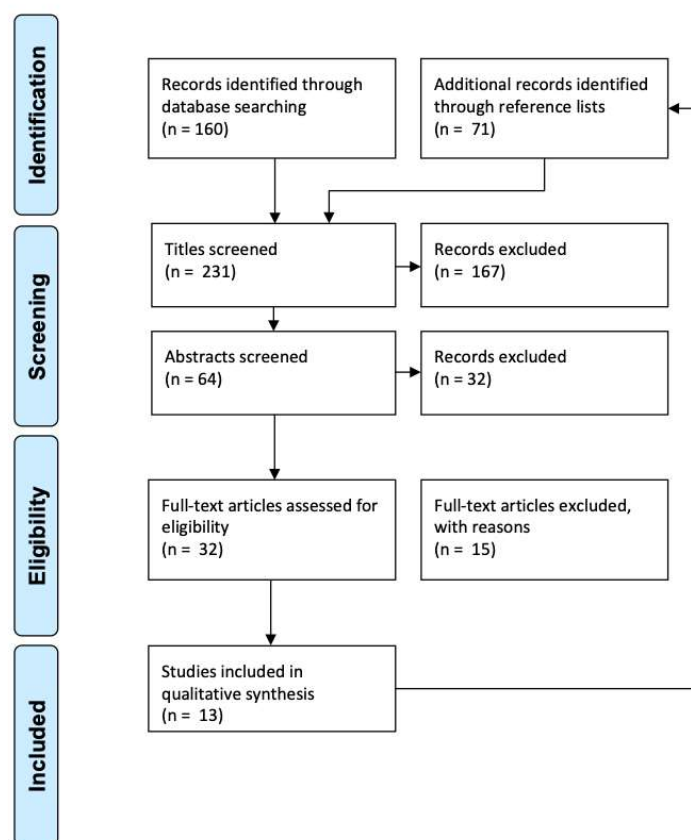


Fig. 1. Flow diagram of study selection.

Many articles were eliminated based on the title. Out of the 231 search articles that were reviewed, 167 were eliminated based on the title. Despite the relevant search terms, both Scopus and EBSCOhost offered numerous articles that, based on the title, were not related to the topic at all. Based on the abstracts, 32 articles were selected from the 64 reviewed, and a total of 13 articles were selected for the study by reviewing the final 32 full texts (see Fig. 1). Studies were eliminated since they were not suitable for the research on behalf of the age group under study, the target group under study was not teenagers and/or peers, or the conflict was defined in a different way in the article than in this study, or the causes of the conflict were not discussed in the article.

Results

Based on the inclusion criteria, a total of 13 studies were selected for the study. The authors of the studies, the study sample and age distribution, as well as the research goals and method(s) are presented in Table 1. The studies examined conflicts between peers/friends (76.9%), between peers/friends and family (7.7%) and between peers/friends and family and teachers (7.7%). In one study conflicts were examined “in different” interpersonal relationships, including family, peers, friends, romantic partners and other adults (7.7%). Conflicts were studied either during the current/previous day (23.1%), on a daily basis (23.1%), or without specific time limit (53.8%) like hypothetical conflict situations used in the study or participants were asked to talk about one conflict situation in past. The goals in the studies were finding differences between genders and culture, comparing conflict resolution methods, examine perceptions about conflict situations or examining the effect of the quality of friendship in a conflict situation. In many studies, several of the aforementioned goals were combined, so it was impossible to divide them into clear percentages.

The age of the participants was important in this study, as the purpose was to study conflicts between teenagers' peers. Teenagers were considered to be 10-18 years old. 10-12-year-olds were examined in a total of 2 studies (15.4%), 13-15-year-olds in a total of 2 studies (15.4%), and 16-18-year-olds in a total of 4 studies (30.8%). Five studies examined several age groups at the same time (38.5%). The studies were divided into groups based on the median age or age distribution; the group was determined by the first initial (for example mean age 15.8 years = 15-year-olds). The studies were carried out with the help of ready-made questionnaires (30.8%), as a questionnaire that was filled out via a telephone interview (15.4%), as an interview (23.1%), or as various situation-related studies where the participant had to evaluate hypothetical situations, or the participant was evaluated in the research situation (30.8%).

The studies included in this paper can be divided into three categories. Representatives of one category are all studies that used the questionnaire called The Issues Checklist as a basis. In 6 studies (#1, #2, #5-7, #12) the questionnaire was used as a basis, with the help of which the study was carried out in slightly different ways. In two studies (#1 and #7), questionnaire

was conducted in a telephone interview. In four other studies (#2, #5, #6, and #12), "The Issues Checklist" was part of a questionnaire for examining causes of conflicts. Brett Laursen is one of the pioneers of conflict research. Laursen is the author or co-author of seven of the articles selected in this study and six of those studies used The Issues Checklist as a basis.

The second category contains real or hypothetical conflict situations that the participants had to evaluate. Three studies (#3, #8 and #13) used a combination of survey and evaluation of conflict situations as a research method. As part of the research, a questionnaire was filled out based on either hypothetical (#3 and #8) or combination of hypothetical and self-reported (#13) conflict situations, which were used to assess reactions, solutions or prevalence on conflict situations. In study #4, a survey was completed to collect initial data, after which students participated in an observation session. In study #4, children were taught the rules of a game in a different way and children were observed playing a game with conflicting rules and how children handle conflicting situations. Whether the child played with a friend, or a non-friend was also essential in the review. Study #9 implemented the study by combining an interview and an evaluative questionnaire. The basis of the interview was the Peer Feedback Interview (PFI), after which a modified version of The Middle School Alternative Solutions Test (AST) was used to assess the causes and strategies of the conflict.

In the third category, the studies used the participants' own conflict experiences as research material. Studies #10 and #11 were carried out in interview format. In study #10, the interview consisted of two parts, the first covered basic information and the second asked open-ended questions. In study #11, the participants had to talk about two different situations where they were so offended by the behavior of a peer that they "wanted to take back on." One situation had to be forgiven and the other not.

The purpose of this study was to systematically review empirical studies on causes of adolescent peer conflicts. More specifically, which conflict issues are common between adolescent peers; how has it been examined and what are the gaps in the literature. None of the studies focused solely on examining the causes of the conflict. The studies are numbered alphabetically (as in Table 1), so Tables 2, 3 and 4 use the same numbers to avoid confusion.

Table 1. Sample size, age distribution and/or average age and explanations of what was studied, why and how.

Author(s) & year of publication	Sample size & age distribution / average age	What was studied, why and how
1. Adams & Laursen, 2001	212 students (94 male, 118 female). 11 th graders, from age 15.2 to 17.8 (M = 16.6 years).	All disagreements with parents and friends that occurred the previous day. How disagreements are organized, how the conflict dynamics between parents and friends differ and are the differences because of conflict topics? Telephone interviews, questions based on The Issues Checklist. Participant was supposed to rate different kind of conflict situations.
2. Burk & Laursen, 2005	282 adolescents and their same-sex friends. 171 early-adolescents (11 to 13 years of age, M = 11.53) and 111 mid-adolescents (14 to 16 years of age, M = 14.71). Also 103 mothers participated on study.	Thoughts on the quality of friendships and their impact on daily conflicts. How the quality of friendship affects conflict situations and coping with them, as well as afterthoughts. Questionnaire on the quality of friendship, which described the pros and cons of friendship: The Network of Relationships Inventory (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). After that, the participants completed the Interpersonal Conflict Questionnaire (Laursen 1993) " The Issues Checklist", that described conflict situations on the previous day. In addition, the participants completed the self-assessment form and their mother completed a questionnaire on the child's potential behavioral problems. School grades were also evaluated.
3. Haar & Krahe, 1999	261 adolescents from the two countries. German: 116 adolescents (66 females and 50 males). Average age 15.9 years (SD = 1.16 years). Indonesia: 145 adolescents (75 females and 70 males). Average age 15.8 years (SD = 0.98 year).	A collection of hypotheticals, but typical teenage conflict situations with same-sex peers, parents and teachers. Demonstrating possible gender and cultural differences in the resolution of conflict situations. Also, relationship status was assumed to influence the course of the event. A questionnaire was filled out as part of the study. Four hypothetical scenarios were presented in a random order, from which the participant had to rate aversiveness, emotional response, frequency of experience (self) and frequency of experience (peers).
4. Hartup, French, Laursen, Johnston & Ogawa, 1993	132 students (68 girls and 64 boys), 9- and 10-years old.	Disagreements between children aged 9-10 were examined as a function of friendship status. The aim was to find out the gender differences and whether to deal with a friend than a non-friend in a conflict differs. First, a questionnaire was completed to evaluate sociometric factors and friendship, based on which the participants were chosen to dyads. Children were taught different rules on how to act in the conflict situation and close friends and non-friends were observed while playing a board game.
5. Laursen, 1995	319 adolescents (141 boys and 178 girls). Age from 15.2 to 18.9 years (M= 16.7).	Self-reported experiences of daily social interactions and conflict situations. The study examined the importance of relationship status to conflicts, whether the amount of time spent together (in minutes per day) matters, and the combined effect of the two. The questionnaire inquiring about the use of free- and task time and all conflict situations. Then the other questionnaire was filled about affective intensity and outcome of conflicts. Conflicts were evaluated using "The Issues Checklist."

Table 1. continues

Author(s) & year of publication	Sample size & age distribution / average age	What was studied, why and how
6. Laursen, 1993	685 high school students (364 female, 321 male). Age from 15 years, 2 months to 18 years, 9 months (M = 16 years, 7 months).	Adolescents' perceptions of daily conflicts in different interpersonal relationships. The aim was exploring positive and negative outcomes of conflict. The participants filled out two booklets in which they described the previous day's conflicts in different relationships. In the first booklet, the conflicts were described according to "The Issues Checklist." The second booklet inquired about the resolution of the previous day's conflict.
7. Laursen & Koplas, 1995	212 adolescents (94 male, 118 female). Age from 15 to 17 (M = 16.6).	Adolescents thoughts about daily conflict situations. The aim was identify precursors of behavior that can lead to conflicts and isolates unique behavioral traits from conflicts. Telephone interviews, questions based on The Issues Checklist. Participant was supposed to rate different kind of conflict situations.
8. MacEvoy & Asher, 2012	267 student (134 boys, 133 girls). 4 th and 5 th graders from age 9 to 11 years old.	According to the general assumption, girls are more talented at maintaining relationships, so the study looked at whether girls have a more negative attitude to the failure of friendship expectations than boys. Evaluating 16 hypothetical vignettes; how would you feel, strategies, goals and interpretations of the situation, determination of severity, how long would you worry about it?
9. Noakes & Rinaldi, 2006	120 students from grades 4 and 8 (60 boys and 60 girls). Randomly selected, 60 were in grade 4 (mean age of 9.5) and 60 were in grade 8 (mean age of 13.6).	Age and gender differences in peer conflicts, especially in their causes and resolution methods. The research was carried out by means of interviews and evaluating hypothetical conflict situations. Peer Feedback Interview was the base of interview (PFI; Rinaldi and Heath, 2001). An adapted version of The Middle School Alternative Solutions Test (AST; Caplan et al., 1986) was used to assess conflict issues and strategies.

Table 1. continues

Author(s) & year of publication	Sample size & age distribution / average age	What was studied, why and how
10. Partridge & Knapp, 2016	15 adolescent female athletes. Age from 14 to 18 years.	Expand the existing sport peer conflict literature by exploring female athletes' experiences of conflicts with peers. How conflicts are experienced, what sustains them and what are the consequences of conflicts. The research was carried out using a semi-structured interview and inductive content analysis. The first section of interview was about backgrounds and the second part open-ended questions like "How well do girls get along on sports teams?"
11. Recchia, Wainryb & Pasupathi, 2019	100 participants divided into three age groups: thirty-one 7-year olds (M age = 7.5 years, range = 6.4–8.6), thirty-five 11-year-olds (M age = 11.5 years, range = 10.8–12.5), and thirty-four 16-year-olds (M age = 16.4 years, range = 15.3–17.9). Approximately equal numbers of boys and girls.	Children's and adolescents' descriptions of wanting and seeking revenge in peer conflicts. The aim was to explore experiences of forgiveness in peer conflicts. Background information was collected with the help of parents. Individual interviews. The participants had to tell about two incidents in which they felt that they were hurt or upset by the behavior of a peer and that they were even so angry that they wanted to "get back at them." One event should have been forgiven, the other not.
12. Shulman & Laursen, 2002	Total 194 adolescents (100 females, 94 males). First pilot: 138 adolescents (78 females, 60 males). Second pilot: 250 adolescents (122 females, 128 males). 7 th graders from age 11 to 13 and 11 th graders from age 16 to 18.	Israel middle-class adolescents reported experiences of conflict behavior in close and detached relationships. The aim was to examine differences in the initiation, effect and control of conflicts between different kinds of friendships. A modified version of the Interpersonal Conflict Interview (Laursen & Koplas, 1995) "The Issues Checklist." Two separate pilot studies, the first of which were answered by the 11 most typical conflict sources between friends. In second study, participants responded how often the 11 most typical conflicts occurred.
13. Tamm, Tulviste & Urm, 2018	905 Estonian adolescents. 8 th graders, mean age 14.04 (SD = 0.47, min = 13, max = 15).	Adolescents conflict resolution strategies and reasons behind them. Participants were asked to recall recent conflicts with friends and write them down. Four hypothetical vignettes were compiled from the answers, and after getting to know them, the participants had to answer three questions: how would you behave in that situation, why and how often do you think such situations occur.

First, the results on table 2 in more detail; the studies where the causes of conflict were examined based on The Issues Checklist. In Study #1, conflict topics are divided into daily hassles, autonomy, and relationships based on "The Issues Checklist." A total of 148 different conflict situations were reported between friends. Conflicts between friends were most often reported in the relationship category (55.5%) and second most often in matters related to autonomy (28.1%). Daily hassle situations were reported 19.6% out of all causes of conflict. In study #5, 2469 different conflicts were reported by 319 teenagers ($M=7.74$ conflicts per teenager). Individual frequencies ranged from 0 to 30. The Issues Checklist was divided into 12 different subscales (see Table 2). The results show only those subscales where conflicts with peers were reported. The results should consider the fact that other relationships were also examined in the study, and conflicts between peers cannot be separated from other relationships. The most typical cause of conflict was different ideas or opinions (219), friendships (212), standards or behavior (207), transportation (204), heterosexuality (175), criticizing/putting down (158) and annoying behavior (148). The frequency of conflicts was reported with close friends' $M = 1.21$, with girlfriend/boyfriend $M = 1.02$ and with another peers $M = 0.35$.

In study #7, a total of 651 conflicts were reported based on The Issues Checklist. In the study, the second most reported conflicts were with friends and romantic partners (the most reported conflicts were with parents). Parents were primarily perceived as a source of conflict and issues related to autonomy (106) as a cause of conflict. This study also examined relationships other than peers, and it is not possible to separate the results. After autonomy, the most reported reasons for conflict were responsibilities (84), school (66), standards or behavior (59) and transportation/getting a ride (57). Research #12 was based on The Issues Checklist, from which public disrespect, undependability, and private disrespect were highlighted as causes of conflict. 120 younger adolescents (7th graders) and 74 older adolescents (11th graders) participated in the study. Conflict frequency was the dependent variable. Conflict issues were rated; 1 (very infrequent) – 4 (very frequent). Mean values for reported topics of conflict among younger adolescents were: public disrespect (1.73), undependability (1.89), and private disrespect (1.97) and among older adolescents: public disrespect (1.57), undependability (1.58), and private disrespect (2.15). Private disrespect was the most frequently reported among both younger and older adolescents.

In Study #2 causes of conflicts are again based on "The Issues Checklist" but individual causes of conflict or more general categories have not been highlighted in the research.

However, participants reported a total of 653 disagreements and participants' friends reported 762 disagreements. In Study #6 the frequency of conflicts was not reported but the causes of conflicts were mapped using The Issues Checklist, based on which a total of 5043 conflicts were reported in 1895 different relationships. 905 of them were with a close friend, 325 with a girlfriend or boyfriend, and 268 with other peers. Individual causes or general categories of causes of conflicts were not highlighted.

Next, the studies of the second category where participants were placed in a real or hypothetical conflict situation (Table 3). In Study #9, participants had to evaluate hypothetical conflict situations. Conflict topics reported in study were relational issues, related to friendship betrayal or trust, such as not being invited to birthday parties or revealing a secret, and themes related to status and dominance, such as who is the best in a particular sport. Gender differences were examined, assuming that relational issues are more common with girls and status and dominance conflicts with boys. No statistically significant gender differences were observed, but some differences occurred: girls (31%) report more conflicts related to relational issues than boys (12%). Boys (5.3%) report more conflicts related to status and dominance than girls (0.9%).

Study #8 used hypothetical conflict situations and assessed the severity of the conflict. Conflict topics were divided into four main categories: betrayal (.76), lack of validation (.74), lack of instrumental help (.69), and unreliability (.72). The significance of the results is described with Cronbach's alpha. Based on the mean results, conflicts related to betrayal were considered the most serious, unreliability as the next most serious, lack of validation as the third most serious, and lack of instrumental help as the least serious. In study #3, hypothetical conflict situations were evaluated such as "a classmate promising to help with schoolwork and later cancelling." The frequency of conflicts was not reported.

In study #4, an observational situation was used as a research method for the participants, where the participants were taught to play a game with different rules. The emergence of conflicts was studied among friends and non-friends. A comparison was also made based on gender. Analysis of frequency scores is conducted for conversational turns as a covariate. (Total utterances occurring by children/dyad). According to the results, the situation caused slightly more conflicts among boys than among girls, especially among friends (M= boys 15.47, girls 12.78). Among non-friends, the difference was smaller (M= boys 10.27, girls 10.06). The situation caused more conflicts among friends than among non-friends.

Table 2. Causes of conflicts. Research based on *The Issues Checklist*.

Author(s) & year of publication	Causes of conflicts and frequency
1. Adams & Laursen, 2001	<p>148 conflicts with friends were reported. Total scores in Conflict topics and relative frequency.</p> <p>“ The Issues Checklist**” original 34 topics were combined to three categories:</p> <p>Daily hassles (e.g., transportation) = 19.6% Autonomy (e.g., how to use free time) = 28.1% Relationship (e.g., honesty) = 55.5 %.</p>
2. Burk & Laursen 2005	<p>“ The Issues Checklist**”</p> <p>Participants reported a total of 653 disagreements (M = 2.47, SD = 3.63, range: 0 to 17 conflicts) and friends reported a total of 762 disagreements (M = 3.24, SD = 4.04, range: 0 to 19 conflicts) from the previous weekday.</p> <p>The frequency of individual conflict topics was not defined</p>
5. Laursen, 1995	<p>2469 conflicts were reported by 319 adolescents (M=7.74). Individual frequencies were ranged from 0 to 30.</p> <p>“ The Issues Checklist**” 12 subscales: autonomy, school, heterosexuality, friendship, responsibilities, standards or behavior, transportation, money, use of telephone or TV, criticism/teasing/put-downs, differences of idea or opinion and annoying behavior.</p> <p>Mean conflict frequency with close friends 1.21, boyfriend/girlfriend 1.02 and other peers 0.35. Differences between relationship and conflicts were examined by MANOVA, conflict rates as a dependent variable.</p> <p>Subjects where conflict arouse (total frequency of conflicts with subscales that included peers): Differences of idea or opinion: 219, friendship 212, standards or behaviors 207, transport 204, heterosexuality 175, criticism, putting down 158 and annoying behavior 148. (It is not possible to separate the results of peers alone.)</p>
6. Laursen, 1993	<p>“ The Issues Checklist**”</p> <p>5043 conflicts were reported in 1895 different relationships. 905 of them with close friends, 325 of them with girlfriend/boyfriend, and 268 of the with other peers.</p> <p>The frequency of individual conflict topics was not defined.</p>
7. Laursen & Koplas, 1995	<p>“ The Issues Checklist**”</p> <p>651 conflicts were reported. Conflicts were reported mostly with parents (410), but the second most with friends and romantic partners (122). Parents were reported to be primary source of conflicts and autonomy to be most frequently the subject of conflict.</p> <p>It is not possible to separate the results so most frequent conflict of all conflicts were autonomy (106), responsibilities (84), school (66), standards of behavior (59) and transportation/getting ride (57). Scores represented how often those conflict situations occur.</p>
12. Shulman & Laursen, 2002	<p>Based on “ The Issues Checklist**” conflict issues: public disrespect, unavailability, and private disrespect.</p> <p>Younger adolescents (60), M (SD): public disrespect 1.73 (.49), unavailability 1.89 (.43), and private disrespect 1.97 (.54). Older adolescents (37), M (SD): public disrespect 1.57 (.39), unavailability 1.58 (.47), and private disrespect 2.15 (.62).</p> <p>Conflict frequency was the dependent variable. Conflict issues were rated: 1 (very infrequent) – 4 (very frequent). Statistically significant differences $p < .05$ between age groups in follow-up <i>t</i> tests.</p>

In Study #13, participants were presented with four conflict vignettes and asked to report their own most recent conflicts with friends. As participants' responses matched previously reported typical causes of conflict, vignettes were created. The conflict vignettes were different musical tastes, romantic competition, friendship exclusivity, and backbiting. After getting to know the vignettes, the participants had to rate the conflicts using three questions: how you would behave in the situation (open-ended question), how often do you behave this way (open-ended question) and how often do such situations occur between you and your friend (1 = never - 5 = very often). Differences were compared between girls and boys, so both average results are shown separately. Differences in musical tastes caused the most conflicts, M= girls (2.46) and boys (2.16). Second highest backbiting: M= girls (1.94) and boys (1.71). Third most romantic competition: M= girls (1.92) and boys (1.71). And the least exclusivity of friendship M= girls (1.90) and boys (1.47). The biggest difference between the sexes was in the exclusivity of friendship.

Lastly, in the third category (Table 4) the participants talked about their own conflict experiences through open-ended questions or in the form of an interview. Study #10 researched conflicts between female athletes, conflict topics were compiled based on the interviews given by the participants. The three conflict topic categories based on interviews were jealousy (e.g., play time), personal characteristics (e.g., "having an attitude") and significant others (e.g., parents starting conflicts). The frequency was not reported in numbers, but the frequency was emphasized in text-form, in the order mentioned above. Jealousy caused the most conflicts among female peers who play sports.

Study #11 used self-reported topics of conflict as the research object. Various conflict situations were examined, as well as the participants' desire to take revenge in these situations. When self-reported, reasons for conflict situations were described as causing physical harm, verbal bullying, verbal insults, being left out, revealing secrets, destroying property, and the inability to share. The frequency of individual conflicts was not reported.

Table 3. Causes of conflicts where participants are placed in a real or hypothetical conflict situation.

Author(s) & year of publication	The possible causes of conflicts, without specific background support
3. Haar & Krahe, 1999	<p>A classmate promised to help with schoolwork and later canceled.</p> <p>Conflict resolution with same-sex friend: Germans responded to the situation primarily with confrontation (61,8%). Submission (15,5%) and compromise (16,6%) were chosen significantly rarely. Indonesians chose confrontation (35,2%), submission (31%) and compromise (33,8%) equally often.</p> <p>The frequency of individual conflict topics was not defined.</p>
4. Hartup, French, Laursen, Johnston & Ogawa, 1993	<p>Teaching different rules about a game which were: “ (a) landing on the same space; (b) losing a turn; (c) receiving a card with instructions to “Go to the Trash Can”; (d) receiving a card with instructions to “Send the other player to the Snake Pit”; and (e) getting out of the Snake Pit.”</p> <p>Mean scores and standard deviations for conflict occurrence in friend and non-friend dyads, girls and boys separated.</p> <p>Frequency scores: Boys (F) 15.47 (7.21) (NF) 10.27 (4.33) Girls (F) 12.78 (3.73) (NF) 10.06 (4.04).</p> <p>Analysis of frequency scores is conducted for conversational turns as a covariate. (Total utterances occurring by children/dyad).</p>
8. MacEvoy & Asher, 2012	<p>Betrayal (e.g. telling secrets), lack of validation/support (e.g. disregards an important matter), lack of instrumental help (e.g. asking to share food) and being unreliable (e.g. failing on group project).</p> <p>Perceived severity: betrayal (.76), lack of validation (.74), lack of instrumental help (.69), being unreliable (.72), altogether (.91). The frequency of individual conflict topics was not defined, but these are reported severity scores.</p>
9. Noakes & Rinaldi, 2006	<p>Relational issues (friendship betrayal and trust): not being invited to birthday party or disclosing secret.</p> <p>Status and dominance: who is best in some specific sport.</p> <p>8th graders (M = 2.31, SD = 1.34) reported more conflicts than 4th graders (M = 1.61, SD = .71).</p> <p>To examine gender differences there were two separate chi-square tests: independent variable was gender and dependent variable was conflict issues. Girls (31%) reported more relational issues than boys (12%). Boys (5,3%) reported more conflict with dominance and status, than girls (0,9%). In frequency, there were no significant differences between boys and girls.</p>
13. Tamm, Tulviste & Urm, 2018	<p>4 conflict vignettes: Different music tastes. Romantic competition. Exclusivity of friendship. Backbiting.</p> <p>After getting to know vignettes, participants had to answer three questions. Question based on conflict frequency was: how often do such situations occur between you and your friend (1 = never - 5 = very often)?</p> <p>Girls / boys M (SD): Different music tastes 2.46 (0.88) / 2.16 (0.86) *** Romantic competition 1.92 (0.95) / 1.71 (0.85) *** Exclusivity of friendship 1.90 (0.90) / 1.47 (0.69) *** Backbiting 1.94 (0.91) / 1.71 (0.90) *** Note. ***p < .001</p>

Table 4. Causes of conflicts. Research where participants talked about their own conflict experiences through open-ended questions or in the form of an interview.

Author(s) & year of publication	Causes of conflicts and frequency
10. Partridge & Knapp, 2016	<p>Jealousy: within and outside of sport were primary cause of conflict (e.g., playing time and playing status). Outside the sport reasons for conflicts were dating and friend issues (e.g., dating ex-boyfriend and not being invited).</p> <p>Personal characteristics: “ having an attitude” main conflict issue. Gender was often pointed out, “ girls are more drama” .</p> <p>Significant others: parents starting conflicts and causing tensions between teammates. Also, cliques were mentioned as a challenge to conflict solutions.</p> <p>The frequency of individual conflict topics was not defined. The causes of the conflict were considered the most common in the order mentioned above.</p>
11. Recchia, Wainryb & Pasupathi, 2019	<p>Physical harm, verbal teasing, verbal insults, exclusion, disclosing secrets, property destruction and failing to share. And wanting to revenge after that.</p> <p>Out of the total sample of 100 youth, 87% described desiring revenge for at least one event.</p> <p>The frequency of individual conflict topics was not defined.</p>

Several different causes of conflict were brought up in the studies, but it was possible to categorize them into five categories. The most typical cause of conflict, that was mostly examined, was relationship issues. It can be further divided into three subcategories, *relationship norms*, such as betrayal and being unreliable like not being invited, telling secrets or failing to attempt group project (#8, #9 and #3), disrespect (#12) and exclusivity (#13). The second subcategory included themes of *relational aggressiveness* meaning exclusion (#11) and backbiting (#13). In the third subcategory included *status and dominance* as a reason, for example who is the best in some specific sport (#9), or romantic competition e.g., dating ex-boyfriend (#13 and #10) or jealousy, e.g., playing time or playing status (#10).

The second category that mostly came up in the studies was autonomy (#1-2, #5-7 and #12). All studies that used The Issues Checklist as a base, had autonomy as one conflict factor. However, its role is somewhat difficult to define in more detail, because autonomy was not defined more precisely. In study #1 autonomy has an example of “how to use free time” but it is not defined, between whom this type of conflicts occurs. Due to the fact, that in several studies conflicts were examined between both friends and family at the same time, and it was not possible to separate the results from each other, it is possible that autonomy is more common reason for conflicts between teenagers and parents.

The third category of cause of conflicts was behavior. Study #10 pointed out personal characteristics as a reason, as an example of girl athletes “having an attitude” causing conflicts between players/friends. More specifically *aggressive behavior* such as teasing, insulting and causing physical harm (#11 and “teasing” is also one factor in The Issues Checklist). In study #11 teasing was verbal. The fourth and fifth categories included differences of ideas and conflicts with material objects / sharing. In the fourth category, there were studies e.g., different musical tastes (#13) as causes of conflict and whether different rules of the game cause disagreements in communication afterwards (#4). In the fifth category factors were like property destruction (#11) and inability to share (#8 and #11).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to systematically review empirical studies on causes of adolescent peer conflicts. More specifically, which conflict issues are common between adolescent peers; how has it been examined and what are the gaps in the literature. From the

categorization of the results, it can be stated that relationship issues are the most researched topic among the causes of conflicts, so it could be assumed that it is the most typical cause of conflicts between peers among teenagers. Autonomy and independence are associated with youth, when young people try to find their place in society and establish new relationships and distance themselves from the familiar and safe family environment (Rubin et al. 2006). The individual seeks out various social situations, which form interaction and, in the longer term, even a relationship; the relationship can take different forms and contain multiple events (Rubin et al. 2006), such as conflicts. Sometimes individual relationships become a larger group of relationships (Rubin et al. 2006). In groups there are certain rules and norms followed (Holland & Kensinger 2010), which at the individual level can cause conflicts when opinions differ. Relationship issues among teenage peers can be supported by the fact that at a young age, peers are often the closest relationships with other youngsters, because teenagers strive to become independent and distance themselves from parents and family and spend more time with friends and find one's own place and connection with other peers, e.g., according to the objects of interest (Powell 2004). Conflicts are also an important part of socio-cognitive development (Laursen & Hafen 2009), in youth and relationships play an important role in which one essential part is acceptance of peers (Powell 2004).

Autonomy as the cause of the conflict came up second most in the studies, but as stated in the results, a more detailed examination of it is somewhat challenging, because the studies did not define the importance of autonomy in conflicts in more detail. According to Larson & Ham (1993), adolescence is the period of greatest physical and mental turmoil. Young people have a need to grow and develop through interaction relationships, which in adolescence are more with peers than with family; when peers are in a similar stage of change, acceptance and autonomy is achieved through them (Rubin et al. 2006). Therefore, such conflicts might occur, especially among teenagers, because teenagers are developing and seeking independence as well as their own boundaries and values, so clashes with peers are presumably possible. According to Erikson (1968), the most important developmental stage of adolescence is the creation of an identity, which involves various conflict situations (cited in Powell 2004). Autonomy as the cause of conflict was presented in several studies that simultaneously examined conflicts between peers and teenagers and parents and teenagers, so it is possible that autonomy is more related to teenager-parent conflicts or has been studied between teenagers and parents more. To know that, more detailed results would be needed.

The third category for the causes of conflicts was aggressive behavior, which included teasing, insulting and causing physical harm. The introduction discussed how aggressiveness and conflict should not be confused with each other or used as synonyms, but studies revealed that aggressive behavior can be one of the causes of conflict. There are many reasons for teasing and aggressive behavior, but in adolescence those are explained by, for example, the need to belong to a group, group pressure, applying for roles and forming groups (Thornberg & Knutsen 2011). In groups, there is a certain kind of hierarchy (Holland & Kensinger 2010), which can lead to higher people in the group subjugating lower ones verbally or physically. Due to group pressure, group members can be "forced" to tease and insult others as part of group activities (Thornberg & Knutsen 2011), if one individual is having aggressive behavior towards others, the surrounding group can be considered complicit. A certain type of teasing can also be part of group formation, where the aim is to build a hierarchy and seek one's own role in the group by insulting and teasing others to get attention (Thornberg & Knutsen 2011).

The reasons for the fourth category, differences of ideas, can be very similar. Young people choose groups according to their own preferences and prefer some peers over others, for example according to age or gender (Rubin et al. 2006). Forming groups and applying to groups according to one's own preferences can cause conflicts among peers; differences of opinion cause an imbalance that is perceived as uncomfortable and that is sought to be resolved (Rubin et al. 2006). Differences of opinion and autonomy as reasons are also related, because for a teenager, the need to belong to a group and to be accepted is an essential part of growth (Powell 2004), but also creating one's own identity and adopting new roles is a key developmental task (Erikson 1968, cited in Powell 2004). Different preferences can also lead to a situation where the young person behaves against their true preferences, to belong to the group or "to be popular" (Thornberg & Knutsen 2011), in which case the situation can develop into an individual's internal conflict (Erikson 1968, cited in Powell 2004), which eventually erupts in, for example, aggressive behavior.

The fifth and last category is material objects / sharing, more precisely, for example, the destruction of property and the inability to share as causes of conflicts. Helping and sharing become more common with age (Rubin et al. 2006) and problems with sharing are most typical in kindergarten age (Keane and Calkins, 2004), but as noted, similar factors cause conflict in adolescence as well. In childhood, problems with sharing are more related to age; the child has not yet learned to understand that things should be shared, while in adolescence materialistic

things and problems with sharing can be used as a tool of power. According to Thornberg & Knutsen (2011), the cause of aggressive behavior, such as teasing and insulting, can simply be "doing it for fun", which can be, for example, a place for social position. The individual wants to strengthen his own self-esteem and show his status in the group by having aggressive behavior towards others, which can involve, for example, the destruction of property. According to Rubin et al. (2006), sharing in youth is connected to the fact that peers have to share friends and their attention, as well as possible dating partners, in which case the individual may have to change themselves in order to be accepted or noticed. The inability to share can be related to wanting to keep one's own identity. Sharing is often related to family life and especially the life of siblings, so it is possible that the young person drifts into so-called to the dispersion of roles (Erikson 1968, cited in Powell 2004) when trying to break away from old norms and adapting to new ones, and is unable or unwilling to share things anymore as part of the independence process.

In summary, it can be said that there are similarities between the causes of conflicts and different causes can possibly be linked to the same situation. When considering the explanations of the causes of conflicts, it becomes clear that it is possible to explain different themes with the same reasons. For example, becoming independent in youth and finding one's own place among peers is related to both relationship issues and autonomy conflicts which might be one explanation to peer conflicts. To resolve conflicts effectively, it is essential to know the cause of the conflict, which factors trigger the conflict between teenage peers. Behavior in a social situation is individual and since each individual experiences the situation in their own way, the solution models also differ from each other (Rubin et al. 2006). It is difficult to say with complete certainty that one single cause led to another, but the conflict and its causes as a whole are a very ambiguous matter. Therefore, it is important to study the topic more in order to gain clarity on the complex phenomenon.

The studies used three different approaches to studying the causes of conflicts. Almost half of the studies have been carried out by means of a questionnaire, using The Issues Checklist as a basis. The Issues Checklist was originally designed as a clinical tool to start a conversation, but today Brett Laursen has used it with various variations in his own conflict studies to determine the causes of conflicts. The questionnaire is pre-structured, so there might not be room for own opinions, so the possible causes of the conflict can basically be considered from the researcher's point of view. If the frequency of conflict reasons, for example, is

measured, the factors can be justified better, because the participants confirm the existence of the conflict with their own experiences by telling how often the conflicts in question occur in everyday life. Questionnaires can be used to study the prevalence and frequency of possible conflict causes, so those give answers for what are the most typical reasons, but do not necessarily give an answer to the actual conflicts or the respondents' personal opinions about them.

In the second approach, in five studies, participants were placed in either real or hypothetical conflict situations. In this case, too, it is practically a question of the possible causes of the conflict that emerged from the researcher's side, but evaluating the situations gives a little more information about the real causes of the conflicts. It is important to consider that the studies often presented only one or a few hypothetical conflict situations, so it is difficult to generalize based on them. On the other hand, more in-depth information about individual situations is given. The studies evaluated the incidence of conflicts during the same day / the previous day. If it is assumed that there are conflicts between teenagers' peers on a daily basis, which they know how to name and evaluate, the causes of conflict can be considered real and significant between peers. In real situations, for example, in a study where the participants were taught different rules of the game and watched how they discussed the topic, it's possible to see real feelings, which cannot necessarily be hidden and evaluate how conflicts starts, what it's the triggering factor.

In the third approach, in two studies, participants had to recall previous real conflict situations. Participants' personal experiences are a good starting point for the research, because then the reasons can be justified already on the basis that the individual has brought it up as a conflict. To be generalized, on the other hand, it requires bringing it up by several different people. This kind of research method can be challenging from the participant's point of view, because not everyone can necessarily distinguish what kind of situation they consider a conflict, or because it is a subjective view, people experience similar situations in several different ways. An individual's memory can also be affecting recall. The emotional content of an event can influence how an individual remembers the event (Holland & Kensinger 2010). Recent conflicts can come to the fore, even if conflicts have also happened in the past. Possibly only very serious ones or conflicts that have affected the individual greatly occur in mind first (Holland & Kensinger 2010), in which case smaller, everyday conflicts can be left in the

background. As can be seen, each research method has its pros and cons. To obtain a versatile and generalizable result, it may be necessary to combine research methods.

When observing the effect of the research method on the obtained results, it can be noticed that in the studies that used the questionnaire, the causes of conflicts are diverse, because the questionnaires have presented many possible conflicts. None of the research methods clearly identified only one specific type of conflict. When evaluating real or hypothetical conflict situations, the causes of conflicts were most concentrated in categories one (relationship issues), three (behavior) and four (differences of idea). Autonomy was not brought up at all in these research methods, and from the fifth category, only the lack of providing instrumental help can be connected to the category "failing to share." This was brought up in only one study. Relationship issues, behavior and differences of ideas are clearly the most typical causes of conflicts in these research methods. The third research method, in which the participants told their own conflict experiences, it can be considered that the most typical factors were related to behavior and relationship issues. Category five is also represented in relation to materialistic and sharing problems.

Generally, it can be said that there are two different kinds of studies of causes of conflicts between peer adolescents. Studies where the causes of conflict were examined by frequency, so the existence of conflicts can be considered justified and studies where possible causes of conflict were presented, as if from the researcher's own point of view, but frequency or other support were not reported. The results show researchers' views on possible causes of conflicts and how many conflicts were possibly reported during the study.

What it comes to gaps in literature, the results show that the causes of conflicts between teenage peers have been studied relatively little. Many studies are based on questionnaires where researchers have views on what kinds of things cause conflicts between teenage peers, but these can be considered more as researchers' views, since there is only some real data on the causes of conflicts and their frequency. Based on these, conclusions can be made about the causes of conflicts, but it would be important to do more research based on real conflict experiences, for example through interviews, in order to get information about possible conflict situations that are not evident from the questionnaires. The research in different age groups among 10-18 years old is relatively even. Examining two different age groups at the same time obtains a better contrast, as has been done in several studies analyzed in this work. A simultaneous study of two age groups possibly gives signs of age-related differences as well.

Since adolescence is a time of great turmoil (Larson & Ham, 1993) and adolescence can be considered a relatively long period, differences between conflicts between a 10-year-old and a 17-year-old are possible. If, on the other hand, conflicts between peers and between a child and a parent are studied at the same time, additional information is obtained between the conflicts of these two relationships.

It can be stated that based on the conducted research, generalizations can be made about the conflicts between teenagers' peers, but further research on the topic is necessary. Based on the research, it was found that the causes of conflicts have been studied relatively little and that the existing research is largely based on relationship issues. Questionnaires are used a lot as a research method, but other methods, like interviews and evaluating real or hypothetical conflict situations, have been used successfully, so other methods use could be expanded in the future. Teenagers' own views on conflicts could be studied more deeply, as the questionnaires are largely based on the researcher's views on possible conflicts between teenagers.

In summary, this research shows that there is plenty of room for development and expansion, especially for studying the causes of conflicts. Conflicts should be studied much more, to understand adolescents' peer conflict factors better, and in a more diverse manner to get a broader picture of the possible reasons and situations that lead to conflicts. Conflicts should be studied among people of different ages, interpersonal relationships, and groups at the same time, to obtain more accurate data on what kind of diverseness there are in conflicts between different groups of people. Combining research methods is probably needed. The causes of conflicts should be examined in more detail to better understand the whole phenomenon of conflict. If the causes of conflicts are better understood, it is possible to prevent them and solve them more efficiently. A lot of conflict research is existing, but it is important to separate real conflicts from situations used as synonyms (e.g., bullying), and to pay attention to the definition of conflict, if comprehensive studies on the subject are to be carried out in the future as well.

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Käesolevaga kinnitan, et olen korrekselt viidanud kõigile oma töös kasutatud teiste autorite poolt loodud kirjalikele töödele, lausetele, mõtetele, ideedele või andmetele.

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Laura Julia Toroi