Identity Reconciliation: Understanding the Relationship between the Pursuit of the Ideal-Self and Intrapersonal Conflict

Abdul Mack
Nova Southeastern University, am1856@mynsu.nova.edu

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Identity Reconciliation: Understanding the Relationship between the Pursuit of the Ideal-Self and Intrapersonal Conflict

by

Abdul E. Mack

A Dissertation Presented to the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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This dissertation was submitted by Abdul E. Mack under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

December 5, 2017

Neil Katz, Ph.D.
Chair

Dustin Berna, Ph.D.

Jason Campbell, Ph.D.

December 5, 2017

Neil Katz, Ph.D.
Chair
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents for teaching me the value of an education.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Nova Southeastern University family for supporting me during this journey. Special thanks to my dissertation committee for the vital role they played in mentoring and advising me. To Dr. Neil Katz, who shared his wisdom, encouragement, and positive energy during the entire process. Thank you for your patience and support while I found my way. To Dr. Dustin Berna, whose dedication and commitment helped me turn this dissertation into something I am proud of. Thank you for never losing faith in me. To Dr. Jason Campbell, Thank you for teaching me how to become one with research. I am forever in your debt. Many thanks to my wife Shereen, and son Eli, whose love and sacrifice allowed me to achieve this goal. Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank God for giving me the strength and stamina to see this project to the end.
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Abstract

Cognitive responses to identity crisis can influence inner harmony, behavior, and decision making while negatively affecting interpersonal relationships. The emotions associated with identity crisis establish the conditions that lead to various forms of conflict. Identity-related conflicts are often intractable and characterized by high levels of stalemates, counterproductive responses, posturing, or one-sided resolution expectations. Furthermore, the onset of dual conflicts brought about by competing internal and external demands has a deleterious impact on conflict strategies and resolution attempts. The purpose of this study was to explored the relationship between the pursuit of the ideal self and intrapersonal conflict as a means to further the understanding of the role identity in conflict. The researcher utilized a mixed-method approach to determine associations between variables. During the quantitative phase of the study, a Pearson’s bivariate correlation was used to establish statistical significance. Research results reveal a strong significant negative correlation between the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict in participants aged 32 to 47 years, $r (28)= -.779$, $p < .0005$. During the qualitative phase of the study, five participants from phase one were purposefully selected to assist in obtaining a detailed description of the Pursuit of the Ideal Self. A Transcendental Phenomenological inquiry was conducted to explore the essence of the participant’s experience. Participants described the phenomenon as an unachievable, continuous, and emotional maturation process that fosters reflection, restraint, and inner peace. Additionally, the qualitative phase of the study revealed a connection between the pursuit of the ideal-self and an individual’s conflict management style.
Chapter 1: Introduction and Statement of the Problem

“If a situation is showing up on the outside, it only reflects what's taking place on the inside.” - Lori A. Locklear

Introduction

A comparative review of scholarly literature infers that the behavioral responses to identity crisis can influence individual decision making while negatively affecting interpersonal relationships. The emotions associated with identity-based turmoil and any subsequent interpersonal conflicts establish the conditions that lead to intrapersonal conflict. The onset of dual conflicts brought about by competing internal and external demands have a deleterious impact on conflict strategies or resolution attempts (Archer, 1982; Cote & Levine, 1988; Heise & Calhan, 1995). Although the current literature infers linkage between identity crisis and several variables, there has been no direct examinations.

It was hypothesized that a linear relationship exists between the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict. Throughout the current research investigation, the pursuit of the ideal-self was operationally defined as an attempt to identify and establish an individual identity that embodies beliefs and values aligned with one’s self-interest and desires. Interest encompasses an individual's needs, wants, concerns, and fears. Reconciling interest is a complicated process that involves probing for deep-rooted concerns. It is neither possible nor desirable to resolve disputes by reconciling interest alone (Lewicki, Saunders, Barry, 2010). For this research, identity was defined as the
complete representation of an individual's makeup, a sense of purpose, and perceived connection to the outside world.

Behavioral responses to identity crisis have been found to range in severity and catalyze both positive and negative outcomes (Barondes, 2012; Brink, 2003; Kajan, 2001; Pashko, 2013). Research reveals that intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts decrease an individual’s ability to interact with others or cope with stress and anxiety positively. Additionally, these individuals are prone to bouts of depression and are less likely to resolve disputes successfully (Brink, 2003; Mosak & Lefevre, 2003).

Throughout the past century, social scientists have attempted to understand identity crisis and individual attempts at mitigation by focusing on personality and identity traits (Reich & Siegel, 2002; Syed & Seiffge-Krenke 2013). Traits are often observable responses to a more significant need and as such could never yield a full understanding of individual identity crisis (Pals, 2006; Roberts & Mroczek, 2008; Roberts & Takahashi, 2011). The past use of character and personality traits to enhance problem-solving skills, interpersonal relationships, and conflict resolution techniques has been limited by the lack of depth and understanding associated with typology based social science. The current research investigation was developed to refine, advance, and expand the knowledge, understanding, theoretical platforms and applications within the fields of conflict analysis and resolution, identity theory, and social psychology. The study explored the relationship between the pursuit of the ideal self and intrapersonal conflict as a means to further the understanding of identity crisis.
Statement of Problem

Throughout the past century, despite the desire to accurately predict behavior and identify causal influences, social scientists have yet seriously examined the relationship between identity crisis and intrapersonal conflict (Redekop, 2014). Although there are many theories of identity development, there is insufficient research that explores the conditions that lead an individual to display the character traits that are observable on a day-to-day basis (Allik, Leeson, & Martin, 2014; Archer, 1982; Cote & Levine, 1988; Dinkha & Abdelhalim, 2008). In focusing primarily on descriptive characteristics, little knowledge is gained about the relationship between the variables that impact an individual’s overarching identity. It was the researcher's position that the psychological process of becoming someone that achieves self-respect while obtaining validation from others can lead to an intrapersonal conflict. This research referred to the process of reconciling the two aforementioned interest as the pursuit of the ideal self. Hence, the pursuit of the ideal-self has the propensity to result in an intrapersonal conflict that can be described as an Introspective Emotional Conflict or IEC. Although the relationship between one’s pursuit and intrapersonal conflict are not fully understood, individually the elements influence perception, cognition, emotion, and behavior. This study examined the relationship between the pursuit of the ideal self and intrapersonal conflict.

Identity reconciliation or the lack thereof is the product of an individual’s interpretation of their environment and culture. It was hypothesized that individuals who have embraced an identity that is in contrast with their self-perception are less likely to possess the ability to resolve the conflicts they encounter successfully. Identity often
frames the manner in which an individual will define or react to a conflict. The inability to reconcile identity confusion may prove to be a barrier to conflict resolution or hinder an individual’s ability to articulate their intent, desires, or goals.

An understanding of the relationship between the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict is necessary to enable practitioners to effectively move the conflict resolution process beyond impasses and identify common ground and desires. Regardless of the type of conflict an individual experiences or manner in which the conflict is expressed, an individual’s self-image will influence how a person views the cause and solution to a given situation (Brown, 1998; Kegan, 1982). This subjective element of conflict is challenging to categorize and accounts for the unique nature of a given conflict. An individual’s perceived self-image is a significant human factor that may dictate the extent to which he or she is amenable to compromise or to explore solutions and common ground. The conflict resolution process must, therefore, take into account where an individual is at concerning their self-image to be effective and efficient.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to increase contextual knowledge of identity reconciliation by examining the relationship between the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict. Specific objectives are 1) To understand the common meaning of the phenomenon, 2) To understand the emotions associated with the research variables, 3) To identify factors associated with the phenomenon that could facilitate future longitudinal studies and enhance conflict resolution techniques.
Background of Study

The Self, Identity, and Personality

To date, the study of identity has been limited by past researchers failure to adequately consider the varied meaning, application, and understanding of the "identity" concept. Moreover, identity as a field of study is much more multidimensional than concerning individual identity than the development or reference of social characteristics and general “identity statuses.” The tendency not to consider the multidimensional aspect of identity has not enhanced the overall understanding of the interaction between stages of identity development or statuses nor has it reduced the misunderstandings that have plagued modern day literature. The emphasis on the psychological aspects of identity development vice a comprehensive, multidimensional approach that takes factors such as sociology or value orientation has limited the understanding of essential elements of identity formation. Consequently, the onset of identity conflict is better understood from an intrapersonal perspective than the more multidimensional interpersonal lens (McLean & Moin, 2015).

The self and identity are concepts used interchangeably with little effort to develop clear and distinguishable terminological differences. Current explanations center on either an emphasis on individual perception (i.e., internalized experiences) or the external social meaning of observable experiences (Brown, 1998; Craib, 1998; Kegan, 1982). Identity is the conscious sense of uniqueness and life direction that derives from a variety of ego-based psychological and social experiences (Jones & Abes, 2013; Waterman, 1992). It embodies that which an individual is, hopes to become and is
expected to become. Identity can evolve and be shaped by one’s environment (Adams, 1988; Cote, 1996; Fadjukoff, Pulkkinen, & Kokko 2005). The manner in which an individual responds to environmental stimuli can impact perception and behavior (Srivastava, Oliver, Potter, & Gosling, 2003; Ryckman, 2008; Patterson, Bigler, & Swann Jr., 2010).

A review of the scholarly literature reveals that an understanding of identity is difficult due to the lack of a universal definition and the complexity of the concept as a whole. The most commonly used descriptions of identity often incorporate the identity process rendering a holistic exploration crucial (Sugimura & Mizokami, 2012). This study furthered the understanding of identity through an exploration of the relationship between the identity development process and one’s pursuit of the ideal-self. It was hypothesized that identity is a product of an individual’s perception of self as it relates to experience and interpretation of their environment.

**Identity defined**

Identity is neither effortlessly defined nor easy to explore scientifically. It embodies self-image and all learned identity associations such as family, friends, school, and church (Bozhovich, 2009; Bandura, 1994). In totality, identity consists of that which individuals hope to become, and what an individual is expected to become (Ashmore, Jussim, & Wilder, 2001; Craib, 1998). In contrast, Ryckman (2008) definition of identity incorporates an individuals response to environmental stimuli. According to Ryckman, identity is a complex abstraction that encompasses the person’s unique genetic background, learning history and how these factors influence his or her responses to
various environments or situations (2008). Individual identity is comprised of traits that embody the tendency to experience their environment as either distressing or harmful (Srivastava, Oliver, Potter, & Gosling, 2003).

Identity is often difficult to define given its complex nature. Many social scientists have attempted to use self-experience, cognitive structure, or value system. Although it is an arduous task to find an identity definition that is universally accepted, many modern-day theorists agree that an individual’s self-concept provides the foundation for identity (Kegan, 1982, Ryff, & Marshall, 1999). Therefore, could be regarded as a sub-component or expression of the self. It embodies the self-representations that inform self-definition and is responsible for organizing an individual’s experiences (Ryff & Marshall, 1999). Identity comprises the self-characteristics an individual considers most representative of him or herself (Kroger, 1996; Protinsky, 1988). Those characteristics often consist of values, commitments, roles, and competencies that may change over time due to shifts in self-perception and motives (Pilarska, 2014). It was hypothesized that the psychological process of maintaining an identity that results in self-respect while obtaining validation from others could lead to an intrapersonal conflict.

According to Ornstein (1993), the self is difficult to understand on a superficial level. The true self is an exploration of the mental experiences that renders it undiscoverable. Individuals are a “composite of different action and reactions that come in and out of consciousness” by environmental stimuli. Cognitive abilities, which are not organized for self-knowledge, are designed to determine appropriate action. As such,
self-observation becomes a difficult cognitive task. When initiated, self-observations seldom support preconceived notions of the self (Ornstein, 1993).

The understanding of the relationship between identity and the self is difficult because personality is often used as an umbrella term that encompasses both concepts. The study of personality development is an examination of the differences that exist between individuals (Van Lieshout, 2000). VanLieshout defined personality as ‘the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysiological systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment…characteristic behavior and thought’ (2000). Personality is those enduring and observable individual characteristics that make a person unique.

An individual's personality is the culmination of lifelong decisions and their awareness of the experiences that have influenced those decisions. Although genetics contribute to differences in early personality onset, longitudinal behavior genetic studies reveal that changes in personality traits are as much the result of one’s environments as it is their genes (Roberts & Robins, 2004). Genetic factors that contribute to personality development are the result of social interactions within an individual’s environment (Roberts & Robins, 2004; Willemsen & Waterman, 1991). Furthermore, hereditary personality traits are likely to diminish from early to middle adulthood raising questions regarding the etiology, make-up, consistency, and overall dynamics of personality (Srivastava, Oliver, Potter, & Gosling, 2003).

Identity encompasses more than the traits and characteristics that we show others to gain acceptance or a typology used to understand or predict behavior. Although
personality may derive from an observable aspect of one’s identity, it does not take into consideration the holistic sense of self that encapsulates the basis of individual existence. According to Identity Reconciliation Theory, personality is a reflection of one’s current emotional state or their position on the identity development continuum. It is an externally produced description of a person whereas identity derives from individuals.

According to Schuman (2005), an increased understanding of personality can help a practitioner ensure that the conflict resolution process continues to move in right direction. The underlying premise is that an understanding of personality is as essential to conflict resolution as it is to therapy. Schuman position, although partially correct, does not adequately consider that observable personality is more symptomatic than casual. Simply stated, since personality only offers a glimpse of an individual’s internal struggle, it must be combined with a personal narrative. Providing disputants with the opportunity to frame a conflict from their perspective may potentially counterbalance the perceived threat to their narrative. Threats to an individual’s narrative can be construed as attacks on an individual’s identity and ultimately hinder the conflict resolution process (Schuman, 2005).

It was hypothesized that the complicated process of identity development could create intrapersonal conflicts that hinder identity reconciliation and subsequent realization of the ideal-self. The ideal-self is the element of identity that grants an individual permission to be who they are. It is not an image based on external values but the vision of self that is the result of one’s acknowledgment of personal values and imperfections. Realization of the ideal-self is often a significant motivational factor of
individual behavior (Brown, 1998; Kegan, 1982). Currently, there is limited research on the correlation between the desired self and the environment (Roberts & Robins, 2004; Willemsen & Waterman, 1991). Unfortunately, achievement of the ideal-self is not an obtainable end state but rather an indicator of the highest level of self-acceptance and awareness. An individual recognizes that a perfect version of self should be viewed as the ideal-self that facilitates the pursuit of actualization, psychological health, and internal harmony.

**Theoretical Considerations**

The following theoretical considerations informed the current research investigation:

1. Hierarchy of Needs,
2. Self-actualizing tendency,
3. Self-realization,
4. Social Cognitive Theory,
5. Three Mind Theory.

It is evident that the synergistic relationship among these five theoretical considerations has influenced what is known today about identity and the concept of Self (Kegan, 1982). The current research investigation explored these theoretical considerations, providing an overview of each and a foundational understanding of any identity specific theories with research implications.
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow developed a hierarchic theory of needs based on an individual’s journey to reach their highest level of consciousness and become a fully functioning individual (i.e., self-actualization). His five-level hierarchy of essential needs explains individual motivation. Maslow believed that a person would not feel the urge to satisfy higher level needs until all lower level needs have been met. He held that it is only after lower level needs of physical and emotional well-being are satisfied that a person is free to explore the higher level needs that influence their personal development (Rykman, 2008; Schultz & Schultz, 2009).

Maslow posited that each needs level is nested inside the previous level. Furthermore, he holds that levels are not fixed and that there is no requirement to completely satisfy each need to be drawn towards or move to the next level. This holistic perspective of the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs describes a more integrated relationship between each need level and the consequences of unaddressed deficiencies at any level. Individuals who have addressed their lower needs are then able to act based on a willingness to grow rather than a desire to ratify shortcomings (Maslow, 1943).

Maslow believed that an individual would not progress to a state of self-actualization if he or she succumbs to challenges placed in their way by their environment. Individuals fulfill their five essential needs in stages and can become fixated on a set of needs if significant problems arise during development (Rykman, 2008; Schultz & Schultz, 2009). According to Maslow, a human being has two primary categories of needs that are rooted in their biological makeup. Deficiency or basic needs
are hierarchical and by far the most urgent individual needs. Maslow viewed the fulfillment of all needs as essential to one’s survival. He believed that the five basic needs are instinctive and suggest that we ask an individual their philosophy of the future as means of understanding their developmental level (Maslow, 1943). He identified the following basic needs:

**Physiological Needs.** Physiological needs refer to biological needs that are essential to survival. They consist of needs for oxygen, food, water, and a relatively constant body temperature. If physiological requirements are not fulfilled, individuals will prioritize addressing those needs before anything else. Moreover, attempts to satisfy a need themed a priority usually causes an individual to become preoccupied with filling that specific need.

**Safety Needs.** After all physiological needs are satisfied and no longer control an individual’s thoughts and behavior, the need for security emerges. Safety needs, which are second on Abraham Maslow’s ascending hierarchal needs pyramid, arise after physiological requirements have been met. Maslow operational definition of safety extends beyond physical attributes and includes second tier needs such as vocational, monetary, and psychosocial concerns. The forfeiture of safety needs could potentially have a negative impact one’s physical needs. For example, the loss of a job could affect an individual’s ability to maintain a home or purchase food.

**Need of Love, Affection, and Belongingness.** Maslow believed that individuals seek to overcome feelings of loneliness and alienation. The process involves both giving and receiving love, affection, and the sense of belonging. The feeling of belonging to
something that is bigger than a single individual is often the catalyst for survival during tumultuous times. Love and a sense of belonging habitually foster a positive mental outlook and increase psychological resiliency. A lack of interaction, human relationships or sense of belonging may result in depression and have a deleterious impact on identity development.

**Need for Esteem.** Maslow divided esteem needs into subcategories based on internal and external factors. Internal esteem needs are based on an individual’s self-respect as it relates to competence, independence, and accomplishments. In contrast, external esteem is predicated on the recognition and evaluation of others. Individuals need a stable, firmly based, high level of self-respect, and respect for others. When these needs are satisfied, a person is left feeling self-confident. When these needs are not met, an individual will feel inferior, weak, helpless or worthless. Maslow viewed the experience of being loved and accepted by one’s family and community as a prerequisite for the development of self-esteem. It is only after an individual obtains a modicum of self-esteem and confidence that they can gain the psychological freedom necessary to explore their uniqueness.

**Need for Self-Actualization.** After all lower needs are satisfied, the need to self-actualize is activated. Maslow describes self-actualization as a person’s need to be and do that which the person was born to do. Once engaged, these needs will continue to be felt and become stronger as they are developed. The excursion towards self-actualization is an individual’s journey to become the best version of him or herself. Maslow suggests that only two percent of all people reach the actualization level. It is only from a
psychological state of well-being that an individual can pursue growth, autonomy, identity and the pursuit of the ideal self.

What a man can be, he must be. This need we may call self-actualization…It refers to the desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming. (Maslow, 1954, p. 93)

According to Maslow, the pursuit of the ideal self is one’s universal tendency towards actualization. Self-actualized individuals perceive reality accurately and are independent thinkers who are not overly influenced by their environment. Moreover, self-actualized individuals constantly seek self-improvement and maintain a sense of awe, wonder, and gratitude about life (Maslow, 1943; Rykman, 2008 & Schultz & Schultz, 2009). He identified the following basic characteristics of a self-actualized individual:

**Maslow’s Self-actualizing characteristics.** The following attributes are often indicative of a self-actualized individual:

- Reality-centered: a keen sense of reality, aware of real situations, objective judgment.
- Problem-centered: see problems as challenges and situations requiring solutions.
- Solitude: the need for privacy and comfortable being alone.
- Autonomy: reliant on own experiences and judgment (independent).
• Non-conformist: not susceptible to social pressure to be well adjusted or to “fit in.”

• Humility and respect: democratic values, fair and non-discriminating, embraces and enjoys all cultures, races and individual styles.

• Acceptance of others: accepting others as they are.

• Acceptance of self: comfortable with oneself.

• Personal relations: a few close intimate friends rather than many surface relationships.

• Unhostile: a sense of humor directed at oneself or life in general, rather than at the expense of others.

• Spontaneous and natural: true to oneself, rather than being how others want.

• Human kinship or Gemeinschaftsgefühl: social interest, compassion, and interested in everything.

• Strong ethics: spiritual but seldom conventionally religious.

• Unique perception of means and ends: the ends don’t necessarily justify the means.

• The means could be an end. Therefore means (journey) is most often more important than the ends. (Rykman, 2008; Schultz & Schultz, 2009).

The premise of this research investigation does not fully support all the tenets expressed within Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs theory. In contrast to Maslow’s view that only two percent of people reach actualization, this study suggests that all individuals experience a degree of self-actualization as they become aware of their ideal self (Bishop,
The difficulty lies in remaining connected to the identity that presents itself once the pursuit of actualization begins. The challenge is thereon maintaining a connection to the identity that evolves from the redefined ideal-self. The current research premise shares Maslow's view that individual share everyday needs in which they are constantly seeking to satisfy. However, the current research investigation suggests that once awareness of a more perfect version of self becomes known it will serve as the most prominent need to an individual.

A lower level needs such as those identified by Maslow compete with the pursuit of ideal-self for fulfillment during identity reconciliation. Maslow described an emotionally intense loss or transcendence of self as a peak experience which can promote growth and effect profound change (Maslow, 1943). He noted that peak experiences are rare experiences that are associated with a temporary feeling of overwhelming happiness. Furthermore, Maslow did not believe peak experiences had significant impacts on self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). This research aimed to conventionalize how moments of clarity such as peak experiences are a product of increased awareness and the overall reconciliation process.

**Carl Rogers Theory of Actualization**

Rogerian theory describes an individual’s inevitable journey to become the best version of themselves (Clifford, 2008). Rogers referred to this inevitable journey as the actualizing tendency or built-in motivation to realize one’s potential. Rogers posited that behavior is largely influenced by an individual’s self-actualizing tendency. The self-actualizing tendency is a biological and psychological controlling drive that motivates
individuals to fulfill their potential, improve, or seek nourishment (Maslow, 1943). He advocated that individuals use their self-actualizing tendency to determine what experiences are worth pursuing (Bauer, Schwab, & McAdams, 2011; Maslow, 1943). The failure to realize one’s potential is believed to be due to societal interference rather than an individual’s lack of desire. According to Carl Rogers, the subjective experience or inner reality of individuals form the foundation for judgment and behavior (Rogers, 1959).

Rogers held that humans are all basically good and fundamentally desire new experiences that promote growth while avoiding environments that lack stimulation (Clifford, 2008). Healthy individuals possess the ability to accept and accurately verbalize their conscious experiences (Davies & Bhugra, 2004). Carl Rogers believed behaviors or mental deviations such as psychosis or criminal behavior are distortions of their natural inclination. Rogers suggested that people instinctively value positive regard or the desire for love, affection, attention, and nurturance (Clifford, 2008). He believed that through the receipt of positive regard from others an individual develops self-esteem, self-worth, and a positive self-image. Carl Rogers further explained that conditional positive regard could influence an individual’s self-perception and prevent them from realizing their true self (Rykman, 2008; Schultz & Schultz, 2009).

Carl Rogers referred to the best version of one’s self or the goal of the actualizing tendency as the real self (Rykman, 2008). When conditions are placed on positive regard, it negatively impacts one’s true self leading to a pursuit of an out of reach image that is based on an unrealistic standard. The gap between the real self and ideal-self is
called incongruity. Rogers essentially believed that neurosis is the gap between the two versions of the self or the degree an individual is out of touch with their true self (Rogers, 1959). Carl Rogers identified denial (the blockage of a threatening situation) and perceptional distortion (reinterpreting a situation to reduce its impact) as two defense mechanisms that people utilize when their real self is threatened (Rogers, 1959). The extremely neurotic individual has overwhelmed their defense mechanisms and developed a significant distance between the real and ideal self (Rykman, 2008; Schultz & Schultz, 2009).

Drawing upon tenets articulated within Rogerian theory, the exploration of the meaning of the ideal-self and its relationship with intrapersonal conflict warrant investigation. Similar to Rodgers, the research investigator holds that the journey towards actualization is the result of one’s desire or motivation. However, the researcher believes that the initiation of the journey is more accurately described as a motivational urge that derives from an increased sense of self-awareness vice built-in motivation. Additionally, the researcher viewed the inability to actualize as the consequence of one’s perception as influenced by societal interference or environment challenges. Rogers unconditional positive regard concept is in-line with the researcher's theory that the need for acceptance plays a crucial role in behavior and the pursuit of the ideal-self (Rogers, 1959).
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<th><strong>Rogerian description:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Maslow’s description:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1. Non-defensive individuals that are in touch with their feelings and open to new experiences</td>
<td>1. Accepting of their limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Make every effort to live in the moment</td>
<td>2. Embrace life and their biological functioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Make decisions in their best interest</td>
<td>3. Possess a high level of acceptance of self and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reject the criticism of their environment</td>
<td>4. Governed by laws of their character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Live meaningful more self-fulfilling lives than others.</td>
<td>5. Efficient perception of reality and truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Are caring individuals</td>
<td>6. Are generally caring, open-minded, and considerate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. They are indifferent to materialistic possessions</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Are creative as a result of their lifestyle</td>
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**Carl Jung Theory of Self-Realization**

According to Carl Jung, individual maturation and development are predicated on one’s ability to move towards self-realization (Schultz & Schultz, 2009; Jung, 1969). Self-realization is the process by which a person embraces the uniqueness that defines who they are as individuals (Bishop, 2014). Jung posited that self-realization is not achievable, but the process towards an ideal self enables an individual to understand who they are (Jung, 1969). As individuals progress towards self-realization, they learn to integrate all aspects of the psyche while adopting a new and evolving identity (Schultz & Schultz, 2009; Jung, 1969). The journey is a difficult and painful process that forces the individual to acknowledge every aspect of their life while striving to maintain stability.
Jung believed that through the adequate resolution of problems, a person is capable of reaching their full potential as a human being (Bishop, 2014). In contrast to the fully functioning individual, maladjusted individual struggle to negotiate the challenges of everyday life.

Jung viewed identity development as a reoccurring, dynamic process that continues throughout a lifetime (Bishop, 2014). It involves continuous attempts by the individual to reconcile the opposing forces within their overall identity (Ryckman, 2008). The desires and outcome of identity development is individuation or realizing one's full potential. Jung posited that the danger of one-sided identity development is that it can create conflict and strain as opposed to a balanced growth that enhances maturity. Jung differed from Sigmund Freud in that he viewed the journey towards the ideal self as a lifetime process that is influenced by both past and present experiences (Clifford, 2008).

The individual persona, a product of identity development, can, therefore, be described as a compromise between environmental demands and individual interest.

Personas are facade serve as defense mechanisms that allow individuals to engage in functional relationships (Clifford, 2008; Cramer, 2001). Accordingly, excessive identification with the personas may stunt identity development, conceal one’s ideal-self, or cause and individuals to lose sight of their individuality (Rykman, 2008; Schultz & Schultz, 2009). Jung held that individual characteristics are a result of one’s predisposition to respond to specific experiences in a particular manner. These responses are established pathways that either is spontaneous reactions to the environment or triggered by various forms of stress.
Clifford explained that in Jung’s attempt to understand behavior, he integrated the principles of 14 different scientific disciplines. In doing so, he created concepts that are difficult to understand and apply to various forms of behavior (2008). However, Jung’s view that identity development is a reoccurring process that leads to identity awareness is one of the central premises of this research investigation. The exploration of the factors that shape identity development will enhance our understanding of what influences individual behavior and response to the environment.

**Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory**

Albert Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory focuses on learning that occurs within a social environment. The theory explains how an individual acquires and maintains certain behavioral patterns which provide the foundation for interpersonal relationships. Human behavior is viewed as a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. The environment offers models for behavior that guide an individual’s future behavior. Bandura (1994) wrote that observational learning occurs when an individual watches behavior within an environment then uses the observed behavior as a guide for future activity. Bandura (1986), proposed the following four necessary conditions for effective modeling:

- Attention- various factors increase or decrease the amount of attention paid. Includes distinctiveness, affective valence, prevalence, complexity, functional value. One’s characteristics (e.g., sensory capacities, arousal level, perceptual set, past reinforcement) affect attention.
• Retention- remembering what you paid attention to. Includes symbolic coding, mental images, cognitive organization, symbolic rehearsal, motor rehearsal.

• Reproduction- reproducing the image. Including physical capabilities, and self-observation of reproduction.

• Motivation- Includes promised, imagined, and vicarious incentives.

Albert Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) explains how an individual’s observation and perception of their environment significantly influences their future behavior (Bandura, 1994). During this research study, this causal explanation of behavior proved helpful in understanding the cognitive process that inspired participants to embrace maladaptive identities or engage in certain behaviors. Bandura’s SCT states that behavior is the result of motivational incentives (Bandura, 1994). However, it does not explain why these environmental factors can shape motivational aspirations. This researcher believes that individual cognitive thought patterns and associated behaviors relate to the pursuit of the ideal-self. The current research study attempted to further understanding of how the imitation of environmental behavior is connected to the need for acceptance and the desire to solidify individual identity.

**Sigmund Freud’s Three Mind Theory**

Sigmund Freud’s fundamental assumption about the factors with the greatest influence on identity, cognition, and behavior can be divided into three parts: the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious (Clifford, 2008). The conscious refers to the ideas and sensations we are aware of on a conscious level. The preconscious contains the experiences that are unconscious but could become conscious with little
effort. The preconscious exists just beneath the surface of awareness (Rykman, 2008; Schultz & Schultz, 2009). Schultz & Schultz further explained that the unconscious consists of experiences and memories in which an individual lacks awareness. The memories affiliated with the unconscious are usually painful. Deeply rooted in the fibers of the unconscious are individual instincts (2009). To understand the dynamics of a person’s conflict, Freud postulated a system that allowed him to describe the way in which these conflicts originated and influenced behavior. This system would later be called the “three mind system” or the ego, superego, and Id (Rykman, 2008). The following is a brief description of the Three Minds system:

**Ego**

The ego is based on the reality principle and serves as a buffer between the id and actual reality. The ego attempts to meet the needs of the Id while taking into consideration the reality of a given situation. It is responsible for cognitive decision-making functions such as intelligence, thoughtfulness, and learning. Freud viewed the ego as an organized aspect of the Id that provides realistic direction to an individual’s impulses. Moreover, a properly functioning id enables appropriate environmental interaction (Rykman, 2008; & Schultz & Schultz, 2009).

Building on Freud’s model, Erickson held that successful ego development is predicated on an engagement at three levels of identity work (Erikson, 1956; Schwartz, Zamboanga, Wang, & Olthuis, 2009). The first level, ego identity, is characterized by a focus on personal continuity and the desire to integrate one’s most important and fundamental beliefs about the self to create consistency across time. The second level,
personal identity, centers on self-definition of culturally derived beliefs and goals. The last level, social identity, emphasizes one’s connection to larger groups such as country or ethnic group. The social identity perspective suggests that an individual is defined not only by personal or individual aspects of the self but dynamics of the groups in which the individual belongs (McLean & Moin, 2015).

The Freudian ego concept was relevant to the study of the identity because it is used interchangeably with the concept of self. Ego processes played a role in the study of the self and formulation of ego defense mechanisms (Clifford, 2008). Ego defense mechanisms protect or defend the self-images while limiting exposure to psychological pain (Brown, 1999). This type of defensive behavior is an attempt to reduce the anxiety and stress associated with intrapersonal conflict (Schwarz, 2002).

**Ego Defense Mechanisms.** The ego serves as a mediator for the id and superego. If a situation develops which prevents the ego from successfully mediating, it may employ one of the following Ego Defense Mechanisms:

- Denial: arguing against an anxiety provoking stimuli by stating it does not exist.
- Displacement: taking out impulses on a less threatening target.
- Intellectualization. avoiding unacceptable emotions by focusing on the intellectual aspects.
- Projection: placing unacceptable impulses in yourself onto someone else.
- Rationalization: supplying a logical or rational reason as opposed to the real reason.
- Reaction formation: taking the opposite belief because the true belief causes anxiety.

- Regression: a temporary reversion to a previous stage of psychological development.

- Repression: occurs when a threatening situation, event, idea, memory or emotion is blocked from one’s conscious awareness. For example, adults who were sexually abused during childhood often repress abusive memories to ensure survival. Repression differs from suppression in that an individual attempts to deny the existence of the repressed memory.

- Sublimation: acting out unacceptable impulses in a socially acceptable way.

- Suppression: the conscious act or decision to acknowledge and ignore a particular thought or feeling that enters the awareness to avoid taking immediate action. For example, an individual will often suppress random impulses to maximize concentration or complete a pending task (Ryckman, 2008; & Schultz & Schultz, 2009).

**Ego Based Character Types**

**The Oral Character.** The oral character is a result of overindulgence in infancy. The individual became accustomed to receiving support and encouragement from other people, and they are dependent on others for gratification. The majority of their pleasure is derived from what others do for them and not for what they accomplish themselves.

**The Anal Character.** According to Freud, this character is made up of various traits: obstinacy, parsimony, and orderliness. Obstinacy in anal characters means that
they are stubborn, defiant, and resistant to control by others. They are also overly conscientious, rigid, fiercely, independent, and extremely persistent in the performance of “all” duties. Parsimony refers to this characters frugal and stingy nature. The trait of orderliness is reflected in their need to live by routine. They are incredibly meticulous and perfectionistic.

**The Phallic Character.** This individual suffers from an inadequate resolution of the Oedipus complex. The male version of this character behaves in a reckless and self-assured manner. Such males have to prove that they are real men. The women version is primarily concerned with dominating her male counterpart (due to penis envy).

**The Genital Character.** Freud viewed the genital character as the ideal type. Such people are sexually mature and capable of orgasm; their libidinal energies are no longer distraught because they have found appropriate love objects. Freud believed that the key to happiness is the ability to love and be loved. The genital character is also capable of redirecting their id impulses into the form of productive and creative work (Ryckman, 2008; & Schultz & Schultz, 2009).

**Superego**

The Superego is the moral part of an individual that develops due to the moral and ethical restraints placed on us by caregivers. It is often referred to as the conscience because it dictates our belief in right and wrong. Freud utilized the superego to describe an individual’s internalization of societal values. These values are instilled in an individual primarily by parents, who teach which behaviors are appropriate or inappropriate in given situations. The superego represents a set of learned ideas. Freud
divided the superego into two major components (conscience and ego-ideal). The conscience is acquired through the use of punishment by the parents. On the other hand, the ego-ideal is learned through the use of rewards. The primary functions of the superego are to inhibit the urges of the id, implement realistic goals, and to strive for perfection (Rykman, 2008; Schultz & Schultz, 2009).

**Id**

Freud considered the id to be the original aspect of personality, rooted in the biological makeup of an individual. He described the id as powerful and primitive urges or desires that insistently seek expression in external reality. The id operates according to the “pleasure principle” which strives to maximize pleasure and minimize pain without regard for reality.

Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalytic Theory is the final theoretical consideration that informed the current research investigation. Freud’s theory broadly infers that behavior is a complex entity that occurs on various levels of individual consciousness (Clifford, 2008). The complexity has exacerbated the struggle between an individual and the demands of society. As an individual's journey towards actualization, defense or survival mechanisms are often created to allow an individual to maintain a degree of cognitive stability. Although this research has no intent to analyze the data collected during research, Freud’s theory should prove useful in understanding research findings and the complex nature of identity development.
Continuity theory

Continuity theory, which is constructionist, assumes that individuals develop personal constructs to gain an understanding of life experiences (Ryff & Marshall, 1999). Continuity theory proposes that through feedback processes the self remains in a constant state of development. However, the theory states that the inherent nature of individuals is to seek a high degree of consistency over time to provide continuity to the self during the adaptation caused by the feedback process (Atchley, 1993). Personal constructs are influenced by one’s social environment but are not determined by them. Regardless exposure to a social environment or its intensity, individuals will ultimately construct their reality. Continuity theorists assume that the thoughts and behavioral patterns that endure over time are the results of personal constructs based on desired developmental direction. The theory posits that individual choices are made not only with developmental goals in mind but also with a consideration towards adapting to continually changing circumstances (Ryff & Marshall, 1999).

Hypothesis and Research Questions

Research questions were established to explore whether self-reporting measures reveal a relationship between the pursuit of the ideal self and intrapersonal conflict. Quantitative methodologies examined the central research hypothesis that a correlation exists between the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict. Furthermore, the qualitative affiliated method explored the meaning, process, and context of organizational conflict. Demographic information such as age and race are also of interest to the researcher. Therefore, the following research questions were developed.
Ho] *There is no significant linear relationship between the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict.*

H1] *There is a significant linear relationship between the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict.*

RQ1] *What have you experienced regarding the phenomenon?*

RQ2] *What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected an individual’s experiences of the phenomenon?*

RQ3] *What emotions are associated with intrapersonal conflict that is the result of the pursuit of the ideal-self?*

RQ4] *Are intrapersonal conflicts and negative conflict management styles related?*

**Definition of Terms**

- **Cognitive dissonance:** An internal state that results when individuals notice the inconsistency between two or more of their beliefs or between beliefs and their behavior.

- **Coping:** Responding to stress in a way that reduces the treat and its effects; including what a person does feels or thinks to master tolerate the negative effects of a stressful situation.

- **Fidelity:** The ability to sustain loyalties freely pledged in spite of inevitable contradictions of value systems.

- **Framing:** The specific wording of information that can influence decision-making.
- Individuation: The desire to differentiate oneself from others by emphasizing one’s uniqueness or individuality.
- Identity: The complete representation of an individual’s makeup, a sense of purpose, and perceived connection to the outside world.
- Interpersonal interaction: The evaluation of like or dislike towards others.
- Need for affiliation: The underlying motivation to seek interpersonal relationships.
- Negative Identity: Scornful and hostile responses to roles offered as proper and desirable by the community.
- The Pursuit of the Ideal-Self: An attempt to identify and establish an individual identity that embodies beliefs and values aligned with one’s self-interest and desires.
- Self: Refers to an individual’s internal thoughts, feeling, and the degree of which they are aware of their cognition and perception.
- Self-efficacy: A person’s evaluation of his/her ability or competency to perform a task, reach a goal, or overcome an obstacle.
- Self-esteem: The self-evaluation made by each individual. Self-esteem is one’s attitude toward oneself along a positive-negative dimension.
- Self-concept: Refers to the way individuals categorically think about themselves.
- Social Cognition: The manner in which individuals interpret, analyze, remember information about the social world.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

“I pretended to be somebody I wanted to be until finally, I became that person. Or he became me.” - Cary Grant

Erik Erickson and James Marcia’s identity status models are often considered the dominant theories to understanding identity development. An Eriksonian style approach to identity development focus on how the negotiation of life stages which ultimately allow an individual to self-actualize. According to Erickson, identity fidelity or commitment is paramount to psychological well-being. In his view, healthy identity development is predicated on an individual navigating through three levels of functioning to reach a synthesis that promotes life satisfaction. He viewed identity synthesis as a process of reworking childhood identifications into a self-concept that is valid across time and are based on adult roles that are valued within society. One’s self-concept emerges during infancy and is viewed as a precursor to identity. However, the identity maturation process is prevalent during due to a maturation of cognitive abilities. During adolescence, an individual has the cognitive ability, independent freedom of choice, and life experience necessary to begin the complex process of identity development (McLean & Moin, 2015).

The Self

Brown (1998) posited that the self primarily functions to organize experiences, motivate behavior and regulate affect, ultimately connecting behavior with the ability to adapt. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), the self is established, modified, and sustained in a social context. Consequently, there is a correlation between an individual’s
social environment and self-attributions and evaluations of themselves. The social nature of the self is formed and maintain via information obtained from the self-evaluative feedback process. The self should be viewed as a process vice an end state.

The self evolves, changes, and develops throughout an individual’s life (Cross & Markus, 1991). Ryff emphasized the historical dynamics of the self via the formulation of possible selves, which includes a belief in the past or desired self (1991). Past selves are crucial to self-evaluation whereas future selves inspire present-day behavior. The self-evaluation process is the method by which individuals compare themselves to others. Eventually, the comparative process drives the development of the self-concept (Ryff & Marshall, 1999).

Individuals can be viewed through one of two lenses; the actual self or the ideal self. The ideal self is used to describe the attributes and characteristics that an individual believes will maximize happiness. It is an individual’s roadmap to the best version of him or herself. The actual self can be divided into two subgroups. The first subgroup based on how a person views them self in the present moment. The second subgroup is based on the “self” individuals have concluded others believe or expect them to be. What others believe a person should be is often based on a subjective normative standard that is not aligned with an individual ideal self. The pursuit of the ideal self is sometimes done at the risk of alienating members of an individual’s community network to include family and friends. As the basis of an individual identity, alienating one's community network could mean losing acceptance and love (Meeus, Iedema, Helsen, & Vollebergh, 1999; Oldham, & Morris, 1995).
Identity Development and Perspectives

Once identity has formed, individuals engage in various identity management behaviors designed to promote the desired self-image and facilitate their ideal-self (Bauer, Schwab, & McAdams, 2011; Fadjukoff, Pulkkinen, & Kokko, 2005). Pashko (2013) views changes to identity as the unsuccessful attempt of an individual to maintain a given identity. Change that is a product of development extends beyond superficial psychological or behavioral variations. According to Dinkha, Abdulhamid & Abdelhalim (2008), to be considered an influence on identity development a progressive or regressive transformation must alter an aspect of an individual’s identity. Personal experiences that lack a foreseeable value-added consequence are considered nebulous and would therefore not be a part of the developmental process or the underlying unconscious elements of the self (McLean & Moin, 2015).

Erikson held that identity development is guided by a series of major challenges that grow out of cultural imperatives. Unfortunately, Erikson did not identify a clear, definitive list of challenges to identity development. This research aimed to bridge the gap in literature between identity and conflict. In doing so, the researcher gained an understanding of the impact of one’s inability to balance the need for acceptance and desire for individuality.

Erickson viewed identity as a multifaceted process that begins between ages 13 through 19 (Erickson, 1956). During this period (i.e., identity vs. role confusion), it is normal for an identity crisis to occur thus paving the way for individual problem solving and growth. When an identity crisis is not resolved to an individual’s satisfaction, the
onset of a frantic search for identity ultimately begins. The successful resolution of a crisis will result in fidelity whereas unsuccessful attempts may result in negative identity or maladaptive behavior (Marcia, 1993; Marcia, 1966).

Erickson posited that an identity crisis that occurs during adolescence stems from role confusion regarding who they are currently and who they will become in the future. Adolescence is characterized by torturous self-consciousness and shame surrounding their self-perception of their identity (Marcia, 1966; Marcia, 1967; Marcia, 1993). Consequently, many confused adolescents compensate by over-identifying with individuals they greatly admire. Erickson suggests that this compensatory behavior derives from a strong desire to clarify their life’s meaning thereby formulating the desired identity while benefiting from the stability associated with self-direction.

As life continues to spiral out of control for individual experiencing an identity crisis, order and stability are achieved by over-identifying with cliques and crowds. These individuals become extremely intolerant and cruel in their exclusion of those who are different in appearance or culture. Their intolerance serves as an identity crisis coping mechanism and a means of compensating for the lack of a positive self-image (Rykman, 2008; Schultz & Schultz, 2009). During the identity crisis period, individuals set rigid boundaries in their beliefs, values, and interpersonal relationships. Erickson views this embrace of destructive behavior as a survival or defense mechanism often attributable to a rapidly changing environment (Marcia, 1993). In many cases, parents and authoritative figures are confused about their values and cannot guide adolescents through an identity crisis that results from a chaotic environment.
Building upon Erik Erikson’s eight stages of conflict, James Marcia developed a multiple status framework for understanding how adolescents cope with problems that derive from a crisis and the impact of experience on identity development. Marcia identified four statuses (i.e., identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, foreclosure, identity achievement) that significantly shape identity and directly correspond to one of the stages in Erikson’s identity development model (Marcia, 1993). Identity diffusion, the first status, occurs during adolescence and is characterized by a lack of emphasis on the future. These individuals are content to live in the moment. A failure to move past identity diffusion often results in low self-esteem, poor interpersonal skills, trust issues, lack of confidence, and low morality.

Foreclosed individuals commit to an identity that has been predetermined by parents or an authoritative figure. As adults, foreclosed individuals display a strong need for approval, lack of adaptability, an inability to display affection, conformed behavior, and a happy family life. In contrast, individuals that fall within the moratorium status are characterized by their exploration of identity without a commitment to a specific ideology (Erikson, 1956). These individuals use the exploration period to define and experiment with ideas that reflect their core beliefs.

The moratorium status exemplifies high self-esteem, internal focus, positive interpersonal interaction, high levels of anxiety, and the need for acceptance and rebellion. Lastly, identity achieved individuals are described as having committed to an ideology that embodies their values and beliefs. They are typically confident, independent, and intelligent individuals who are well received by others. Identity
achieved individuals have a well-defined self-concept and ego identity that fosters self-awareness and the development of individual identity. These individuals maintain high levels of self-esteem during periods of uncertainty (Erikson, 1956).

Marcia held that all four statuses could be arranged along a development continuum with identity achievement and identity diffusion serving as opposites. Identity moratorium and identity foreclosure are categorized as intermediate statuses based on their proximity to identity achievement. According to Marcia, identity achievement is the fixed end state of the identity development continuum and is representative of optimal growth and maturation. Subsequent identity development research contradicts Marcia’s assertion that achievement is the end state of identity development (Meeus, Iedema, Helsen, & Vollebergh, 1999). Individuals believed to have achieved lower level statues may experience a similar identity satisfaction or high levels of psychological well-being in comparison to those individuals who experience identity achievement. Moreover, identity achievement itself does not automatically equate to positive identity resolution (Marcia, 1967; Read, Adams, & Dodson, 1984; Willemsen, & Waterman, 1991).

Identity is presented as a significant organizing principle within an individual and as the link between individual and society. Physical, cognitive, and personality domains encompass the content of identity (Ryff & Marshall, 1999). The critical processes of identity are assimilation (i.e., an interpretation of life events based on an established cognitive framework) and accommodation (i.e., changes to identity in response to experiences). Individuals seek a state of identity that maintains a balance and allows alternation between assimilation and accommodation. In doing so, one's identity is
flexible enough to allow appropriate change yet structured adequately to prevent identity from being impacted by every new experience (Ryff, 1991)

Table 2

*Identity Theory Comparison*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological identity perspective:</th>
<th>Sociological identity characteristics:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Internal needs prioritized</td>
<td>1. External needs prioritized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. An individual’s cognitive and mental processes emphasized</td>
<td>2. Identity is the product of social roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The self is based on individual experiences</td>
<td>3. The self develops from interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Singular self/identity assumed</td>
<td>4. There are multiple selves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The self works to ratify identity</td>
<td>5. The self strives to organize social life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Are caring individuals</td>
<td>6. Are caring, open-minded, and considerate</td>
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Identity assimilation is the interpretation of life experiences that are pertinent to the development of the emotional and cognitive schemas that become part of identity. Experiences that are relevant to the identity assimilation process include significant life occurrences that influence an individual’s self-definition, environmental interactions, and aspects of cognitive functioning (Ryff & Marshall, 1999).
Figure 1. Identity Accommodation Flow Chart

Figure 1 depicts the changing of an individual's identity as a result of an identity relevant experience. Events that are incorporated into one's identity are subjective due to the subjective nature of an individual's sense of self (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The hypnotized desired status of individual identity is a state of dynamic balance with the environment, which fosters alternation between assimilation and accommodation. The individual's identity would be flexible enough to incorporate relevant change yet sufficiently rigid to prevent every new experience from jeopardizing an individual sense of self. Thus, accommodation would be triggered when assimilation can no longer fit new events into the individual's existing identity (Kiecolt, 1994).

Identity can be divided into multiple domains that interact with a central core (Ryff & Marshall, 1999). Accordingly, the central core is theorized to contain a combination of the most common aspects of individual's identity. Amongst the salient domains are competence, cognition, personality, and intimacy. Competence becomes a key consideration when dealing with issues related to an individual’s ability to maintain
independence. A lack of competence may cause an individual to question their self-efficacy or self-esteem (Bandura, 1994). Personality includes self-acknowledgment of characteristics relevant to an individual's disposition. Personality is observable through one's emotions, coping and conflict style, traits, and values (Bono, Boles, Judge, & Lauver, 2002). An individual’s personality characteristics may change over time as he or she matures and gains self-acceptance. Lastly, the intimacy domain refers to ones most significant interpersonal relationships (Schultz, & Schultz, 2009; Schwartz, Zamboanga, Wang, & Olthuis, 2009). An individual's central core is assumed to have derived from self-conceptions form during early childhood interactions with parents. These initial childhood interactions ultimately form.

**The Development of Individual Identity**

The development of identity usually begins from birth to age three. During this period and continuing into early childhood, children are reintroduced to their imperfections and limitations. It is at this stage that a child gains awareness of human social interactions (Archer, 1982; Barki & Hartwick, 2004). Through observation of family, friends, and teachers, a child begins to understand what is acceptable and what is not. Observational learning (modeling) is the most common way in which children develop and pattern their Identity (Dinkha, Abdulhamid, & Abdelhalim, 2008; Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2010). Children ultimately learn that it is in their best interest to make life choices that increase their chances for success. Success, however, is often predicated on being validated by others, which can cause a person to lose sight of individual values (Akse, Hale III, Engles, Raaijmakers, Meeus, 2004).
Childhood experiences with peers and caregivers are directly related to the development of social competencies including the personal dispositions that form the foundation of self-perception, and one’s ability to enter into and maintain close relationships. These vital social competencies shape an individual’s ability to understand another person’s point of view and influence their ability to work through conflict. Childhood experiences also affect whether an adult will possess the social competency necessary for mutual win-win conflict resolution. Individuals with low levels of agreeability are typically more arrogant and develop combative interpersonal styles in comparison to their high-level counterparts (Dehann, Dekovic, Vande Akker, Stoltz, & Prinzie, 2013; Dehaan, Prinzie, & Dekovic, 2010).

One’s childhood years are marked by expanded self-awareness and exploration in which children develop a belief in their uniqueness, skill, and preferences (lagattuta, 2005). At approximately ages 2 to 3, children become aware of the connection between desire and emotion. Within five years child relates to the social group as an essential aspect of self that indicates that assimilation has occurred and signaled the need for acceptance (Bozhovich, 2009; Campos, Frankel, & Camras, (2004). During this time, children may also acquire preferences, talents, or behaviors that conflict with their group thus triggering intrapersonal strife (Patterson, Bigler, & Swann Jr., 2010). The knowledge gained at this age forms that basis for a child’s understanding that emotional satisfaction is shaped by both desire and expectations that at times restrict one’s ability to choose their behaviors. By age 7, it is expected and commonly understood that the social group's humans live in often prevent self-determination of behavior. In fact, a central
task of childhood is to obtain skillsets that allow an individual to change, stop, or avoid actions that violate parental or societal standards (Lagattuta, 2005).

According to Cramer, attempts by children to imitate the behaviors of parents and respected figures ultimately establish the foundation for the development of personal identity (2001). Identification through imitation is also a defense mechanism that functions to reduce anxiety and protect an individual’s self-esteem. The use of defense mechanisms can be associated with individuals that are searching for their identity (e.g., identity moratorium) or experiencing a crisis as a result of the identity development process (e.g., identity diffusion).

Identification as a means of survival is observable when a victim takes on characteristics of an abuser or an adolescents attempt to identify with a group to avoid the feeling of loneliness and isolation. Research reveals that threats to identity in late adolescence increases ones perceived need to identify with others as a means of survival (Cramer, 2001). The increased demand for relational association spurs a greater use of identification-based defense mechanisms which indicate a connection to the overall development of identity. For example, as an adolescent separates from his or her parents to assert independence they consciously decrease their identification with parental values and behaviors. These individuals often experience ensuing feeling of insecurity, confusion, and anxiety, which stem from the change in their familial relationship (Cramer, 2001).

The process of identity development is heavily nested in an individual’s belief system and is responsible for establishing the stability and uniqueness associated with an
identity. The inability to develop functional identities can negatively affect emotional well-being, the coherence of identity, or psychosocial maturation (Pilarska, 2014). Furthermore, the manner in which an individual construes the self will have an impact on their identity makeup and stability. Self-construal refers to the method in which an individual understands their self in comparison to others. Earlier attempts to understand identity were based on the private-self model, which did not take into consideration social roles and relationships (Pilarska, 2014).

The concept of self-construal addresses the complexity of the self and explores an individual's need for both individuation and affiliation. The self-construal perspective holds that there are two types of self-concepts that influence identity development. The first, interdependent self-concept, describes an individual self-definition based on significant interpersonal relationships. Individuals with an interdependent self-construal are less likely to strive for uniqueness and often define themselves in terms attributes shared with others (Pilarska, 2014). These individuals are connected with their social-cultural affiliations. Interdependent construal implies little awareness of one’s true self and the presence of a current belief system that facilitates external approval. These individuals are primarily concerned with assimilation and maintaining a harmonious sense of belonging (Pilarska, 2014). The second, independent self-concept, describes individuals whose constellation of thoughts and behavior reflects a self-perception that they are unique and distinct individuals. Individual's with an independent self-construal consider themselves distinctively different from others, consistently strive to reinforce
their uniqueness, and establish healthy boundaries that protect their sense of individualism (Pilarska, 2014).

Independent and interdependent self-construal shape the motivational component that forms and maintains identity. Empirical evidence reveals that self-esteem is positively correlated with independent self-construal were associated with an increase in positive affect, a decrease in adverse affect, an increase in perceived life satisfaction. According to a 2014 study conducted by Aleksandra Pilarska, a high level of separateness is associated with increased self-worth. Ultimately, this heightened sense of self-worth promotes positive affect and life satisfaction for individuals with independent self-construals. Distinctiveness and separateness are less beneficial to the emotional well-being of individuals with an interdependent construal. Additionally, the increased adverse effect associated with a weakened sense of separateness is known to suppress the interdependent self-construal (Pilarska, 2014).

**Structural Perspective**

From a sociological standpoint, the self can be understood from two different paradigms: (1) structural perspective and (2) interactionist perspective of the self. Structuralists posit that the self emerges within a social context and is subsequently shaped by an individual’s social environment. From this perspective, the self cannot be understood outside of social context. In essence, the social structure produces the attitudes and commitments that influence behavior and shape identity (Ryff, & Marshall, 1999).
**Interactionist Perspective**

Advocates of the interactionist perspective hold that individuals are motivated by their values and desire to impose their identity on the social world. The interactionist perspective takes into consideration that the individuals will differ in their interpretation of social interactions. Hence, the self is viewed less as a product of the environment and more as the result of an individual creating the environment in which the self will exist. Interactionists suggest that a primary motive of social behavior is the desire to protect and nurture the self. At minimum, individuals seek to avoid situations and environments that are at odds with the self (Roberts & Robins, 2004; Rosenberg, 1979, Willemsen & Waterman, 1991)). Interactionists view people as architects of their own lives and place significant emphasis on an individual's ability to interpret and assign meaning to their social environment. Self-perceptions determine the degree of influence that social structures have on individuals. Hence, the self is not simply the result of social structure but acts to shape and create it, which results in a sense of self that was generated by individual vice a group. (Bauer, Schwab, & McAdams, 2011; Oldham & Morris, 1995; Zalk & Denissen, 2015). Although socialization has a strong impact on identity, interactionist suggest that (1) individuals are more than their observable social roles and (2) all aspects of the self are not products of socialization.

According to Barondes (2012), creating life narratives is a fundamental human function that organizes experiences to define life direction, and explain behavior. Life narratives are imaginative interpretations that promote a sense of identity during an individual's teenage years and ultimately influence decision making. Erik Erikson
viewed the construction of life narratives as the initial composition of identity. The motivation to create life narratives derives a desire to reconcile goals and interest with social opportunities and expectations (Barondes, 2012). Erikson and Barondes assume that the onset of identity is caused by an unconscious decision to develop characteristics and a sense of self that allows an individual to cope with their environment.

Barondes suggest that throughout adolescents an individual decides who they want to be and devises a path to obtain that identity (2012). During this period it is not uncommon for individuals to experience intrapersonal conflict resulting from an inability to align their skills, ideas, and goals with social demands. These individuals ultimately settle on an identity that suits their interest and maximizes their opportunity for success. As identity continues to form an individual unconsciously shapes his or her memories to conform to their desired internal self-image (Barondes, 2012).

To be an adult means, among other things, to see one's life both in retrospect and in prospect. By accepting some definition of who he is, usually on the basis of a function in an economy, a place in the sequence of generations, and a status in the structure of society, the adult is able to selectively reconstruct his past in such a way that, step by step, it seems to have planned him, or better he seems to have planned it (McLean & Moin, 2015,p. 90).

Erikson viewed such distortions or modifications as vital to the foundation of a coherent identity. It is the modification of life narratives that allow individuals to reconcile ideas and attitudes that differ from environmental or cultural norms. To satisfy both personal and cultural demands an individual seeks environments and relationships
that support what they want to become while creating life narratives that explain the synthesis (Barondes, 2012).

**Influence on Perception**

Many conflicts are the result of an individual’s perception or misperception (Weeks, 1994). Regardless of the type of conflict, an understanding of perception is critical in determining causes or formulating resolutions (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). When Psychologists examine individual identity, they often focus on the individual differences that influence reactions to environmental or situational circumstances. How an individual view their environment is perhaps the single most influential factor in their behavior. Their perception ultimately becomes the reality that determines identity and its associated behavior (Bandura, 1986; Cluster, 2012; & Keba, 2004). An individual's perception significantly impacts the core attributes of individual identity. Differences in perception explain why individuals develop different views or reactions when exposed to similar experiences or setting. Conflict emerges when the perception of one person clashes with the perception of another. During conflict, it is an individual's perception that determines what resolutions they are amenable to the acceptable cost. The perceptions that inform an individual’s identity are reinforced by the expectations of others (Dancy, 2014; Oldham & Morris, 1995).

Self-perception is a significant contributing factor of identity development and intrapersonal conflict (Brink, 2003; Brown, 1957; Clercq, Rettew, Althoff, & Bolle, 2012; Cote & Levine, 1988; Keller, 2012). Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), published a multi-dimensional nonsecure attachment model based on an individual’s
positive and negative perception of self and others. Each style embodies distinct interpersonal characteristics that influence an individual’s conflict style. Bartholomew and Horowitz’ conflict style theory states that individuals with a dismissing style display high levels of self-confidence, hostility, and coldness combined with low levels of emotional articulation, warmth or positive regard for others. The preoccupied method is characterized by high levels of self-confidence, passionate articulation and dependency. The fearful style involves low levels of confidence, assertiveness, openness, and dependence. Ultimately, the lessons learned from attachment to others during early life relationships have an impact on conflict style (Corcoran & Mallinckrodt, 2000). Dysfunctional relationships lead to anger during problem-solving, higher distress levels, and negatively impacts an individuals ability to relate to others.

According to Carl Rodgers, the environmental experiences and interaction with others are responsible for the development of the social self. The social self is a product of individual self-critique and feedback from parents, teachers, friends, siblings, and priest that form the environment (Rogers, 1959). Consequently, an individual becomes more concerned with the opinion and perception of another vice his or her views. According to Rogers, dysfunction occurs when an individual allows the expectations of others to usurp their innate system of belief. The desire to remain or become part of a group prevents individuals from getting in touch with their true self (Ryckman, 2008). Furthermore, Rodgers posits that maladaptive behavior occurs under challenging circumstances and is not in accordance with a person’s fundamental nature. As this study proved, experiences that reduce the opportunity for an individual to become the best
version of the self create a cycle of confusion and disorder. The intense desire to receive validation and acceptance from others stems from an individual’s need for positive regard or the approval that is gain by fulfilling the expectations of others. The process of seeking approval from others prevents individuals from moving toward actualization (Ryckman, 2008; Schultz & Schultz, 2009).

Membership in social groups leads individuals to form self-perceptions that are consistent with the group. Research reveals that as a child’s awareness of group norms increases they become more mindful of the group’s needs (Bozhovich, 2009; Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinard, (1998); Fleeson & Noftle, 2008; & Grist & McCord, 2010). Group members who feel overly dissimilar from their social group will strive to increase their group identification in an attempt to feel more similar to affiliated members. The reconciliation of self-identity versus group identities is a continuous process that serves individuals’ needs for belonging and uniqueness (Patterson, Bigler, & Swann, 2010). However, before an individual can achieve a balance between group and self-perceptions they must acquire stable views of their traits, skills, and values (Lagattuta, 2005).

**Self-Perception Conflicts**

There are four types of perceptual disputes: conflicts arising from (1) self-perception, (2) perceptions of others, (3) differing perceptions of situations, and (4) perceptions of threats. The various forms of perception-based conflicts can be characterized into two major categories. The first type, external based conflict, occurs when individuals base their self-perceptions on the expectation or perception of others. Prolonged exposure to external perception based conflict will eventually cause
intrapersonal conflict. Unresolved intrapersonal conflict will have a negative impact on interpersonal relationships. The second, value base conflict, occurs when an individual's behavior is inconsistent with values or when the perception of values lacks clarity. Prolonged exposure to value-based conflict influences behavior and may result in various forms of conflict (Weeks, 1994).

**Environmental Impact**

Gordon Allport held that individuals are motivated to act by their need to adjust to the environment and a desire to maintain psychological harmony. Although Allport believed that individuals are both proactive and reactive, he viewed psychologically healthy individuals as more likely to engage in proactive behaviors. Allport identified the following criteria as prerequisites for psychological health and growth: (1) a broad sense of self, (2) positive interpersonal relationships, (3) emotional security or self-acceptance, (4) a realistic view of the world, (5) insight and humor, and (6) a unifying philosophy of life (Van Lieshout, 2000).

Individuals are more likely to thrive and flourish in an environment that compliments their values in contrast to settings that conflict with their needs. The relationship between environmental elements that significantly influence an individual’s development and those that foster compatibility reflects the tenets of person-environment (Roberts & Robins, 2004) fit theory. In time, the result of prolonged exposure to an environment causes assimilation of new roles and the acceptance of mainstream cultural values. Lofquist and Dawis (1991), revealed that changes in person-environment fit
could be attributed to changes in one’s value system as a consequence of environmental interaction or changes in perception (Kiran-Esen, 2012).

Research reveals that person-environment consonance leads to greater psychological adjustment, identity consistency, higher levels of self-esteem, and decreased levels of neuroticism (Roberts & Robins, 2004). An unfetter environment has the propensity to levy significant demands on an individual’s identity development. During adolescence, the development of a harmonious identity is crucial to continuity in adulthood. When an individual manipulates the manner in which they view their environment to increase the potential for assimilation they reduce the likelihood of realizing a harmonious inner identity. The fact that person-environment fit increases over time suggest that individuals will adapt to gain acceptance and become fully integrated into their environment. It does not indicate that the impacts will affect everyone the same or that the results can be generalized to the broader society. Cognitive restructuring as a matter of necessity vice choice will likely yield an arrested identity that stunts the maturation process (Roberts & Jackson, 2008; Van Lieshout, 2006).

According to Horney (1992), an individual’s initial perspective is distorted if their childhood environment consists of parents who are preoccupied satisfying personal neurotic needs to provide the appropriate and required a degree of affection. Most often these parent's neurosis causes the child to develop insecurities and anxiety. As a means of coping with fear and uncertainty, a child creates an idealized self-image, which ultimately leads to their neurosis. Neurosis can be described as a distorted view of self and one’s environment which results from the irrational needs of an individual (Horny,
Neurosis derives from disturbances in human relationships that are often specific to one’s culture and environment. The irrational needs associated with neurosis originate from feelings of isolation, helplessness, fear, and hostility. Such demands negatively affect how an individual perceives conflict and the manner in which they choose to work through it. More importantly, the combination of a neurosis based idealized self-image and irrational needs negatively influence identity development and an individual’s overall well-being. Although associated feeling has the propensity to contribute to the onset an identity crisis, each feeling offers individuals a sense of safety and a means of coping with their environment (Horny, 1992).

The idealized image is an unconscious phenomenon in which most individuals are not aware. In cases, whereas the individual is slightly aware of the contradictions between the actual self and the idealized image they often frantically worked to bridge the gap of perceived minor imperfections (Horny, 1992). Idealized images are hindrances to growth because they allow an individual to avoid facing the shortcomings that stand in the way of actualization. The more unrealistic the idealized image, the more critical it is for an individual to receive outside validation for those attributes they are uncertain of. Consequently, the ability to achieve the ideal self is decreased by one's dependence on others for validation (Horny, 1992).

**Conflict and Emotion**

Although there is no precise, concise, universally accepted definition of conflict it is widely accepted that conflict involves disagreement, negative emotion, and interference (Barki & Hartwick, 2004). Previous empirical studies have defined conflict
using descriptive statements that offer little insight into what a conflict is or the conditions necessary for it to occur. Moreover, the awareness of irreconcilable differences or disagreement alone may constitute conflict at its lowest form but will have a limited impact on behavior without an elicit element (Angier, 1927; Charland, 2002; Dancy, 2014). Coser (1967) defined conflict as a “struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources in which the opponent aims to neutralize, injure, or eliminate the rivals.”

Deutsch (1973) defined conflict as the existence of incompatible activities which action “prevents, obstructs, interferes with, injures, or in some way makes resolution less likely or useful. Wilmot & Hocker (2011), define conflict as an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals.

Two types of conflict apply to a given dispute. First, there are constructive conflicts which do not deviate from the initiating issue and are categorized by tactics such as negotiation and problem-solving. The second category, destructive conflict, are those disputes that escalate beyond underlying issues and are characterized by the use of tactics such as threats and coercion (Jensen-Campbell, Adams, & Malcolm, 2003). Additionally, the style of response to an intrapersonal conflict is primarily influenced by an individual’s beliefs and value system (Mosak & Lefevre, 2003). According to Thomas Szasz, individuals respond to conflict in two ways:

Faced with conflict a person may react in one of two ways; he may seek what he likes or avoid what he dislikes…The seeker goes after what he wants. He tries to
maximize utility. The avoider, on the other hand, moves away from what he does not want…he attempts to minimize disutility…The seeker is moved by the hope of gain; the avoider, by the fear of loss (Szasz, 1988, p 72).

According to Sverdlik (2011), all conflict can be divided into two categories that take into account the personal experience. The first category is referred to as the concrete facet that describes the specific life situations that become the themes of conflict. Given the unique and varied nature of conflict, identifying concrete facets of conflict alone will not increase a practitioner’s overall understanding. Secondly, the abstract aspect refers to the psychological element that personalizes conflict while increasing subjectivity.

Motives, needs, and personal values are examples of abstract facets that have a tremendous impact on an individual’s interpretation of conflict. The abstract facet is also responsible for the subjective meaning individuals attribute to conflict. Regardless of personal values, the influence of the abstract facet is evident in some manner. Values guide behavior and are a cognitive representation of an individual’s aspirations. Therefore, values are both abstract and concrete thus rendering them extremely useful in understanding the etiology of conflicts.

Conflict as a whole is an introspective emotional experience regardless of the manner in which it is manifested. In fact, even external physical conflicts originate from within an individual. The emotions associated with conflict are the result of an individual's perception formulated through interaction within their environment. These feelings establish a core fear system that significantly influences cognition and behavior (Locklear, 2013). Emotions elicit the frustration, anger, friction, and tension associated
with interpersonal conflict thus changing behavior. These negative feelings often inform a person’s perception that their interest is being opposed or deleteriously affected (See Appendix A). Ignoring the emotions associated with intrapersonal or interpersonal conflict can increase the likelihood of impasse or undesired disruptions (Schuman, 2005).

Schwarz (2002) define emotion as the feelings and distinct thoughts that cause a person to act. The primary and most intense emotions a person may experience is fear, surprise, anger, disgust, sadness, and happiness. It is likely these basic emotions evolved from physiological reactions to ensure individual or group survival (Rorty, 1978; Thoits, 1989; Alanen, 2003). Burkitt (1997), posits that the discharge of distressing emotions (grief, fear, anger, embarrassment, boredom) is a biological necessity. Repression of painful emotions and bodily tensions may cause neurotic behavior patterns and may lead to intrapersonal conflict.

Emotions are distinguishable from feelings, affects, moods, and sentiments. Feelings often describe physical states such as hunger, pain, fatigue. Affects are the negative or positive evaluations of an object, behavior, or idea. Thus, emotions can be described as culturally delineated feelings or affect (Thoits, 1989).

Emotions are the result of internal perception vice the product of external stimuli. An accurate understanding of emotions can allow an individual to receive the messages that are associated with one’s feelings. It is these underlying messages that influence the perception of self and the environment. A meaningful understanding of the self can render conflicts more about unmet needs and less about other individuals or external
stimuli. Ultimately, individuals who can focus on self-needs can take responsibility for their role resolving conflict (Rosenwald, 2008).

Emotions are learned social constructs which derive from interpersonal interaction. However, they are neither the exclusive product of social interaction nor the sole result of biology (Long & Brecke, 2003). External social interaction serves as a stimulus for the expression of emotion. In turn, emotions inspire thought and inform cognitive functioning. Emotion and cognition are mutually exclusive aspects of behavior that function together to shape perception, critical thought, and problem-solving.

Research has linked emotionality with social outcomes and individual levels of stability. A high level of negative emotions is positively associated with lower levels of happiness, job satisfaction, relationship quality and physical and mental health (Barrick, Mount & Judge, 2001; Kiran-Esen, 2012).

During the conflict resolution process, the ability of an individual to identify problems, interpret meaning, and formulate a strategy is primarily the byproduct of cognition and emotion (Barbalet, 2006; Birgenheir & Pepper, 2011; Bower, 1999, Luria, 1933). Hence, the interrelated nature of both emotion and cognition renders it extremely difficult to understand one without considering the other entirely. Collectively, they serve as the foundation for an individual’s journey towards the ideal self.

Emotions serve as conduits to action and are often reactions to failed interaction with the environment. Feeling such as fear, anger, frustration, and shame are therefore consequences of a perceived impediment to an expected goal (Long & Brecke, 2003). Intrapersonal conflict is an example of an individual’s attempt to push past an obstacle to
a desired goal or end-state. IECs are the product of the frustration caused by an individual's inability to progress towards their ideal self. Identity is the aspect of one’s sense of self that is validated by interpersonal experiences and the socio-cultural environment. Potential threats to identity serve as a bridge between emotion, behavior and the environment.

Individual are the primary source of their conflict is so much as they choose the degree in which conflict is experienced. The consternation and discomfort associated with intrapersonal conflict make it difficult for individuals to identify the need believe to have forced them into a dispute. Instead, it is more comfortable and convenient to focus externally on the actions of others (Ury, 1991; Ury, Brett, & Goldberg, 1993). It is difficult for emotionally invested disputants to control their emotions and communicate emphatically (e.g., attentive listening, paraphrasing, reflection, etc.). This is in part because emotions are shaped by social-obligations that influence an individual’s perception and subsequent behavior (Lagattuta, 2005). Disputants are often guided by emotion and a belief that he or she must convince the other party to agree with their position (i.e., win/lose). Consequently, it is easier to defend a position than to make an effort to understand the need of the other party during conflict resolution (Abelson, 1959; Bouckenooghe, Vanderheyden, Mestdagh, & Laethem, 2007).

Emotions may also be viewed as the collaborative result of general arousal and specific sociocultural factors (Thoits, 1989). Emotions can be a means of understanding the environment or interpreting behaviors of self or others people within society. It is an individual’s concern about impression management and self-esteem that guides actual
behavior. Denzin (1984) describes emotion as a "self-feeling…an emotional experience that does not in some way has the self, the self-system, or the self or self-system of the other as its referent seems inconceivable. . . It is through emotionality, imagination, sympathy, fellow-feeling, and revealed self-feelings that persons come to know themselves and one another."

Failure to identify the manner and degree in which emotions influence a dispute can perpetuate a cycle of mistrust, anxiety, blame, or violence and modify the initial underlying cause of the conflict. The pull between one's emotional needs and the expectations of others may cause an individual to lose touch with their underlying need thus adapting a win-lose approach to conflict resolution that will likely antagonize the other party.

The nature or foundation of emotions often determines an individual’s attitude towards conflict resolution and willing to work towards common ground. Emotions are the genesis of both intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict and serve as a primary influence on cognition and behavior. For example, multi-layered emotions may derive from one’s belief that their identity or goals have been threatened. These individuals conclude that their inability to resolve interpersonal or intrapersonal conflict is an indictment on their sense of self or who they are as individuals (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011).

**Functions of Emotion**

Responses to stimuli are predicated on root feelings. Emotions help individuals adapt to their environment and cope with various challenges. The feelings derived from
emotion can influence an individual’s conflict resolution path. Additionally, emotions organize perceptions, cognition, and the coping mechanisms that accomplish different task during the conflict resolution process. It is the multidimensional nature of emotions that influence both conflict complexity, intensity and resolution. The emotional foundations established in early life forms the basis for schemas. These organized patterns regulate other emotions and influence identity development. Ultimately, the resolution of a conflict is predicated on overcoming raw emotion.

The Role of Needs and Values in Conflict

Needs and values are the avenues through which individuals determine what is important to them. Although needs are universal, the prioritization of needs is based on life circumstances and may differ for each (Rosenwald, 2008). Values or needs may cause an individual to view the actions of others unfavorably or influence their willingness to resolve conflicts. During conflict resolution, an impasse occurs when needs are confused for desires or are perceived to be incompatible with the need of others. Hence, the clarifying of need and perceptions is one of the keys to successful conflict resolution (Weeks, 1994).

The resolution of conflict is predicated on the ability of an individual to find a solution that meets all needs while encapsulating the needs of the other party. When individuals involved in disputes become aware of what needs are connected to a conflict, they are better able to finds ways to address them. Focusing on needs allows individuals involved in a dispute to maintain higher levels of flexibility and while minimize unrealistic expectations that threaten the conflict resolution process (Rosenwald, 2008).
Additionally, an acknowledgment of needs can mitigate mechanisms that render conflicts intractable.

**Basic Needs**

Needs can be described as conditions that cannot go unmet. Conflict arises when an individual or group concludes their needs have been threatened, ignored, or obstructed (Weeks, 1994). An individual has two basic requirements that shape their belief system and frame the manner in which life events are interpreted, or conflict is created. The first category, *physical needs*, represents those items that are necessary to sustain life (e.g., food, shelter, safety). The second category, *emotional needs*, are those requirements that are necessary for self-actualization or a healthy state of mind (e.g., sense of belonging, acceptance, emotional security, self-worth, life-meaning, purpose, and identity).

Emotional needs, which are based on a collection of experiences and consequences, become schemas which affect cognition and behavior (Dancy, 2014; Nixon & Watson, 2001; Rorty, 1978; Thamm, 1992). Furthermore, emotional needs are the basis of every action taken by an individual. These requirements explain why an individual behaves in a specific manner and the timing associated with their decisions. Regardless of whether an individual is consciously aware of their actions, their observable behavior is a result of an emotional need at some level (Campos, Frankel, & Camras, 2004; & Thamm, 1992). During a conflict, the basic needs of an individual may appear to compete for fulfillment or contradict each other. For example, the need for a healthy self-identity may at times oppose the need to be accepted by others. The intensity
of competing emotional needs may force an individual to sacrifice their self-vision as a method of coping.

**Values and Conflict**

Values conflicts are products of environmental socialization and the desire of an individual to maintain authenticity. Although a person's belief system may change over time, what remains consistent is one's desire to stay authentic and genuine. The process of environmental socialization often requires that an individual make short-term sacrifices to increase the probability of future success or gain social acceptance.

Conflicting desires are products of opposing values and therefore essential elements of internal conflict. An individual's pursuit of one set of dimensional values will render the opposing less critical. For example, an individual's pursuit of self-actualization or self-direction may cause them to deemphasize the conservative values that are promoted by family, culture, and religion. The struggle with an ongoing inner battle does not exempt an individual from other external forms of conflict. Instead, the values associated with internal conflict influences decision making and behavior. Individuals are likely to experience conflicts that revolve around opposing values. Values influence the perception and interpretation of internal conflict, which in turn explains the reasons individuals experience similar conflict themes differently. It is, therefore, necessary to explore the context of both the concrete and abstract facets of conflict to deduce meaning and potential resolution strategies (Sverdlik, 2011).

Prudence, the act of sacrificing now for later, may cause inner turmoil as individuals cope with feelings of inauthenticity. The struggle to find a balance between
prudence and authenticity creates internal conflict within many individuals. These individuals often lack the practical reasoning or ability to establish a link between present and future interest. According to Brink (2003), people usually invest in a short-term benefit at the expense of long-term interest leading to morality, genuineness, judgment, or self-control issues. Although the connection between the two entities is not always obvious, the association between prudence and authenticity is strong.

Prudence requires that individual remain mindful of their overall best interest, which in turn informs the perspective that significantly influences their ability to learn from past success and failures. The concept of best interest or overall good governs an individual’s current attitude, deliberation process, and behavior. The idea of prudence can appear ineffable because it can be challenging to ascertain future belief while making present-day decisions. Moreover, remaining authentic true requires a person to assign greater value to the here and now. Consequently, behavior and decision making is based primarily on current concerns with limited regard for tomorrow.

Schwartz (1992) identified ten common types of values that are interrelated and have a significant influence on conflict style: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security. According to Shwartz (1992), the ten universal values will fall into one of two basic dimensions. The first aspect contrasts self-enhancement values (e.g., power and achievement) with self-transcendence values (e.g., universalism and benevolence). Self-enhancement values describe the pursuit of self-interest in contrast to self-transference values, which embody the concern for the welfare, and interest of others. The second dimension contrasts
willingness to change (e.g., self-direction and stimulation) with conservatism. The desire to change values describe an individual's emphasis on independent action, thoughts, feelings, and a hunger for new experiences in contrast to conservative values which emphasize self-restriction, order, and resistance to change (Sverdlik, 2011).

**The Role of Identity in Conflict**

Identities are complex and can be ridged or transitional (Bazerman, Tenbrunsel, & Wade-Benzoni, 1988; Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2006; Sandole, Byrne, Sandole-Staroste, & Senhi, 2009). The concept refers to one's sense of self or a mean by which individuals relate and understand themselves. During conflict, identity validates or justifies the positions taken by those involved in the dispute. As a theoretical concept, identity explains behavior, dispute dynamics, and potential conflict mitigating strategies.

Identities gain significance and meaning to an individual through sociocultural interaction when individuals seek a connection with the greater society. Given the broad applicability of identity as a concept, theorists often distinguish between the personal and social aspect of identity. Social identity is a facet of one's self-image that derives or is affiliated with a group; whereas personal identity refers to one sense of individuality, autonomy, and uniqueness.

The desire to safeguard and protect one's public image is connected to a person’s ability to maintain the identity they have established. A threat to self-image or personal identity alone could trigger or escalate a conflict. Moreover, a conflict that results from a threat to one's identity can increase intractability (Sandole, Byrne, Sandole-Staroste, & Senhi, 2009). Threats to self-image move emotions and perceptions of self and others to
the forefront of a party’s conflict waging strategy. Identity threats contribute to stalemates, defensive responses, counterproductive posturing, and one-sided resolution expectations. Additionally, identity threats may lead to offensive retaliation, retribution, or unreasonable request for restitution. Inevitably, the introduction of identity into a conflict increases the likelihood that ensuing assumptions will render disagreements into intractable conflicts that necessitate the discussion of identity needs (Pilarska, 2014; Sugimura & Mizokami, 2012; Zalk & Denissen, 2015).

John Burton developed a theory about intractable conflict that posits when human needs go unfulfilled it fuels disputes. Burton identified identity as a universal, non-negotiable and vital essential need that is at the root of most conflicts. Historically, individuals have gone to great lengths to satisfy identity needs because a failure to do so often causes dysfunction. Burton suggests that when denial of identity needs is at the root of a conflict, traditional resolution methods are likely to fail. Traditional approaches tend to focus on symptoms vice causes, which fail to acknowledge an individual’s basic needs (Sandole, Byrne, Sandole-Staroste, & Senhi, 2009).

Intrapersonal Conflict

According to Wilmot & Hocker (2011), identity and relational factors are the core elements of disputes. An individual’s sense of self and perception of how they are viewed by others often overlap. Human factors, which significantly influence cognition and emotion, contribute to the perceived causes of conflict are subjective. A tenuous and fluctuating sense of self can impede progress and negatively impact conflict resolution. A weakened self-identity results in efforts to suppress conflict issues (Kegan, 1982).
Wilmot & Hocker (2011) defined intrapersonal conflict as an ‘internal strain that creates a state of ambivalence, conflicting internal dialogue, or lack of resolution in ones thinking and feeling.” Although there is no timeframe associated with the onset of intrapersonal conflict, once intrapersonal perceptions are manifested they form the foundation of all conflict. Intrapersonal conflicts can be further defined as the subjective experience of incompatibles, which have fundamental consequences for well-being and health development (Sverdlik, 2011). Such conflicts describe the struggle between inner competing motivations within the self. Individuals experiencing intrapersonal conflicts are unlikely to view their struggles philosophically. Instead, these individuals tend to sensationalize conflict into something with greater meaning.

An intrapersonal conflict is an enormously influential phenomenon with tremendous developmental consequences. Early age intrapersonal conflict has been linked to cognition, social understanding, maladaptive behavior, and emotional development. Conflict, in general, can stunt growth if experienced in a way that causes it to escalate out of control. However, conflict can also promote ontogeny within individuals while increasing the potential for growth.

During intrapersonal or interpersonal conflict, preservation of self-identity is often critically important to those involved. Identity-based conflict is characterized by lower levels of flexibility and increased unrealistic expectations. Disputants become so adverse to losing that they engage in destructive behavior that masks causes of conflict, conceal common ground, and raise conflict intensity. If s person concludes that their sense of self
has been threatened or damaged, the response is often to attack the identity of their adversary.

Adlerian theorists regard intrapersonal conflict as a creation by individuals to avoid dealing with underlying issues. The ambivalences associated with intrapersonal conflict render an individual’s actions vice words the most accurate indicator of the purpose of the conflict (Mosak & Lefevre, 2003). An individual experiencing inner conflict often feels helpless and ambivalent regarding expectations and desires. Henceforth, there may be apparent inconsistencies between an individual's intentions and actions. Intrapersonal conflicts are usually the result of an individual’s struggle to act in their best interest. The existence and maintenance of an intrapersonal conflict is a deliberate act that requires extraordinary efforts deign to fulfill specific interest (Mosak & Lefevre, 2003).

**Interpersonal conflict**

The desire to be connected to others is a basic emotional human need that develops from birth (Luyten & Blatt, 2013). It is the connection to others that provides people with a sense of belonging thus establishing a foundation for identity development. Interpersonal conflicts are created when there is a perception of irreconcilable need-based differences that are exacerbated by the interdependent nature of many disputes (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). It is the misconception of how the actions of one party affect another that creates the win-lose dynamic associated with many forms of conflict.

During early life stages, adaptive identity development is predicated on the successful coexistence individual self-exploration and relationships. The development of
self fosters an internal maturation that renders an individual capable of engaging in healthy interpersonal relationships. Without a proper balance between relationships and self-definition, maladaptive underlying attachment behavior may occur. Together, interpersonal relationships and self-identity are responsible for an individual’s expectations, beliefs, and feelings.

Barki and Hartwick (2004) defined interpersonal conflict as a dynamic process that occurs between interdependent parties as they experience adverse emotional reactions to perceived disagreements and interference with the attainment of their goals. During interpersonal conflict, the underlying cause of conflict is attributed to factors associated with the personalities of all involved as opposed to the manifested symptoms. Interpersonal conflict is associated with a variety of negative consequences to include difficulty interacting with others and poor decision making. Interpersonal conflict involves multiple individuals whose interpretation of conflict influences the experience for themselves and others.

As awareness of pressure related to interpersonal conflict increases, general self-efficacy expectations decrease. Self-efficacy originates from one’s interaction with family and the environment (Bandura, 1994). Individuals who have a high degree of self-efficacy are better equipped to handle stress or challenging situations (Kiran-Esen, 2012). During later stages of life, peer groups begin to gain significant influence and eventually play a key role in regulating and confirming an individual’s self-efficacy. Research reveals that self-efficacy is associated with self-image, increases in perceived social acceptance, self-worth, self-respect, depression, academic success, problem-solving
capabilities, and the ability to overcome stress. Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy are better equipped to cope with challenging situations or stress (Bandura, 1994).

**Inner turmoil and the Pursuit of the Ideal Self**

Abraham Maslow identified acceptance as one of the most fundamental needs of an individual. During the process of self-development, individuals who never feel embraced or accepted develop low self-esteem or have difficulty self-actualizing (i.e., reaching their full potential). Consequently, these individuals conclude that they must sacrifice their pursuit of the ideal-self to be accepted by others. The decision to forgo self-development to belong marks the beginning of an internal conflict that is often observable in various behaviors during adulthood (Schultz & Schultz, 2009).

To establish the conditions in which basic needs can be satisfied, individuals must have the freedom to explore and exercise self-expression. Once an individual’s basic needs have been met the desire for self-actualization and cognitive understanding become prominent. Self-actualization or one’s growth needs comprise the last category of Maslow’s primary needs (Horney, 1992; Kopala-Sibley, Mongrain, & Zuroff, 2013). According to Maslow, the ability to self-actualize is made difficult by a reluctance to explore the unknown, accept the responsibilities of success, and become vulnerable to social rejection.

Maslow held that individuals often fear their best version of self and the talents that embody their uniqueness (Ryckman, 2008). The movement towards self-actualization is mostly predicated on environmental and socialization conditions that foster trust and respect for individual choice. Therefore, self-actualization is primarily
dependent on exposure to an unrestrictive environment that maximizes personal choice. Restrictive, unsupportive environments produce neurotic personae characterized by inner tendencies that interfere with self-actualization. Maslow identified the inner tendency as the motivating forces that strive toward self-actualization and has the most influential impact on behavior (Ryckman, 2008).

Individuals experience difficulty self-actualizing because they learn to be the best version of who they are expected to be. These individuals wear a mask that suppresses their identity in support of the perceived greater good (i.e., career success and happiness). These are very adept at placing the needs of others ahead of our own. Consequently, these individuals make little effort to maintain their individuality and are not free to pursue their ideal-self (Littauer, 1992; Locklear, 2013; & Oldham & Morris, 1995).

Many people are unaware of their inner contradictions. Such individuals are subconsciously afraid to address the sources of inner conflict due to fears of becoming overwhelmed. These individuals engage in frantic attempts to deny the existence of their conflict or create artificial harmony. Eventually, these efforts to deny inner conflict lead to the creation of an idealized self-image that is inconsistent with the actual self (Horney, 1992). Movement away from one's actual self, allows individuals to distance themselves from their inner conflict and adopt an identity that will enable them to function on a daily basis.

Freud viewed inner conflicts as a struggle between repressed and repressing forces. When inner conflict is addressed based on individual values, it increase the likelihood that individual will experience internal freedom. The presence of inner
conflict indicates that an internal struggle has become overbearing. Moreover, the onset of another form of conflict that results from unaddressed inner distress merely symbolic of the previous inner struggle (Horney, 1992). For example, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is based on the suffering associated with the Palestinians’ perceived lack of identity and a dispute of sacred land. During similar situations, the creation of an external conflict can be an efficient and effective means of resolving internal problems by focusing on external concerns. Hence, individuals, as well as groups, may look for adversaries to maintain or increase internal cohesion (Mosak & Lefevre, 2003).

For children, the possibility of navigating their environment alone can cause inner conflict. Ensuing insecurities may cause them to develop insecurities, indifference, erratic behaviors, or fail to address their personal needs (Horney, 1992). Once an internal conflict is externalized, individuals may conclude that personal interest and environmental demands are incompatible. These individuals begin to question the validity of many lessons they have learned from their environment while embracing hypocritical attitudes towards authoritative figures (Horney, 1992). In doing so, they unconsciously develop coping strategies that are neurotic, character shaping, and have a lasting influence on identity development. The lack of a relatable and genuine identity causes a neurotic person to overcompensate by conflating feelings of significance and power in an efforts to compensate for a sense of inadequacy and vulnerability. The neurotic children often compare themselves to other individuals in search of evidence of superiority. Although harmful, an identity based on fallacy and an idealized image
provides individuals with a sense of purpose, confidence, and a means to deny the existence of inner conflict (Horney, 1992).

The need for perfection within individuals experiencing inner conflict can be characterized as an attempt to achieve an idealized self. It is important to note that the idealized self is not synonymous with the ideal self. The idealized self is an unrealistic self-image nested in fantasy whereas the ideal self is realistic and in keeping with the best interest of the individual. According to Karen Horney (1992), superficial beliefs that are adopted by individuals have very little influence on conflict or decision making. When subjected to external influences, these transient type beliefs are likely to be abandoned in favor of views that are aligned with the environment. This notion directly influences the purpose of this research, which examined the connection intrapersonal conflict resulting from a realization of incongruent value system.

Individuals view conflict from a specific perspective that influences how they address a given conflict. Often an individual perspective is one-sided and does not consider all relevant variables that are associated with the conflict they are experiencing. Consequently, an individual response to conflict is often short-sighted and leads to acts that are opposite of what is required to solve their dispute (Robinson, 2009). The inability to view a conflict through an appropriate lens is in part due to the shortsighted meaning assigned to conflict and its skewed perception. Perception is formed from the meaning assigned to life experiences whereas meaning is derived by consulting the cognitive maps created from experience. Cognitive maps are usually biased and partial because individuals cannot completely capture the complexity of conflict or reality as a
whole. Albert Einstein's proclamation that no problem can be resolved using the level of consciousness that created it describes the limitations of underdeveloped comprehensive cognitive maps (Robinson, 2009).

The existence of conflict is dependent upon an individual’s perspective. Individuals involved in conflict each assign a different meaning to the situation based on their perception of the events that transpired (Robinson, 2009). Conflict can occur when individuals determine that an experience has not met their expectation or desire. In such cases, resolution attempts must address unmet expectations or hopes. When intense emotions are associated with conflict, an individual may be unable to acknowledge the perspective of the other party involved in the dispute (Robinson, 2009). These responses to conflict impede dispute resolution and marginalize the other parties' view. Furthermore, emotions can lead to a win-lose approach to conflict resolution or a proclivity to invalidate the perspective of others by determining that only one correct perspective exists (Robinson, 2009).

Intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts have a reciprocal cause and effect relationship that has the propensity to lead to conflict (Robinson, 2009). The resolution of an interpersonal conflict is dependent upon a disputant’s ability to accept that no perspective is without flaw, remain objective, and avoid inflexible thinking. In contrast, intrapersonal conflict is resolved through awareness of self and the subsequent fulfillment of personal needs. Regardless of type, all conflict can be solved if the perspective that governs the resolution efforts are appropriate for the situation (Robinson, 2009).
Intrapersonal Conflict and the Conflict Resolution Process

The disconnect between an externally influenced identity and one’s ideal-self creates a cycle of internal conflict that prevents an individual from every being truly satisfied with a non-reconciled identity. The ideal-self or most perfect version concept reflects an understanding that a flawless persona is unachievable. However, the journey towards "would be" perfection provides an opportunity for self-improvement. It is an individual's sense of awareness that ultimately permits them to be themselves.

The dispute resolution process does not directly influence an individual pursuit of the ideal-self, but it should help identify how an opposing party is perceived as contributing to a given conflict. During the conflict resolution process, a practitioner should focus on gaining a better understanding of the meaning disputants have assigned to conflict. A goal of conflict resolution is to help disputants avoid contributing to an impasse while understanding how continued conflict may prevent the fulfillment of needs. When conflict goals are addresses, individuals understand that external conflict or self-sacrifice as a means of coping with intrapersonal issues is an ill-fated temporary solution.

The conflict resolution process should be designed to enable understanding vice attempting to validate a disputant’s point of view. As facilitators of the resolution process, disputants attempting to discern credibility, bias, critique practitioner actions. A practitioner may increase their effectiveness when attempting to resolve an identity-based conflict by helping disputants articulate the differences that exist amongst them. In doing so, the involved parties acknowledge the identity and values that have informed the
opposing point of view. A more in-depth understanding of each other's perspective may prevent disputants from viewing the conflict through one lens or assuming there is only one acceptable solution. Disputants are more likely to cooperate or work harder to find common ground when they are connected to the process. Additionally, acknowledgment from an opposing party may help break down the lack of trust, defensiveness or counterproductive efforts to discover ulterior motives. The recognition of the rival parties perspective can facilitate a diffusion of identity-based emotional repressed issues.

According to Abelson (1959), an intrapersonal conflict exists on two levels. The first level is referred to as the action level. External stimulation triggers the action level of intrapersonal conflict. Secondly, the belief level of intrapersonal conflict derives from affective and cognitive processes. Regardless of the level of conflict, intrapersonal turmoil is often the result of contrasting belief systems. An individual’s belief system is the result of experiences and preconceived cognitive notions. Consequently, a belief system may contain psychological inconsistencies such as imbalances, incongruities or dissonance (Adams & Shea, 1979; Bazerman, Tenbrunsel, & Wade-Benzoni, 1998; Bergmann & Volkman, 1994; Brink, 2003; Caspi & Roberts, 1999). There are numerous dormant inconsistencies within the average individual's belief system. These discrepancies are pushed to the forefront of thought by self-perceived pressure to move towards cognitive balance. When a person experiences overwhelming pressure to achieve a greater state of balance they attempt to increase stability by selecting from amongst the various self coping methods.
Denial and bolstering are two common forms of resolution that often prevents intrapersonal conflict from being resolved. Denial is a resolution method that describes the repudiation of positive or negative emotions attributed to a stimulant. Denial may also refer to the embracement of a belief that is opposite of one’s true perspective. Bolstering is often used in conjunction with denial. It involves attempts to relate the source of the imbalance with a cognitive object that minimizes the overall inequity. For example, an individual may convince himself that slavery was beneficial to all involved parties because it helped maintain a strong economy, created affordable labor, and provided shelter to impoverished families. Both denial and bolstering behaviors are attempts to preserve identities that existed before the recognition of the intrapersonal conflict. The meaning associated with the conflict remains the same; however, the attitude towards the stimulus is weakened by denial or strengthened by bolstering (Abelson, 1959).

Regardless of the type of conflict, an individual’s experience determines how they perceive it. The meaning attributed to a given conflict will influence an individual’s interpretation of a dispute and any associated events (Bauer, Schwab, & McAdams, 2011; Biesanz, West, & Kwok, 2003; Deutsch, Colman, & Marcus (2006); Sandole, Byrne, Sandole-Staroste, & Senhi, 2009). Effective conflict resolution requires that all involved parties obtain an understanding of the various backgrounds, life experiences and cultural perspectives that have influenced a given dispute. To date, there is limited research regarding the effect of human dynamics on the conflict resolution process, dispute outcomes, or the ability of practitioners to bring about change. An awareness of how
responses that are predicated on identity affect conflict will increase the likelihood of satisfactory resolution. Failure to consider the influence of identity on the conflict resolution process may prevent a practitioner from identifying and understanding the emotional elements that form the underlying cause of conflict. Practitioners that attempt to apply one-size fits all approach to conflict resolution will experience difficulty avoiding deadlock or escalation. Moreover, without an understanding of identity, the possibility of generating solutions that are amenable to all parties while simultaneously addressing their needs is less likely (Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2006).

According to Weeks (1994), it is essential for a practitioner to recognize the biases they bring to a conflict resolution setting to prevent them from influencing outcomes. In a conflict resolution setting, effective communication (reflection, positive regard, empathic listening, etc) is viewed as techniques that fosters rapport while creating a warm environment (Docherty, 2005; Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2006, Jensen-Campbell, Gleason, Adams, & Malcolm, 2003; Sandole, Byrne, Sandole-Staroste, & Senhi, 2009). If a practitioner lacks awareness of how their identity influences their judgment, opinions, or approach to conflict resolution it may be challenging to communicate or generate appropriate solutions efficiently. The parties involved in a conflict have barriers and preconceived notions that fuel a dispute and make it difficult to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. For example, disputants must be willing to be vulnerable and sometimes present an unflattering version of themselves to address the underlying cause of an issue thoroughly.
People form perceptions about conflict causes, strategies, and resolution options during childhood. The ability to manage intrapersonal conflict influences the degree to which an individual can deal with the frustrations caused by interpersonal conflict successfully. Additionally, the ability to manage intrapersonal conflict as a child effects temperament and the ability to maintain favorable relationships during adulthood (Bono, Boles, Judge, & Lauver, 2002; Dehann, Dekovic, Vanden Akker, Stoltz, Prinzie, 2013; Lakey & Scoboria, 2005). Empirical data reveals that children with low levels of agreeableness become adults who believe that destructive tactics such as physical force and use of coercion are appropriate conflict resolution strategies.

Agreeability, which determines one’s ability to manage conflict and patterns of socialization, is directly related to identity disorders. Low agreeable individuals lack the ability to manage anger or frustration which typically manifest as an inability to identify conflict resolutions amendable to all involved parties. The failure to manage anger and the use of destructive tactics leads to poor interpersonal relationships. Individuals who are rejected by peers are at a higher risk of developing serious adjustment problems later in life (Lakey & Scoboria, 2005; Larsen, 2010; Obstfeld, 1983; Robbins, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2002).

The failure to resolve conflicts constructively has become increasingly difficult in modern day society. Conflict is a prerequisite for growth and is neither inherently positive nor negative. The likelihood of a destructive consequence increases when win-lose conflict resolution tactics are utilized. The use of win-lose tactics as a means of
resolving conflict seldom produces permanent dispute resolution. Instead, new conflicts are created and, ill feelings associated with the original conflict are strengthened.

Effective conflict resolution occurs when the involved parties work to find common ground without capitulating needs. For example, a dispute between two parties over the use of a car on a Friday night could be resolved by addressing the underlying need. While both sides might initially determine that satisfactory resolution of their dispute means gaining possession of the vehicle, a closer examination of their concerns would uncover the presence of a more substantial need. In this scenario, a win-lose approach could create new conflict due to an involuntary capitulation of needs. Instead, a collaborative effort to discover the underlying need behind the conflict would reveal that each party has a transportation issue. The proper framing of a conflict could identify solutions that would otherwise go unconsidered (Docherty, 2005; Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2006, Jensen-Campbell, Gleason, Adams, & Malcolm, 2003; Sandole, Byrne, Sandole-Staroste, & Senhi, 2009). The parties involved in the car dispute could address their transportation issue by creating a schedule that allows them to share the vehicle vice simply attempting to gain sole possession for the night.

Conflict results from an individual's perception that their pursuit of personal needs has been obstructed (Corcoran, & Mallinckrodt, 2000). The emotional nature of conflict makes acknowledgment and consideration of all perspectives necessary for satisfactory resolution. Thus an essential element of conflict resolution involves the willingness of the involved parties to engaging in a semi-emphatic, mutually collaborative process that is needs based.
Emotions are triggered when individuals perceive a similarity between a current and past situation. When combined with rational thinking, emotions inform the conflict resolution process (Schwarz, 2002). Acknowledging emotions present within a conflict resolution setting may help disputants explore the causes of conflict and possible solutions. However, it is essential to consider that emotional responses and the associated meaning can differ across cultures. Making untested and uninformed inferences during the conflict resolution process can have negative consequences (Schwarz, 2002).

Articulating underlying emotions can be vital to the conflict resolution process. Emotions can cause conflict and are inherent to most disputes (Lewicki, Saunders, Barry, 2010). The perception of incompatible goals triggers events that elicit emotion. Subsequently, evoked emotions defined the nature of a conflict. Individuals move through a series of emotional stages as a conflict develops or during dispute resolution attempts. Emotions will either be a detriment to the conflict resolution process or cultivate the conditions for satisfactory resolution (Moore, 2003).

Conflict resolution involves a recognition of emotions to foster constructive expression. Constructive expression can help prevent impasses typical associated with conflict resolution. Furthermore, the proper management of emotions may allow them to be used as a source of motivation for resolving a conflict. Understanding emotions that are present during conflict resolution increase the effective and efficiency of the resolution process (Schwarz, 2002).
Although researchers have explored the various types of conflict processes, the exploration of the differences that exist in the coping behaviors associated with the management of intrapersonal conflicts has mainly been understudied. Intrapersonal conflict, brought about by an inability to cope or adjust, may lead to either (1) irrational conclusions, (2) frantic searches for information, (3) abdication of responsibility, (4) procrastination to avoid conflict. Engaging in any of the four aforementioned coping behaviors is likely to produce an intrapersonal or decisional conflict that stems from tension between what an individual wants to do and what they believe they should do (Bouckenooghe, Vanderheyden, Mestdagh, & Van Laethem, 2007).

Decisional conflict refers to the “simultaneous opposing tendencies that occur within an individual when deciding whether to accept or reject a course of action.” Decisional conflict intensifies with increased awareness of the consequences associated with a selected course of action (Bouckenooghe, Vanderheyden, Mestdagh, & Van Laethem, 2007). Individuals with a heightened need for cognitive closure seek to terminate conflict exponentially (Brown, 1957; Mosak & Lefevre, 2003). For these individuals, prolonging closure is problematic because it is viewed as harmful and uncomfortable. In addition to the emotional stress associated with decisional conflict, personality variables and other characteristics may significantly influence an individual’s penchant towards specific coping mechanisms or behaviors (Bouckenooghe, Vanderheyden, Mestdagh, & Van Laethem, 2007).

Individuals often choose their approach to conflict base on circumstance, setting, and experiences. An individual’s perceptions and past interactions with an opposing
party will have a significant influence on the selected conflict resolution strategy. An approach or conflict style refers to an established pattern of response during disputes. Amongst the most commonly chosen approaches to conflict are avoiding (lose-lose), accommodating (lose-win), competitive (win-lose), collaborative (win-win), and compromising (splitting the difference) which are all characterized by a concern for self or others (Lewicki, Saunders, & Barry, 2010).
Chapter 3: Methodology

“The childhood never disappears from us; it is an important place from which all our ups and downs start.” - George Calinescu

Methodology Overview

Given the complexity of the research subject area, a mixed-method inquiry analysis informed and guided the current research investigation into the relationship between the pursuit of the ideal self and intrapersonal conflict. A sequential mixed designed was used because the second component of the study is dependent on the identification of suitable participants during phase I. Research questions were established to directly examine typical responses to the phenomenon and the relationship between the variables to be studied.

The first phase of this study was conducted utilizing a quantitative approach to the research problem. Quantitative correlational research determines the extent to which a relationship exists between variables. Correlational studies reveal systematic relationships between measurable features of a phenomenon under investigation. Hence, a quantitative correlation was used to examine the central research hypothesis, which contends that the pursuit of the ideal leads to intrapersonal conflict which subsequently impacts identity reconciliation. It was hypothesized that individual incongruity during the pursuit of the ideal-self would lend to the presentation of high relational levels of identity. To prevent alternative explanations for discovered relationships, the researcher guarded against various confounding variables within his control.
The second phase of the study utilized qualitative transcendental phenomenological research. It is a detail-oriented method of inquiry that involves the researcher at the center of the study obtaining data without bias. The suspension of judgment or “epoche,” established the conditions for the researcher to understand a phenomenon as it was perceived by individuals who experienced it (Giorgi, 1997 & Moustakas, 1994). Data was collected from the individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. Data collection for the phenomenological portion of the study consisted of in-depth interviews with participants. The collection of data during this study was not overly structured which allowed the researcher to connect with participants and gain a richer understanding of the phenomenon.

The research data collected was analyzed by first categorizing data by significance and then combining significant statements into themes. The researcher later developed a textual description of what the participants experience, a structural description of how they experienced the phenomenon (e.g., conditions, situations, context, social interactions, etc.) and a combination of textural and structural descriptions to convey overall true meaning of the experience. Once essential themes were identified and transcribe into a narrative, it was clear how the pursuit of the ideal self as it relates to intrapersonal conflict is unlike other similar experiences. Socio-cultural context played a role in the creation of themes. However, there was no excessive interpretation, use of symbolism, or assignment of meaning beyond what was stated by participants.
Research Process

Scheduled surveys and interviews (Phase 1, Step 1): Participants were scheduled in 2-hour blocks, which allowed the administration of the qualitative interviews following the quantitative surveys. The researcher interviewed the first five participants who are eligible and willing to be interviewed (i.e., during the 2-hour block at the conclusion of the 15-minute survey). Eligibility determination was made using the criteria identified in Appendix A (determined by researcher review at the completion of each survey). The researcher's analysis at the end of each survey took less than five minutes. No more than two interviews were conducted in one day, which meant any participant who completed a survey after the second interview was done was not given the opportunity to complete the interview regardless of eligibility. If the maximum number of daily interviews were met, the qualitative study was halted until the next day.

Until the researcher conducted five qualitative interviews, a maximum of five survey participants was scheduled during any given day. Limiting the number of daily survey participants and interviews protected the privacy of participants by ensuring there was no participant overlap during transitions. It also assured the researcher was alert and attentive during each interview. After five interviews were completed, the researcher scheduled ten surveys per day. At that time, participants were scheduled in 1-hour blocks to avoid overlap during transitions. Survey/interview administration times varied with participant schedules.

Administered surveys (Phase 1, Step 2): A total of 30 research participants were given a 32 item survey designed to examine the degree in which participants self-relate to
their identity pursuit and current or past intrapersonal conflict. During survey administration, the researcher was nonsuggestive when giving instructions to avoid influencing the responses of the research participants. The survey lasted between 10-15 minutes. Surveys were conducted with only one research participant at a time.

Conduct interviews (Phase 2, Step 3): Five participants, whose survey scores rendered them good candidates for the qualitative interview were asked if they were willing/able to continue. Before conducting interviews, the researcher discussed participants rights/ and informed consent with each participant. Lastly, steps four consists of the analysis of all quantitative data.

Survey analysis (quantitative): The survey section of this study was analyzed utilizing SPSS to compute a correlation coefficient. The calculated correlation coefficient determined the degree to which research variables are related. Neither the independent nor the dependent variables were manipulated. All variable scores were determined based on a ten point Interval Semantic Scale (ISS).

Interview analysis (qualitative): The interview section of this study was analyzed utilizing transcendental phenomenological research techniques. All interviews were transcribed to refamiliarize the researcher with the collected data. Significant statements or sentences (i.e., horizontalization) that underscored how participants experienced the phenomenon were highlighted. 2) Theme based clusters that illuminate the meaning of the phenomenon were developed. During the previous step, every significant statement possessed equal value. During step 2 of qualitative data analysis, irrelevant, overlapping, or repeating statements were deleted which produced horizons or textural meanings
(Moustakas, 1994). The researcher then carefully examine the identified significant statements to develop themes or meaning units. 3) Textual and structural descriptions were generated from the thematic analysis. During this step, the researcher developed a description of what was experienced and how it was experienced. 4) The textual and structural descriptions of the phenomenon were synthesized into a composite description of the phenomenon through intuitive integration (Moustakas, 1994). The ensuing description became the essence of the experience and captured the meaning ascribed to the phenomenon.

**Rationale for Methodology**

Although modern-day literature provides a common description of the pursuit of the ideal, it falls short of providing an in-depth understanding of behavior, culture, attitudes, and value systems of individuals. The examination of the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict could not be accomplished by forcing the study into one research methodology. Utilizing the strengths of qualitative and quantitative inquiry, the current research investigation thoroughly explored the relationship between the aforementioned research variables. A mix-method process produced data that is supported by statistical significance and qualitative verification. The nature of the research questions alone required a quantitative and qualitative approach that would yield a greater understanding of the topic and statistical explanations. Therefore, a mix designed was appropriate because a single research method was not sufficient to answer the research questions (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009).
It would be unethical to utilize an empirical research method to conduct the quantitative portion of my study because it would require placing participants' mental well-being and livelihood at risk. Empirical research offers investigators the ability to prove a causal effect, which was not a goal or focus of the study (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009). Given the literature gaps that exist within the fields of identity development and intrapersonal conflict, a non-empirical relational study should be conducted first to establish the groundwork for further longitudinal studies (Obstfeld, 1983). Consequently, the qualitative stage of the research investigation called for an examination of individual experiences that are meaningful enough to enhance understanding of a phenomenon beyond simple descriptions.

To date, current literature on the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict is primarily limited to descriptive, trait-based exploration. Practitioners within social science related fields have been limited to predicting behavior, or creating conflict resolution strategies based on patterns and characteristics. It was hypothesized that the pursuit of the ideal self is the foundation from which one’s identity is cemented. Identifying the existence of any relationships between variables without an understanding of the meaning attributed to the pursuit of the ideal self would yield findings that are incomplete or superficial.

Quantitative correlational research methodologies have the propensity to determine the extent of a relationship between two or more variables using statistical data. This form of research was appropriate for this study because the intent was not to determine causal effect but to instead to prove the extent to which a relationship exists.
Despite its inability to rule out alternative explanations, a non-empirical correlational study was appropriate because there are multiples independent variables that cannot be manipulated. Any attempts to manipulate the independent variables would have been unethical given the potential harm doing so could cause research participants.

The probability sampling procedures used during the quantitative inquiry (i.e., random sampling) was an effective method to identify individuals that are representative of the general population. Utilizing random sampling allowed the data collected to be generalized to the greater society. Lastly, the use of surveys as a method of data collection proved very useful during the quantitative portion of the study given its versatility, efficiency, and generalizable nature. Ultimately, the research methodology inherent within this study produced a thorough examination of the relationship between the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict.

Phase I (Quantitative Research)

Sampling procedures

The participants were randomly selected to participate in the quantitative section of the inquiry. Each member assigned to the Marine Corps University had an equal chance of being chosen to participate in the study. A list of over 230 potential participants was numbered in ascending order. The researcher then used an online random number generator and selected the first 30 names that appear on the spreadsheet. These individuals were sent an email requesting their participation in the study. If a chosen participant was unwilling to partake in the study or failed to meet the survey
selection criteria (e.g., age, mental health, etc.), the researcher selected the next name from the previously generated list.

Sample computation software was used to determine the minimum required size of the correlational inquiry. Utilization of an appropriate sample size reduced the probability of Type I and Type II research errors (Kihberger, Fritz, & Scherndl, 2014). The researcher established a 0.80 power criteria to increase the likelihood of rejecting a false null hypothesis. The alpha level was set to 0.05 to decrease the probability of rejecting a true null hypothesis. The Coefficient valued was expected to be strong which required a value greater than .50 (Cohen, 1988).

Data Collection

All research participants were given a 32-item survey designed to examine the degree in which participants self-relate to their identity pursuit and current or past intrapersonal conflict. Survey research is a systematic method for data collection that is appropriate to increase awareness of population attributes and behaviors (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009). Self-report questionnaires are valuable when measuring internal experiences such as emotions, intrapersonal conflict, and beliefs. Although this type of research instrument relies on individual cooperation and truthfulness, it is an accurate means of recording a phenomenon from a participant’s perspective. During survey administration, the researcher was non-suggestive when giving instructions to avoid influencing the responses of the research participants.

Participants were encouraged adequately describe the feelings, thoughts, images, and memories associated with their experience. Neither the independent nor the
dependent variables were manipulated; however, both variables were scored based on the result of a seven-point Semantic Differential Scale. The Semantic Differential Scale was constructed to produce interval data. Ordinal or nominal data generation would have been inappropriate because the difference between scores cannot be determined. Additionally, ordinal scales typically measure non-numeric concept that is not useful in establishing a relationship between variables. In contrast, interval scales produce numeric data that identifies the order and the difference between the values. With interval data, the central tendency can be measured by mode, median, or mean, which ultimately provides a greater understanding of the population distribution. Additionally, the use of interval data allowed a standard deviation to be calculated which quantify the degree of variation that exists within the data values. During the quantitative phase, the research instrument measured attitudes and feelings. Unlike generic, Likert base instruments, a seven-point Semantic Differential Scale was best suited to measure the research variables. The survey and a demographic questionnaire were administered separately and without regard to time. The scale was constructed for both variables (PIS & Intrapersonal conflict).

Survey Design. The researcher considered the following to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the survey:

1. Purpose and objectives
2. Target population
3. Method of delivery (e.g., paper, electronic, interview)
4. Development of questions are:
a. Clear, unbiased content
b. Concise and simple
c. No leading questions
d. Uniform response scale

5. Level of detail directions required

6. Benefit of pilot testing for clarity and effectiveness

**Data Analysis**

To conduct quantitative data analysis the researcher utilized the measurements obtained from surveys. The researcher then computed a correlation coefficient to determine the degree that the variables are related. The Pearson correlation coefficient was an appropriate measure of strength between the research variables because there is an assumed linear relationship. The collected data was continuous as there were infinite possible values for each outcome (Creswell, 2009; O'Dwyer & Bernauer, 2014).

Spearman’s correlation coefficient was an alternative method of measuring the strength of relationships between variables. However, the Spearman correlation measures the relational strength of monotonic variables. Monotonic dependent variables would neither increase nor decrease as its independent variable increases. The research hypothesis assumes a significant linear relationship between variables, rendering the use of Spearman correlation inappropriate for the study (Corder & Foreman, 2014).

The collected data were interpreted using a two-tailed test because the central research hypothesis did not predict the direction of the correlation between variables. Testing the possibility of a relationship between variables in two directions (i.e., positive
and negative) mitigates type I errors and cognitive bias errors. To determine whether the null hypothesis should be accepted or rejected, the alpha level for collected data was set to .05. The alpha level and probability-value were compared to determine whether the collected data was statistically different from the null hypothesis (Creswell, 2009; O'Dwyer & Bernauer, 2014). A p-value that is less than or equal to the alpha level would result in the rejection of the null hypothesis. A p-value that is greater than .05 would indicate a failure to reject the null hypothesis due to a statistically nonsignificant result.

Scatterplot graphing and SPSS was used to identify strength and direction (Greasley, 2008).

Table 3

**Pearson Correlation**

| Direction of relationship between X, Y | Positive (+r) = As X goes up, Y goes up
| Negative (-r) = As X goes up, Y goes down |
| Strength of a relationship between X, Y | Closer to ± 1.0, stronger
| Closer to 0, weaker |

**Phase II (Qualitative)**

**Sampling procedures**

Utilizing intensity sampling, the researcher identified five participants whose phase I surveys indicate that have experienced the phenomenon in a significant manner. Additionally, the researcher drew from the data presented in the literature review to determine an acceptable manifested level of the phenomenon. The sample size for the
qualitative phase was purposefully small to identify consistent patterns, themes, or emerging concepts. A non-probability sampling method was chosen because the goal of the qualitative section of the study did not include producing a statistically representative sample or maintaining the ability to reach statistical inferences. The researcher anticipated each interview taking approximately an hour; however, two hours were allocated for each participant.

**Data collection**

**Interviews.** The interviews were no more than two hours and were conducted in a private, quiet location that is conducive to self-reflection and does not detract from one's thought process. With the permission of each participant, all interviews were audio recorded and notes were taken. Participants were afforded the opportunity to take breaks as required or withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant was required to create a pseudonym to protect their identity and for ease of reference. Before conducting an interview a consent form and demographic form was collected. Each participant was provided with a consent form in English and told that they might withdraw from the study at any point.

**Reflective Journal.** During the entire data collection process to include interviews, the researcher maintained a journal and field to record/describe my feelings or thoughts that influenced the study. The journal aided in the bracketing of personal experiences that could identify limitation of the research study or investigator bias. Lastly, the field notes provided insight into the socio-cultural context that influences theme creation.
**Data analysis**

Before the qualitative research data was analyzed, all interviews were transcribed to re-familiarize the researcher with the collected data. The research data collected was initially analyzed by highlighting significant statements or sentences (i.e., horizontalization) that underscored how the participant experienced the phenomenon. Next, the researcher developed theme based clusters of meaning that derives from the significant statements identified during horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher then developed a textual description of what the participants experience, a structural description of how they experienced the phenomenon (e.g., conditions, situations, setting, context, etc.). Next, a combination of textural and structural descriptions (i.e., invariant structure) was used to convey the overall essence of the experience. The invariant structure primarily focused on the underlying structure or shared experiences of the participants.

**General Research Procedures and Considerations**

**Role of the Researcher**

Abdul E. Mack served as the sole investigator throughout this mix-method study. This role entailed the generation, distribution, administration, and analysis of all quantitative and qualitative research material. Research participants are sometimes not able to articulate the full extent of what they have experienced. I used interview probing techniques to help participants turn abstract and ambiguous emotions into more concrete feelings. Probing allowed me to help participants clear up information, articulate, challenging themes and life obstacles, or remember details that may not have
been apparent before. According to Charmaz (2006), "neither observer nor observed come to a scene untouched by the world." Therefore it was paramount that the researcher was attuned to personal biases to reduce evaluative listening. Evaluative listening describes the dynamic in which a researcher judges the statements of participants during data collection. Consequently, the researcher described the personal experiences that have influenced his understanding of the phenomenon.

Validation Strategies

During the conduct of this study, several validation strategies were used to enhance the credibility of the research finding. The validity of the qualitative section of this study was achieved through peer review, clarifying, and thick description. A peer reviewer provided an external check of the research process to enhance the reliability of the research investigation. Clarifying is a form of bracketing resident to a phenomenological inquiry (Moustakas, 1994). From the outset of the study, the researcher commented on experiences, biases, and orientations that have potentially shaped the interpretation and approach to the study. Finally, rich, thick description allowed readers to form their own opinions regarding transferability of findings to another setting.

External and internal validation considerations during the quantitative section of the study were addressed beginning with the selection of research participants. Thirty participants were randomly selected in an attempt to increase the applicability of research findings to the broader population. Research questions were carefully constructed to ensure ease of comprehension; however, some participants still attempted to alter their
responses to meet the perceived expectation of the researcher. A sole investigator administered the research instruments to guard against confounding variables that occur due to conflicting instructors or delivery. No participants were or otherwise compensated which should reduce compensatory rivalry and altered subsequent responses. This bivariate study of identity pursuit and intrapersonal conflict was a single group investigation, which reduced internal validity threats commonly associated with participant selection. Lastly, the manner in which the dependent variable scores were measured did not change at any time during the study.

**Research Participants and Recruitment**

Research participants were selected from military members assigned to Marine Corps University, Quantico Virginia. Efforts were made to secure a heterogeneous representation of research participants across gender, age, race, level of education, and socioeconomic background. The participants partaking in the qualitative study were purposefully chosen based on the self-reported degree of intensity in which they experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). A blind all hands email was sent out describing the study and requesting that interested individuals contact the researcher by email or phone. Research participants were current students of Marine Corps University. The first 30 eligible individuals were allowed to participate in the qualitative phase of the study. No one from Marine Corps University assisted with participant recruitment, and no flyers will be posted in public spaces. All participants were asked to identify times that best fit their schedule. The researcher obtained consent before survey administration and then again before allowing a participant to partake in the interview. Due to time
restraints associated with the study, the first five participants that meet the minimal criteria were utilized during the quantitative phase of the study. A note was added to the recruitment email to inform of the limited availability associated with the qualitative interview (See Appendix G).

**Ethical Considerations**

To ensure the protection and safety of all research participants, the study was conducted in accordance with the established protocol prescriptively denoted within Nova Southeastern University’s’ Policy and Procedure Manual for Research with Human Subjects, the highest ethical standards were maintained throughout the inquiry. This research investigation was conducted utilizing the deontological principles of honesty and respect (Mauthner, Birch, Jessop, & Miller, 2002). The study posed no risk to the participants’ physiological, physical, or social well-being. Participants did not experience stress beyond what they would experience in their everyday life. The study did not include participants from vulnerable populations such as children, elderly, or people with disabilities. All of the participants were treated in accordance with the ethical guidelines established by the National Institute of Health and Nova Southeastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Although there were no identifiable risks for participating in this study, a high degree of caution will be maintained throughout the conduct of this inquiry. Every effort was made to ensure that all participants feel safe, comfortable, and free to withdraw from the study at any given time. When collecting data, the researcher ensured the participants do not feel coerced or offended by research instruments. Furthermore, at no time during
the recruitment process were participants pressured to join the study. Self-reporting is a less intrusive means of data collection as it allows participants to choose what they want to share. At the onset of the inquiry, gaining informed consent was prioritized and the parameters of interviewee participation it will be apparent. The consent forms included provisions related to the participant’s right to privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. Before signing a consent form, research participants understood the purpose and possible outcomes of their participation. Each participant was made aware of the following before partaking in the study:

1) What is going to happen (i.e., research process)
2) Researcher techniques to be utilized during the study
3) How will the collected data be used
4) Why they were selected.
5) What will they gain from the study (i.e., reciprocity)

**Informed Consent Process**

Step 1: The initial email included the purpose of the study and emphasized the fundamental right to refuse to participate in the study.

Step 2: Provided additional in-person information about the study in a manner that was understandable.

Step 3: Conducted a question and answer session to ensure that participants understood the study and their role in it.

Step 4: Provided participants sufficient time to consider their decisions.

Step 5: Obtained voluntary agreement of individual participating in the study.
Step 6: Reemphasized that participants could withdraw from the study at any time, decline to answer specific questions, or complete specific tasks at any time during the research.

**Inclusion Criteria**

Part one (Quantitative survey)

- Participants must be 18 years of age or older.
- Must be able to articulate their understanding of the decision to consent.
- Must be able to read and speak English.
- Must be a current student at Marine Corps University.

Part two (Qualitative interview)

- Participants must be 18 years of age or older.
- Must be able to articulate their understanding of the decision to consent.
- Must be able to read and speak English.
- Must have a total survey score of 102 or higher for the pursuit of the ideal self section.
- Must have an overall survey score of 90 or higher for intrapersonal conflict section.
- Must be a current student at Marine Corps University.

**Exclusion Criteria**

Part one (Quantitative survey)

- Participants who have mental health issues
- Participants who cannot consent to participate in the research
• Participants who are currently in a current state of crisis
• Participants who appear overly anxious or reluctant
• Participants who cannot read or speak English
• Participants who are not at least 18 years of age
• Participants who are not current students of Marine Corps University

Part two (Qualitative interview)

• Participants who have mental health issues
• Participants who cannot consent to participate in the research
• Participants who are currently in a current state of crisis
• Participants who appear overly anxious or reluctant
• Participants who cannot read or speak English
• Participants who are not at least 18 years of age
• Participants who are not current students of Marine Corps University
• Participants who are deemed eligible after the maximum number of daily interviews has been met (i.e., after two interviews have been conducted within the same day).

**Record and Audio Safeguard and Retention**

Participant identification and responses remained anonymous throughout the study. All information obtained in this study was safeguarded and kept confidential unless the law requires disclosure. The audio recorder used during the study was secured in a lockbox and then placed into a Government Services Administration (GSA) approved safe that remained locked in the researcher’s private office. Hard copy files
and electronic notes/records were placed in the same GSA approved safe. The researcher was the only person with access to the GSA safe. The safe remained locked at all times. Any electronic files were encrypted and stored on a computer that was password protected.

Data stored on a computer was not connected to the internet to protect against breach of confidentiality. Electronic and physical records did not contain any personally identifiable data to protect the identity of research participants. The researcher prohibited the use of direct identifiers unless necessary. When direct identifiers became necessary, they were removed as soon as possible in favor of codes. Any created codes list were kept in a separate and secure location. The researcher protected against confidentiality breach via deduction of indirect identifiers by using pseudonyms whenever possible.

Any data not required to be maintained for 36 months upon the completion of the study was destroyed immediately after data analysis. The researcher estimates that data collection and analysis will take 30 days. At the end of data analysis, the researcher destroyed all hard copy files (e.g., surveys) with a level 6, high-security crosscut shredder. The hard disk drive used during the study will be formatted twice. Any data required to be maintained for 36 months upon the completion of the study will be destroyed utilizing the following procedures. Audio recordings will be erased twice. Hard copy files (e.g., consent forms) will be shredded with a level six, high-security crosscut shredder.
Benefits of the Study

The current research investigation refined, advanced, and expanded the knowledge, understanding, theoretical platforms and applications within the fields of conflict analysis and resolution, identity theory, and social psychology. The inability to reconcile identity confusion has proven to be a barrier to conflict resolution or an individual’s ability to articulate their intent, desires, or goals. The study explored the relationship between the pursuit of the ideal self and intrapersonal conflict as a means to further the understanding of identity crisis. Additionally, it may provide life clarity and the opportunity to move forward from arrested social/developmental life stage.

Knowledge gained from the study of the relationship between the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict may enhance conflict resolution techniques and available mental health services while furthering the understanding of the struggles associated with internal conflict. As a result, the productively and overall harmony of the general population may improve. The research participants were provided the opportunity to understand further or clarify things about themselves while being of service to others in the process. There were multiple ways the study may have a positive impact (e.g., further scientific understanding of identity, detect possible conflict correlations, establish the groundwork for longitudinal studies, provide clarity/motivation to research participants).
Chapter 4: Results and Interpretation

“They know not only who they are, they know how they became that, and that they had a
hand in the becoming.” - James Marcia

Phase I (Quantitative Research)

Participant Summary

Total participants (n=30) included 12 (40%) females and 18 (60%) males. The mean age of participants was 37.33 years of age (range: 15). The sample population consisted of fourteen Caucasian-Americans, eight African-Americans, four Latin-Americans, three Asian-Americans, and one Arab-American. Male participants reported higher levels of intrapersonal conflict (78.61) compared to females counterparts (77). PIS scores for female (126.67) were slightly higher than male (125.56) participants. During the pursuit of the ideal-self, male participants reported slightly longer periods of reflection. Male’s participants also reported a lower level of emotional intensity during intrapersonal conflict. In contrast, female’s experienced greater levels of awareness than did male participants (see Appendix C).

Results

A scatter plot graph was used during preliminary analysis to aid the researcher in determining if a linear relationship between the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict existed. The pursuit of the ideal-self represented the X-axis while intrapersonal conflict was depicted on the Y-axis. Table 4 supports the researcher’s pre-investigation assumption that there is a linear relationship between the two variables. The data collected for both variables was based on a seven-point Semantic Differential Scale.
Consequently, the researcher was able to treat the data as continuous variables satisfying a fundamental prerequisite for utilization of the Pearson correlation. All data points followed a similar pattern, and there were no significant outliers. The direction of the regression line indicates that there is a negative relationship between the examined variables. Not all variables were normally distributed as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test (see table 5). Although the significance value for one variable fell below the .05 threshold, Pearson’s correlation was utilized based on the complexity of defining the variable deviations from normality were expected. Additionally, normal probability plot analysis revealed that both variables had no significant deviation from the regression line (see table 6 & table 7).

A Pearson’s bivariate correlation was run to assess the relationship between the pursuit of the ideal self and intrapersonal conflict in adults. There was a strong significant negative correlation between the pursuit of the ideal self and intrapersonal conflict in participants aged 32 to 47 years, \( r(28) = .779, p < .0005 \) (see table 8). The coefficient of determination or the pursuit of the ideal self statistically explained 61% of the variability in intrapersonal conflict (see table 12). The establishment of a strong statistically significant relationship between the pursuit of the ideal self and intrapersonal conflict allowed the researcher to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. Higher intensity values of the pursuit of the ideal self are associated with lower intrapersonal conflict. Subsequent analysis of the research variables revealed a strong significant negative correlation between the pursuit of the ideal self and the duration of intrapersonal conflict, \( r(28) = .739, p < .0005 \) (see table 7a). Additionally, a
strong statistical relationship was established between and individuals self-satisfaction and the intensity in which they experience conflict, $r(28) = -0.398, p = .036$ (see table 9).

Linear regression analysis was used to determine the degree of variation in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variable. In other words, the establishment of linear regression determined the extent to which new values can be predicted for the dependent variable. To assess linearity, a scatterplot of intrapersonal conflict scores and against the pursuit of the ideal-self scores with a superimposed regression line was plotted (see table 4). Visual inspection of the plots indicated a linear relationship between the variables. There was independence of residuals as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.399 (see table 12). Consequently, errors/residuals are not correlated and one cannot provide information about any other residual. There was homoscedasticity as assessed by visual inspection of a plot of standardized residuals versus standardized predicted value. The points on the plot exhibited no patterns and were approximately constantly spread (see table 13). Residuals were normally distributed as assessed by visual inspection of a normal probability plot (see table 14). Standard residuals appeared to be approximately normally distributed (see table 15). Furthermore, there were no significant outliers as assessed by casewise diagnostics.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) testing revealed that the regression model results were a statistically better predictor of intrapersonal conflict than analysis of the mean of the dependent variable alone. The prediction equation was: intrapersonal conflict scores = $169.965 + 0.730\text{PIS}$. Average PIS scores statistically significantly predicted intrapersonal conflict scores, $F(1, 28) = 43.27, p < .0005$, accounting for 60.7% of the
variation of intrapersonal conflict with an adjusted $R^2 = 59.3\%$ (see table 12), a significant effect according to Cohen (1988). Predictions were made to determine mean intrapersonal conflict scores for individuals with survey pursuit of the ideal-self (PIS) score of 126 (mean & mode), and 127 (median). For a PIS score of 126, intrapersonal conflict was predicted as 77.96 (95% CI, 75.61 to 80.32) cumulative value; for a 127 PIS score intrapersonal conflict was predicted as 77.23 (95% CI, 74.86 to 79.60) cumulative value (see table 16).

**Assumptions and Significance Test.** Tables four through seven supports the author’s hypothesis that the data collected was appropriate for a Pearson product moment correlation analysis. Tables eight through seventeen depict the strength of correlations and their associated statistical significance.

Table 4

*Linearity Test*
Table 5

Tests of Normality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kolmogorov-Smirnov</th>
<th>Shapiro-Wilk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuit of Ideal-Self</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrapersonal Conflict</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 6

Normal Q-Q Plot of Variable X
Table 7

Normal Q-Q Plot of Variable Y

Table 8

Correlation Coefficient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pursuit of Ideal-Self</th>
<th>Intrapersonal Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pursuit of Ideal-Self</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-0.779*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrapersonal Conflict</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-0.779*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Table 9

**Additional Correlations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact of PIS</th>
<th>Impact of PIS</th>
<th>Duration of Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.739**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Duration of Conflict**

| Pearson Correlation | -.739** |
| Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000    |
| N            | 30   | 30                   |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

Table 10

**Additional Correlations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Satisfaction</th>
<th>Self-Satisfaction</th>
<th>Emotionally Intense Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.398*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Emotionally Intense Conflict**

| Pearson Correlation | -.398* |
| Sig. (2-tailed)     | .029   |
| N                 | 30     | 30                             |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

Table 11

**Additional Correlations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PIS &amp; Wellbeing</th>
<th>PIS &amp; Wellbeing</th>
<th>Actively Pursuing the Ideal-Self</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.621**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Actively Pursuing the Ideal-Self**

| Pearson Correlation | .621** |
| Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000   |
| N                 | 30     | 30                               |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**
Table 12

Independence of Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>Durbin-Watson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.779*</td>
<td>.607</td>
<td>.593</td>
<td>6.302</td>
<td>1.399</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), Pursuit of Ideal-Self
b. Dependent Variable: Intrapersonal Conflict

Table 13

Homoscedasticity Scatterplot
Table 14

Normal P-P Plot

Table 15

Histogram
Table 16

**K-Matrix**

![K-Matrix Table]

Table 17

**Test Results**

![Test Results Table]
Phase II (Qualitative Study)

Participant Summary

Total participants (n=5) included 3 (60%) females and 2 (40%) males. The sample population consisted of two Caucasian-Americans, two African-Americans, and one Latin-American. The mean age of participants was 36.2 years of age (range: 10). Male participants reported higher levels of intrapersonal conflict (74.5) compared to females counterparts (69.33). PIS scores for female (131) were slightly higher than male (130) participants. During the pursuit of the ideal-self, female participants reported longer periods of reflection. Similarly, female participants reported a lower level of emotional intensity during intrapersonal conflict. In contrast, male’s experienced greater levels of identity clarity and awareness than female participants (See Appendix D).

Participant 1: Iyanla. Iyanla is a 34-year-old African American female that grew up in the Southern region of the United States. Raised by deeply religious parents, part of Iyanla pursuit of the Ideal-Self involved denouncing the expectation of her parents and church in order pursue an identity she felt was meaningful. She was raised in a single parent home and has three siblings. Iyanla has never been married and has no children. During the interview, the researcher was able to hear the pain, struggle, and conviction in her voice as she described her fractured relationship with the church and how difficult it has been to reconstruct her new identity.
Participant 2: Marisol. Marisol is a 32-year-old Puerto Rican- American female who grew up in the Southern region of the United States. She enjoyed strong relationships with her siblings and was raised in a two-parent home. Marisol has never been married and has no children. During the interview, Marisol was initially guarded and apprehensive while discussing the pursuit of the Ideal-Self. She requested that the researcher turn the recorder off but granted note taking permission. Marisol felt compelled to explain why she was not being candid and answering the interview questions openly. She eventually stated that she was a lesbian struggling to fit into the military and society. Additionally, her mother was pressuring her to take whatever steps necessary to change her “lifestyle.” Marisol confessed that the researcher was one of the few people she confided in but admitted not fully understanding why she chose to discuss the matter with the researcher. She expressed concern for her future as a lesbian in the United States military and the societal rejection associated with living openly as a lesbian.

Participant 3: Andrew. Andrew is a 38-year-old Caucasian male who grew up in an economically diverse southern region of the United States. He is the middle child of a relatively large family. Although he only occasionally attended religious services as a child, as an adult he became a devoted religious worshiper. Andrew married almost immediately upon graduating from college and had his first child shortly after that. Despite being married to an African-American woman, he has not experience intolerance or bigotry during 17 years of marriage. Andrew’s military career has been a constant source of friction and has required his family to make numerous sacrifices. He recalled
missed special events and tumultuous job-related events that caused him to question his priorities.

Participant 4: Marcus. Marcus is a 42-year-old African-American male who grew up in an economically depressed Southern region of the United States. Marcus was primarily raised in a single family home with two siblings. His family attended church regularly as a child and lived their lives in accordance with biblical scriptures. During his childhood, he was extremely popular and seemingly gifted at sports. His athletic prowess allowed him to earn a full scholarship to a top-ranked Division I college. During his college career, Marcus developed a sense of entitlement that ultimately conflicted with his foundation. He divorced several years ago but has recently remarried. Marcus has three kids with his wife and is currently attempting to gain custody of the child he shares with his ex-wife.

Participant 5: Jenna. Jenna is a 35-year-old Caucasian female who married her first love during college. She has been married for 17 years and has three kids. Jenna was raised in a two-parent household in the Northeast region of the United States. She is the oldest sibling of four and the only female child. During her childhood, participating in religious services was encouraged but not required. Despite immense academic and career success, Jenna is tremendously unhappy with her current occupation.
Table 18

Participant Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Active PIS*</th>
<th>Currently in Conflict*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iyanla</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marisol</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Epoche

Epoche, the first step of the Transcendental Phenomenological process, requires a researcher to set aside everyday understandings, prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas to experience a phenomenon in an unfettered state of mind. The challenge for a researcher is remaining self-transparent ultimately allowing a manifestation of consciousness that fosters an unbiased perspective. During the epoche process, researchers avoid taking a position, allowing data and observations to possess equal value. Epoche required intense focus and sustained attention and presence by the researcher. It includes entering an intimate place that requires a researcher suspending anything that interferes with fresh vision. Phenomenological Epoche does not eliminate everything, does not deny the reality of everything, does not doubt everything-only the natural attitude, the biases of common knowledge, as a basis for truth and reality. The desired endstate of epoche is an inclination towards a receptiveness that can promote
awareness of the personal biases that color thoughts and perception while negatively affecting a researcher’s ability to actively listen (Moustakas, 1994).

According to Moustakas, "what appears in consciousness is an absolute reality while what appears in the world is a product of learning" (1994, p 27). To understand the phenomenon, the researcher had to elicit preconceived notions and perceptions to eliminate suppositions. In doing so, the researcher was thereby able to experience the lived experience without bias (Moustakas, 1994, p 37). Accordingly, Husserl asserted, "For me, the world is nothing other than what I am aware of and what appears valid in my cognitions… I cannot live, experience, think, value, and act in any world which is not in some sense in me, and derives its meaning and truth from me” (1975, p.8). The epoche process afforded the researcher the opportunity to become aware of personal stances and preconceptions regarding the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict. Moreover, this process facilitated the objective gathering of data without allowing experiences to influence the researcher’s thoughts.

**Epistemological Reflection**

Identity Reconciliation Theory is the product of the epoche process and as such is priori in nature. The formulation of the theory preceded data collection and analysis. Consequently, it is offered as an epistemological reelection to shed light on any potential research biases that could influence the conduct of the study.

**Identity Reconciliation Theory**

Individual identity is a complete representation of the makeup of an individual. It is the most basic description of an individual’s perception of self in relation to his or her
experience and interpretation of their environment. When viewed holistically, personal
identity can be described as the byproduct of one's efforts to reconcile external
expectations with his or her interest. Identity is much more than the traits and
characteristics that we show others to gain acceptance. Personality, a component of
identity, is often mistakenly used to describe or define one's makeup. Although
personality may derive from an observable aspect of one's identity, it does not take into
consideration the holistic sense of self that encapsulates the basis of individual existence.
Identity development exists on a continuum between emotion and cognition.
Consequently, individuals may spend a significant number of years reconciling the
emotional-cognitive needs triggered during identity development. Personality can be a
reflection of one's current emotional state or their position within the identity
development continuum. It is an externally produced description of a person whereas
identity derives from individuals. Identity is an indicator of where an individual is at in
their pursuit of the ideal-self. Although the ideal-self is an unachievable end-state, its
quest is indicative of an individual's progress towards realizing their desires, values, and
needs. The ideal-self is both a description of one's desired identity and a causal element
that influences self-actualization.
Figure 2. Depiction of the Ideal-Self

Figure 2 depicts the conceptual relationship between the ideal-self, personality, and identity. The interaction and development of these critical concepts impacts maturation and can lead to conflict. Furthermore, the complicated process of identity development can create intrapersonal conflicts that hinder identity reconciliation and subsequent realization of the ideal-self. The ideal-self is the element of identity that grants an individual permission to be who they are. It is not an image based on external values but the vision of self that is the result of one's acknowledgment of personal values and imperfections. Achievement of the ideal-self is not an obtainable end state but rather an indicator of the highest level of self-acceptance and awareness. Recognizing that the most perfect version of the self should be viewed as the ideal-self that facilitates actualization and internal harmony.

The desire to gain acceptance is a significant and influential factor in the identity development process. Throughout childhood, an individual learns to associate group
acceptance with the ability to fulfill the expectation of others. They ultimately become so eager to please others to facilitate acceptance that they adopt values and principles that conflict with their personal beliefs. By focusing on the demands of others, an individual will inevitably neglect their duty to satisfy personal needs. It is during early childhood that individuals both need and desire a higher sense of belonging. However, as individuals become aware of the void caused by a lack of clear understanding of self they began to crave independence and the ability to delineate self from the group. An over association with external groups or entities such as land will necessitate a reconciliation of group-based identity and individual identity. Moreover, the psychological process of maintaining an identity that results in self-respect while obtaining validation from others can lead to an intrapersonal conflict.

During adolescence, an individual gains awareness of the conflict created by neglecting self-interest in favor of fulfilling external expectations. Although the pursuit of the ideal-self is thereby automatically triggered, progress may be slow if an individual does not fully embrace the journey. The stages of identity development are both cyclical and endless due to the propensity of an individual to change life perceptions with each meaningful experience.

All individuals will experience a degree of self-actualization as they become aware of the identity disconnect between how they viewed themselves and who they have ultimately become. The difficulty lies in remaining connected to the reconciled identity that presents itself once the pursuit of actualization begins. The challenge is thereon maintaining a connection to the identity that evolves from the redefined ideal-self. Once
awareness of a more perfect version of self becomes known it will serve as the most prominent need to an individual. Lower level needs will thereafter compete with the pursuit of ideal-self for fulfillment at the onset of identity reconciliation.

Identity reconciliation is a recurring process that allows individuals to reclaim power over their lives that was forfeited during their efforts to gain acceptance. It is the movement towards the ideal-self caused by reconciliation that facilitates understanding and self-acceptance through constant self-critique. If an individual determines their journey towards the ideal self has been prolonged or delayed without progress, the reconciliation process will eventually cause an intrapersonal conflict that can best be described as an Introspective Emotional Conflict (IEC). IEC's have a deleterious impact on an individual's identity and may threaten the security and self-confidence that previously facilitated personal growth. An IEC combined with an overwhelming need for acceptance can cause an individual to assume an identity that is primarily in line with what others expect of them. These individuals ultimately become a superficial expression of their experiences with others vice connecting with an identity that embodies their uniqueness, values, and beliefs.

Introspective Emotional Conflicts can most effectively be resolved by deconstructing one's maladaptive perception of self and reconstructing it utilizing values associated with the vision of self that was sacrificed during previous bids for acceptance. Deconstruction establishes the conditions, which allow an individual to reconcile the identity constructs created to gain acceptance with the ideal self that embodies their unique individuality. The deconstruction of faulty identity is achieved when an
individual can discover and then address the need beneath their need. This type of root need is the best indicator of the factors driving adversity; however, the need itself is not always apparent to the individual. The need beneath the need represents that which is necessary to move towards the ideal-self as opposed to surface level requirements that misleadingly present as underlying needs during conflict. Addressing surface level needs can only offer temporary relief from IECs as the root causes of conflict are ignored.

Identity reconciliation forces an individual to examine how they view themselves with how others perceive them. It is during this period that an individual begins to understand how their assimilated belief system is hindering their pursuit of the ideal self.

It is sometimes difficult for an individual to let go of an old self-image and allow a reconciled identity to develop. Individuals may be reluctant to accept a reconciled identity due to the sense of familiarity and emotion connection associated with the old identity. For these individuals, an attempt to refine a maladaptive identity is safer and less painful than embracing reconciliation. They have concluded that despite the potential benefits, rejecting the old identity may leave them lost or damage current interpersonal relationships. Instead, these individuals will minimize the impact of the former identity by convincing themselves that change is not a realistic option. A refined or fantasy identity is held in high regard whereas a potential reconciled identity is irrationally scrutinized to justify a decision. The identity reconciliation process will remain in a state of near impasse until an individual is eventually overwhelmed by maladaptive thoughts or behavior thus forcing them towards reconciliation.
During the process of identity reconciliation, individuals sometimes wear a mask to conceal their fears, intent, and desires while increasing their probability of life success. For example, the truculent military Drill Instructor's persona may be entirely at odds with an individual's perceived self-identity. The ferocious persona is only a means to an end for the Drill Instructor and not necessarily representative of his actual identity. As is often the case, it is difficult to draw valid conclusions about the totality of a person's identity based on observed traits and characteristics.

The reoccurring and overwhelmingly intense process of identity reconciliation can create the perception that striving towards the ideal self is virtually impossible. The ensuing sense of despair, frustration, and hopelessness forces many individuals to forgo the pursuit of the ideal-self to protect themselves from pain and anguish. The IECs created by the identity reconciliation process can serve as the primary or secondary cause of various forms of conflict, frame the manner in which an individual defines a dispute, or perceives their circumstances.

During attempts to resolve external conflicts, IECs can act as barriers to progress by hindering an individual's ability to articulate needs, intent, desires, or goals. When IECs are at the forefront of a dispute, conflict resolution strategies must avoid exploring "why" based questions as they have an associated negative connotation, imply judgment, and trigger defense mechanisms. Resolution attempts should include acknowledgments of each party's point of view to prevent impasse and facilitate efficient navigation of identity-based conflict.
Figure 3. Identity Reconciliation

Figure 3 depicts the internal and external expectations that derive from an individual's need for acceptance. Conflicting demands for acceptance combined with the need for approval can trigger intrapersonal conflict. The ensuing conflict has the propensity to trigger one's pursuit of the ideal-self.

**Horizontalization**

The next in Phenomenological Reduction is the process of horizontalization. During this step, every statement was initially treated as having equal value. Subsequently, horizons were produced by deleting accounts that are irrelevant, repetitive, overlapping (Moustakas, 1994). As shown in Table 19, 43 verbatim statements were taken from Phase II interview transcripts. The statements are significant, non-repetitive, non-overlapping comments that reflect what participants experienced because of the phenomenon. The researcher did not attempt to group or represent these statements in any way. Additionally, the statements are not transcript excerpts presented in a specific manner to represent a position or suggest context. During the horizontalization process,
the researcher attempted to extract statements that provided insight as to what individuals experienced during the pursuit of the ideal-self. Moustakas (1994, p. 95) described the horizon as “the grounding or condition of the phenomenon that gives it a distinct character.” As we think about each horizon and its textural qualities, we begin to understand the experience through our self-awareness and reflection.

Table 19

Selected Significant Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>So for me…my pursuit, it has been a spiritual maturity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It’s the thinking that brings about an inner peace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pursuit of the ideal-self is embracing the things that make you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uncomfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We were meant to be at peace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There were definitely things done to me that if I was not in my ideal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self, I would have reacted differently.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Those moments at the table informed me of my own self-worth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>So the need is actually maintaining that mental state.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe that it’s something that I don’t even think I will achieve.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I do think that its changed overtime…and I think it will continue to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change overtime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As I matured…I look to the future ideal-self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ll continue to have more goals to become better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It might not be achievable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To truly know yourself helps guides your interactions and reactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My vision of an ideal-person is a lot of how you are as a person…and how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you treat others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My ideal self is trying to be the best person I can be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But pursuing a better version of myself is a want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maturity is a factor that led to it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I think the whole ideal self…you have to take into consideration what</td>
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<tr>
<td>others think.</td>
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Themes or Meaning Units

Horizons or statements that represented textural meaning were clustered into themes or meaning units (Moustakas, 1994). Literature was presented in conjunction with themes to elucidate the terminology used by research participants. Four themes
emerged from this analysis regarding what participants experienced the pursuit of the Ideal-Self: maturity, inner peace, reflection, and reaction (see table 20).

Table 20

Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maturity</td>
<td>“So for me...my pursuit it has been a spiritual maturity.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“As I matured...I look to the future ideal-self.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Maturity is a factor that led to it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner peace</td>
<td>“So for me...my pursuit it has been a spiritual maturity.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“As I matured...I look to the future ideal-self.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Maturity is a factor that led to it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>“Ultimately I would say its self-reflection.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I sat there and through tearful introspection and reflection.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The pursuit of the ideal self is challenging because it requires you to do some reflection and analysis to determine what you want out of life.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction</td>
<td>“There were definitely things done to me that if I was not in my Ideal Self I would have reacted differently.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“To truly know yourself helps guides your interactions and reactions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It makes me pause and kind of charge what my reaction would be.”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Pursuit of the Ideal-Self: Maturity

Jung, Maslow, and Rogers define maturity in terms of self-actualization or the full realization of internal potential (Hogan & Roberts, 2004). Maturation is a process predicated on an individual's ability to move towards self-realization (Schultz & Schultz, 2009; Jung, 1969). Hence, maturity involves movement toward an inner vision that produces higher levels of self-esteem and internal peace. Maturity is associated with an
individual's level of emotional stability, resilience, increased awareness, and low levels of neuroticism. An indication of maturity is a person's ability to integrate and interact with society without losing their individuality. The mature individual is self-accepting and comprehends that he or she is not perfect. These individuals are comfortable with themselves and are actively engaged in helping others while simultaneously advancing their interest (Hogan & Roberts, 2004). The enhanced levels of maturity typically associated with self-realization allows a person to embrace their uniqueness and individuality (Bishop, 2014). Jung posited that self-realization is not achievable, but the process towards an ideal self enables an individual to understand who they are (Jung, 1969). Hence, maturation may be viewed as the ability to integrate all aspects of the psyche while adapting a new and evolving identity (Schultz & Schultz, 2009; Jung, 1969).

In accordance with Freud's Three Mind Theory, maturation may be as one's ability to the control their animalistic instincts or need for instant gratification. If one's ego or organized aspect of the id conflicts with their superego (conscience) it can cause confusion or dysfunction. A properly functioning id develops with maturity and enables appropriate environmental interaction (Rykman, 2008; Schultz & Schultz, 2009). The superego concept describes an individual's internalization of societal values. Hence, during the maturation process, individuals scrutinize values and identity.

It is only from a psychological state of well-being that an individual can pursue growth, autonomy, identity and the pursuit of the ideal self. According to Maslow, the pursuit of the ideal-self is ones universal tendency towards actualization. Maslow
describes self-actualization as a person's need to be and do that which the person was born to do. The excursion towards self-actualization is an individual's journey to become the best version of him or herself. Maslow believed that an individual would not progress to a state of self-actualization if he or she succumbs to challenges placed in their way by their environment (Rykman, 2008; Schultz & Schultz, 2009). He suggests that only two percent of all people reach the actualization level.

**Marcus.** The pursuit of the ideal-self fostered a maturation process that allowed Marcus to accept that trials and tribulation associated with the self-actualization process. “I realize that as long as I keep pursuing the ideal-self, they will be recurring. So, I'll never say hey I got past that, and now I'm happy… and then be disappointed the next time I'll be sad, glad or whatever else. It's a recurring cycle. I will be disappointed again. I will be excited again; I will be nervous again, I will have anxiety about the next step again. And I thinks that’s the beauty of that pursuit… Once you embrace that the sky is not falling every time you get off one emotion to another… you know if we just felt content every day we wouldn’t have to pursue anything. If we didn’t embrace sadness… we would not pursue gladness. And if we didn’t understand sadness we wouldn’t protect that gladness. You know so I understand those emotions are going to continue to drive me… and that’s what makes that pursuit such an interesting pursuit because you get to see all the different… you know it runs the gamut. But a mature person understands that and realizes that as long as he doesn’t rest on any one of those, to include happiness, he will continue to excel up that level of pursuit.”
Andrew. The maturation process triggered by Andrew's pursuit allowed him to move towards self-actualization while dealing with painful memories of the past. "The other side of things for me is also as I've grown older and matured. Angry guy as a young guy, parents divorced when I was young. I was daddy's boy, daddy left. I had to go through the abandonment, and figure out how to be a teenager then, figure out how to be a man, a parent…without a motherly influence, without a fatherly influence. Didn't see the interaction between mom and dad…that kind of thing… so as I married, raised children, interacted with other individuals that come from other experiences. I've seen flaws in the way that I have conducted myself. And uhh…I've identified, and therefore I have a desire to try to change."

Marisol. Marisol credited her maturation process for revealing the impact of her behavior on interpersonal relationships and fostering the internal strength that allowed her to pursue the ideal-self. “Maturity is a factor that led to it. Realizing how my behavior affects others and not wanting to be a burden on anyone…or cause any discomfort for people.”

Iyanla. Iyanla described her maturation process as the creation of the endurance that built perseverance, character and the desire for perfection. "So for me…my pursuit it has been a spiritual maturity. Internally, in my spirit and the way I think, I can be perfect as my father is perfect based on how I think, my peace, and the fact that I can love. That is, when you, the ideal-self is a person who can eliminate negative feelings. As he is perfect is in his thinking. It’s the thinking that brings about an inner peace. It’s the
thinking that allows you to love. So that is what we are actually pursuing. That is in fact perfection.”

**The Pursuit of the Ideal-Self: Inner Peace**

According to Feldman (2003), inner peace is a strength that derives from within and is dependent upon an individual's self-acceptance and ability to cope with the external world. Rubenstein (1998) stated that inner peace includes gratefulness, self-esteem and resiliency, a positive mental outlook, and a lack of negative self-talk or counterproductive self-criticism. Liebman (1946) viewed peace of mind as the ultimate life goal and held that "the quest for this unwearied inner peace is constant and universal" (p. 5). According to Parr (1997), an individual achieves inner peace through the unconditional acceptance of self and others combined with a strong emphasis on living in the present. Instead of dwelling on what has already happened, individuals should view the past as learning experiences. Focusing on the present decreases emotional suffering and establishes the conditions for inner peace. Additionally, individuals should avoid rating or evaluating their self-worth as to avoid undermining their pursuit of inner peace or interring with overall life satisfaction (Parr, 1997).

Inner peace is associated with an individual’s understanding that one must alter his or her behavior and attitude towards external circumstances to achieve inner peace (Lama, 1999). According to Browne et al. (2010), individuals with low levels of inner pace displayed a reduced ability to regulate emotions, narcissistic perspectives, and low levels of agreeableness. In contrast, individuals with high levels of internal peace report higher serenity, forgiveness, and self-acceptance (Browne et al., 2010). Nelson (2014)
suggested that acceptance of self and self-congruence characterize inner peace.

Similarly, Floody (2014) identified harmony and coping ability as core elements of inner peace.

Maslow identified esteem and acceptance (i.e., belongingness and love) as psychological needs that affect an individual's sense of peace and identity development. The absence of their needs produces a sense of despair that leads to intrapersonal conflict. Esteem and a sense of belonging habitually fosters a positive mental outlook, increase mental resiliency thus strengthening one's sense of inner peace. When these needs are not met, an individual will feel inferior, weak, helpless or worthless. It is only after an individual obtains a modicum of self-esteem and confidence that they are able to gain the psychological freedom necessary to pursue their ideal-self.

Andrew. So umm its…when you go…It's growth. And that sounds kind of vague. When you go through a hard time. And you go and execute the self-reflection…And you go and start putting stuff…you make efforts to try to change yourself so that you’re not putting yourself through that same sort of event again. Or if that event, external event presents itself again you would go through it differently. And you look back, and you’re like I really grew from that. And there is…kind of like an adrenaline rush…but it's not an adrenaline based thing. An inner peace that you feel throughout your body, and it’s like I made a change, I’m becoming better as a person. A better version of myself through this. It's hard to put in any sort of word…it's more of a feeling from within. I'm doing the right thing. And you know what. That's good. The
bigger the change, the more intense it is. Smaller changes are not quite as intense. But it's an emotion.

**Iynala.** It’s the thinking that brings about an inner peace. It’s the thinking that allows you to love. So that is what we are actually pursuing. That is in fact perfection. We were meant to be at peace. We were meant to feel comfort…and anything that does not feel that way is not in your true self. And if a person was to come to me not knowing how it feels or what it is like to experience the ideal-self I would say well do you feel comfortable. Do you feel angry, do you feel oppressed, do you feel neglected, have you felt all these bad things, and if the answer is yes I will tell them those are the messages that are telling you to get back to yourself. So that's that the attributes of being in tune or being on the quest of this pursuit is hope. No matter what there is hope, there is understanding; there is peace, there is light, there is love. What feeling did the pursuit generate…uhh in short…Hope, peace, love.

**Jenna.** This is the same reason that the pursuit is important to me…because of them (family)….I also feel fulfilled when I am the best version of myself. I feel an inner peace that is often projected on to them. It’s funny because at times it seems like I’m working against my own sense of peace and tranquility. Making decisions and doing things that are basically against my own interest…out of obligation or to gain favor…to fit in at times or be accepted. Eventually, I realize that I'm working against myself…although sometimes at great cost…and I try to get to that internal peace that by then appears fleeting. That's what the pursuit of the ideal-self has been like for me. A roller coaster journey with me trying to get at my place of happiness and peace. I'm
actually a better person when I'm at peace. I'm not conflicted or worried about what others need or think. I don't feel like there at things happening inside that's out of my control. I'm a better mother…better wife. Basically a better me.

The Pursuit of the Ideal-Self: Reflection

Reflection is an essential element of development that involves the recollection of experiences that have been scrutinized and reevaluated. Reflection occurs via an individual's ongoing reconstruction and attribution of experiences (Korthgen, 2005). As a concept, reflection can be defined as the activity of exploring or examining an issue of concern and considering it in relation to personal experiences (Lundgren, 2016). It is the active, unwavering, and careful consideration of the basis of an individual’s belief(s) (Korthgen, 2005). The intent of reflection is to analyze and learn from experiences in order increase the possibility of future happiness or success (Nesbit, 2012). Functionally, reflection transforms a situation characterized by obscurity, doubt, or conflict into one of increased harmony (Clara, 2015). Through the reflection process, a person’s awareness is enhanced which provides clarity to an otherwise incoherent situation (Clara, 2015).

According to Lundgren (2016), reflection involves the assessment of content, process, or premise to uncover the meaning of experiences. Among the various hierarchical levels of reflection, critical reflection depicts the highest category (Lundgren, 2016). Critical reflection affects the development of the self by illuminating one individuality and highlighting characteristics shared with others. Enhanced awareness of individuality established a link between reflection and the development of the self (Cornu, 2009). Once knowledge of self has been profoundly internalized, it will have an
impact on the development of the self and the newly acquired knowledge leads to internalization (Cornu, 2009). Hence, reflection and internalization are often related.

Reflection works as a continuous interface between inference and observation (Clara, 2015). This form of interplay is initially triggered by challenges stemming from a sense of uncertainty surrounding an experience (Nesbit, 2012). Consequently, reflection can be an effective means of learning from both failed and successful experiences (Ellis, 2014). Through a comprehensive analysis of behavior and its influence on situational outcomes, reflection leads to increased motivation for required (Ellis, 2014). Increased understanding and motivation as a result of reflection leads to more productive cognitive structuring (Ellis, 2014). Through analysis and reflection, individuals increase their understanding of their role in their in success and failures, further increasing self-efficacy and the motivation to pursue higher goals (Ellis, 2014).

Reflection, which includes a gradual transformation of social experiences knowledge into personal understanding, plays a crucial role in learning and behavior (Cornu, 2009; Ellis, 2014). Albert Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory focuses on learning that occurs within a social environment. The theory explains how an individual acquires and maintains specific behavioral patterns that provide the foundation for interpersonal relationships. Human behavior is viewed as a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. The environment offers models for behavior that guide an individual's future behavior. Bandura (1994), wrote that observational learning occurs when an individual watches behavior within an environment then uses the observed behavior as a guide for future
activity. Albert Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) explains as to how learning and reflection influenced participants perceptions and subsequent behavior (Bandura, 1994). The cognitive thought patterns and associated behaviors of research participants appear related to the pursuit of the ideal-self. The external social dynamics associated with identity development, which foster imitation of environmental behavior seems to be connected to the need for acceptance.

Andrew. The desire to change come from within. Whether that be personal reflection or interaction with others. Certainly, if you do a certain thing, or you come across a certain way, and you received that feedback, and then you go back and self-reflect and go yeah. I really do that. It's really messed up that I do that. Or I need to attempt to stop doing that because some of those things are just ….again you been doing it your whole life and you dot realize you're doing…and you can't change it overnight, so it's something that you work at trying to take out of your life. So it’s a combination of sitting down thinking about things that occur in your life…something that causes you to reflect. Or there is some sort of external input that now causes you to reflect. Ultimately, I would say its self-reflection…but why did that self-reflection occur? Usually, you just sit down and think about how things are going, or you get some sort of external stimuli that cause you to do that reflection. So, because these things have happened over the course of the last ten years of my life, the two particular examples that I gave, umm, I have now become more reflective than I was. So that's a way that it has changed me. And, in addition to that, I am now equally interactive with those around me, but I am more choosy about what I interacted with them about. Because of the self-reflection.
When a major event occurs, and you go back, and you reflect upon it…you go through that conscious piece, and you make a decision that ok no that really is messed up. The change in you now needs to take place. Umm, if you go back, and you reflect upon it and umm you know you didn't say it the right way but what you did say is right...ok work on the way you say things, but there is no real need for change. Cause that still is in line with the ideal self that you're attempting to become. If that makes sense. So its comes down to the evaluation of the event and the way that I reacted to it…or interacted with it while it occurred. If that makes sense.

**Marcus.** I sat there and through tearful introspection and reflection…I realized that I was a version of myself that wasn't where I wanted to go. And I decided right then that my aim was to be the best version of a friend, the best version of a man, the best version of a teammate. The best version of whatever it was I was going to be. So that was a conscious decision. It was a painful decision because I now want to change the natural stream of things for me.

**Jenna.** The pursuit of the ideal self is challenging because it requires you to do some reflection and analysis to determine what you want out of life. And to simply say I want to be happy well what does that look like. Happiness doesn’t mean all sunny days nor does it mean mostly sunny days either. So what does it mean to be truly to be happy? So, it has affected my life because I have to constantly be reflecting, analyzing, making changes, and accepting new possibilities. Honestly, I think the pursuit of the ideal-self is overwhelming at times because the analyzing and reflecting forces me to deal with stuff I wasn’t even aware of.
The Pursuit of the Ideal-Self: Reaction

The meaning attributed to a given conflict will influence an individual's interpretation of a dispute and any associated events (Bauer, Schwab, & McAdams, 2011; Biesanz, West, & Kwok, 2003; Deutsch, Colman, & Marcus (2006); Sandole, Byrne, Sandole-Staroste, & Senhi, 2009). Identity reconciliation, as a product of one's pursuit of the ideal-self, increases awareness, emotional stability, and inner peace. Consequently, an individual can avoid or resolve conflicts at the lowest possible level. A disconnect between one’s externally influenced identity and their ideal-self could create a cycle of internal conflict that alters an individual’s decision making as it pertains to conflict resolution. Individuals often choose their approach to conflict base on circumstance, setting, and experiences (Lewicki, Saunders, & Barry, 2010). Several research participants credited the pursuit of the ideal-self for allowing them to react in a constructive manner in the face of conflict or adversity.

Iyanla. There were definitely things done to me that if I was not in my ideal self I would have reacted differently. Out of anger, out of revenge, out of you name it, but being in that self, those offenses would happen, and I could deal with them in a different way. Universally thinking, ok this person doesn't have my background. This person has other things that they’ve been through in life. They not from my country, English is not their first language, whatever, whatever. It’s influenced my approach to conflict… in my identity of self, I’ve found more wisdom in silence. So yes I may be offended, yes it may make me angry, but I react with silence and thought…and go back into my meditation.
Marcus. Well I believe that to know yourself...that to truly know yourself helps guide your interactions and reactions. It's guides how you treat people and what you strive to accomplish. I uhh...my pursuit of the ideal-self has been a continuous process. I continue to evaluate, reevaluate and access my dealing on a daily basis, on a situational basis. Long term, short term, midterm basis. And I think that we all should realize...we all have...we all can get better. And a truly humble person who is really wanting to reach their goals continues to assess and modify on a continual basis.

Marisol. Umm...so if I don't like a person I'm like I don't care anything about that person but then if I'm pursuing the ideal me that internal dialogue would say just take a second and don't be so mean to that person even though you don't like them. Don't wish harm on them. It's kind of like the little angle on one shoulder and the little devil on the other should when you're in the heat of things, and you're upset with someone you can say hurtful things and the devil is like yeah hurt that person. And so there is an internal conflict between doing what's gratifying and doing what lines up with who I want to be. I think about the long effects or impacts that it will have on this person, and so it makes me pause and kind of change what my reaction would be. Which to me that's a positive thing.

Textual and Structural Descriptions

After thematic analysis, the researcher described "what" was experienced in textural descriptions, and "how" it was experienced in structural descriptions. Textural descriptions are considered, and additional meanings are sought from different perspectives, roles, and functions. Textural descriptions include examples, ideas,
situations, feelings, and thoughts that portray a lived experience (Moustakas, 1994, p 47). Structural descriptions involve conscious acts of thinking and judging, imagining, and recollecting to arrive at core fundamental meaning (Moustakas, 1994, p 78). The process of imaginative variation leads to the structural textures resulting in essential structures of the phenomenon. This was accomplished by focusing on the conditions that influence and underlie textural qualities.

The research participants reported developing a strong desire for change. The recognition of shortcoming associated with their current self was viewed as a detriment once they gain knowledge of their ideal-self. The pursuit of the ideal-self offered participants the opportunity to close the gap between their desired self and the current version. The desired appeared to derive from the realization and acceptance of their flaws and imperfections.

The participants underwent a cognitive reconstruction to establish the conditions that would allow them to let go of past anguish and pain. Additionally, research participants had to reevaluate their value system. Before their pursuit of the ideal-self, their beliefs were primarily based on the values of others. Letting go of the expectation of others and incongruent beliefs left participants feeling empowered. Participants experienced various stages of reflection that enabled inner peace and cognitive reconstruction. The newness and evolving nature of the participants emerging identity made it difficult for them to describe how they felt independent of their environment. Consequently, several participants describe the pursuit of the ideal-self in relation to their environment and others.
Research participants described the ideal self as unachievable. This realization appeared vital to developing effective affect regulation strategies and responses to conflict. Accepting that the ideal-self is an unattainable goal reduced both self-criticism and intrapersonal conflict. This realization was accompanied by an understanding of the control participants had in their happiness. Although the ideal-self was determined to be unachievable, it was not viewed as a limitation to growth. Instead, the necessity of pursuing the ideal-self despite it being unachievable was understood as a requirement to prevent developmental stagnation.

Participants reported experiencing traits and characteristics associated with a self-actualized individual during the pursuit of the ideal-self (See Appendix D). Hence, although the ideal-self is ultimately unachievable as a whole, it has the propensity to be obtained or experience partially. This experience motivates individuals to continue pursuing the long and arduous pursuit of the ideal-self.

Participant reflection took place in isolation after multiple, substantial, or emotionally driven events or situations. Although the reflection process did not guarantee or specific behavioral change, it often led to changes in ones thought process. During reflection, participants were more aware of what they experienced and how they felt. However, participants had a limited understanding of the associated root causes. In many regards, the pursuit of the ideal-self is initially a journey to discover the why of life experiences. However, as an intrapersonal conflict is reduced, the answers to why are less important. Instead, individuals became more concerned with solutions and the how associated with their experiences. With acceptance of self, participants saw greater value
in resolving conflict and issues in ways that did not threaten inner peace. The answers to how provided comfort, revealed potential solutions, and enhance inner peace as individuals were better equipped to make appropriate life adjustments. Ultimately, this awareness allowed them to live for themselves while preventing or avoiding various forms of conflict.

While participants viewed the obtainment of the ideal-self as unachievable, several reported increased growth and maturity. Maturity levels appeared to be predicated on the perceived ability to respond life stimuli in a manner consistent with one’s belief system. The participant’s recognition that they were progressing toward their ideal-self often signified that identity reconstruction was occurring. Reassurance and confidence characterized maturity. Confidence stemmed from their demonstrated ability to external and internal conflict in a manner conducive to happiness and well-being. Reassurance derived from the positive and desirable outcomes associated with acceptable responses to internal and external triggers.

Identity reconstruction during the pursuit of the ideal-self was both a reward and a challenging step for participants. Reconstruction was associated with participant’s courage to strive for personal goals and live by their values and expectations. The time between deconstruction and reconstruction varied. However, maturity was gaged by one's ability to avoid undesirable consequences. Maturity essentially is a continuous developmental process that leads to the dismissal of conflicting beliefs and the formulation of congruent values. Maturity is not defined by age or experience alone. Instead, it's characterized by movement towards actualization or ones ideal-self.
The Essence of the Experience

The textual and structural descriptions of participant experiences were synthesized into a composite statement of the phenomenon through ‘intuitive integration. This description became the essential, invariant structure of ultimate essence, which captures the meaning ascribed to the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The consolidated statement of the essence of the experience represents a particular vantage point of the researcher's reflection on the phenomenon.

The pursuit of the ideal-self is an unachievable, continuous, and emotional maturation process that fosters reflection, restraint, and inner peace. The emotional aspect stems from the intrapersonal conflict associated with moving away from a previously established belief system. Additionally, in the quest to fulfill esteem needs, individuals have spent a lifetime trying to gain acceptance by meeting the expectations of others. The pursuit of the ideal-self is not only unachievable, but it also has no stages. The understanding or definition of the pursuit will vary because it's based on individual goals and values. Although the pursuit of the ideal-self is based on an individual's needs, such needs often benefit others. This is perhaps one of the factors that render the ideal-self unachievable.

Although the achievement of the ideal-self is not an obtainable end state, it may be viewed as an indicator of the highest level of self-acceptance and awareness. It is an individual’s recognition that their most perfect version of self is the ideal-self that facilitates internal harmony. The ideal-self is a reconciled identity characterized by a cognitive state that promotes internal harmony and maximizes potential. The
reconciliation is between external values/expectation and internal values or desires. The ideal-self is the element of identity that grants an individual permission to be who they are. It is not an image based on external values but the vision of self that is the result of one's acknowledgment of personal values and imperfections.
Chapter 5: Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations

“I am who I am in part because I am not Who you are.” - Alison Le Cornu

This research investigation challenged the inadequate inundation of identity traits and characteristics that exist within scholarly literature as a means of understanding the etiology of conflict and the resolution options available to practitioners. Hence, this dissertation offers an alternative framework for moving passed resolution impasse. Quantitative methodologies examined the central research hypothesis that a correlation exists between the pursuit of the ideal self and intrapersonal conflict. The secondary purpose of the research investigation was to identify participants who had experience the intrapersonal conflict due to their pursuit of the ideal-self. Purposefully selected individuals participated in the qualitative phase of the research investigation. This chapter will present a summary of the overall research purpose, procedures, and findings. Additionally, the relationship between the quantitative and qualitative results will be discussed. Chapter 5 concludes with implications the current study may have on the field of conflict analysis and resolution, a description of research limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Purpose

Behavioral responses to identity crisis can influence individual decision making while negatively affecting interpersonal relationships. The emotions associated with an identity crisis and any subsequent interpersonal conflicts established the conditions that lead to intrapersonal conflict. The onset of dual conflicts brought about by competing internal and external demands have a deleterious impact on conflict strategies or
resolution attempts (Archer, 1982; Cote & Levine, 1988; Heise & Calhan, 1995). The purpose of this study was to increase contextual knowledge of identity reconciliation by examining the relationship between the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict. The researcher attempted to understand the common meaning of phenomenon and its associated variables. Lastly, the researcher tried to explore and identify factors associated with the phenomenon that could facilitate future longitudinal studies and enhance conflict resolution techniques. The current research investigation was developed to refine, advance, and expand the knowledge, understanding, theoretical platforms and applications within the fields of conflict analysis and resolution, identity theory, and social psychology. The study explored the relationship between the pursuit of the ideal self and intrapersonal conflict as a means to further the understanding of identity crisis.

Summary of Procedures

To understand the context, process, and meaning of intrapersonal conflict as it relates to the pursuit of the ideal-self, the researcher utilized phenomenological investigative procedures to harvest the personal narratives of purposely-selected participants. Within this qualitative construct, semi-structured interviews were used to obtain answers to research questions.

The qualitative phase was design to reveal the meaning, process, and context associated with the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict. Therefore, the following research questions were developed.

RQ1] *What have you experienced regarding the phenomenon?*
RQ2] What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected an individual’s experiences of the phenomenon?

RQ3] What emotions are associated with intrapersonal conflict which results from the pursuit of the ideal-self?

RQ4] Are intrapersonal conflicts and negative conflict management styles related?

The quantitative survey instrument (See Appendix I) consisted of two distinct sections. The first section part of the survey contained 17 questions designed to collect information about participants perception of the pursuit of the ideal-self. A semantic differential scale was used to ascertain intensity and obtain raw data that could be inputted into SPSS for correlation exploration. During the qualitative phase of the study, the researcher asked ten questions designed to ascertain the essence of the experience as it relates to the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict.

Summary of Findings

The quantitative phase of the research investigation consisted of 30 participants ages 32-47. The mean age of participants was 37.33 years of age with a mode of 32. The sample population consisted of 12 females, 18 males, with five different ethnic backgrounds. Male participants reported higher levels of intrapersonal conflict and spent longer periods reflecting on their ideal-self. In contrast, females experienced higher levels of awareness than did male participants. The researcher hypothesized that there was a significant linear relationship between the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict. The correlational analysis yielded a "p score" that was less than .0005 allowing
the researcher to reject the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative hypothesis.

Subsequent analysis of the research variables revealed a strong significant negative correlation between the pursuit of the ideal-self and the duration of intrapersonal conflict, $r (28) = -.739, p < .0005$. Additionally, a strong statistical relationship was established between an individuals self-satisfaction and the intensity in which they experience conflict, $r (28) = -.385, p = .036$.

To examine the predictive value of the independent variable as related to the dependent variable measured, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. Analysis of Variance testing revealed that the regression model results were a statistically better predictor of intrapersonal conflict than the analysis of the mean of the dependent variable alone. The average PIS scores statistically significantly predicted intrapersonal conflict scores. Furthermore, an Analysis of Variance revealed that the intensity of the participant’s intrapersonal conflict would be 46 percent higher if they did not pursue their ideal-self.

The qualitative phase of the research investigation consisted of five participants ages 32-42. The mean age of participants was 36.2 years of age with a mode of 32. The sample population consisted of two females, three males, with three different ethnic backgrounds. Male participants reported higher levels of intrapersonal conflict and experienced more significant levels of identity clarity and self-awareness. In contrast, females experienced longer periods of reflection and lower levels of emotional intensity during intrapersonal conflict than did male participants.
Textural and structural descriptions of the experience were synthesized into a composite statement. Consequently, the researcher defines the pursuit of the ideal-self as an unachievable, continuous, and emotional maturation process that fosters reflection, restraint and inner peace. Many participants responded to research questions by offering examples of people within their lives. At first glance, the answers were viewed as a reluctance respond in an open and transparent manner. However, upon further evaluation, the researcher concluded that the initial responses from participants were due to an inability or difficulty viewing themselves from outside of their group identity. This courage triggered the maturation process that provided participants with the courage to break away from the influence and expectations of others.

**Implications of Findings**

The results of this research study have implications for practitioners in the field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution who are looking for ways to move disputes past friction or impasse. The feedback from practitioners who consider the influence of intrapersonal conflict on interpersonal and group conflicts could assist in developing a new wave of theories and techniques that could facilitate desired outcomes. Furthermore, the new movement and influx of ideas could change the approach to conflict resolution.

In general, practitioners avoid focusing on the causes of disputes in favor of solution-focused or needs based approaches. The time restraints associated with many resolution attempts that line of thinking was often appropriate. However, the higher the intensity or level of intractability may require an approach that recognizes associations and causes. Cases, whereas disputants were unable or unwilling to adhere to a negotiated
agreement, may benefit from a more holistic approach to conflict resolution. Identifying needs and common ground will continue to play a critical role in future conflict resolution. Nonetheless, an understanding of how the causes of intrapersonal conflict and the pursuit of the ideal-self connect to the larger picture may prove vital. All interpersonal and group conflict stems from intrapersonal conflict.

An intrapersonal conflict that stems from an identity crisis could affect a dispute unbeknownst to the parties involved. In situations where disputants are aware of identity conflicts, they may still be unable to recognize its effect or articulate related desires. Finally, emotional intensity and sustained periods of reflection characterize the pursuit of the ideal-self. Consequently, any action that threatens tranquility or increases emotional intensity may be received unfavorably. In contrast, an action by practitioners that support, acknowledge or encourage an individual's pursuit of the ideal-self has the potential for move the resolution process forward.

Limitations of the Study

Time restraints associated with this investigation, it became necessary for the researcher to keep the sample population small during the qualitative phase of the study. Access to the sample population was limited due to participants conflicting work obligations and pending location transfers. Additionally, time restraints force the researcher to accept participants based on the established minimum standard vice the selecting the best qualified individuals.

The lack of previous research on the pursuit of the ideal-self required the researcher to limit the scope of the analysis and the sample population to establish the
conditions necessary to uncover trends, themes, meaning. The lack of previous research is most likely the result of the perception that the pursuit of the ideal-self is a simple concept vice a phenomenon.

Furthermore, the ideal-self as a concept has been explored theoretically but not as part of an empirical study due to ethical considerations. Ethical restraints combined with a lack of interest in exploring the phenomenon have made it necessary for initial research to be narrow in scope. Furthermore, ethical considerations prevented variable manipulation, which degrades external validity and reduces the degree to which a researcher can generalize findings. Quantitative correlational research as a whole does produce strong causal inference and cannot always eliminate other explanations to established relationships.

When correlation relationships are discovered, they seldom explain how variables are related. Unfortunately, once the linear relationship between the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict was established the researcher could not create a qualitative research question that explores how. As is the case with transcendental phenomenological research, determining why is the result of the researcher reflection and intuitive integration. The results of this study are not indicative of cause-effect relationships associated with identity development but could lay the groundwork for future longitudinal studies.

The data collected during the qualitative phase of the investigation was self-reported and was thereby difficult to verify independently. The researcher had no choice but to accept the data provided by participants as factual. Consequently, there were
several potential biases that threatened the validity of phase two. The following are possible limitations: (1) participant selective memory (2) telescoping or confusion of timelines associated with the phenomenon, (3) false attribution, and (4) exaggeration or embellishment of facts. The aforementioned limitations have the potential to invalidate or skew research results.

**Recommendations for future research**

The qualitative and quantitative phases of this investigation were limited to graduate level students within a military community. Future research investigations should increase the demographic diversity of the sample population to enhance the degree in which the results are generalizable to the greater society. In broadening the scope of the study, additional aspects of phenomenon may be examined to provide further understanding within the unstudied areas. For example, possible areas of future research include the influence of educational level, age, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status on one's decision to pursue the ideal-self. Additionally, the differences in responses between male and female participants warrant further examination.

Given the time restraint associated with this study, a longitudinal study may be appropriate for future studies. Longitudinal studies offer the opportunity to enhance research validity by recording data over a longer timeframe. The extended timeframe would afford a future researcher the opportunity to ask follow up questions beyond those questions asked during probing. With additional time, the quality and richness of the data collected would enhance and provide greater understanding of the phenomenon. Further, a longitudinal study would allow a researcher to collect data during optimal conditions.
Data collection during this study occurred during a time of increased academic stress for the participants, which could have influenced their overall effect during interviews and surveys. Future research should revise a specific method for gathering data to include an opportunity for participants to make comments or elaborate on the survey responses they provide.

**Conclusion**

This research investigation was developed to advance the understanding of the influence of identity reconciliation on the conflict resolution process. As the review of scholarly literature suggests, there appears to be both a theoretical and practical lack of understanding regarding the correlation between the various factors that influence intrapersonal conflict. The lack of attention given to identity-based disputes calls to question the effectiveness of the current approaches to conflict resolution. The core aspects of the major approaches to conflict resolution emphasize needs, perception, and generating appropriate options (See Appendix B). However, the results of this study reveal a need to identify the importance of the unarticulated need beneath the need. Additionally, practitioners must establish baselines for each participant in order to understand the micro meaning disputants assign to conflict.

Grounded in the qualitative and quantitative methodology of this study, the results provide a clear and thorough explanation of how the pursuit of the ideal-self is perceived and its impact on intrapersonal conflict. Furthermore, in addition to establishing a linear relationship between central research variables, this research identified a connection between the pursuit of the ideal-self and an individual’s conflict management style.
Research participants report that they were more likely to select a productive approach to conflict because of their desire to maintain the inner peace associated with their pursuit of the ideal-self. Additionally, a strong statistical correlation was established between the pursuit of the ideal-self and the duration of an intrapersonal conflict.

The current research investigation could be used as a bridge to increase contextual and theoretical understanding of the options available attempting to resolve a dispute that appears challenging or intractable. Using knowledge gained about the influence of the ideal-self to enhance the foundation of the conflict analysis and resolution could potentially bolster practitioner effectiveness, spark theory development, or produced negotiated agreements that are sustainable. The results of this investigation make it clear that practitioners can leverage an individual’s pursuit of the ideal-self to affect change within an interpersonal setting. Transformation of our understanding of the best approaches to stagnate conflict resolution attempts cannot occur until all perspectives have been examined and subsequently ruled out.
References


Kiviruusu1, O., Berg1, N., Huurre1, T., Aro1, H., Marttunen1, M., & Haukkala, A. (2015). Interpersonal Conflicts and Development of Self-Esteem from Adolescence to Mid-Adulthood. A 26-Year Follow-Up. DOI:10.1371/journal.pone.0164942


*Russian Social Science Review*, vol. 48, no. 5, 47–56.


# Appendix A: Core Fears & Negative Feelings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Core Fears &amp; Negative Feelings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Helplessness, powerless, impotent, or controlled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Abandonment, isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Loneliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Inept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Unloved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Defective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Inferior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Cheated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Devalued, invalidated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Unfulfilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Humiliated</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Manipulated</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Observable indicators of anxiety/insufficient mental faculties</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Trembling or shaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Chest pain or discomfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Sensations of shortness of breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Excessive sweating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Feelings of dizziness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Signs of nausea or abdominal distress (grabbing stomach, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Excessive movement or fidgeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Excessive eye movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Initial lack of eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Irregular voice inflection and tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Poor or debilitating body language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Facial distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Hesitation or lack of enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Nail biting</td>
</tr>
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### Appendix B: Core Aspects of Conflict Resolution

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitation</th>
<th>Negotiation</th>
<th>Mediation</th>
<th>Work of Conflict Res.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infer meaning</td>
<td>Maintain awareness of tension and resolution obstacles</td>
<td>- Uncover hidden interest and identify psychological interest</td>
<td>Clarify perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Compassion - Internal commitment</td>
<td>- Demonstrate empathy or assertiveness as appropriate</td>
<td>- Check perceptions</td>
<td>Create an effective atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand, incorporate, and mitigate emotion</td>
<td>Understand, incorporate, and mitigate emotion</td>
<td>Understand, incorporate, and mitigate emotion</td>
<td>Understand, incorporate, and mitigate emotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Disputants understand the needs and goals of the opposing party - Avoid capitulation of needs</td>
<td>- Disputants understand the needs and goals of the opposing party - Avoid capitulation of needs</td>
<td>- Disputants understand the needs and goals of the opposing party - Avoid capitulation of needs</td>
<td>Focus on individual and shared needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide whether and how to change behavior</td>
<td>Select an appropriate approach to conflict resolution</td>
<td>Select a strategy</td>
<td>Generate options</td>
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## Appendix C: Quantitative Participant Statistical Data

### Descriptive Statistics

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<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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### PIS & Intrapersonal Conflict Scores

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<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
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## Appendix D: Research Participant Statistical Data

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<td></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PIS clarified my identity</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inner conflict is emotionally intense</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inner conflict is overwhelming</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MEMORANDUM

To: Abdul Mack

From: Pei-Fen Li, Ph.D.,
Center Representative, Institutional Review Board

Date: May 6, 2017

Re: IRB #: 2017-312; Title, "Identity Reconciliation: Understanding the Relationship between the Pursuit of the Ideal-Self and Intrapersonal Conflict."

I have reviewed the above-referenced research protocol at the center level. Based on the information provided, I have determined that this study is exempt from further IRB review under 45 CFR 46.101(b) (Exempt Category 2). You may proceed with your study as described to the IRB. As principal investigator, you must adhere to the following requirements:

1) CONSENT: If recruitment procedures include consent forms, they must be obtained in such a manner that they are clearly understood by the subjects, and the process affords subjects the opportunity to ask questions, obtain detailed answers from those directly involved in the research, and have sufficient time to consider their participation after they have been provided this information. The subjects must be given a copy of the signed consent document, and a copy must be placed in a secure file separate from de-identified participant information. Record of informed consent must be retained for a minimum of three years from the conclusion of the study.

2) ADVERSE EVENTS/UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS: The principal investigator is required to notify the IRB chair and me (954-262-5369 and Pei-Fen Li, Ph.D., respectively) of any adverse reactions or unanticipated events that may develop as a result of this study. Reactions or events may include, but are not limited to, injury, depression as a result of participation in the study, life-threatening situation, death, or loss of confidentiality/anonymity of subject. Approval may be withdrawn if the problem is serious.

3) AMENDMENTS: Any changes in the study (e.g., procedures, number or types of subjects, consent forms, investigators, etc.) must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Please be advised that changes in a study may require further review depending on the nature of the change. Please contact me with any questions regarding amendments or changes to your study.

Appendix F: Consent Form for Participation in the Research Study

Title of study: Identity Reconciliation: Understanding the Relationship Between the Pursuit of the Ideal-Self and Intrapersonal Conflict

Funding Source: None
IRB approval #: 2017-312

Principle Investigator: Abdul E. Mack, M.S.
Supervisory Professor: Neil Katz, Ph.D.
Nova Southeastern University
Student, DCAR
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314
Tel: (760) 819-9398

Supervisory Professor: Dustin Berna, Ph.D.
Nova Southeastern University
Student, DCAR
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314
Tel: (954) 262-3040

Supervisory Professor: Nova Southeastern University
Associate Professor, DCAR
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314
Tel: (954) 262-3024

3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314
Tel: (954) 262-3024

For questions/concerns about your research rights, contact:
Human Research Oversight Board (Institutional Review Board or IRB)
General Gray Marine Corps Research Center
Nova Southeastern University
2040 Broadway St, Quantico, VA 22134
(954) 262-5369/Toll Free: 866-499-0790
IRB@nsu.nova.edu

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research project is to increase contextual knowledge of identity reconciliation by examining the relationship between the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict. You are being invited to participate due to your affiliation with Marine Corps University. If you choose to participate, your part in the research project will involve the completion of a set of demographic questions (for example, your age, gender, and organizational position), and a 32-item survey. This process should take approximately 10 minutes. Approximately 30 participants will engage in this research study. Directly upon your completion of the research survey, you may be purposely selected for a 45-minute interview, consisting of 10 questions examining your view of the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict. Five research participants will be selected for the interview. This research project will include audio recordings of the interview. This audio recording will be available to be heard by the researcher, Mr. Abdul Mack, personnel from the IRB, and the dissertation chair, Dr. Katz. Mr. Mack will transcribe the recording. Mr. Mack will use earphones while transcribing the interviews to guard your privacy. The recording will be kept securely in Mr. Mack's office in a locked cabinet. The recording will be kept for 36 months from the end of the study. The recording will be destroyed after that time by shredding the tape. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the recording, your confidentiality for things you say on the recording cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the tape as described in this paragraph.

Risks and Benefits to the Participant: [Risks]: Risks to you are minimal, meaning they are not thought to be greater than other risks you experience every day. Being recorded means that confidentiality cannot be promised. Sharing your opinions about treatment may make you anxious or bring back unhappy memories. If this happens, Mr. Mack will try to help you. If you need further help, he will suggest someone you can see, but you will have to pay for that yourself. If you have questions about the research, your research rights, or if you experience an injury because of the research, please contact Mr. Mack at (760) 819-9398. You may also contact the IRB at the numbers indicated above with questions about your research rights.

Title of study: Identity Reconciliation: Understanding the Relationship Between the Pursuit of the Ideal-Self and Intrapersonal Conflict

[Benefits]: There are no direct benefits, cost to you, or compensation for participating in this research study; however, your participation will help construct effective conflict resolution practices, lending to the
development of enriched organizational, cultural, or home environments.

Confidentiality and Privacy: All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The data collected will be analyzed and reported in summary form. Your identification will not be connected to your contributions. The questionnaire will not ask you for any information that could be linked to you. The transcripts of the tapes will not have any information that could be linked to you. As mentioned, the tapes will be destroyed 36 months after the study ends. The IRB, regulatory agencies or Dr. Katz may review research records. To ensure security and confidentiality, data will be stored in locked, fire-proof filing cabinets in the private residence of the principal investigator. Electronic data analysis and records will be stored and maintained on the secure computer of the primary investigator. Access to the data will be granted to the primary investigator and supervisor professors. To ensure your protection and safety, the highest ethical standards will be maintained throughout this study, in accord with the established protocol denoted within the Policy and Procedure Manual for Research with Human Subjects, published by Nova Southeastern University IRB Guidelines.

Use of Protected Health Information: This study does not require the disclosure of any protected health information (PHI).

Participant’s Right to Withdraw from the Study: As a research participant, it should be understood that you are free to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without adverse effects or loss of any benefit. If you do decide to leave or you decide not to participate, you will not experience any penalty or loss of services you have a right to receive. If you choose to withdraw, any information collected about you before the date you leave the study will be kept in the research records for 36 months from the conclusion of the study and may be used as a part of the research.

Other Considerations: If significant new information relating to this study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you by the investigator. If the researchers learn anything which might change your mind about being involved, you will be told of this information.

Voluntary Consent by the Participant: I have read this consent form, or it has been read to me, and I fully understand the contents of this document and voluntarily consent to participate. All of my questions concerning the research have been answered. I hereby agree to participate in this research study. If I have any questions in the future about this study, they will be answered by Abdul E. Mack, Dr. Neil Katz, and/or Dr. Dustin Berna. A copy of this form has been given to me. This consent ends at the conclusion of this study.

By signing below, you indicate that
• this study has been explained to you
• you have read this document or it has been read to you
• your questions about this research study have been answered
• you have been told that you may ask the researchers any study related questions in the future or contact them in the event of a research-related injury
• you have been told that you may ask Institutional Review Board (IRB) personnel questions about your study rights
• you are entitled to a copy of this form after you have read and signed it you voluntarily agree to participate in the study entitled “Identity Reconciliation: Understanding the Relationship Between the Pursuit of the Ideal-Self and Intrapersonal Conflict.”

Participant's Name & Signature: _________________________________ Date: ________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____________________________ Date: __________________
Appendix G: Recruitment Email

Nova Southeastern University
Depart of Conflict Analysis and Resolution
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314
Tel: (954) 262-3006

Dear Sir or Ma’am,

My name is Abdul Mack, and I am a Ph.D. Candidate at Nova Southeastern University. I am currently conducting a research study to increase contextual knowledge of identity reconciliation by examining the relationship between the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict. An understanding of the relationship between the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict is necessary to better enable practitioners to move the conflict resolution process pass impasses or identify common ground. The ideal self can be described as a reconciled identity characterized by a cognitive state that facilitates internal harmony and maximizes potential. Reconciliation occurs s between external values/expectation and internal values or desires. You are invited to participate in this study due to your affiliation with Marine Corps University. If you choose to participate, you maintain the right to withdraw from the study at any time. All research participants will be asked to complete a twelve question, multiple choice, demographic questionnaire (for example, your age, gender, and organizational position), and a 32-item, self-scored survey. This process should take approximately 10-15 minutes. Five of the thirty research participants will be asked to partake in a 45-minute interview, consisting of 10 questions examining your view of the pursuit of the ideal-self and intrapersonal conflict. Participating in the research survey does not obligate you to participate in the interview. Furthermore, research participant will be encouraged not to respond to any questions that exceed their comfort threshold. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless law requires disclosure. If interested, or if you have questions, please contact me via email at am1856@nova.edu or (760) 819-9398. All research will be conducted at the General Alfred M. Gray Marine Corps Research Center, 2040 Broadway St, Quantico, VA 22134

Research participation criteria: Quantitative survey. All research participants must be at least 18 years of age and possess the mental capacity to consent to the study. Mental capacity is defined as the ability to make a decision (e.g., consent to study). Participant must be able to articulate an understanding of the decision to consent, explained the purpose of the study, and articulate their understanding of the pros and cons of the study. All participants must possess a fundamental comprehension of the English language.

Research participation criteria: Qualitative interview. All research participants must be at least 18 years of age and possess the mental capacity to consent to the study. All participants must possess a fundamental comprehension of the English language and have experienced the phenomenon of interest as determined by the researcher. Due to time restraints associated with the study, only the first five participants who meet the established criteria will be allowed to participate.

Respectfully,
Abdul E. Mack, Ph.D. Candidate
Nova Southeastern University
Student, Department of
Conflict Analysis and Resolution
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314
Tel: (760) 819-9398
Appendix H: Demographic Form

Identity Reconciliation: Understanding the Relationship
Between the Pursuit of the Ideal-Self
and Intrapersonal Conflict

Please complete the following demographic information. Omit any question that you are unable, unwilling, or uncomfortable answering.

D1] Gender (Please Circle): Female  Male

D2] Age:  ______________

D3] Race:  ______________

D4] Ethnicity  ______________

D5] Religious affiliation during childhood (Please Circle):
   a] Yes  c] Sometimes
   b] No  d] No response

D6] Did you live in a two parent household during childhood? (Please Circle):
   a] Yes  c] Sometimes
   b] No  d] No response

D7] Number of siblings (Please Circle):
   a] 0  c] 3 or more
   b] 1-2  d] No response

D8] Interpersonal relationships during childhood (Please Circle):
   a] 6 or more friends  c] 0-2 friends
   b] 3-5 friends  d] No response

D9] Marital Status: What is your marital status? (Please Circle):
   a] Single, never married  d] Divorced
   b] Married or domestic partnership  c] Widowed
   e] Separated  f] No response

D10] Highest Level of Education Completed (Please Circle):
   a] Less than High School  f] Portion of 2-year Graduate Education
b] High School               g] 2-year Graduate Degree (e.g., M.A./M.S.)
c] Portion of Undergraduate Education   h] Portion of 4-year Graduate Education
d] 2-year Undergraduate Degree (e.g., A.A./A.S.)   i] 4-year Graduate Degree (e.g., Ph.D./M.D.)
e] 4-year Undergraduate Degree (e.g., B.A./B.S.)   j] Post-Graduate Specialization

D11] Your current position at your place of employment is best characterized as (Please Circle): *Note: If you are not currently employed, please refer to your most recent place of employment.

a] Upper-Level Management/Executive
b] Middle-Level Management/Supervisory
c] Lower Level Management/Supervisory
d] Administrative/Support staff
e] Non-Management/Non-Support Professional Staff
f] Other

D12] Household Income (Please Circle):

a] 15k-25k
b] 25k-40k
c] 40k-50k
d] 50k-75k
e] 75k +
f] No response
Appendix I: Quantitative Survey Questions

Section 1 (Quantitative Survey Questions)
Note: Participants will score each question on a scale of 1-10. Ten represents the highest value or strong agreement (SA). In contrast, one represents the lowest value or strongly disagree (SD).

Relationship between variables
X: Pursuit of ideal-self

SD  Neutral  SA
1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

1. I am currently the best version of myself. ____
2. I expect to become the best version of myself within the next year. ____
3. I have been pursuing my ideal-self for more than one year. ____
4. I am completely satisfied with my current version of myself. ____
5. I am actively attempting to become the best version of myself. ____
6. My current self-view is the result of a great deal of reflection and thought. ____
7. I will not stop until I become the best version of myself. ____
8. The pursuit of the ideal self is crucial to my wellbeing. ____
9. Pursuing my ideal self is extremely important to me. ____
10. The pursuit of my ideal-self is primarily motivated by external/social expectations. ____
11. The pursuit of my ideal-self is primarily motivated by my values and expectations. ____
12. My efforts to become the best version of myself required courage. ____
13. My pursuit of the ideal-self is the result of enhanced self-awareness. ____
14. The pursuit of my ideal self has clarified how I view my identity (Identity embodies that which an individual is, hopes to become or is expected to become). ____
15. My pursuit of the ideal-self has negatively impacted my interpersonal relationships. ____
16. My pursuit of the ideal-self has positively impacted my interpersonal relationships. ____
17. My pursuit of the ideal-self has resulted in or been associated with inner conflict. ____

Y: Intrapersonal conflict

SD  Neutral  SA
1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Score

1. Throughout my life, I have never experience inner conflict. ____
2. I have experienced inner conflict within the past 12 months. ____
3. I have experienced inner conflict within the past two years. ____
4. I am currently experiencing either a mild, moderate or a severe inner conflict. ____
5. When I experience inner conflict, it is emotionally intense. ____
6. When I experience inner conflict, it is overwhelming. ____
7. When I experience inner conflict, the experience will last for several months. ____
8. When I experience inner conflict, the experience will last for several weeks. ____
9. When I experience inner conflict, the experience will last for several days. ____
10. My intrapersonal conflict(s) are values based. ____
11. Inner conflict has a negative impact on my life perspective or daily functioning. ____
12. Inner conflict has a positive impact on my life perspective or daily functioning. ____
13. My identity or self-concept is primarily defined by external/social values. ____
14. My identity or self-concept is primarily defined by my values and expectations. ____
15. In past years, inner conflict(s) have disrupted my pursuit of the ideal-self. ____
Appendix J: Qualitative Interview Questions

Section 2 (Qualitative Interview Questions)

Experiencing the phenomenon

1. What are your beliefs regarding the pursuit of the ideal-self? Please explain.

2. Describe the experience of pursuing the ideal-self?

3. Select one event or situation in which you were acutely aware of your pursuit of the ideal self? Please describe/explain.

4. How has your pursuit of your ideal self affected your life? How has it affected significant others in your life?

5. Does/has the pursuit of the ideal-self fulfill a need? If yes please described.

6. What factors led to your decision to pursue your ideal-self? What makes the pursuit of the ideal-self important to you?

7. What were the shortfalls of the previous version of self? What are the qualities of the best version of yourself?

8. In past years, how have inner conflicts influenced your journey towards becoming the best version of myself? What other factors have influenced your pursuit?

9. What emotions have been associated with any intrapersonal conflict that resulted from the pursuit of the ideal-self? How has this influenced your conflict management style?

10. What feelings did the pursuit of the ideal-self generate?
Appendix K: G Power Sampling Results