THE ROLE OF SECURE STUDENT-TEACHER ATTACHMENT IN PROMOTING

DENOMINATIONAL LOYALTY IN PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The Role of Secure Student-Teacher Attachment in Promoting

Denominational Loyalty in Parochial Schools

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Is it possible that emotive factors such as caring and affirmation on the part of parochial school teachers towards their students could be drivers that motivate students toward denominational loyalty? Little is known as to whether or not caring teachers and school climate matter for the prediction of denominational loyalty and what kind of role student-teacher attachment plays in connecting these two attributes. To address these issues, data were analyzed from approximately 13,000 adolescents enrolled in a large evangelical parochial school system in the United States and Canada. Results indicated that, as hypothesized, the more school climate is perceived as caring by students, the more likely students are to manifest satisfaction and attachment with their teachers. Additionally, the results also supported the expectation showing that secure student-teacher attachment does play a statistically significant role in promoting denominational loyalty. Supplementary analysis revealed the importance of personal religion, particularly doctrinal faith, to denominational loyalty. This also stood for the quality of youth ministry programs at the parochial schools. The present study addressed the implication of these auxiliary findings in relation to the role of religious schools in promoting denominational loyalty among the students.

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Dedication

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CHAPTER 1

Purpose and Organization

There are a variety of reasons why parochial schools remain a popular choice with parents. The number one reason given by parents is a desire to enroll their student in a school with a positive spiritual environment. Parents who choose parochial education tend to have strong religious and spiritual values and have a strong concern that their school age children receive a formal education that is imbued with those same religious and spiritual values. Also, of importance to parents is the academic quality of the parochial school, their perception of how safe the school is, and the opportunities for moral education (Ji & Boyatt, 2007). Berit von Pohle (2013) elucidated the point further by suggesting that "in choosing a parochial school, parents [seek] support in providing religious and spiritual education for their children in addition to what the parents and the church could provide" (p. 9). Accordingly, the role of the parochial school also involves facilitating student commitment to their religion. In other words, parents choose schools that not only align with their values but also help them perpetuate those same values in their children (von Pohle, 2013).

In their review of data compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics, *Trends in the Use of School Choice: 1993 to 2007*, Grady and Bielick (2010) reported that close to nine per cent of the student population of the United States attend a parochial school. Considering the vast number of students attending parochial schools in the United States, little research has been conducted to determine their efficacy in achieving the primary goal of promoting religious and spiritual values.

A review of the literature suggested there are still gaps regarding the impact of religion in educational settings when compared to the impact of religion in other areas of human endeavor. In particular, there is very little understanding of "how [the] personal religiousness of students, parents, teachers, and school administrators figure into successful church-led parochial school and schooling" (Ji, 2010, p. xxii).

Statement of the Problem

Is it possible that a student's ability to develop denominational loyalty in a school is mediated by how they perceive their teachers' attitudes towards them? Is it possible that emotive factors such as caring and affirmation on the part of parochial school teachers towards their students could be the drivers that motivate students toward denominational loyalty?

Roger Dudley (1978) noted precisely such possibilities: "The experiences that the student has with his teachers and school administrators at [a parochial school] may be the very factors that cause him to turn away from religion" (p. 10). Ji and Boyatt (2007) pointed out that "parents choose parochial schools for religious reasons and expect the schools to actualize religious and spiritual standards as a core part of their education" (p. 176). This study seeks to analyze the possible impact that student-teacher relationships have on students' overall desire to maintain denominational loyalty in a parochial school setting. No study has yet been conducted using attachment theory within the context of student-teacher relationships in parochial schools.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

This study seeks to fill a gap that currently exists in regard to the efficacy of parochial education in this area. Specifically, there is scant research on how personal religiousness of parents, students, teachers, and school administrators contributes to the spiritual success of a parochial school. In particular, this study seeks to bring a greater understanding of the

"individual-level psychological mechanisms by which personal religiousness functions to influence...the attitudes and academic traits of individual students, parents, teachers, and administrators" (Ji, 2010, p. xxviii).

Theoretical Foundation

Attachment theory is one of the most prominent theories arising in the latter half of the 20th century and has provided a theoretical framework for researchers in diverse areas of developmental, social, clinical, and personality psychology by which to analyze human relationships (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980). In conducting research of groups and organizations, psychologists have found attachment theory to be particularly helpful as well. Formulated by John Bowlby with further refinements made by Mary Ainsworth, attachment theory provides a conceptualization by which to describe and analyze the emotional bonds in human relationships (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991).

Attachment theory can be classified as one of the theories informing the field of developmental psychology (Ainsworth, et al, 1978). As such, attachment theory belongs alongside other notable theories of developmental psychology such as Piaget's cognitive-developmental theory, Kohlberg's stages of moral development, Lorenz and Tinbergen's ethological theory, Bandura's social learning theory, and in particular Freud's psychoanalytic theory (Crain, 1980). Like all other theories of developmental psychology, attachment theory seeks to answer "four critical issues: What is the basic nature of the human? Is development qualitative or quantitative? How do nature and nurture contribute to development? What is it that develops?" (Miller, 1989, p. 4). Thus, attachment theory considers and incorporates "all of the

psychological forces that arise and collide in the human quest for security, meaning, and self-regulation" (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016, p. 6).

Background of Attachment Theory

Ainsworth et al. (1978) suggested that "a new paradigm comes into being in an attempt to account for findings that older paradigms could not deal with adequately" (p. 4). The development of attachment theory is no different. While conducting research on the effects of maternal deprivation on children, Bowlby was having difficulty finding a theoretical framework that would help explain the negative impact on personality development that prolonged maternal deprivation had in small children. As a trained psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Bowlby found psychoanalytic theory lacking in help to explain his findings. In an attempt to create a framework that could accommodate his research findings, Bowlby drew from cognitive developmental psychology, ethological theory, evolutionary theory, and psychoanalytical theory (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016).

According to Bowlby (1969), even though his early research "had much to say about the many kinds of ill effect that evidence shows can be attributed to maternal deprivation and also about practical measures that may prevent or mitigate these ill effects," nonetheless, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts pointed out that the research was silent regarding "the process whereby these ill effects are brought into being" (xii). In particular, Bowlby's critics pointed out that evidence and claims were missing "an adequate explanation of how the types of experiences implicated could have the effects on personality development claimed" (1988, p. 24). On the other hand, psychoanalysts, particularly those "focused on the role of fantasy in psychopathology to the relative exclusion of the influence of real life events, remained unconvinced" (1988, p. 25).

The new conceptual framework that Bowlby (1988) proposed—attachment theory,

addressed the perceived deficiencies of psychoanalytic theory. In particular, attachment theory,

according to Bowlby, offered an approach different from the metapsychology of psychoanalytic

theory of his day. Attachment theory was able to accommodate "all those phenomena to which

Freud called attention—for example love relations, separation anxiety, mourning, defense, anger,

guilt, depression, trauma, emotional detachment, [and] sensitive periods in early life" (p. 28)

better than the extant psychoanalytical theory of the day.

Ainsworth et al. (1978) suggested that Bowlby's attachment theory should be considered

"an explanatory theory—a guide to understanding data already at our disposal and a guide to

further research" (p. 4). This is due primarily to the fact that attachment theory "does not purport

to be a tight network of propositions" (p. 4) but rather is designed to be more flexible.

Accordingly, the validity of the postulates of attachment theory are subject to further research

that allows for further refinement and elaboration of the theory.

Attachment Theory

Central to attachment theory is the concept of a *behavioral system*. Bowlby (1969, 1973,

& 1980) theorized that infants develop attachment behaviors which allow them to improve the

prospect of sustaining proximity to an attachment figure. For example, attachment behaviors can

include smiling, crying, clinging, and hugging. According to attachment theory, humans have

developed various *behavioral systems* which allow for species survival. In ethological terms and

through implication evolutionary theory, survival of a species is defined as the successful ability

to reproduce offspring and successfully nurture their development (Ainsworth, et al., 1978). It is

precisely the nurturing function and enduring relationships that ethology research into primates

found which helped Bowlby (1988) understand the biological underpinnings of human behavior.

He said, "Parenting behavior…has strong biological roots, which accounts for the very strong emotions associated with it; but the detailed form that the behavior takes in each of us turns on our experiences" (Ainsworth, et al., 1978, p. 6).

Therefore, the central purpose of the *behavioral system* or *attachment behavior* is "to promote sufficient proximity [by the child] to the principal caregiver—the mother figure—that parental protection is facilitated" (Ainsworth, et al., 1978, p. 6). Attachment behaviors, according to attachment theory, are part of an attachment behavioral system that is innate to all infants and allows them to seek the proximity and protection of an attachment figure as they feel the need. Once the *behavioral system* is activated, according to attachment theory, a *predictable outcome* occurs, such as the child crying in order to be held by the mother. Also, part of the behavioral system is the *biological function*. Once the behavioral system is activated, the role of the biological function is to protect the child from a hostile environment (Ainsworth, et al., 1978).

Attachment theory postulates that even though the attachment behavioral system plays a very important part in infancy, it nonetheless remains active for the entire lifespan of an individual and manifests itself in the way individuals seek or reject the proximity of others. This claim becomes the grounding and motivation for the study of adult attachment (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980).

According to attachment theory (Ainsworth, et al., 1978; Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980), secure attachments are not limited to a child's primary attachment figure, such as parents. As a child develops into adolescence and later adulthood, friends can become attachment figures. Secure attachment can also occur in other settings which enable the developing adult to enjoy secure relationships with other adults that are not their primary caregiver(s). Places, groups, organizations, institutions, as well as religious figures, have the

capacity to elicit positive regard from those that view them as providing support and comfort to their life. Interestingly enough, thoughts and memories of attachment figures are also capable of being a source of comfort, protection, and support. Those mental representations are capable of providing inner strength and comfort even in the absence of the attachment figure.

From the viewpoint of attachment theory (Ainsworth, et al., 1978; Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980), in order for someone to be considered an attachment figure, there must exist a specific partner relationship from which an attachment relationship develops. That specific relationship must fulfill three conditions. The first condition is that the attachment figure should be capable of providing comfort in a time of need through their presence with the person with whom they are in a relationship. Or said another way, the absence of the attachment figure has the ability to induce anxious feelings such as distress and worry in the relationship partner due to the separation from the attachment figure. Second, in times of need the attachment figure is seen as someone safe and capable of providing security and comfort to the person with whom they are in relationship. Lastly, the attachment figure inspires confidence and promotes an environment conducive to personal growth and risk taking in the person with whom they have a relationship.

The purpose of the attachment system (Ainsworth, et al., 1978; Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980), therefore, is to provide individuals with a sense of security that allows them to view their environment as a safe place to indulge their curiosity and the people in it as supportive and protective. This safe and supportive environment in turn allows them to learn new skills and affiliate with others without any fear of harm or rejection. Thus the concept begins to provide an understanding of the importance of positive and secure attachments in an educational setting.

Attachment Theory in Educational Settings

In beginning a discussion of the relationship between attachment theory and education, it is important to first discuss the key concepts of attachment theory and how they relate to education. Whereas in attachment theory research, relationships are typically classified as secure, dismissing, preoccupied, or fearful with very specific scoring systems to determine such classification, in educational settings attachment relationships can be classified as secure when trust and warmth exist between the child and teacher or insecure when there is an absence of either trust and/or warmth between the child and teacher. Each child has the capacity to develop relationships with other adults that are distinct from their relationships with their primary caregiver(s). In other words, children are capable of developing secure relationships with other adults with whom they come in contact, particularly during their school years, independent of the fact that they may or may not have a secure attachment with their primary caregiver(s). Thus, secure attachment in educational settings is the positive emotional connection of warmth and trust that a child (the student) has towards his/her teacher(s) (Altenhofen & Biringen, 2008).

Attachment theory and education are connected in three distinct and significant ways. First, children are capable of participating in relationships with their adult caregivers as well as with teachers that are conducive to learning. Second, secure adult-child attachments play an important role in developing a child's positive social-emotional, linguistic, and cognitive outcomes. Lastly, healthy brain development in children is contingent on positive adult-child attachment (Altenhofen & Biringen, 2008; Bus & van Izjendoorn, 1992; Mashburn & Pianta, 2006; Pianta, Nimetz, & Bennet, 1997).

A child's ability to develop secure relationship with teachers in a school setting, according to attachment theory, is mediated by a primary frame of reference that is based on the

quality of the attachment, whether it be secure or insecure, that they have with their primary caregiver(s) (Altenhofen & Biringen, 2008; Bus & van Izjendoorn, 1992; Mashburn & Pianta, 2006; Pianta, Nimetz, & Bennet, 1997). This concept has important ramifications for the educational environment. The primary frame of reference or template that a child has for their relationships with their primary caregiving adults will impact how they will filter all the learning experiences to which they are exposed. Accordingly, in a learning environment, the more secure the attachments the students have with their primary caregivers the more likely they are to establish secure relationships with their teachers. Thus, this template or frame of reference for relationships has a great impact on the quality of attachment that the child will experience with other adults throughout his or her life. However, it is very important to note that children who experience an insecure attachment with their primary caregivers are still capable of experiencing a secure attachment with their teachers, and that a positive and secure relationship with their teacher can lead to better academic outcomes.

Similarly, a child's readiness and desire to participate in the learning process, according to attachment theory, is based on the quality of the early relationship the child has with her or his primary caregiver(s) (Altenhofen & Biringen, 2008; Bus & van Izjendoorn, 1992; Mashburn & Pianta, 2006; Pianta, Nimetz, & Bennet, 1997). The more stable and secure the attachment with their primary caregiver(s), the more likely the child will be ready to participate in formal learning experiences. Sadly, the inverse is also true: The more unstable and insecure their relationship with the primary caregiver(s), the less likely the child will be ready to participate in formal learning experiences. Thus, early positive interactions with their caregiver(s) develop in children the desire to seek positive interactions with their teachers as well. The more positive the

relationships and experiences in a learning environment, the more likely the student (child) is to have a positive association with the school setting.

Secure attachment in child-adult relationships is also strongly associated with helping children develop positive social-emotional, linguistic, and cognitive outcomes when they become students in an educational setting (Altenhofen & Biringen, 2008; Bus & van Izjendoorn, 1992; Mashburn & Pianta, 2006; Pianta, Nimetz, & Bennet, 1997). For instance, the more secure the attachment, the more likely the child is to have engaged in sustained symbolic play, which in turn promotes social cognition in the child. Children with secure attachment also show a higher propensity to have school readiness skills, such as attentiveness during instructional time. The ability to use expressive language is also strongly associated with secure child-adult caregiver interactions. Also worth noting, for children with special learning needs, the more secure their attachment to their teacher, the more likely they are to be better adjusted and, as a consequence, have better learning outcomes. Unfortunately, not all children have secure attachments with their primary caregiver(s). Children with disorganized attachment with their primary caregiver(s) are more susceptible to development of impairments in their cognitive functioning which negatively impact their ability to learn.

Lastly, secure child-adult caregiver attachments have an important function in promoting healthy neurological system development in the brain. Brain development in children typically follows a trajectory of increasing complexity as the neurological systems of the brain develop. Accordingly, it is thought that there are windows of opportunity in early childhood during which environmental factors, such as the quality of child-adult caregiver(s) attachment, can either negatively or positively impact the neurological development in the child's brain. Furthermore, it can be concluded that positive experiences during the early childhood years are foundational for

the positive development of the brain and also play a part in supporting future brain expansion. Positive, secure child-adult caregiver relationship is associated with attention and arousal in children. The brain, like a muscle, needs to be exercised. The more often an area of the brain or brain function is activated, the more developed the area or function becomes, and the more likely it is to retain and process information (Cozolino, 2014).

Given the importance that secure student-teacher relationship has in the child's ability to learn, educators should seek every opportunity possible to develop relationships with all their students (Altenhofen & Biringen, 2008; Bus & van Izjendoorn, 1992; Mashburn & Pianta, 2006; Pianta, Nimetz, & Bennet, 1997). Educators should be aware that each child is capable of establishing a unique relationship with the teachers they contact at school, one different from the relationship they have with their primary caregiver(s). The more rewarding the student-teacher relationship is for the child, the more optimal and rewarding their learning experience will become. In addition, secure student-teacher relationships help promote a positive school environment, which in turn stimulates secure student attachment to the school and their peers. Secure student-teacher relationships promote learning.

Caring School Climate

Schools that promote a caring school climate embedded in humane values have the following characteristics: students feel loved and affirmed, teaching is responsive to the needs of the students, and the culture makes students feel supported. This environment creates student-teacher relationships that are positive, ones built on mutual respect and warm regard for each other. In a caring school climate teachers are not only interested in the academic success of all their students but also in their life success (Ji, 2018).

Ji (2018) found that parochial schools that promote humane and reflective environments had a strong correlation with a student's satisfaction with school peers, increased efficacy in study behaviors, decreased academic stress, and decreased class absences. In addition, Ji noted that a humane and reflective school environment helped explain 14% of the variance of student satisfaction with school peers. Thus a humane and reflective school environment promotes an increase in learning effectiveness. Furthermore, Ji's results showed that a humane and reflective environment is a strong predictor for future educational aspirations. However, the relationship is indirect. Ji theorized that this is due to the intervening influence of learning effectiveness between humane and reflective teaching practices and the increase in student self-confidence which in turn drives the student's educational aspirations (Ji, 2018).

Singh (2018) suggested that the following elements are conducive to effective, humane teaching: the ability to transmit warmth and empathy, engender enthusiasm for learning, and validate the opinion of their students. The effective and humane teacher has invitational behaviors toward his or her students—the belief that students are, first and foremost, capable and valuable as persons. Also, the effective, humane teacher has a deep understanding of his or her subject area and knows how to differentiate presentation of that knowledge to make the subject matter accessible to all students.

Furthermore, such teachers are organized and clear in presenting the content and concepts of their subject matter expertise to their students. Most importantly, the effective, humane teacher develops a positive rapport based on a warm and positive regard they have for all their students. However, the most important quality an effective and humane teacher must possess is the ability to reflect. According to Singh (2018) the ability to be reflective entails an understanding of self-awareness, self-concept, self-evaluation, and self-efficacy (Singh, 2018).

Additionally, some researchers have suggested that effective, humane teachers incorporate sensitivity—by making students aware that there is an "other" that experiences life differently from them; awareness—that the learning has a practical application outside of the classroom; and, synthesis—by providing experiences that allow the student to synthesize the acquired knowledge and apply it to real world problem (Srivastava & Sharma, 2018).

Gail Rice (1993) suggested that parochial schools that promote a caring school environment increase the likelihood of positive student teacher relationships to develop which in turn help increase the denominational loyalty and faith maturity of the students that attend. According to Rice, most students who stop attending church leave because they no longer feel needed, accepted, or loved. Rice has suggested that greater importance should be given to developing this sense of warmth in parochial school environments. In her opinion, student that attend parochial schools "need to know that they are loved unconditionally" (Rice, 1993, p. 9).

The responsibility for establishing school climates that are conducive to caring rests upon the teachers and principal of the parochial school. Rice (1993) noted, "Teachers do not instruct [students] by disapproving looks and discouraging comments. They instruct them by living fulfilled Christian lives and sharing those lives with their students. They instruct them by loving their students because they are theirs" (Rice, 1993, p. 9).

A caring school climate impacts a student's mental and physical well-being and self-esteem, diminishes the negative impact of self-criticism, among other benefits, and promotes a climate for learning. Also, a caring school climate is positively related to a student's positive self-concept and a diminished prospect of substance abuse and likelihood of psychiatric problems. Other benefits of a caring school climate include a decline in student absenteeism, a

decrease in student disciplinary actions, and an increase in stimulation of health promotion efforts (Thapa, Cohen, Guffy & D'Alessandro, 2013).

Parallel Research with Youth Ministers

Also informing the theoretical framework of this study is research previously conducted by Ji and Tameifuna (2011) with youth pastors and their impact on a church's youth ministry as well as their impact on the attitude of the youths and their decision to remain affiliated with the denomination of the church, particularly after they graduate high school and are old enough to make their own choices.

Ji and Tameifuna (2011) postulated two hypotheses for research. The first one stated, "Youth affiliated with a church with youth pastors more often take leading roles in the worship services and other activities and perceive their programs as interesting and cognitively stimulating than do those in the churches without youth pastors" (p. 309). In their view, the literature supported the notion that the presence of a youth pastor is related to increases in the frequency of youth programming in the church, the creation and maintenance of interesting youth programs for the youth of the congregation, and increased leadership opportunities for the youth that those activities generate.

The second hypothesis stated, "Youth's perception of their pastor relates to their attitude towards the denomination" (p. 309). They pointed out that the research literature explained that effective educational practices and good parenting are built on the creation of nurturing environments for the youth that are conducive to learning and developing confidence in themselves. These researchers anticipated strong parallels between parenting, school settings, and youth ministry (Ji & Tameifuna, 2011).

In analyzing the data to determine which factors impacted denominational loyalty, Ji and Tameifuna (2011) discovered that "personal religiosity is much more powerful than youth pastor- and program-related variables in explaining youth attitude toward the denomination" (p. 314). However, they noted that the evidence they found "failed to support the idea that youth pastors have a direct link with youth attitude toward the denomination" (p. 314). They also analyzed the impact that caring youth pastorship had on denominational loyalty and discovered that even though personal religiosity played an important part in determining attitudes toward the denomination, nonetheless, "youth tend to show high levels of content with and support for the denomination when they perceive their youth pastors being amiable and responsive" (p. 315). In summary, Ji and Tameifuna found that caring youth pastors explained 4% of the variance in youth attitudes towards the denomination in which they were religiously active. This finding is deemed important because it informs the theoretical framework by providing a parallel study with which to contextualize the findings from this study (Ji & Tameifuna, 2011).

Empirical Framework

The study's theoretical framework posits that secure attachment is possibly the single most important determinant for positive outcomes in a child's future. As such it provides the child with the confidence and readiness to begin and take part in the formal learning process. Furthermore, due to a child's inherent ability to transfer that secure attachment to other caring adults, the child is prepared to develop positive student-teacher relationships which in turn allow them to achieve greater academic achievement than that of children lacking secure attachments. Also, secure attachment between a students and a teacher allows teachers to become role models. This plus a caring school climate provide the conditions necessary for learning and spiritual development.

Previous research conducted with youth pastors has found that youth pastors perceived as caring were found to promote in the youth a greater level of satisfaction with their denomination. The parallel of the Ji and Tameifuna (2011) study also implied a parallel between youth pastor and teachers. The most important implication of the parallel is that both can be designated as spiritual leaders and as such are capable of impacting the youth's decision to remain affiliated with the church. This expectation of a parallel between youth minister and teachers provides confidence in hypothesizing that student-teacher relationships in parochial school setting have some level of correlation in promoting denominational loyalty. The theoretical model of this study proposes that caring school climates promote positive student-teacher relationships; positive student-teacher relationships are indicative of the presence of secure student-teacher attachments; and secure student-teacher attachments promote denominational loyalty.

Research Hypotheses

Research hypothesis 1: To the extent that a school's climate is perceived as caring by students, the more likely students are satisfied with their teachers, which would be indicative of secure student-teacher attachment.

Research hypothesis 2: The more prevalent the presence of secure student-teacher attachment, the more likely the students are to maintain denominational loyalty.

Definition of Terms

Parochial school: A type of school choice that promotes spiritual and religious values that parents of the students attending typically seek to reinforce. In addition, the parochial school also seeks to promote a climate of academic excellence that is perceived to be safe from physical harm and drug-free for the students attending, which is also valued by the parents of the children attending those schools.

Secure attachment: In educational settings, secure attachment is the positive emotional connection of warmth and trust that students experience from and have towards their teacher(s) that promotes learning (Altenhofen & Biringen, 2008).

Insecure attachment: In educational settings, insecure attachment is the negative emotional disconnect that students experience from and/or have towards their teacher(s) that hinders their ability to learn.

Attachment theory: Attachment theory provides a conceptualization of emotional bonds and a way to describe and analyze them in human relationships (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980).

Denominational loyalty: For the purpose of this study, denominational loyalty is defined as the student's intent to attend a congregation affiliated with the denomination sponsoring the parochial school.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The study is limited to the analysis of Valuegenesis data. The delimiting factor is that this study will only look at the role of student-teacher relationships within the context of the parochial schools operated by a conservative evangelical Protestant Christian denomination in North America (Gillespie, Donahue, Boyatt, & Gane, 2004). The main assumption is that the participants in the survey being used answered the questionnaire honestly.

Summary

This chapter discussed the expectation that most parents have in sending their children to a parochial school: a desire to perpetuate their values in their children (von Pohle, 2013). In spite of the fact that parochial education represents nine per cent of the total student enrollment in the United States (Grady & Bielick, 2010), little research has been conducted to determine the effectiveness of the parochial school in meeting the expectations of the parents whose children

they educate (Ji, 2010). In particular, little research has been conducted to determine the impact

that teachers in a parochial school have on the religious attitudes of their students (Ji, 2010).

Also, this study posits that attachment theory provides a useful framework in which to analyze

the effectiveness of those relationships, particularly in promoting denominational loyalty.

Previous research has demonstrated that youth pastors perceived as caring and warm accounted

for four per cent of the variance in determining the denominational loyalty of youth that attended

church and suggests that there could be a parallel between youth pastors and teachers in

promoting denominational loyalty (Ji & Tameifuna, 2011). The purpose of this study, therefore,

is to analyze the relationship between the perceived quality of student-teacher relationships

(secure attachment) and its likelihood to promote denominational loyalty in a parochial school

setting.

The remaining chapters of the study are arranged as follows: Chapter 2 contains a review

of the research literature conducted as it relates to the following strands of research: previous

Valuegenesis research, concern for the denominational loyalty of adolescents, the role of

attachment theory in an educational context, and reasons for choosing parochial education;

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological procedures used to conduct this study. In particular it

looks at the population and sample from which the data was obtained and the methods used to

analyze the hypotheses put forward in the study. Chapter 4 discusses the results obtained by

testing the hypotheses; and lastly, Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings, discusses their

implications, and provides recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to determine to what extent a caring school climate promotes

positive student-teacher relationships which in turn promote secure student-teacher attachment,

and this attachment's relationship to denominational loyalty in a parochial school setting. The

literature review covers the pertinent strands of research covered by this study, namely

Valuegenesis research; concerns for denominational loyalty; the role of secure attachment in an

educational setting; and lastly, the reasons why parents choose a parochial school education for

their children. The findings from the literature review not only help provide a context for

understanding the findings of this study but also help inform the theoretical framework and

hypotheses put forward by this study.

The literature review begins with an examination of the literature regarding previous

research conducted using Valuegenesis data. An emphasis is placed on research conducted to

determine to what extent caring and warm student-teacher relationships were found in a

parochial school setting. It also looks at the factors impacting the denominational loyalty of

adolescents. In particular, the review focuses on research conducted using the National Study of

Youth and Religion (Smith & Denton, 2005).

Next, the literature review discusses the role of secure attachment in the context of an

educational setting. Lastly, literature regarding the reasons why parents choose a parochial

education for their children is explored.

Valuegenesis Research

Valuegenesis research began with the development of a research program titled Project
Affirmation, originally intended as a three-year project. The project consisted of four task forces,
each with a different focus: one on faith, values, and commitments; another on academic quality;
yet another on marketing; and lastly, one focused on financial issues and strategies. Valuegenesis
was the name given to the survey instrument used to provide the data that was to inform the work
of all task forces involved in the project. Valuegenesis became the most exhaustive youth
surveys ever given by any Christian denomination up to that time. The data that Valuegenesis
provided garnered more interest than the original project. The survey received its name from the
interest of the project leaders in better understanding the faith development, beliefs, and values
of the youth of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church. The project was sponsored by the
Department of Education of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, which
oversees the educational work of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church in Bermuda, Canada,
and the United States. This oversight covers the church's entire educational system from early
childhood educational centers to universities that offer graduate level programs in the countries
that constitute the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. (Dudley & Gillespie,
1992).

Most instructive to this study is Tameifuna's dissertation (2008). Tameifuna researched
to what extent youth pastors, youth program frequency, youth program meaningfulness, and
youth assuming leadership roles in worship influence youth satisfaction with the church and their
inclination to remain within the SDA church. He concluded that there was a positive correlation
between church satisfaction and intrinsic religiosity, vertical faith maturity, doctrinal orthodoxy,
program meaningfulness, youth assuming leadership roles in worship programs, attending junior

high/middle school, being White, and from the Midwest and the South. However, Tameifuna also concluded that a negative correlation existed between church satisfaction and extrinsic religiosity, horizontal faith maturity, and being a high school senior. Furthermore, Tameifuna determined that the mere presence of a youth pastor and frequency of attendance to youth programming had marginal impact on the church satisfaction by the youth surveyed in the study.

Findings by Rice (1993) from the original Valuegenesis suggested that a caring school environment that promotes positive student teacher relationships is related to "a mature Christian faith and denominational loyalty" (p. 4). According to Rice, most students who stop attending church leave because they no longer feel needed, accepted, or loved. Rice suggested that "we need to give a high priority to increasing perceptions of warmth in the schools" (p. 8). In her opinion, student that attend parochial schools "need to know that they are loved unconditionally" (p. 9). The responsibility for establishing school climates that are conducive to caring rests upon the teachers and principal of the parochial school. Rice believed, "Teachers do not instruct [students] by disapproving looks and discouraging comments. They instruct them by living fulfilled Christian lives and sharing those lives with their students. They instruct them by loving their students because they are theirs" (Rice, 1993, p. 9).

Valuegenesis research revealed that youth pastors perceived as caring and warm account for 4% of the variance in determining denominational loyalty by the youth of the church (Tameifuna, 2008). Also Rice's (1993) Valuegenesis research has explained that a caring school climate, particularly the perception of teacher warmth, is related to denominational loyalty. However, previous research has not yet explained completely to what extent positive student-teacher relationships in a parochial school setting promote secure student-teacher attachment and its subsequent relationship to effective promotion of denominational loyalty.

Youth Religiosity

Smith, Denton, Faris and Regnerus (2002) analyzed three data sets: the Monitoring the Future survey (1996), the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (1995), and the Survey of Parents and Youth (1998). Smith, et al. sought to understand three aspects of youth religiosity which they perceived as important: involvement in church youth groups, religious affiliation, and church attendance. In addition to the aforementioned factors, Smith, et al. pursued an understanding of the role demographic variables such as geography, ethnicity, age, and gender had on youth religiosity.

Their findings allowed them to make the following observations:

1. The majority of United States youth seemed to identify with some religious community, the vast majority identifying as Baptist or Catholic;

2. There seems to be a progressive decline in number of youth identifying with a specific Christian denomination;

3. About half of the youth in the United States reported participating in some form of church youth program or church attendance;

4. Inversely, about half of the youth in the U. S. reported not being religiously active;

5. As youth mature into adulthood, their religious participation seems to decline as well;

6. There seems to be greater religious activity by girls than by boys;

7. Ethnicity seems to have a role in the level of youth religious participation with African-American youth the most religiously active; and

8. Region of residence seems to play a role in the extent that youth participate in religious activities, i.e. youth living in the South being the most active and youth living in the Northeast the least active (Smith, et al., 2002).

In a later study, Smith and Denton (2005) discussed the findings of a comprehensive study conducted on the spiritual lives of youth in the United States, the *National Study of Youth and Religion*. The study, according to Smith and Denton, showed that the majority of the youth identify with religious communities and claim to be religious, debunking a myth that today's youth is "spiritual but not religious"; the majority of youth affirmed having the same beliefs as their parents, including a belief in God. However, the authors noted, they are not able to articulate those beliefs; yet their attitude towards religion tends to be positive. They also found that the vitality of their religious experience showed a variation based on the youth's claimed denominational affiliation. The authors pointed out that the variation in religiosity can be attributed to the extent that the parents are religious (Smith & Denton, 2005).

Smith and Denton (2005) conjectured that the reason the youth could not articulate the tenets of their belief or the reasons for their belief can be attributed to a phenomena they refer to as Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. According to these researchers, the creed of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD) is a belief in the existence of a God who created the world and watches over humanity; that God desires humanity to treat itself in a way that is ethical and fair; and that the purpose of life is to live happily and feel good about one's self. MDT also fosters a belief that God is not involved in matters of human existence unless invited to do so. Lastly, it includes a belief that when good people die, they go to heaven. This creed, according to Smith and Denton, is "the de facto dominant religion" (Smith & Denton, 2005, p. 162) of the youth in the United States.

Also notable in Smith and Denton's (2005) work is the finding that religiosity has a positive impact on the everyday life of the youth in this country. For instance, youth that attend church regularly and participate in other religious activities are more likely to abstain from

alcohol, narcotic drugs, and premarital sex. They report less confrontation with their parents, take their school work more seriously, make decisions based on their religious values, and demonstrate greater concern for social issues than their non-church going peers.

The literature reviewed on the subject of youth religiosity does not yet explain to what extent youth denominational disaffiliation is related to parochial school attendance. However, it has brought forward a need for youth affiliated with Christian denominations to be able to articulate fully and comprehensively the reasons for their hope and faith. Another finding from the literature review is the important role that parents and other adults with whom youth come in contact, such as youth pastors and school teachers, play and their influence on the lives of youth. Personal religiosity of the youth has been shown to have an important impact on their religious development. The current study hopes to elucidate to what extent secure attachment has a role in the development of positive student-teacher relationships in a parochial school setting and its relationship to the phenomenon of youth religious disaffiliation.

Attachment Theory in Educational Settings

Attachment theory, formulated by John Bowlby with further refinements made by Mary Ainsworth in collaboration with him, is a conceptualization that serves in describing and analyzing the emotional bonds in human relationships (Ainsworth, et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980).

Benefits of Secure Attachment in Child Development

As previously mentioned, the attachment system provides a child with a sense of security that allows her or him to view the environment as a safe place for indulging curiosity and the people in it as supportive and protective. This creates in the child a sense of emotional security which in turn allows him or her to learn new skills and affiliate with others without any concern

for harm or rejection (Ainsworth, et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980). This perspective is attributed to the research conducted by Bowlby and Ainsworth in studying mother-child dyads (Ainsworth et al, 1978; Ainsworth and Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1969). However, research has also shown that an absence of care in the mother-child dyad creates a pattern of insecure attachment on the part of the child (Lamb, Thompson, Gardner, Charnov, & Estes, 1984).

Attachment theory accentuates the importance that secure attachments have on a child's ability to develop values and beliefs as well as in the development of personality (Hughes, 2012). The ability of a child to develop a sense of well-being and a healthy sense of self is facilitated by the presence of a secure warm relationship with the primary caregiver(s) (Cornelius-White, 2007). Other researchers (Blatt & Levy, 2003; Blatt & Shichman, 1983) suggested that the acceptance and confidence instilled in the child through their secure attachment to their primary caregiver is the vehicle through which a child develops her or his personality. The ability to develop a positive self-identity and the corresponding ability to interact in social situations are also mediated through secure child-caregiver attachment (Blatt & Blatt, 1996).

Secure Attachment Implications for Educational Practices

As discussed previously, children are capable of developing secure relationships with other adults with whom they come in contact, particularly during their school years, independent of the fact that they may or may not have a secure attachment with their primary caregiver(s). Thus, secure attachment in educational settings is the positive emotional connection of warmth and trust that a student has towards their teacher(s) (Altenhofen & Biringen, 2008). This attachment or trust, in turn, promotes greater levels of student motivation and involvement with the educational process (Howes, Hamilton, Matheson, 1994).

TenElshof and Furrow (2000) conducted research with students at a southern California seminary to determine the "role of relational maturity within an understanding of spiritual maturity" (p. 99). They interviewed 216 students enrolled in a conservative seminary. To gather the data for their study, TenElhof and Furrow administered the following questionnaires: *Faith Maturity Scale, Parental Bonding Instrument*, and *Attachment Style Questionnaire*.

These researchers hypothesized that "A minister's pastoral effectiveness will be tied to his relational maturity, and this maturity will also be influential in understanding the pastors' overall spiritual growth" (TenElshof & Furrow, 2000, p. 100). They reported that secure adult attachment showed a positive relationship to faith maturity. Also they found a minimal relationship between the student's measure of parental attachment, their adult attachment style, and faith maturity. In discussing the implications of their research, TenElshof and Furrow alleged, "Teachers and Pastors cannot model and teach what they have not experienced" (p. 106). They conclude, by saying, "Secure adult attachment was a stronger predictor of faith maturity when compared to measures of parental bonding" (TenElshof & Furrow, 2000, p. 99).

So far the literature has indicated a link between secure adult attachment and faith maturity exists among students in a conservative Christian seminary. However, the literature does not yet explain to what extent student-teacher relationships classified as secure can be linked to the promotion of denominational loyalty in a parochial school setting. This finding has informed the hypotheses put forward by this study. The literature so far does point out that secure attachment in student-teacher relationships promotes an improvement in the students' academic outcomes, another benefit of promoting secure attachment between students and teachers in a parochial school setting, one that would address the concerns of parents when choosing a place of education for their children.

Critique of Attachment Theory

Critics of attachment theory (Fonagy & Target, 2007) have suggested that there have been substantial changes within psychoanalysis that address the deficiencies that Bowlby (1969, 1988) pointed out. The following are some of the most prominent shifts within psychoanalysis as reported by Fonagy and Target.

1. Psychoanalysts increasingly have encountered the negative impact of serious deprivation on children caused from abusive parenting. This, in turn, has resulted in greater acceptance of the determinative impact that the child's social environment holds.

2. An increased interest in studying the development of infants as a way of understanding adult behavior. Neuroscientific studies have underscored the profound impact that early childhood experiences have on the developing brain.

3. Psychoanalytic theories have been researched and can be empirically demonstrated, particularly those theories concerning self-development, thinking, and affect regulation.

4. The field of psychoanalysis embraced the object relations model with its view of "an autonomous need for a relationship" (p. 416) as its dominant framework replacing ego psychology.

5. Psychoanalysts have gradually accepted the schemata theory as a way of representing relationships.

6. The concept "that psychic functions reflect the complexity of internalized primary object relationships gained general acceptance" (p. 417).

7. Seeking a therapeutic coherence of meaning for the patient has become a "legitimate goal of treatment" (p. 417).

8. The psychoanalytic theory of motivation has shifted from drives as essential to motivation to affect as the essential motivator.

9. The current psychoanalytic therapeutic process incorporates both the exploration of fantasy as well as the currently lived experiences of the patient.

10. Psychoanalytic researchers have developed psychometric instruments to study the unconscious.

11. Psychoanalytic theory reduced the importance of psychosexual theoretical concepts to explain psychological disturbances.

However, in spite of how psychoanalysis has changed in theory and practice, from a psychoanalytic perspective, concern remains that attachment theory has stagnated in the following areas:

1. Bowlby developed a relational construct too hastily. As a consequence the relational construct didn't consider the unconscious mind and the body.

2. Bowlby developed the *software* without any consideration for the *hardware*. In other words, attachment theory was seen as too detached from "the emotional core of the human infant in states of distress" (p. 445).

3. The fields of cognition and neuroscience have advanced enough to require a reevaluation of the attachment tenets, given "that attachment behaviors have a unique brain representation, and that empath and sensitivity depend on the effective functioning of specific brain centers" (p. 445).

4. Psychoanalysts perceive attachment theory as insensitive to metaphorical/concrete thinking by stipulating that the mind and body are separate.

5. The capacity to think metaphorically, according to psychoanalytical theory, is intimately linked to the embodiment of the brain.

6. Attachment theory does not account for the psychoanalytic view that "metaphoric thought expresses dynamically unconscious ideas" (p. 445).

7. Attachment theory does not take into account "the nature of the relationships that are enacted through the use of language" (p. 445), particularly the use of phonation, prosody, and syntax in linguistic metaphor.

8. The role of procedural memories and embodied images are seen as rooted in the bodily experience.

9. Movements of thought or mental manipulations can be seen as products of the mind and can have a metaphoric quality about them (Fonagy & Target, 2007).

Despite such scholarly critiques and concerns, attachment theory remains a viable option in the study of relationships.

The Choice of Parochial School Education

Choosing to Choose

The fact that parents choose a parochial education for their school-age children requires them to make a choice, and in making that choice they invest time and resources to research their best options available (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Tedin & Weiher, 2011; von Pohle, 2013). "The process of school choice can be both complex and highly localized and are influenced by social networks (von Pohle, 2013, p. 33). For instance, research points out that one of those resources available to parents seeking to make a school choice is "general social capital." In other words, parents' involvement in the community provides them with greater access to a large web or network of friends and acquaintances that in turn provide more information about the different

school options available in the community thus allowing parents to make a more informed decision (Bagley, Woods, and Glatter, 2001; Tedin & Weiher, 2011; von Pohle, 2013).

An additional factor mentioned in the literature as involved in school quality is competition. In an educational environment where various choices are being provided, and thus competing, the schools which emerge as "successful," as defined by the number of parents choosing to enroll their children there, will do so based on the perception of providing a higher quality educational experience when compared to other schools. Furthermore, research shows that parents tend to choose schools that are responsive to the needs of their children, are perceived as providing a higher quality educational experience, and are known to share their beliefs and values (Goldring & Hausman, 1999; Robert, 2010; von Pohle, 2013).

However, even though parents from lower socioeconomic communities and those of color are taking advantage of school choice, the majority taking advantage of school choice are white parents with higher socioeconomic means. There is a concern that the availability of school choices, because of this fact, will continue to perpetuate inequalities in access to higher quality educational programs, particularly to communities of color and lower socioeconomic means (Goldring & Hausman, 1999; Robert, 2010; von Pohle).

Interestingly, the reasons parents give for rejecting schools can also elucidate reasons for choice of a particular school (von Pohle, 2013). In the United Kingdom, Bagley, Woods, and Glatter (2001) conducted research regarding why parents rejected certain schools for their children. The researchers found that negative opinions held by the parents about the school choices provided were determinant in choosing a school for their child. The research revealed that there are various reasons as to why parents felt compelled to reject the school choices offered.

The first and foremost factor was the issue of convenience. When parents were asked to make a school choice, some schools were rejected based on this issue. For example, the distance of the new school proposed as a choice was determined to be too far or otherwise inconvenient. In other words, in the mind of the parent, when comparing the school that was convenient to them and the school choice being offered, the parents did not perceive that the choice being offered provided anything more valuable than the school in their neighborhood (Bagley, Woods, & Glatter, 2001).

The student body composition of the school being considered was also found to be a determinant factor in rejecting a school. If the appearance and attitudes of the members of the student body appeared to be in conflict with the values of the parents, they rejected the option of their child interacting with those students. Furthermore, ethnic composition was also found to be problematic to some parents and their reason for rejecting a school (Bagley, Woods, & Glatter, 2001).

Another reason for rejection was the school environment. That is to say, the physical condition of the school buildings and facilities was found to be a source of rejection from some parents. Parents have an expectation that the school will provide their children an adequate space in which to learn, and the older the buildings and facilities, the more likely that the school would not be considered (Bagley, Woods, & Glatter, 2001).

The teachers of the school were cited as yet another reason for rejection, specifically their appearance and attitudes. One area of great concern for parents was the perceived approachability of the teachers and their attention to the concerns of the parents, particularly if they were of lower socioeconomic means. The principal's school management style was also of

concern, especially as related to the consistent enforcement of rules and expectations (Bagley, Woods, & Glatter, 2001).

Lastly, the perceived reputation of a school also played a determinant role in its rejection by parents. The researchers found, however, that the perception of the school's reputation was built more on the opinions of the parents' social network than on actual facts. The study showed that parents were willing to reject a school based on the opinions of their friends and acquaintances (Bagley, Woods, & Glatter, 2001).

Whatever their reason for choosing or rejecting a particular school, parents choose schools based on a value. Accordingly, parents that choose a parochial education for their children do so out of a strong conviction and desire for an education that will reinforce their moral values and religious beliefs (von Pohle, 2013).

The Choice of Parochial Education

The choice of a parochial education by parents is guided by a desire to seek an educational setting that reinforces the values of their home. As von Pohle stated, "Parents with strong religious and moral values would seek a [parochial] school to reinforce these beliefs" (p. 40). For instance, Daley and Seltzer (1987), researched the views of parents whose children attended parochial schools that belong to the educational system of a conservative evangelical Protestant church. The declining rates of enrollment in the parochial school system was the motivation to create a new vision for the purpose of the parochial school system, and they were seeking input from parents—their opinions about their parochial schools. Their research found that the parents were of the opinion that the parochial schools "should provide excellence with regard to religion and spirituality and with regard to academics. [The parents were] not willing to compromise on either aspect" (p. iii). In other words, just because parents are seeking a religious

education for their children does not mean they do so at the expense of strong academics for their children. The two are not mutually exclusive (Daley & Seltzer, 1987).

Parents perceived parochial schools as "important to the future of the church and for the faith" (Daley & Seltzer, 1987, p. iii). In addition, the parents had a firm conviction that is was very important that their children receive a parochial education. This was motivated by the finding that parents thought the parochial school environment sought to "avoid the undesirable aspects of [non-parochial schools] and outside society and to provide for the religious salvation of the children" (iii). The researchers believed that a loss of regard for parochial education by the parents of the church would be detrimental for the future of the parochial education system. However, they also discovered that parents with students in the elementary grades of the parochial school system were more likely to hold strong views about the importance of a parochial education than those with children in higher grades. Their findings uncovered significant concern for the quality of the academic program of the parochial schools. Parents in this study had a great concern for the spiritual development and the religious upbringing of their children, but they also expressed concern for the quality of the academic program of the parochial schools. The researchers found that this created a conflict of values amongst the parents (Dailey & Seltzer, 1987).

Research conducted in Israel by Schwarzwald and Leslau (1992) involving 710 respondents whose students had just completed kindergarten and were about to enter regular elementary classes, sought to obtain answers about the decision making process and which considerations were involved in a parent choosing a religious school versus a secular school (both types are considered public choices in Israel). In their opinion, "families generally strive for consistency in values between generations. Among the religious, this effort focuses on the

continuity of religious beliefs and practice (p. 261). However, this desire for cohesion of religious practice and belief also involves the desire for "the molding and channeling of extra-familial experiences [such as choosing a religious school] in ways that will reinforce home influences" (p. 261). The researchers sought to clarify how the opinions of family and friends, parents' views on and attitudes towards religious education, the parents own religiosity, their evaluation of the school choices (e.g. condition of the school facilities, composition of the student body, etc.), and accessibility of the school to their home contributed in the parents' decision making process (Schwarzwald & Leslau, 1992).

Their research revealed that parental choice of a religious or secular school was highly dependent on the parent's level of religiosity. That is to say, the more importance a parent placed on their religiosity, the more likely they were to choose a religious school. Additionally, they found that, as hypothesized, the opinion of friends and family played an important role: "The greater the proportion of friends and relatives choosing religious education, the higher the preference for the religious sector [religious schools]" (Schwarzwald & Leslau, 1992, p. 265).

Mainda (2002) conducted research in Southwest Michigan amongst members of a conservative evangelical Protestant Christian church to determine what selected factors influenced the parents to choose a school other than the ones operated by the church through its parochial educational system. Mainda worked with a data set of 535 interviews conducted with parents whose children were students in the public school system as well as parents whose children were students in the parochial school system of the church to which both groups of parents belonged. The desire to conduct the study arose out of concerns in the leadership of the parochial school system with data reporting declining student enrollment.

The study was conducted on the premise that it would be "reasonable to predict that cost of education may influence school choice" (Mainda, 2002, p. 189). However, Mainda found that even though the cost involved in attending a parochial school was also a significant factor in determining school choice, the most "significant variable that contributed to parental choice was spiritual values" (p. 194). Mean scores in regard to spiritual values of parents whose students were enrolled in the parochial school system were demonstrated to be higher when compared to those parents whose students were enrolled in the public school system. Elaborating on the finding, Mainda noted, "Parents chose [parochial] schools because they believed that it was the best system of education and that spiritual teachers are the best for their children" (Mainda, 2002, p. 194).

Furthermore, Mainda reported that parents with students in the parochial school system were more likely to do the following: (a) place a greater value on the church's beliefs, (b) have morning worship, (c) believe that parochial school attendance is related to their children choosing to remain affiliated with church, (d) recommend the parochial school system to others, (e) believe that parochial schools are an essential ministry of the church and should promote a spiritual atmosphere. Parents with students in the public school system did not perceive the aforementioned factors as valuable. Mainda concluded, "As a general theory, parents who have a strong interest in certain values they espouse have a higher tendency or probability of choosing a school that advocates and demonstrates those specific values" (Mainda, 2002, p. 213).

Ji and Boyatt's (2007) research asked why parents enrolled their students in parochial schools, under what circumstances were they willing to support school vouchers, and if they did, what were their reasons. Ji and Boyatt surveyed the parents of five parochial schools in the greater Los Angeles area. All five schools were operated by a conservative evangelical Protestant

Christian church. Their questionnaire included questions regarding the parents' religiosity, doctrinal orthodoxy, and opinion regarding school vouchers.

Analyzing their data in regard to school choice, from a pool of 578 respondents, Ji and Boyatt (2007) found a strong relationship between a parent's intrinsic religious orientation and their support for parochial schools. Parents with high scores of intrinsic religiosity—those parents who sought congruence in their actions and beliefs—were more apt to value the religious aspects of parochial education than parents with lower scores of intrinsic religiosity. They also found a positive relationship between doctrinal orthodoxy—those parents who demonstrated a commitment to the church's doctrinal beliefs—and a desire for strong academic programs, safe school, and for the religious education of their children.

When analyzing the respondents who scored high on extrinsic religiosity—those parents that view religion through a more utilitarian perspective—Ji and Boyatt (2007) found that a positive relationship existed between parental expectations of safety for their children, the location of the school, and an affordable after-school daycare. Those parents scoring high on the religious practice scale—they attend church regularly, have a personal devotional life, and read books on religious or spiritual topics—place great importance on religious education, and it is a determinant factor in choosing a parochial school. Parental demographic indicators proved to be ineffective determinants for school choice (Ji & Boyatt, 2007).

Ji and Boyatt (2007) also analyzed the parental expectations of the parochial school. These included religious education, academic quality, support for the church, convenience/location, safe school climate, and concern for their neighborhood school and their relationship to parental religiosity. Three of the standards or expectations showed statistical significance: religious education, quality academics, and a safe school climate. As Ji and Boyatt

anticipated, "Religious and spiritual education is likely to be upheld as highly important if parents choose the [parochial] schools to provide their children religious and spiritual education" (p. 165). They also found that parents with high doctrinal orthodoxy have a strong expectation that parochial schools emphasize religious and spiritual education. Ji and Boyatt concluded by suggesting that this is due to the fact that "once parents choose [parochial] schools for religious reasons, they strongly expect religious and moral education to materialize in the schools" (p. 171). They pointed out that, religious parents also expect that there will be an equal emphasis on the academic program of the parochial school (Ji & Boyatt, 2007).

DeVost (2012) conducted research at the behest of a conservative evangelical Protestant Christian church that operates its own parochial educational system in Minnesota. The church leadership was concerned over the diminishing rates of enrollment in its parochial schools and commissioned DeVost to conduct research to determine what "[church] parents want in a school and education for their children" (p. 140). The study was a mixed method study done in two phases: the qualitative portion consisted of face to face interviews with parents; the quantitative portion used a survey developed from the themes that came out in the face to face interviews. The sample consisted of 83 parents. DeVost reported results of the survey showing a parental preference for the following: an emphasis on teaching the children to love learning while at the same time promoting more rigorous classes, a safe environment for learning, small class sizes (lower student to teacher ratios) with no multiple grades, and the presence of up-to-date technology and labs. It was very important to the parents that their children enjoy the educational experience of the school, that they be prepared to undertake the eventual rigors of college, and that the desire for the study of the Bible be instilled in them. These parents were supportive of their children's teachers, and if the cost of attendance and transportation were not issues, over

half of the parents that currently did not have students in the parochial school would prefer that their child attend the parochial school instead (DeVost, 2012).

DeVost (2012) also conducted a statistical analysis of the difference in mean preference scores between parents with students in the parochial schools and those without. DeVost found no difference between these sets of parents in the trust they placed in the schools their children attended. Parents with children in public schools wanted the school their child attended to show respect towards the child's faith and provide more moral education while parents with students in the parochial schools wanted the school to protect their children from influences they considered worldly and immoral. Both sets of parents placed equal importance on their children interacting with good teachers, and they equally desired a strong academic program for their children. As expected, parents with students in the parochial schools placed greater value on the spiritual aspects of their children's education than those with children in public schools (DeVost, 2012).

Two major positive insights DeVost (2012) gleaned from his study were these. First, parents desired the parochial school to provide a strong academic preparation for the rigors of college in a safe environment that promotes a love for learning, and second, most parents of the church would like to have their children in a parochial schools if it were more affordable.

Also conducting research to ascertain what aspects of parochial education were most valued by parents, von Pohle (2013) analyzed data obtained from a survey sample of 750 members of a conservative evangelical Protestant Christian church that operates its own parochial educational system in northern California. The purpose of the study was to identify which of four aspects of the parochial school's educational program—finances/convenience, religion, academics, or school climate—were perceived as most important by the church membership.

Von Pohle (2013) researched three questions: first, of the previously mentioned aspects, which aspect of parochial education was deemed to be most important in selecting a parochial school; second, what was the frequency of church attendance of the respondent; and lastly, what age group did the respondent identify with. In regards to the first question, von Pohle reported the following: the important aspect that the survey revealed was the desire for a school with a strong academic program. Next in order of importance was the desire for a school that provided a school climate conducive to learning. This was followed by the desire for the school to transmit the values of the church. Last were the issues related to convenience and affordability (von Pohle, 2013).

In light of previous research positing a positive relationship between parent religiosity and the desire for their children to obtain a religious education (i.e. Daley & Seltzer, 1987; Schwarzwald & Leslau, 1992), von Pohle theorized that her respondents "view [parochial] schools as schools first. In a school, academic achievement is the priority. [Parochial] schools are considered to be an extension of the church… But they are first, and foremost, schools" (von Pohle, 2013, p. 69). The results of her second question revealed that those that attended church four times a month placed all four aspects of parochial schools as important. She concluded that those respondents with higher frequency of church attendance were also more likely to have a higher expectation of the parochial schools and higher sense of denominational loyalty as well. In reporting the results of the third question, von Pohle stated that respondents between the ages of 10 through 30 demonstrated a concern for the quality of the school climate in parochial schools. However, von Pohle also pointed out that any respondent age 10 through 30 "has a higher expectation or need for good student treatment at school than for academic preparation" (p. 71). This finding strongly coincided with von Pohle's finding in her statistical analysis of the

survey. The highest mean score of all the items in her survey was for the question regarding treatment of their students by the teachers in a parochial school: "Teachers exhibit care and concern for students" (p.72). This item in the survey had a mean score of 4.29, the highest score found in the analysis of each survey item.

According to von Pohle (2013), the teacher plays a significant role in implementing the two most important aspects of [parochial] education: academics and school climate. This seems true not only for the professionally technical parts of teaching such as being competent and engaging but also true for the affective aspects of being a teacher, which included attending to individual students and partnering with parents to provide a successful learning experience for the student (von Pohle, 2013, p. 73).

The review of literature regarding why parents choose parochial schools informs and gives support to the conclusion that parents choose parochial schools primarily for religious reasons. However, the literature is also beginning to support the conclusion that a new trend in parent choice for parochial education is developing. Although parents desire a religious education for their children, it is in conjunction with an equal desire for the parochial schools to offer a strong academic program and a safe learning environment. In addition, the literature specifically reported a finding that there is a strong expectation from the parents that parochial schools provide their students with teachers capable of exhibiting care and concern of their students (von Pohle, 2013). However, no literature as yet explains to what extent parochial schools have been effective in promoting denominational loyalty or in meeting any of the other parental expectations, for that matter. Finally, the literature also supports the idea that at the very least there is a demonstrable interest in seeing parochial education promote denominational loyalty (cf. Mainda, 2002).

Summary

Valuegenesis research has explained that youth pastors perceived as caring and warm accounted for 4% of the variance in determining denominational loyalty by the youth of the church (Tameifuna, 2008). It also has explained that a caring school climate is related to denominational loyalty. However, Valuegenesis research has not yet explained completely to what extent secure attachments in student-teacher relationships in a parochial school setting have been effective in promoting denominational loyalty. Also, the literature does not yet explain to what extent youth denominational disaffiliation is related to parochial school attendance. The current study hopes to elucidate how secure attachment has a role in the development of positive student-teacher relationships in a parochial school setting and what its relationship is to the phenomenon of youth religious disaffiliation.

The literature does not yet explain to what extent secure-attachment in teacher student relationships can be linked to the promotion of denominational loyalty in a parochial school setting. However, the literature does report that secure attachment in student-teacher relationships has been shown to improve student academic outcome and ability to complete school. This benefit of promoting secure attachment between students and teachers in a parochial school setting would address concern parents have in choosing an education for their children.

Furthermore, the literature is also beginning to support the conclusion that a new trend in parent choice for parochial education is developing: parents still desire a religious education for their children, however, it is in conjunction with an equal desire for a strong academic program and safe learning environment. In addition, the literature specifically reported a a strong expectation from the parents that parochial schools provide their students with teachers capable of exhibiting care and concern of their students (von Pohle, 2013). This study seeks to analyze

the possible relationship that students' perception of teacher caring and affirming behaviors have on their overall desire to maintain denominational loyalty amongst students attending parochial schools. It is hoped that this research fills a gap seen in the literature.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which secure attachment between teachers and students is linked with the students' denominational loyalty. This chapter outlines the sampling procedure and instruments used to conduct the present study.

Sampling

The current study used the data from the 2010-2011 Valuegenesis Survey (Gillespie *et al.*, 2004). The survey took samples from students who were attending a large parochial educational system of an evangelical Protestant Christian church. The final data consisted of 10,346 students enrolled in grades six through twelve.

This particular conservative evangelical Protestant Christian church's teaching and its members' adherence to a similar morality and ethics marks it as in line with other conservative evangelical Protestant churches (Ji & Tameifuna, 2011). For instance, the church encourages modesty in dress, entertainment that is positive and uplifting, as well as abstinence from premarital sex, illicit drugs, alcohol, and LGBT lifestyle. The church is also in agreement with the vast majority of the conservative evangelical Protestant doctrines such as, but not limited to, salvation by grace through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, Christ's second coming, and the Day of Judgement. In addition, the church adheres to a strong belief in the separation of church and state.

The survey participants completed a 407 item questionnaire. The survey instrument included questions about church life, home life, attitudes towards school, attitude towards

Christian doctrine, important relationships, church attendance, etc. The survey also incorporated information regarding gender, grade level, ethnicity, and region of residence. The survey goal was to inform church leadership about the spiritual values and attitudes prevalent amongst the youth of the church. For the present analysis, nineteen items from the survey were utilized to answer the research questions.

Variables

Caring school climate was calculated by averaging responses to eight 4-point statements from the survey. The first stated, "Students often feel put down by teachers" (reverse scored); the second said, "There is real school spirit."; the third read, "Discipline is fair."; the fourth, "The teaching is good."; fifth, "Teachers are interested in students."; sixth, "When students work hard on schoolwork, teachers praise their efforts"; seventh, "Teachers listen to what their students say"; and the last statement for response was "Adventist schools provide a better academic program than do public schools."

These eight items were subjected to a principal component analysis. A principal axis method was used to extract the components, followed by a varimax extraction and a scree test. The eight items and corresponding factors are presented in Table 3.1. An item was said to load on a factor if its loading was .40 or greater. The scree test results in Figure 3.1 suggested that the eight items compromising the caring school climate variable had a one-factor solution with an eigenvalue of approximately 3.5. All eight items were found to load on a single component, which was labelled the caring school climate scale. The caring school climate scale explained 44% of the total variance. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha reliability estimate of the caring school climate scale was .65.

Student-teacher attachment was calculated by averaging four 5-point questions from the survey (cf. Ji, 2018). The survey instrument did not include specific questions regarding attachment style. However, it included questions regarding the importance students give to teacher relationships. The questions selected most closely approximate the secure attachment model proposed by Bowlby (1969), which states that secure attachment is based on the interaction of the perception of others towards the child and the perception the of the child towards others.

The first of these questions asked, "How important for you are your relationships with teachers at your school?"; the second asked, "How willing are you to seek out relationships with teachers?"; the third, "Generally speaking, how available are teachers at your school to talk to you in time of need?"; and lastly, "How willing are your teachers at your school to talk to you about sensitive issues (sex, drugs, etc.)?" It should be noted, a lower mean score is hypothesized as indicative of secure attachment being present. Inversely, a higher mean score is hypothesized as indicative of an insecure attachment. This dichotomous labelling corresponds with the suggestion by Altenhofen and Biringen (2008).

Table 3.3 presents the four items and factor loadings for the student-teacher attachment variable. An item was again said to load on a factor if its loading was .40 or greater. The student-teacher attachment scale accounted for 62% of the total variance. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha reliability estimate of the student-teacher attachment scale was .74.

Denominational loyalty was calculated by averaging three 5-point questions from the survey. The first question asked, "How satisfied are you with the denomination of the church you now attend?"; number two asked, "If you moved to another city that has many churches from which to choose, would you attend a church of the same denomination as the church you now

attend?"; and the last asked, "When you are 40 years old, do you think you will be active in the [current denominational] church you attend?" Table 3.4 presents the three items and their factor loadings. The one factor solution explained 62% of the total variance. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha reliability estimate of the denominational loyalty scale was .69.

Three demographic control variables from the survey data were used: grade level, gender, and ethnicity. The demographic control variables will be classified as follows: grade level 6-9 (0) and 10-12 (1); gender male (0), female (1); and, ethnicity White (1), African-American (2), Asian (3), Latino (4), Multiracial (5). These demographic control variables were included in the analysis because previous research has shown their "associations with youth religiosity and denominational loyalty" (Ji & Tameifuna, 2011). Also, these demographic attributes have been found to influence the attachment style, whether secure or insecure, of children and adolescents (Reio, Marcus, & Sanders-Reio, 2009).

Apart from the three preceding demographic attributes, the current study took three personal religiosity and two school-related religion program variables into consideration in order to examine the teacher-student attachment's statistical significance even after controlling the effects of personal religiousness and school-based religion programs. These variables pertain to Christian Orthodoxy, Denominational Orthodoxy, Church Attendance, Frequency of School Religion Programs, and Quality of School Religion Programs.

Christian Orthodoxy was defined as a mean score of the samples' endorsement of ten items related to Jesus' second coming, Ten Commandments, Trinity, God the Father, the nature of Jesus, salvation, Holy Spirit, communion service, and tithe and offerings (see Ji, Pendergraft, & Perry, 2006 for validation). Denominational Orthodoxy was computed using ten items measuring the participants' support for the Church's doctrines on Sabbath, pre-advent judgment,

human conditions after death, the existence of hell, Ellen G. White, a great controversy between God and Satan, the end-time millennium, New Heaven, and "present truth." Church Attendance asked the participants how often they attend worship services at a church: (1) never; (2) less than once a month; (3) about once a month; (4) two or three times a month; (5) about once a week; and (6) two times a week or more. The survey also asked the samples to mark statements about frequency of their school provided youth ministry programs. It was based on 5-point Likert scale: (1) never; (2) once a month; (3) every two weeks; (4) every week; (5) more than once a week. Finally, the quality of these religious programs was assessed using a dichotomous variable asking participants whether the youth programs at their school were meaningful or not.

Table 3.1

Items and Factor Loadings for the Caring School Climate Scale

Items	Loading	Communality
Students often feel "put down" by teachers. (reversed)	.57	.32
There is real school spirit.	.57	.32
Discipline is fair.	.63	.41
The teaching is good.	.75	.56
Teachers are interested in students.	.74	.54
When students work hard on schoolwork, teachers praise their efforts.	.69	.47
Teachers listen to what their students say.	.76	.58
Adventist schools provide a better academic program than do public schools.	.53	.31

Note. *N* = 10,346.
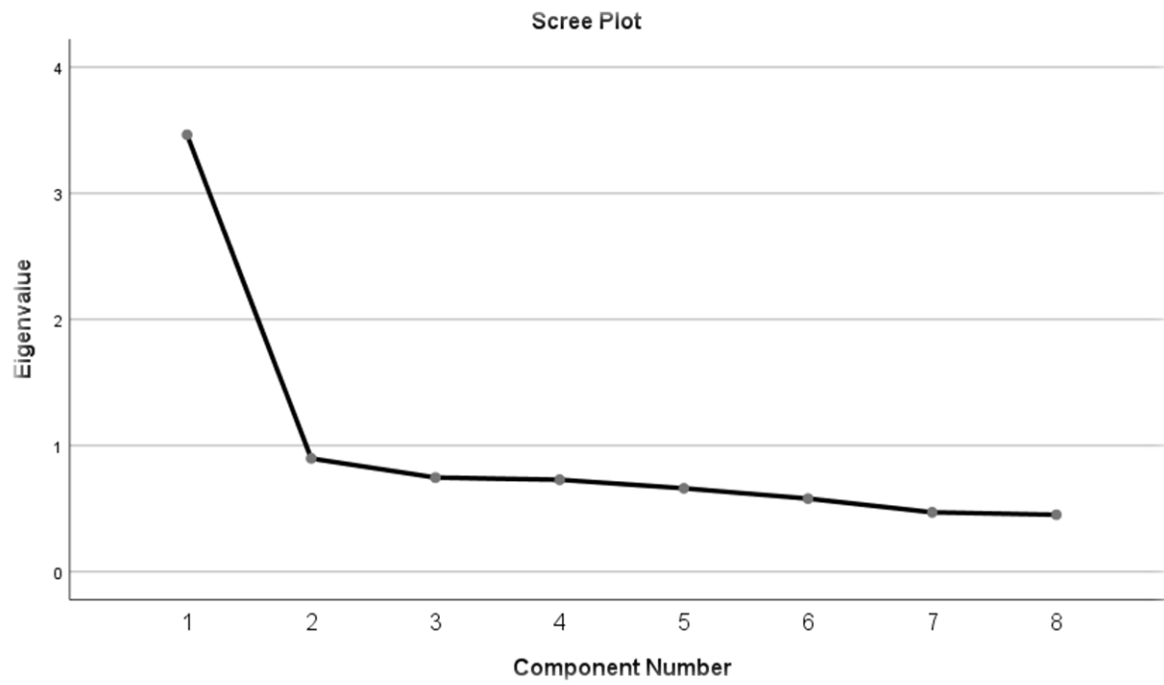
Figure 3.1. Scree Plot for the Caring School Climate Scale (One-factor Solution)

Table 3.2

Items and Factor Loadings for the Student-Teacher Attachment Scale

Items	Loading	Communality
How important for you are your relationships with teachers at your school?	.80	.64
How willing are you to seek out relationships with teachers?	.80	.64
Generally speaking, how available are teachers at your school to talk to you in times of need?	.74	.54
How willing are your teachers at your school to talk about sensitive issues (sex, drugs, etc.)?	.66	.43

Note. $N = 10{,}346$.
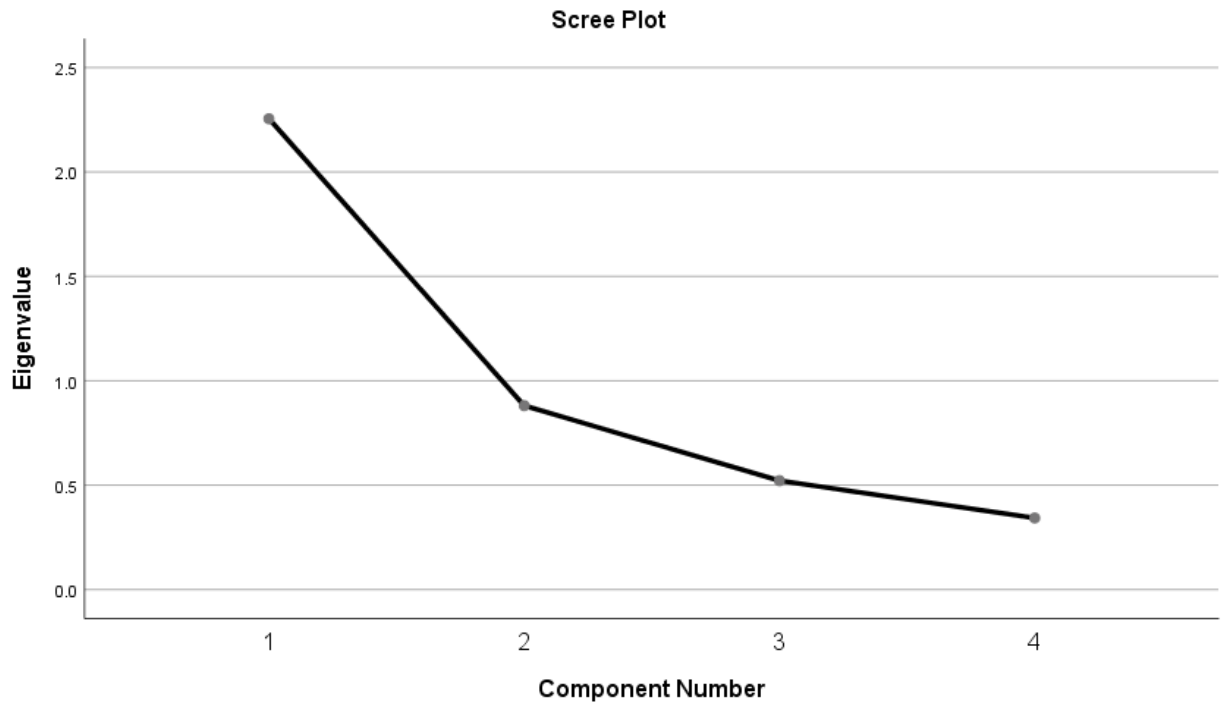
Figure 3.2. Scree Plot for the Student-Teacher Attachment Scale (One-factor Solution)

Table 3.3

Items and Factor Loadings for the Denominational Loyalty Scale

Items	Loading	Communality
How satisfied are you with the denomination of the church you attend?	.73	.53
If you moved to another that has many church from which to choose, would you attend a church of the same denomination as the church you now attend?	.81	.66
When you are 40 years old, do you think you will be active in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?	.82	.67

Note. $N = 10,346$.
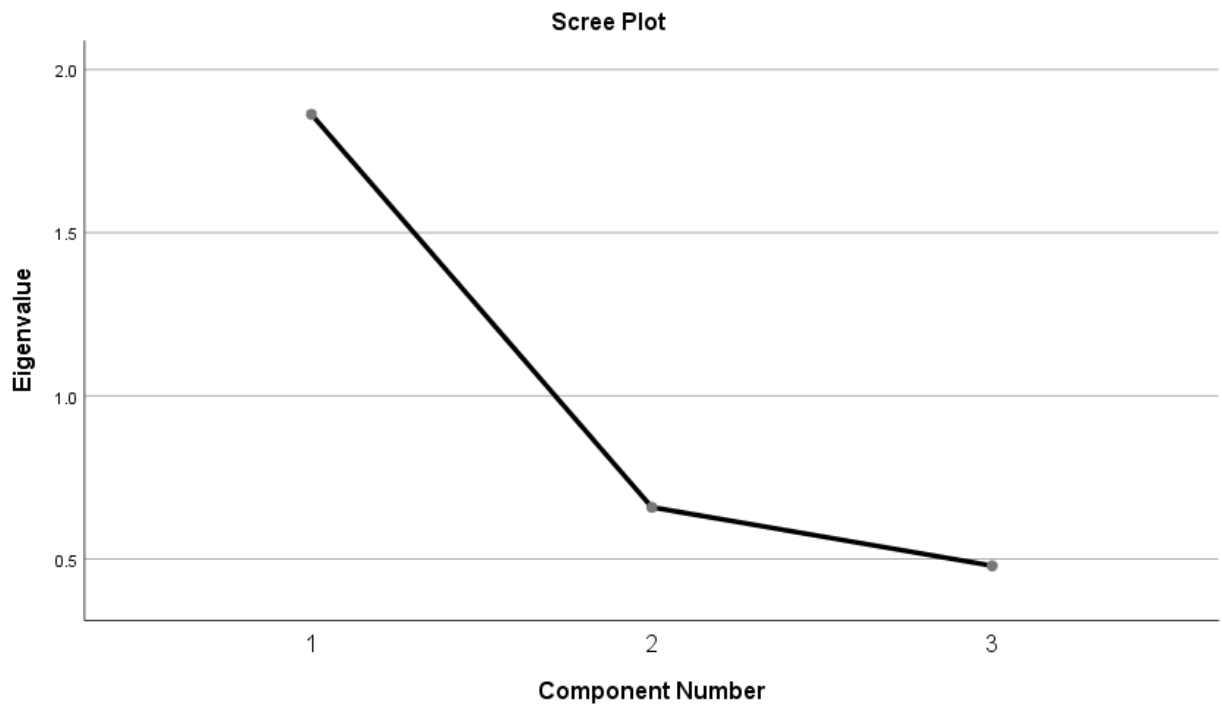
Figure 3.3. Scree Plot for the Denominational Loyalty Scale (One-factor Solution)

CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter reports the results of the statistical analysis performed to answer the three

proposed hypothesis: (1) To the extent a school's climate is perceived as caring by the students,

the more likely the students are satisfied with their relationship to their teachers; (2) The greater

the student satisfaction with teacher relationships, the more likelihood of the presence of secure

student-teacher attachment; and (3) The more prevalent the presence of secure student-teacher

attachment, the more likely the students are to maintain denominational loyalty.

Descriptive Analysis

As shown in Table 4.1, the mean caring teacher/school climate score of the study sample

was 2.88, corresponding to 72.00% of the maximum possible score. On the other hand, the

average score of denominational loyalty was 4.19; the sample recorded a mean score of 3.49 on

the teacher-student attachment scale. These two mean scores are roughly equivalent to 70% and

85% of their maximum possible (7) scores. The mean score of Christian orthodoxy was 4.68, a

score roughly 94% of the possible maximum on the scale. This score is higher than the 4.20 for

SDA orthodoxy, one corresponding to 84% of the maximum possible score.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 4.2 presents the regression results predicting student-teacher attachment. The

results pertain to the first two research hypotheses. The prediction model, as given in the table,

was statistically significant, $F(7, 10973) = 353.94$, $p < .01$, accounting for 18% of the variance

of student-teacher attachment. Caring teachers/school climate was statistically significant and

made the greatest contribution to the prediction of student-teacher attachment. It accounted for 18% of the variance of the dependent variable. All the demographic control variables were also significant. Female and senior high school students reported higher scores as compared to their male and junior high school counterparts. On the other hand, the coefficients of ethnicity dummy variables were all in the negative direction. This means that white students reported significantly higher scores on the teacher-student attachment scale than did African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and multiracial students.

Next, for the third hypothesis, teacher-student attachment was examined to find whether or not it predicted denominational loyalty. The results are summarized in Table 4.3. The prediction model was statistically significant, F (12, 8863) = 349.46, $p < .01$, explaining 32% of the variance of denominational loyalty. Student-teacher attachment was statistically significant with its coefficient in the positive direction. It uniquely explained about 2% of the variance. That is, the closer students feel to their teachers, the higher their denominational loyalty tends to be. Denominational loyalty was also positively correlated with the meaningfulness of school religious programs. All three personal religion variables reached conventional levels of statistical significance. In particular, Christian orthodoxy and church attendance stood out, accounting for 7% and 5% of the total variance, respectively. These percentages were much greater than the 1% for denominational doctrinal orthodoxy. Turning to the demographic variables, we noticed that white students reported higher levels of denominational loyalty than all the other ethnic groups, including multiracial students. Female and junior high school students were found to be more loyal to the denomination than male and senior high school students, in the order specified.

Supplementary Analyses

Comparison of High and Low Attachment Groups

For further knowledge, the participants were clustered into three groups according to their attachment to teachers: One standard deviation (*SD*) below the mean, one *SD* above the mean, and the group between these two scores. The results of analysis of variance are given in Table 4.5. The group with one standard deviation above the mean reported a mean score of 4.46, while the group with one standard deviation below the mean obtained an average score of 3.85. The middle group recorded a mean score of 4.21. This finding indicated the importance of attachment to denominational loyalty. A rise by one standard deviation in student-teacher attachment increased denominational loyalty by about 6% when compared to the group in the average range. This ratio increased to approximately 16% when the low attachment group was taken into consideration.

The data were then subject to multiple regression analysis using the three-grouping dummy variables of teacher-student attachment. Table 4.5 summarizes the results of this supplementary analysis. The findings are almost identical with those reported in Table 4.3. More importantly, the students with average attachment scores were noted to be significantly less loyal to the denomination than the high attachment (1 *SD* above the mean) group, while they had significantly higher levels of denominational loyalty than the low attachment group (1 *SD* below the mean).

Impacts of Gender, Ethnicity, and Grade Level

On the other hand, the preceding regression analyses suggested significant differences in teacher-student attachment and denominational loyalty across different gender, ethnicity, and grade level groups. Accordingly, here, a set of analysis of variance was employed in order to find

out the sources of these significant differences. For reference, student perception of their teachers and school climate was also analysed along with teacher-student attachment and denominational loyalty.

To begin with gender, the results in the upper tier of Table 4.6 show that gender had significant effects on denominational loyalty and teacher-student attachment. Female students recorded a mean score of 3.51 and 4.26 on the attachment and denominational loyalty scales, respectively, while 3.47 and 4.12 were the corresponding average scores for the male counterpart students. No significant gender effect was detected in conjunction with student perception of teachers and school climate.

In regards to ethnicity, it was found to have significant effects on caring teachers/school climate, teacher-student attachment, and denominational loyalty. As presented in the middle tier of Table 4.6, whites consistently acquired the highest mean score across the three scales (M = 2.89 for caring teachers/school climate; M = 3.58 for teacher-student attachment; M = 4.25 for denominational loyalty). African American pupils reported the lowest score on the measurements of caring teacher/school climate (M = 2.83) and teacher-student attachment (M = 3.33); the lowest denominational loyalty score was associated with the Asian sample (M = 4.06).

Finally, grade level also mattered for the accounts of school climate and denominational loyalty. Junior high school students had more positive views about their teachers and school climate (M = 2.94) as compared to the senior high school group (M = 2.83). This was also the case for denomination loyalty (M = 4.25 for junior high school students; M = 4.16 for senior high school students). Yet, there were no significant differences in teacher-student attachment between junior and senior high school students.

Frequency and Quality of School Religious Programs

The above regression analysis demonstrated that the quality of religious programs mattered for the prediction of denominational loyalty. For more knowledge, the data were further analysed using an independent-samples t test. The results in Table 4.8 revealed a significant difference in denominational loyalty between meaningful and non-meaningful religious programs, $t(9522) = 24.48$; $p < .001$. The sample means are displayed in the lower tier of the table, which shows that the samples in the meaningful-religious-program group ($M = 4.31$, $SD = .72$) demonstrated scores on denominational loyalty which were moderately larger than those shown by the samples in the non-meaningful-program group ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.00$).

In addition, Table 4.8 contains the number of the students who reported their school's religious programs are meaningful and interesting. When asked whether they find "the youth or young adult programs meaningful" at their school, 76% of the survey sample answered yes, while 24% answered no. This means that almost 25% of the students who attend the parochial schools considered the religious and youth ministry programs available at their school not much meaningful or interesting. On the other hand, the frequency of religious programs was found above to be statistically non-significant.

For further information, Table 4.9 presents the frequency of religious programs. When asked how often youth ministry programs were provided at their school, 17.5% of the survey participants replied "never"; 30.6% replied "once a month"; 10.3% replied "every two weeks"; 27.9% answered "every week"; and 13.6% answered "more than once a week." This finding demonstrated that more than 30% of the surveyed parochial schools lack youth ministry programs or religious programs for their students, which is surprising given that religion is one

of the most important reasons that parents choose a religious school rather than public schools

for their children's education (Ji & Boyatt, 2007; von Pohle, 2013).

Table 4.1

Descriptive Statistics of Caring Teachers/School Climate, Student-Teacher Attachment,

Denominational Loyalty, and Doctrinal Orthodoxy

	M	*SD*	Min.	Max.
Caring Teachers/School Climate	2.88	.42	1.00	4.00
Denominational Loyalty	4.19	.82	1.00	5.00
Student-Teacher Attachment	3.49	.91	1.00	5.00
Christian Orthodoxy	4.68	.46	1.00	5.00
SDA Orthodoxy	4.20	.62	1.00	5.00

Note. $N = 11,539$.

Table 4.2

Standard Regression Analysis Summary Predicting Student-Teacher Attachment

		B	SE	β	r+
Constant	.65* .07				
High School		.11*	.02	.06	.06
Female		.03*	.02	.02	.02
African American		-.18*	.03	-.06	-.06
Hispanic		-.12*	.02	-.05	-.03
Asian		-.07*	.03	-.03	-.03
Multiracial		-.09*	.02	-.04	-.04
Caring Teachers/School Climate		.93*	.02	.42	.42

Note. *$p < .01$; $F(7, 10973) = 353.94$*; R Square = .18; + part correlation coefficient.

Table 4.3

Standard Regression Analysis Summary Predicting Denominational Loyalty the Continuous

Variable of Student-Teacher Attachment

	B	*SE*	*β*	*r+*
Constant	.29*	.09		
High School	-.14*	.02	-.09	-.10
Female	.09*	.01	.06	.07
African American	-.10*	.03	-.03	-.04
Hispanic	-.13*	.02	-.05	-.06
Asian	-.13*	.02	-.04	-.06
Multiracial	-.05*	.02	-.02	-.03
Christian Orthodoxy	.56*	.02	.30	.27
SDA Orthodoxy	.14*	.02	.10	.10
Church Attendance	.15*	.01	.18	.23
Frequency of School Religious Program	-.01	.01	-.01	-.01
Quality of School Religious Program	.21*	.02	.11	.12
Student-Teacher Attachment	.11*	.01	.12	.14

Note. *p < .01; *F* (12, 8863) = 349.46*; *R* Square = .32; +part correlation coefficient.

Table 4.4

Mean Comparison of Denominational Loyalty by Attachment Group

Source	SS	df	MS	F+
Between Groups	298.20	2	149.10	235.47*
Within Groups	6998.71	11053	.63	
Total	7296.90	11055		

	M	SD
Group 1 *SD* Below the Mean	3.85	.96
Group Between +/- 1 *SD*	4.21	.78
Group 1 *SD* Above the Mean	4.46	.70

Note. * $p < .05$; + $df = 2, 11053$.

Table 4.5

Standard Regression Analysis Summary Predicting Denominational Loyalty via the

Trichotomous Variable of Student-Teacher Attachment

	B	*SE*	*β*	*r+*
Constant	.63*	.09		
High School	-.14*	.02	-.09	-.10
Female	.09*	.01	.05	.07
African American	-.12*	.03	-.04	-.05
Hispanic	-.13*	.02	-.06	-.07
Asian	-.13*	.02	-.05	-.06
Multiracial	-.05*	.02	-.03	-.03
Christian Orthodoxy	.57*	.02	.32	.27
SDA Orthodoxy	.14*	.02	.11	.10
Church Attendance	.15*	.01	.20	.23
Frequency of School Religious Program	-.00	.01	-.00	-.01
Quality of School Religious Program	.23*	.02	.12	.14
Student-Teacher Attachment 1*SD* Below	-.17*	.02	-.07	-.08
Student-Teacher Attachment 1*SD* Above	.13*	.02	.05	.06

Note. *p < .01; *F* (13, 8908) = 321.08*; *R* Square = .32; + part correlation coefficient.

Table 4.6

Mean Comparisons of Caring Teachers/School Climate, Student-Teacher Attachment, and

Denominational Loyalty by Gender, Ethnicity, and Grade Level

	Caring Teachers/ School Climate		Student-Teacher Attachment		Denominational Loyalty	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Male	2.87	.43	3.47	.91	4.12	.85
Female	2.88	.40	3.51	.90	4.26	.78
F (*df*)	.33 (1, 11394)		4.72* (1, 10932)		76.03* (1, 11399)	
White	2.89	.82	3.58	.88	4.25	.79
Black	2.83	.44	3.33	.94	4.18	.82
Hispanic	2.87	.42	3.44	.95	4.16	.80
Asian	2.90	.40	3.51	.85	4.06	.87
Multiracial	2.87	.42	3.46	.92	4.18	.83
F (*df*)	4.94* (4, 11396)		20.58* (4, 11391)		15.42* (4, 11396)	
Junior High	2.94	.43	3.48	.95	4.25	.77
Senior High	4.16	.84	3.49	.91	4.16	.84
F (*df*)	191.60* (1, 11394)		.70 (1, 10932)		30.12* (1, 11399)	

Note. * $p < .01$.

Table 4.7

Analysis of Covariance Results on the Impact of Religious/Youth Ministry Programs at School

on Denominational Loyalty

Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F+*
Frequency of Programs	1.72	1	1.72	2.76
Meaningfulness of Programs	336.26	1	336.26	538.92
Error	5603.74	8981	.62	

	M	*SD*
School Programs Meaningful	4.31	.72
School Programs Not Meaningful	3.84	1.00

Note. * *p* < .01.

Table 4.8

Measuring the Association between Meaningfulness of Youth Ministry and Denominational

Loyalty

	N	M	SD	t (9522)
Meaningful Youth Ministry Programs	7,250	4.31	.72	24.48*
Not Meaningful Youth Ministry Programs	2,265	3.84	1.00	

Note. * $p < .01$.

Table 4.9

Frequency of Youth Ministry Programs at My School

	f	%
Never	1,793	17.53%
Once a Month	3,130	30.61%
Every Two Weeks	1,052	10.29%
Every Week	2,862	27.98%
More than Once a Week	1,390	13.59%

Note. $N = 10,227$.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The results of this study provide support for the proposed theoretical model that caring school climates promote positive student-teacher relationships and, as a consequence, promote secure student-teacher attachment which in turn promotes denominational loyalty. This chapter discusses the results of the statistical analysis performed to answer the two proposed hypotheses developed from the theoretical model.

Caring School Climate

The first research hypothesis stated, to the extent that a school's climate is perceived as caring by students, the more likely students are satisfied with their teachers which would be indicative of secure student-teacher attachment. As hypothesized, the results showed that indeed the more school climate was perceived as caring by students, the more students manifested satisfaction with their teachers. This also means that the greater the student satisfaction with teacher relationships, the more likely the presence of secure student-teacher attachment.

The research literature reported that a caring school climate impacts a student's mental and physical well-being and self-esteem, diminishes the negative impact of self-criticism, among other benefits, and promotes a climate for learning. Also a caring school climate is positively related to a student's positive self-concept and a diminished prospect of substance abuse and likelihood of psychiatric problems. Other benefits of a caring school climate include a decline in student absenteeism, a decrease in student disciplinary actions, and stimulation of health promotion efforts (Thapa, Cohen, Guffy & D'Alessandro, 2013).

The present study's findings were consistent with the literature reviewed and also confirmed that a caring school climate is the bedrock on which positive student-teacher relationships are built. In such a climate, caring teachers are conducive to high academic achievement (Ji, 2018). The results also concurred with the von Pohle's (2013) claim that a caring school climate in parochial schools that promotes academic and spiritual development should continue to be an expectation parents place on the schools. Additionally, Gillespie et al. (2004) proposed that care and warmth are essential components of the school climate in parochial schools.

The present results were also consistent with the literature on attachment theory, confirming that positive student-teacher relationships are correlated with secure student-teacher attachment. According to the main tenets of attachment theory adapted to a school setting, secure student-teacher attachment is only viable if the following conditions are met: (a) teachers are perceived as willing to provide caring or warmth to their students; (b) in times of need the teachers are perceived as available to provide a sense of security and comfort to their students; and (c), the teachers promotes a classroom climate that inspires confidence in the students to take risks and grow in their learning (Ainsworth, et al., 1978; Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980).

The development of positive student-teacher relationships is an important outcome of a caring school climate because "the process of teaching and learning is fundamentally relational" (Thapa, et al., 2013, p. 363). Students that are securely attached to their teachers have higher levels of school engagement, feel supported by their teachers, and are likely to experience the mutual respect of teachers and students (Kennedy, 2008). The more securely attached a student feels with her or his teacher(s), the more likely she or he is to have a positive increases in self-

regulation, motivation, and engagement in the learning process. In addition, as a consequence of these positive outcomes, there exist additional benefits, such as improvements in school behavior and academic performance (Mautone, Lefler, & Power, 2011).

Gillespie, et al. (2004) emphasized that in a parochial school, "teachers that are seen as competent, caring, and supportive provide the best possible nurture to young people" (p. 325). This study confirmed that staffing parochial schools with teachers that are perceived as warm and caring should continue to be an expectation parents have of parochial schools (von Pohle, 2013) as it is that perception of warmth and care that promotes secure attachment.

Secure Student-Teacher Attachment and Denominational Loyalty

The second research hypothesis stated, the more prevalent the presence of secure student-teacher attachment, the more likely the students are to maintain denominational loyalty. The results supported this hypothesis since such students indicated their intention to remain loyal to the denomination.

The results of the regression analysis indicated that secure student-teacher attachment does play a role in promoting denominational loyalty though the strength of the association was not as strong as results reported by Ji and Tameifuna (2011). Student-teacher attachment was found to be statistically significant with its coefficient in the positive direction. It uniquely explained about 2% of the variance (see Table 4.3). Furthermore, the results of the secondary analysis performed indicated that an increase of one standard deviation leads to a corresponding increase in the denominational loyalty of students. This finding was also consistent with the proposed theoretical model and supports the notion that, as secure student-teacher attachment increases in a parochial school, the likelihood for denominational loyalty also increases.

A possible explanation of why the results were not as strong as those of Ji and Tameifuna (2011) is that their theoretical model attributed the effect on denominational loyalty directly to the perception of pastor warmth. In comparison, this study postulated that denominational loyalty is dependent on secure student-teacher attachment, which in turn is mediated and correlated to the perception of positive relationships teachers have with their students, which originate in a caring school climate. These results highlight the important role that teachers have as part of the ecology that promotes denominational loyalty.

This study provided empirical evidence that secure student-teacher attachment promotes denominational loyalty in a parochial school. In addition, it has provided the theoretical and analytical methodology by which schools can demonstrate that they are promoting denominational loyalty and thus meeting the expectation of the parents choosing a parochial education for their children (von Pohle, 2013).

Church Attendance and Denominational Loyalty

Church attendance also had a significant impact on denominational loyalty. According to Gillespie et al. (2004), when students "participate in religious activities it helps them learn ideas and values that are not easily understood if they are passive learners" (p. 188). Also, the strong impact that this variable had can be attributed to the religious practices of their parents. If parents don't attend church, their children do not attend church. Also, attendance presupposes the presence of prior positive experiences with church. When children are socialized into church attendance, it becomes a part of their regular social experience. Also to be considered is the fact that, as students mature, they begin to solidify their Christian identity and theology. These are among the possible factors that may be involved in promoting the socialization of church attendance (Gillespie et al., 2004). The findings are consistent with the literature review

regarding youth church attendance and denominational loyalty in which researchers found a strong correlation between youth church attendance and denominational loyalty (Smith & Denton, 2005).

Christian Orthodoxy and Denominational Loyalty

In the research results, Christian orthodoxy was also positively correlated with denominational loyalty. Regarding their understanding of Christian doctrinal beliefs, the survey asked the students to what extent they believed the following statements: "Jesus will come back to earth again and take the righteous to heaven"; "The Ten Commandments still apply to us today"; "There is one God; Father, Son and Spirit, a unity of three eternal persons"; "God, our Heavenly Father, is the Source, Sustainer, and Ruler of the universe"; "Jesus is truly and eternally God"; "Jesus became truly human"; "God, the Holy Spirit, teaches us how much we need Jesus in our lives, draws us to Jesus, and makes us grow like him"; "The church is God's family on earth, a community of faith in which many members, all equal in Christ, who join for worship, instruction, and service"; "God has given spiritual gifts to each of us that we can use in ministry"; and, "We acknowledge God's ownership of earth and all its resources by returning tithes and giving offerings" (Valuegenesis[3], 2010).

The results indicated that Christian orthodoxy had a strong effect on denominational loyalty compared to the other variables included in the model and was by far the strongest of the predictors impacting denominational loyalty. The strength of the association of Christian orthodoxy implied that students are hearing or discussing these doctrines with their parents at home, at church with their pastors and or youth pastors, or at school with their teacher or in their religious education classes. And most important, they are being internalized into students' religious belief systems and practices.

Denominational Orthodoxy and Denominational Loyalty

One finding from the study that was surprising was the relative weak impact that SDA orthodox beliefs had on denominational loyalty. SDA orthodox beliefs are those doctrinal teachings unique to the SDA Church. The survey asked the students to what extent they believed the following statements of SDA doctrinal beliefs: "The true Sabbath is the seventh day – Saturday"; "The investigative or pre-advent judgement in heaven began in 1844"; "When people die, they remain in the grave until the resurrection"; "The wicked will not burn forever but will be totally destroyed"; "Ellen G. White fulfills Bible predictions that God would speak through the gift of prophecy in the last days"; "The Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's true last-day church with a message to prepare the world for the Second Coming of Christ"; "There is a great controversy taking place between God and Satan. It began in heaven with the rebellion of Lucifer and will continue until the end of time"; "The end-time millennium (1,000 years) begins with the Second Coming of Jesus when the righteous are taken to heaven and ends with the final destruction of the wicked"; "After the millennium, God will recreate the earth as a perfect, eternal home of the redeemed. Sin will never exist again"; and, "The Adventist church believes in 'present truth' that means beliefs might change over time" (Valuegenesis[3], 2010).

The multiple regression analysis suggested that SDA orthodoxy had a minimal impact in promoting denominational loyalty. These findings from a denominational point of view are problematic because previous research has suggested that SDA Orthodoxy was correlated to denominational loyalty (Dudley & Gillespie, 1992). According to Smith and Denton (2005), these results could be indicative of a larger problem within the denomination regarding the articulation and relevance of these beliefs to the current generation of young people. For

instance, Smith conducted interviews with teenagers across the United States and found that most teenagers could not articulate their Christian beliefs (Smith & Denton, 2005).

The literature consulted suggested that between the first and second administrations of the Valuegenesis surveys, there had already been a decrease in support for some of these doctrines, in particular: "The Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's true last-day church with a message to prepare the world for the Second Coming of Christ"; "Ellen G. White fulfills Bible predictions that God would speak through the gift of prophecy in the last days"; and, "The investigative or pre-advent judgement in heaven began in 1844" (see Gillespie et al. 2004, p. 157). In order to determine if this was still the case and as way to explain why SDA orthodox beliefs had a minimal impact in promoting denominational loyalty, a supplementary analysis of the mean scores of the SDA doctrinal scale was conducted.

The results revealed that the following questions were the three with the lowest mean scores in the scale: "The investigative or pre-advent judgement in heaven began in 1844," ($M = 3.08$); "Ellen G. White fulfills Bible predictions that God would speak through the gift of prophecy in the last days," ($M = 3.98$); and, "The Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's true last-day church with a message to prepare the world for the Second Coming of Christ," ($M = 3.22$). The questions obtaining the lowest mean scores were the same ones that Gillespie et al. (2004) had previously reported as diminishing in support. Thus findings from this study provided grounds for agreement with Gillespie et al. that this is cause for concern.

There seemed to be four different factors that could be diminishing the predictive power of the SDA Orthodoxy scale in promoting denominational loyalty: parents, pastors, teachers, and students. A first place to start is with the student's home of origin. One possible hypothesis to explain the lack of support for these doctrines is perhaps embedded in the personal experience of

the parents. The parents of the students can perhaps recall the legalist climate that once permeated SDA churches and its schools and may associate these doctrines with those negative experiences. Also to consider is the role that church pastors and youth pastors have in promoting an understanding of these doctrines. Perhaps the students are attending congregations or youth groups in which the pastors do not emphasize an understanding of these doctrines. Another possible explanation is to be found in the personal experiences of the parochial school teachers, in particular those that are involved in teaching the approved and adopted Religious curriculum of the parochial schools. Even though curricular expectations exist for teachers to teach these specific denominational doctrines in the church's parochial schools, that does not mean they are doing so. Or perhaps, given the association these doctrines have with a legalist religious experience, teachers perceive these doctrines as antithetical to the concept of grace that they are also teaching and just overlook the necessity of teaching these doctrines to their students.

Yet another possible explanation of why SDA orthodoxy has a weak impact in promoting denominational loyalty may be found with the students. To be sure, according to the findings of this study, SDA parochial school students are committed to the core Christian doctrinal beliefs of the church and attend church on a regular basis. The concern therefore is to develop plausible explanations that could explain why SDA doctrinal beliefs that establish the distinctiveness of the SDA Church have a weak impact in promoting denominational loyalty.

Plausible Explanations for SDA Orthodoxy's Diminished Impact

SDA Identity as a Postmodern Construct

Jeroen Tuinstra (2009) provided one possible explanation for why Adventist parochial school students still choose to maintain an Adventist identity in spite the fact that they demonstrated diminished support for or understanding of these distinct doctrines. Tuinstra

suggested that "on the one hand, our youth are carving out their [Adventist] identity, and on the other hand, they have adopted a postmodern world-view that causes tension with the church's world-view" (p. 167). As a way of resolving the apparent conflict, Tuinstra noted, "Our [SDA] church may have to adapt their provided identity to enable our [Adventist students] to be both Adventist and postmodern" (p. 167). According to Tuinstra, Adventist students are not only negotiating a transition between stages in faith development but are also transitioning between a modern identity—represented by the current SDA Church identity—and an identity that is postmodern in its outlook (Tuinstra, 2009).

Tuinstra's (2009) hypothesis is based on Fowler's (1981) stages of faith development, specifically stage three, *synthetic-conventional*, which could be representative of the current identity held by Adventist students and the one promoted by the church and stage four, *individuative-reflective*, one that could be representative of the postmodern identity that Adventist students see all around them. For Tuinstra, Adventist youth are progressing from the synthetic-conventional stage to the individuative-reflective stage and as a result are negotiating a new identity that is postmodern and more inclusive rather than exclusive when compared to the traditional stance of the SDA Church.

Tuinstra (2009) made another important point: "There seems to be an apparent contradiction in the orthodoxy and orthopraxies of the youth" (p. 168). He further suggested that this could be evidence of *compartmentalization*—matching their behavior to the expectation of a specific setting, and as a student moves between diverse *theaters of action*—settings such as home, church, school, etc., the student has various roles to play or live up to and consistent with their *synthetic-conventional* stage of development. The identity of the teenager is closely tied to the expectations of those considered important to him or her. For instance, how the student

would behave at school while under adult supervision would be different from the same student's behavior in the mall without adult supervision. This is due to the fact that in the mind of the teenager, the expectations of one group holds greater authority than that of another. Though this stage is typical for teenagers, for some "adults it becomes a permanent place of equilibrium" (Fowler, 1981, p. 172). For many adults this sense of equilibrium produces a sense of conformity that helps them avoid questioning their beliefs.

Tuinstra (2009) suggested three causes creating an identity crisis with the students attending SDA parochial schools: a shift of worldviews in society, the practices of the church, and the upward mobility of the students. The shift in worldview in society has been driven by an increasing acceptance of postmodernist views: "the relativistic approach to truth, the impossibility of transferring meaning and truth, and the allowance of diversity and differences among believers" (p. 169). Many within the church have great objections to postmodernism, particularly if those members are in the synthetic-conventional stage of faith development Tuinstra (2009).

The practices of the church may have also contributed to the identity crisis of our students. Particularly, that we as a church have come to "recognize and appreciate the pluriformity of the Christian community. This recognition of pluriformity of the Christian community has been extended to our community, realizing that Adventist truth and praxis is dependent of its social context" (Tuinstra, 2009, p. 169). Other church practices contributing to this perceived identity crisis are the SDA Church's stand for religious freedom and emphasis on education. This last practice of the SDA Church, the promotion of education, has inadvertently created the third cause for the identity crisis in our students: upward mobility. The "emphasis on educational development indirectly helps our [students] to move from the synthetic-conventional

stage to the individuative-reflective stage" (p. 169). Particularly, this happens because "education and a more complete knowledge of the surrounding world contribute to a more critical analysis of one's own faith and convictions, resulting in a more internalized and authentic faith [i.e. Adventist identity], yet also a more critical and non-conformist faith [i.e. Adventist identity]" (Tuinstra, 2009, p. 169).

Tuinstra (2009) theorized that for the students the real conflict begins when they reach the individuative-reflective stage, which, according to Fowler (1981), is when the student has accepted that he or she is capable of having an autonomous identity. For Tuinstra it is at this point that the students begin adopting a postmodernist perspective and attitude (Fowler, 2001). However, for Tuinstra it seemed ironical that the same church that has helped the students develop their new individuative-reflective identity continues to promote a synthetic-conventional identity that seems stagnated and that they have already surpassed (Tuinstra, 2009).

Tuinstra (2009) has suggested some ways by which to conceptualize this new postmodern Adventist identity. First of all, this new identity would impact our current understanding of truth as it "would no longer lay a claim on possessing the truth; it rather takes a more humble approach to any truth claims" (p. 170). Also impacted would be the metanarratives of the church such as the Great Controversy. Another aspect impacted is expressed thus: "The quest for spirituality would be regarded higher than the quest for truth" (Tuinstra, 2009, p. 170).

Furthermore, Tuinstra (2009) recommended that the church of the future "should be more fluid, a dynamic notion of church as a series of relationships…with several beacons that would create and maintain a shared identity" (p. 170). Tuinstra suggested as beacons any of our doctrinal beliefs that can be translated not just as an intellectual assent but to have meaning in the daily life of the believer. According to Tuinstra,

Our focus should be in providing an [Adventist] identity which stresses basic

Christianity, which encourages a better understanding of what we share with other

Christians, and which teaches our young people to listen to the voice of God in the Bible.

Instead of providing a radical understanding of our particular truths, we should provide

them with a radical understanding of Christ and what it means to be a follower of Him.

(Tuinstra, 2009, p. 171)

If further research can validate this model, it would suggest that Fowler's stage four of

faith development is occurring with much younger individuals than he originally theorized.

SDA Identity as an Identity Development Construct

Another possible way to understand why SDA doctrinal beliefs have a weak impact in

promoting denominational loyalty is through the lens of identity development. Sue and Sue

(1999) proposed an identity development model as "a conceptual framework to aid therapists in

understanding their culturally different client's attitudes and behaviors" (p. 128). This model

describes five distinct stages of identity development: *conformity*, *dissonance*, *resistance and*

immersion, *introspection*, and *integrative awareness*. Each stage or level of identity incorporates

four attitudes or beliefs to be analyzed: (a) attitude and belief towards self, (b) attitude and belief

toward others of the same minority, (c) attitude and belief toward others of different minority,

and (d) attitude and belief to the dominant group. This conceptual framework may be of help in

understanding the potential religious identity changes occurring among SDA teenagers.

Based on the identity development model, there seems to be evidence to support the

hypothesis that the students in the SDA parochial schools are at the introspection stage in their

religious identity development. According to Sue and Sue (1999), "The introspection person

desires to move away on certain issues, but perceives [their] group positively" (p. 140). Sue and

Sue suggested there are two dynamics at work: first, it would seem the students are developing an awareness that the anger, guilt, and shame felt in the previous stage are not helpful for their wellbeing; and second, it would seem the students have begun to feel unease and dissatisfaction with the views promoted by the church (e.g. SDA doctrines).

Related to the first attitude of this stage, attitude and belief about towards self, the student starts "to spend more and more time and energy trying to sort out these aspects of self-identity and begins to demand increased individual autonomy" (Sue & Sue, 1999, p. 135). The next one in this stage, attitude and belief toward members of the same [group], means the student begins to experience an "increasing resentment over how one's group [the SDA Church] may attempt to pressure or influence the [student] into making decisions that may be inconsistent with the [student's] own values, beliefs, and outlook" (Sue & Sue, 1999, p. 135).

For the third attitude in the introspective stage, the ones towards members of a different [group], the students have begun to experience discomfort with the stated "culturocentrism" of their current religious identity and begin to understand the Christian experience of others. The last attitude of the stage, attitude and belief toward members of the dominant group, shows students beginning to experience conflict in navigating this attitude and belief because the student "begins to recognize that many elements [in the dominant Christian culture] are highly functional and desirable, yet there is confusion on how to incorporate these elements into the [Adventist] culture" (Sue & Sue, 1999, p. 136).

Sue and Sue (1999) admitted that the identity development model "is not a comprehensive theory of personality" (p. 128). However, it does seem a promising model from which to understand the religious identity development of the students attending SDA parochial schools, in particular, as the students attempt to understand themselves in terms of their own

SDA upbringing, the Christian church at large, and the tension that exists in this relationship. This model also helps in the understanding that identity development is a dynamic and not static process. This model illustrates that it is precisely that struggle between minority and dominant identity that clarifies their values and allows for those values to be appropriated by our students. Accordingly, it could be hypothesized that the Adventist identity can be considered the dynamic tension that exists between the specific or peculiar to the SDA Church doctrinal beliefs and the generalized or dominant Christian doctrinal beliefs.

SDA Identity as a Dual Identity Construct

Yet another possible way to understand why SDA doctrinal beliefs have a weak impact in promoting denominational loyalty is through the lens of biracial identity development. Kerwin and Ponterotto (1995) developed a model for understanding the development of identity amongst persons who come from biracial backgrounds. The complexity faced by persons with biracial identities comes from having to establish a dual identity from the very start of their being. This dual identity model seems appropriate to analyze the complex identity students in SDA parochial schools develop, as they are both Adventist and Christian.

The Kerwin-Ponterotto model of biracial identity development (KPM/BID) (Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995) is meant to be considered as an integrated framework or paradigm to understand the process by which individuals from a multiple racial background develop their identity. The model recognizes "that the eventual resolution of the steps toward a biracial identity formation is dependent on numerous personal, societal, and environmental factors. The actual resolution is also individual" (p. 210). This perspective might also be applied to the students in Adventist parochial schools. They also must arrive at a personal resolution of this question: To what extent will they adopt a dual identity of being Adventist and Christian?

The KPM/BID consists of six stages: preschool, entry to school, preadolescence, adolescence, college/young adulthood, and adulthood. In the researcher's perspective, the students of the SDA parochial schools, according to the KPM/BID, should fall into the Adolescence stage. Students in the adolescence stage of development are perceived as receiving extraordinary peer pressure to conform to one identity over the other. However, the findings from the present study do not seem to support that perspective.

The students seemed to have a poor understanding of certain aspects of the Adventist identity but not in its entirety. The supplementary analysis found the mean score distribution for the SDA Orthodoxy scale between ($M = 3.08$) for a low end and ($M = 4.85$) at the high end. The following statements were the three with the lowest mean scores in the SDA Orthodoxy scale: "The investigative or pre-advent judgement in heaven began in 1844," ($M = 3.08$); "Ellen G. White fulfills Bible predictions that God would speak through the gift of prophecy in the last days," ($M = 3.98$); and, "The Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's true last-day church with a message to prepare the world for the Second Coming of Christ," ($M = 3.22$).

Meanwhile, three others had the highest mean scores in the SDA Orthodoxy scale: "The true Sabbath is the seventh day—Saturday," ($M = 4.85$); "When people die, they remain in the grave until the resurrection," ($M = 4.75$); "There is a great controversy taking place between God and Satan. It began in heaven with the rebellion of Lucifer and will continue until the end of time," ($M = 4.63$). These mean scores could help explain why SDA Orthodoxy only helped explain 0.006% of the total variance for Denominational Loyalty (see Table 4.2).

Furthermore, the findings also confirmed a strong commitment among students to their Christian identity. For instance, Christian Orthodoxy helped explain 6% of the total variance for Denominational Loyalty (see Table 4.2). In addition, the supplementary analysis found the mean

score distribution for the Christian Orthodoxy scale between ($M = 4.48$) for a low end and ($M = 4.84$) at the high end. Based on the data, this study seems to indicate that students in SDA parochial schools are at the college/young adulthood stage of development.

The college/young adult stage is distinguished by the person increasingly coming to accept the duality of her or his identity—a resolution. In this stage that person also begins to experience "a growing recognition of the advantages as well as the disadvantages associated with having a biracial [dual] identity" (Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995, p. 213). The findings from the study possibly indicate that the students are going through the college/young adult stage, examining the advantages as well as disadvantages associated with the duality of being both Adventist and Christian and are choosing to what extent they will identify as Adventist.

However, there are some issues that the KPM/BID raises. For instance, to what extent are peers involved in the identity development of another person? What are the social and environmental variables that impact identity development? To what extent have our students adopted a dualistic identity of being both Adventist and Christian and are not conforming to be seen as just Adventist or Christian? Also helpful to know would be answers to the question, "To what extent would the students find a dualistic identity helpful in their sense of self-efficacy?" Also further research would be helpful to understand the roles that home, school, and church play in promoting a healthy dualistic identity (Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995).

Religious Programs and Denominational Loyalty

Finally, s short discussion is provided here in relation to the importance of religious or youth ministry programs at parochial schools for the prediction of adolescents' denominational loyalty. In the preceding analysis, frequency of religious programming in parochial schools was found to have no significant impact on denominational loyalty. A troubling finding was that 48%

of the students of the SDA parochial schools said they never had "regular youth ministry", or at minimum it happened only once a month. The sampling procedures and strong generalization available from this finding means that almost half of the students attending SDA parochial reported that "regular youth ministry" programming never or minimally happens at their school. In the researcher's perspective, this could be indicative of the presence of larger issues. First, it may imply that school leadership possibly has no support from the parents and their constituent churches in providing this type of programming. Otherwise, it may suggest that school leadership and staff are simply too overwhelmed with their other academic and extracurricular activities to make an effort to accomplish this. Whatever the case may be, this is of concern as one of the expectations from parents that choose parochial education is that their students will be exposed to programs of a religious nature that nurture spiritual values in the students (Ji & Boyatt, 2007; von Pohle, 2013).

In contrast, meaningfulness of religious programming was found to have a significant impact on denominational loyalty. As reported in Chapter 4, when responding to the statement, "I find the youth or young adult programs meaningful at my school," 76% of the students answered yes. Unfortunately, that means that 24% of the survey sample did not find the religious programming of their parochial school to be meaningful. The results of the present study were similar to those of Ji and Tameifuna (2011). Ji and Tameifuna reported that meaningfulness of religious programming in a church setting was positively associated with denominational loyalty. Additionally, they found that youth attending church based youth programs were more likely to perceive those religious programs as meaningful if they also perceived their youth pastors as warm and caring. The more that the youth led the religious programs of their church and

perceived the religious programs as thought provoking, the greater the likelihood that they perceived the programming as meaningful (Ji & Tameifuna, 2011).

This finding indicated the quality of the youth ministry and religious programs were far more influential than the frequency of such programs in determining the level of denominational loyalty. This seems to have important practical implications for church and school leaders because they are in a position to prepare their students to remain loyal to the church even after they complete high school, mature, and become adults. The leaders and teachers would better exert more effort in making their religious programs meaningful and interesting to their students, rather than in aspiring for frequency and requiring frequent participation in worship services and youth ministry programs. Having said that, one question remains to be clarified: What are the aspects of youth ministry and religious programs that the students found meaningful? Unfortunately, the available data for the present study offer no hints or clues in relation to this issue. Further research into this avenue of inquiry would prove beneficial in enhancing parochial schools' contributions to adolescents' long-term commitment to the church.

Conclusions

The overarching conclusion from the findings of the analyses conducted supported the theoretical model proposed by the study: the more the parochial school is perceived as caring and the more satisfied students are with their relationship to their teachers, the greater the opportunity for those relationships to flourish into secure attachment and thus promote denominational loyalty. Accordingly, the study concludes that, as hypothesized, the more school climate is perceived as caring by students, the more students manifested satisfaction with their teachers. This also means that the greater the student satisfaction with teacher relationships, the more likely the presence of secure student-teacher attachment.

The research literature reported that a caring school climate impacts a student's mental and physical well-being and self-esteem, diminishes the negative impact of self-criticism, among other benefits, and promotes a climate for learning. Also, a caring school climate is positively related to a student's positive self-concept and a diminished prospect of substance abuse and likelihood of psychiatric problems. Other benefits of a caring school climate include a decline in student absenteeism, a decrease in student disciplinary actions, and stimulation of health promotion efforts (Thapa, Cohen, Guffy & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013).

The present study's findings were consistent with the literature reviewed and also confirmed that a caring school climate is the bedrock on which positive student-teacher relationships are built. In such a climate, caring teachers are conducive to high academic achievement (Ji, 2018). Also, results concurred with von Pohle's (2013) claim that a caring school climate in parochial schools that promotes academic and spiritual development should continue to be parents' expectation. In line with this, Gillespie et al. (2004) proposed that care and warmth are essential components of the parochial school climate.

The present results were also consistent with the literature on attachment theory, confirming that positive student-teacher relationships are correlated with secure student-teacher attachment. According to the main tenets of attachment theory adapted to a school setting, secure student-teacher attachment is only viable if the following conditions are met: a teacher is perceived as willing to provide caring or warmth to their students; in times of need the teacher is perceived to be available to provide a sense of security and comfort to their students; and lastly, the teacher promotes a classroom climate that inspires confidence in the students to take risks and grow in their learning (Ainsworth, et al., 1978; Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980).

The development of positive student-teacher relationships is an important outcome of a caring school climate because, "the process of teaching and learning is fundamentally relational" (Thapa, et al., 2013, p. 363). Students that are securely attached to their teachers have higher levels of school engagement, feel supported by their teachers, and are likely to experience the mutual respect of teachers and students (Kennedy, 2008). The more securely attached a student feels with her or his teachers, the more likely she or he is to have positive increases in self-regulation, motivation, and engagement in the learning process. In addition, as a consequence of these positive outcomes, there exist additional benefits, such as improvements in school behavior and academic performance (Mautone, Lefler, & Power, 2011).

Most importantly, secure student-teacher attachment becomes the binding agent or glue that binds the diverse elements necessary for a caring school climate (Thapa, et al., 2013). Competent, supportive, and caring teachers are capable of nurturing their students. This study confirmed that the staffing of parochial schools with teachers that are perceived as warm and caring should continue to be an expectation parents have of parochial schools (von Pohle, 2013) as it is that perception of warmth and care that promotes secure attachment.

This study was an effort to understand the individual level psychological mechanisms at work in promoting denominational loyalty. As such, the study found evidence to suggest that secure attachment is one of the possible psychological mechanisms at work in promoting denominational loyalty. The study concluded that, as hypothesized, the more secure student-teacher attachments were, the more students indicated their intention to remain loyal to the denomination.

The results indicated that secure student-teacher attachment does play a role in promoting denominational loyalty though the strength of the association is not as strong as results reported

by Ji and Tameifuna (2011). There is, nonetheless, a statistically significant relationship between those variables. Furthermore, the results of the secondary analysis performed indicated that an increase of one standard deviation leads to a corresponding increase in the denominational loyalty of students. This finding was also consistent with the proposed theoretical model and supports the notion that as secure student-teacher attachment increases in a parochial school, the likelihood for denominational loyalty also increases.

This study provided empirical evidence that secure student-teacher attachment promotes denominational loyalty in a parochial school. In addition, it offers the theoretical and analytical methodology by which schools can demonstrate that they are promoting denominational loyalty and thus meeting the expectation of the parents choosing a parochial education for their children (von Pohle, 2013). Due to the sample size, there is a strong level of confidence in generalizing these findings to other parochial school settings.

The present study found evidence to support that Church Attendance also had a significant impact on denominational loyalty. The strong impact that this variable had can be attributed to the religious practices of the parents. If parents don't attend church, their children do not attend church. Also, attendance presupposes the presence of prior positive experiences with church. When children are socialized into attending church, it becomes something that is a part of their regular social experience. Also, the study found that Christian Orthodoxy was also positively correlated to denominational loyalty. The results from the study indicated that Christian Orthodoxy had a strong effect on denominational loyalty, compared to the other variables included in the model, and was the strongest of the predictors impacting denominational loyalty. The strength of the association of Christian Orthodoxy implied that

students are hearing or discussing these doctrines at home, church, and at school with their

teachers.

One finding from the study that was surprising was the relative weak impact that SDA

Orthodox beliefs had on predicting denominational loyalty. The multiple regression analysis

suggested that SDA orthodoxy had a minimal impact in predicting denominational loyalty (see

Table 4.2). These findings are problematic from a denominational point of view because

previous research has suggested that SDA Orthodoxy was correlated to denominational loyalty

(Dudley & Gillespie, 1992).

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this study. First, given the

importance of promoting a caring school climate, this study recommends that a system be set up

to evaluate all the parochial schools in the church's educational system on at least a biannual

basis. In order to achieve this goal of continuous monitoring of a school's climate, this study

recommends the use of the caring school scale used in the Valuegenesis survey. The reliability

and validity of the scale is sound and proven to be effective in evaluating the climate of a school.

The findings from those evaluations should help inform the leadership practices of SDA

parochial school administrators in developing school climates conducive to academic and

spiritual development. The findings from this study have suggested that secure student-teacher

attachment originated in a caring school environment and is positively correlated to

denominational loyalty as well to other academic, social, and emotional indicators.

Also recommended, current teachers in the parochial school system need to be made

aware of the importance of developing positive student-teacher relationships. This should be an

expectation that is a part of their formal annual teaching evaluation. Part of the school's

professional learning time should be spent learning and incorporating strategies from the social emotional literature to improve student-teacher interactions. In addition, new teachers hired into the parochial school system of the church should be screened to determine their level of emotional competence as well as academic subject matter. Instruments like TeacherInsight can be of great help in screening applicants to determine those whose emotional qualities would best fit working for the church parochial schools. The findings from this study have suggested that a caring school environment promotes positive student-teacher relationships which in turn promote secure student-teacher attachment that has an impact on the denominational loyalty of the students as well on other academic, social, and emotional indicators.

Lastly, this study recommends further study into why specific SDA doctrinal beliefs did not perform as expected in the promotion of denominational loyalty. The study has provided some avenues for further research regarding this finding. For instance, Tuinstra (2009) suggested Adventist students are not only negotiating a transition between stages in faith development (Fowler, 1981) but are also transitioning between a modern identity, represented by the current SDA Church identity, and a postmodern one with its relativistic outlook. Further research into this hypothesis seems to hold promise of uncovering why Adventist students have a diminished outlook on core SDA Orthodox beliefs. Another promising focus of research to understand why denominational loyalty is not a strong predictor in promoting denominational loyalty would be using the identity development model (Sue & Sue, 1999) conceptual framework. This framework may be of help in understanding the potential religious identity changes occurring among SDA teenagers. Yet another possible way to understand why SDA doctrinal beliefs have a weak impact in promoting denominational loyalty is through the lens of a dual identity development utilizing the KPM/BID model (Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995). Their model might provide

understanding about the complex identity students in SDA parochial schools are developing as

they become both Adventist and Christian.

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