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ABSTRACT

FAMILY RELATIONAL DIALECTICS: A SYSTEMIC MODEL FOR
EXPLAINING RELATIONAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING
TO ADOLESCENTS' FAITH MATURITY, LIFE
VALUES, AND COMMITMENT TO CHRIST

by

Jasmine J. Fraser

Adviser: David Sedlacek

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: FAMILY RELATIONAL DIALECTICS: A SYSTEMIC MODEL FOR EXPLAINING RELATIONAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ADOLESCENTS' FAITH MATURITY, LIFE VALUES, AND COMMITMENT TO CHRIST

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Date completed: June 2018

Problem

Though widespread studies have been conducted on the psycho-socio-cultural effects of family systems functioning on individuals' developmental outcomes, there is limited discussion on the direct correlations between family relational encounters and adolescents' development of faith and life values. The effects of dialectical interplay within family systems are often missed, misinterpreted, or minimized. This study presumed that because familial relationships have far-reaching psycho-socio-cultural effects on individuals' development outcomes, there are also likely effects on certain religious outcomes. Subsequently, certain parent-child relational encounters were

examined to determine whether they have significant effects on adolescents' faith maturity, life values, and commitment to Christ.

Method

A quantitative, non-experimental, exploratory correlational research design utilizing secondary data analysis was used to test the family systems dialectics (FSD) model. The FSD model is a synthesis of tenets of family systems theories (FST) and relational dialectics theory (RDT) used to conceptualize possible effects of certain parent-child relational encounters. The population sample consisting of adolescents attending high schools affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church was drawn from the Valuegenesis² census carried out by the Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry, La Sierra University, Riverside, California. Forty-one observed items extracted from Valuegenesis² were used to indicate the latent constructs family climate (FC) and FSD, and the outcome variables—faith maturity (FM), life values (LV), and commitment to Christ (CC). The latent construct FC was indicated by adolescents' perceptions of family happiness (FC1), level of love in family (FC2), parent-child relationship (FC3), parents' support of child (FC4), verbal expression of love (FC5), and response to family rules (FC6). Likewise, the FSD construct was indicated by their perception of frequent good conversations with parents (FGCP), comfort with faith talk (CFT), parents' religious posture (PRP), frequent conversations with parents about faith (FCPF), and family worship (FW). Mean score computations and descriptive and frequency analyses were carried out using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and model testing procedures (i.e., structural equation modeling [SEM]) were conducted using Analysis of a Moment Structures (AMOS) 24.

Results

In testing the hypothesized model, FSD, SEM procedures indicated similarities between the theoretical covariance matrix and the observed covariance matrix. Four of five model fitting indices used to evaluate the model indicated acceptable target values. With the large sample size used in this study, a significant chi-square index $\chi^2 (68, N = 4,675) = 822.00, p = .000$) suggested that there were possible inconsistencies between the theoretical model and the observed model. However, other model fitting indices (i.e., GFI = .98; NFI = .96; CFI = .97; and RMSEA = .49) indicated that the empirical data supported the theoretical model. Consequently, the null hypothesis was retained. Significant correlations were indicated among observed variables. Regression was observed between FSD and FM ($\beta = .32, p = .000$), and between FSD and LV ($\beta = .18, p = .000$). Mediated effects of FSD were indicated through FM ($\beta = .42, p = .000$), and through LV ($\beta = .06, p = .000$) on CC. Faith maturity and life values were directly influenced by FSD and FC which accounted for 29% and 11% of the variances (respectively) in faith maturity and life values. The mediated effect of FSD and FC through FM and LV accounted for 20% of the variance in CC.

Conclusions

The FSD model that indicated the systemic dialectical interplay of parent-child relational encounters was supported by the empirical data, providing support for the assumption that relational encounters in family systems potentially influence adolescents' faith maturity, life values, and indirectly commitment to Christ.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

FAMILY RELATIONAL DIALECTICS: A SYSTEMIC MODEL FOR
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VALUES, AND COMMITMENT TO CHRIST

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Jasmine J. Fraser

June 2018

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DEDICATION

To the Sovereign God, my Faithful Father and Friend: You said it was
a walk of faith and You meant every word!

To my brother Anserd, my first teacher: You laid the foundation
early, then blazed a trail and dared me to follow!

To the memory of my late mother Jenise Miralda Irving
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get a degree!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMOS 24	Analysis of a Moment Structures
CC	Commitment to Christ
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CFT	Comfort with Faith Talk
CI	Confidence Interval
CR	Composite Reliability
FC	Family Climate
FC1	Family Happiness
FC2	Level of Love in Family
FC3	Parent-child Relationship
FC4	Parents' Support of Child
FC5	Verbal Expression of Love
FC6	Response to Family Rules
FCPF	Frequent Conversation with Parents about Faith
FGCP	Frequent Good Conversations with Parents
FM	Faith Maturity
FSD	Family Systems Dialectics
FST	Family Systems Theory

FW	Family Worship
GFI	Goodness-of-Fit Index
GST	General System Theory
IBM	International Business Machine
LV	Life Values
NFI	Normed Fit Index
MCAR	Missing Completely at Random
PCLOSE	Closeness of Fit
PRP	Parents' Religious Posture
RDT	Relational Dialectics Theory
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SPSS 24	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The turn of the millennium gave rise to numerous studies and discussions concerning adolescents' and young adults' posture and attitude toward the matter of faith and their relationship with the community of faith. A growing concern is that many adolescents and young adults seem apathetic to issues of faith and exude a lack of commitment to the faith they espoused during early childhood (Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2011). Consequently, the issue of adolescents' and young adults' religious posture and attitude toward faith seems to be one of the most deliberated topics in current religious dialogues (Barna, 2018; Dean, 2010; Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2011; Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007; Paulsen, 2013; Regnerus, Smith, Fritsch, & National Study of Youth & Religion U.S., 2003; Smith & Denton, 2005).

In general, studies indicate that more than 50% of children leave the church after age fifteen (Gregston, 2012; Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2011). Reports indicated that “three out of every five kids in a church youth group will eventually shrug off the institution entirely” (Gregston, 2012, para. 2), and that 40% to 50% of people “drift from God and the faith community after graduating from high school” (Powell, Mulder, & Griffin, 2016, p. 17). Recent studies showed that now, more than any other time in history,

adolescents “[do] not assert a religious identity”, and are more inclined to embrace atheism (Barna, 2018, para. 1). Over the years, studies conducted within Seventh-day Adventist forums regarding youth and young adults’ religious leaning indicated that among those baptized in their mid-teens, at least “40 to 50% will drop out by the time they are halfway through their 20s” (Dudley, 2000, pp. 35, 60). These findings have stimulated extended discussions on issues assumed to be contributing factors to adolescents’ and young adults’ apathy to faith.

Barna (2001) discussed matters such as secularization, pluralism, relativity, peer influence, technology, and media as circumstances which impact the religious views and perception of adolescents and young adults (pp. 20-44). As part of the ongoing discussion, Dean (2010) remarked: “American young people are theoretically fine with religious faith—but it does not concern them very much, and it is not durable enough to survive long after they graduate from high school . . .we’re responsible” (p. 3). In this statement, Dean (2010) seemed to call attention to other issues outside the immediacy of youth apathy to faith while further proposing that “the religiosity of American teenagers must be read primarily as a reflection of their parents’ religious devotion (or lack thereof) and by extension, that of their congregations” (pp. 3-4). Research conducted by Kinnaman and Hawkins (2011) pointed to the faith community as one reason for youth’s apathy to faith, stating that “the dropout problem is, at its core, a faith-development problem; . . .[essentially] it’s a disciple-making problem. The church is not adequately preparing the next generation to follow Christ faithfully in a rapidly changing culture” (p. 21).

Other accounts from ongoing studies also point to faith institutions as contributing factors for adolescents' and young adults' apathy to issues of faith. Such factors include adolescents' and young adults' perception of faith communities as seemingly irrelevant, uncaring, being oblivious in responding to the needs of society, their practice of double talk and double standards, and their judgmental and condemning perspectives (Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2011, 2012; Paulsen, 2013). Further reports highlighting adolescents' description of faith institutions as being hypocritical, political, repressive, shallow, and exclusive examined the impact these issues have in shaping adolescents' and young adults' perspective of faith (Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2011). Interestingly, each of these implications was discussed in the context of the church's direct relationship or engagement with adolescents and young adults. These accounts may be legitimate reasons to hold the church responsible for the religious posture of youth and young adults. Yet, it may be necessary to look at the church's responsibility to adolescents and young adults within a different context.

Barna (2003) discussed the responsibilities of faith communities and highlighted the importance of individual development in sustaining a stable society by stating that "if you want to have a lasting influence upon the world, you must invest in people's lives: and if you want to maximize that investment, then you must invest in those people while they are young" (p. 42). He further described four dimensions of children's well-being (mental, physical, social, and emotional), appealing to the church to make the childhood stage of an individual's development its number one priority. In addition, Bunge (2008), in reference to church's responsibility, stated, "There are many signs of the urgent need to strengthen child, youth, and family ministry" (p. 348). At the same time, Bunge (2008)

mentioned issues such as inadequate funding, difficulty recruiting and retaining appropriate leaders, theologically weak religious education curricula, and sporadic attendance as some of the challenges facing many churches.

Two assumptions may be drawn from Barna's (2003) recommendation: first, that the church needs to be intentional in its ministry to children and second, that the church needs to be intentional in investing in family-inclusive ministry to members, particularly those with children.

This research attempted to look at implications drawn from the second possible assumption: that the church needs to be intentional in investing in family-inclusive ministry to its members, particularly those with children. This assumption was drawn on the basis that the family is considered the principal foundation for faith development (Balswick & Balswick, 2014, p. 146; White, 1980, p. 17). Consequently, instead of trying, on its own, to find the right program or ministry to help young people, the church may need to work collaboratively with families in helping children develop values that will lead to mature faith and unswerving commitment to Jesus Christ in later years.

Endorsing the church-family team effort, M. Anthony (2012) proposed that "the church needs family-empowered ministries not only to raise up a generation of faith followers, but to raise up *a generation of spiritually minded parents* as well" (p. 37). In support of church and family collaboration, Bunge (2008) proposed that "innovative religious education programs now include more attention to the role of parents and other caring adults in faith development," and that "the importance of parents in the faith formation of children is highly emphasized among . . . churches today" (p. 349).

Supporting the assumption that the church needs to be intentional in investing in family-inclusive ministry to members is the general belief that certain relational and communication practices within families have far-reaching impacts on family members' developmental outcomes (Bowen, 1961, 1985; Fosco, Van Ryzin, Xia, & Feinberg, 2016; Grossmann, Grossman, & Waters, 2005; McBride et al., 2013; McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 2017; Phillips, 2012; Raby, Roisman, Fraley, & Simpson, 2015; Sroufe, Caffino, & Carlson, 2010). Research also indicated that the family systems dynamics does influence children's and youths' religious posture (Boyatzis, Dollahite, & Marks, 2006).

Interestingly, Bunge (2008), in referring to the significant role of families in helping in the development of faith in children, stated: "Faith is not really taught but 'caught,' especially by speaking about faith and carrying out religious practices in the home" (p. 349). Speaking of the integral role of family on individuals and society, White (1980) proposed that "the mission of the home extends beyond its own members" and that the "home is to be an object lesson, illustrating the excellence of the true principles of life" (p. 31). Such beliefs tend to support the assumption that relational encounters in family systems have significant outcomes for adolescents' faith maturity (FM) and life values (LV), and their ultimate Commitment to Christ (CC).

Ongoing research highlights youth and young adults' apathy to issues of faith and their disengagement with communities of faith (Barna, 2018; Dean, 2010; Dudley, 2000; Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2011; Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007; Paulsen, 2013; Smith & Denton, 2005). In responding to youth apathy to faith and their disengagement with communities of faith, studies and efforts on the issues have been directed toward creating the "ideal"

program or ministry in the hopes of rekindling their interest and commitment to faith and to Christ. In the process, a number of ministry leaders tend to assume solely the responsibility of reaching youths and young adults.

Apparently, in seeking to fulfill the charge to disciple people and the youth in particular, some leaders in faith communities are often unaware of the value of partnering with families in accomplishing the mission of discipleship. Not much effort is made to work collaboratively with entire family systems instead of isolated individuals. In pointing out a disadvantage of isolated attempts to reach young people, Dean (2010) stated that

they seem less effective as catalysts for consequential faith, which is far more likely to take root in the rich relational soil of families, congregations and mentor relationships where young people can see what faithful lives look like, and encounter the people who love them enacting a larger story of divine care and hope. (p. 11)

Here, Dean (2010) alluded to the relational aspect of faith while pointing out the significance of collaboration between families, faith communities, and leaders in helping adolescents and young adults' experience faith. At the same time, Regnerus et al. (2003) pointed out the significance of the family, proposing that "behavioral patterns displayed (perhaps initiated) during adolescence have their sources in the family and from childhood" while concluding that "religious practice and family life often go together" (p. 8).

Further, studies on adolescents' religious engagement indicated that although several factors contribute to "the development of religious involvement in youth," parents are likely to "constitute the strongest influence" (Regnerus et al., 2003, p. 10). In a broader sense, it was proposed that "parents stand in God's place, intended by God to

represent Him until children grow into the knowledge of God for themselves” (Sedlacek & Sedlacek, 2014, p. 21). Balswick and Balswick (2014), in examining parents’ responsibilities to their children, discussed an “empowerment process,” proposing that it involves helping individuals reach their “potential through one’s encouragement and guidance” (pp. 14, 139). A key factor of empowerment is helping children assert their place and purpose in the family unit and in the wider society. It is of interest for ministry leaders in seeking to reach youths and young adults not only to collaborate with families, but also to be intentional in equipping parents so that they are able to nurture and empower their children in the development of lasting faith. In doing so, leaders need to be aware of the symbiotic nature of relational encounters within family systems and individuals’ developmental outcomes.

In this context, relational encounters within family systems were explored from a systemic dialectical perspective. This was done as a means of examining possible correlations between parent-child relational encounters and adolescents’ religious outcomes, particularly their capacity to mature in faith and be committed to Christ based on the values developed through the relational interplay. The subject of empowerment was explored as the basic theological framework for understanding the influence of family relational encounters (particularly between parents and child) and for directing family-inclusive ministry.

Statement of the Problem

Family systems are configurations of unceasing relational dialectical interplay that are carried out directly or indirectly, consciously or subconsciously, and have effects

on the group functioning, as well as on individuals' developmental outcomes. Research suggests that a person's developmental outcome, whether positive or negative, is often linked to relational experiences in families (Fosco et al., 2016; Grossmann et al., 2005; Johnson, McBride, Hopkins, & Pepper, 2014; McBride et al., 2013; McWhirter et al., 2017; Raby et al., 2015; Sroufe et al., 2010; Stevenson-Hinde, 1990). Implicitly, the ongoing relational dialectics taking place within family systems influence a person's concept of reality, perceptions, and attitudes, as well as how he or she acts or responds to life situations. Parke and Buriel (2006) identify family systems as an integral entity in the process of socialization as it is one of the contexts "in which an individual's standards, skills, motives, attitudes, and behavior . . . conform to those regarded as desirable and appropriate for his or her present and future role in any particular society" (p. 429).

Although extensive studies have been conducted on the psycho-socio-cultural correlations between family systems functioning and individuals' developmental outcomes (Bowen, 1961, 1985; Bowen & Butler, 2013; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Fosco et al., 2016; Grossmann et al., 2005; Kerr, 1981, 2000; McWhirter et al., 2017; Raby et al., 2015; Sroufe et al., 2010), there are few studies on the direct connection between family relational encounters and adolescents' posture on faith and LV. The effects of dialectical exchange within family systems are often missed, misinterpreted, or minimized. This study presumed that because familial relationships have far-reaching psycho-socio-cultural implications on individuals' developmental outcomes (Bowen, 1985; Erikson, 1963, 1968; Olson, 1989, 2000), there were likely influences on certain religious outcomes. Specifically, it was assumed that familial relationships may also have significant effects on adolescents' FM, LV, and their ultimate CC. Subsequently, an

exploration of certain relational interchanges within family systems (particularly between parents and child) was carried out to examine correlations between adolescents' relational encounters in family and these religious outcomes.

Family Systems Dialectics: An Overview

Studies on family systems relationships deem the process of communication “essential to each individual’s personality development and character formation” (Schwab, Gray-Ice, & Prentice, 2000, p. 19). Researchers in the areas of anthropology, psychology, and sociology often use the study of relationships to explain certain phenomena of human life and have perceived that people have used various languages and symbols to create and maintain relational bonds. These relationships shape people’s character, and ultimately, the culture in which they live. According to Leigh and Peterson (1986),

individual traits (e.g., personality traits or cognitive abilities) are not the only means of understanding how humans develop. Instead, social scientists have become more aware that individuals are bound together in human relationships (or group life), through which they become ‘social beings’ and contribute to the meaningful experiences of others. (pp. 12-13)

Though complex in nature, relationships may be the axis of life and certainly do much to contribute to the definitive identity of individuals. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) identified this complexity as that of relational dialectical tensions through which competing needs and desires of individuals in interdependent relationships simultaneously wrestle for fulfillment (pp. 6-7).

In this study, the concept of Family Systems Dialectics (FSD) was created to illustrate the implications of certain relational interplay experienced in families. Family

Systems Dialectics is based on tenets adapted from Family Systems Theory (FST) and Relational Dialectics Theory (RDT). Four basic principles are foundational in FSD:

- 1) Individuals' existential perspectives and their development outcomes are impacted/influenced by their relational encounters in family systems,
- 2) Relational encounters in family systems are impacted/influenced by past and current phenomena within the systems and across generations,
- 3) Embedded in relational encounters are individuals' opposing needs/perspectives vying for acknowledgement, and
- 4) A need to foster a both/and perspective (instead of either/or) in assessing individuals' development outcomes, being aware that who a person is, and what he/she does are linked to their relational encounters within a family system.

Family systems dialectics was derived from basic tenets of FST (Bowen, 1961, 1985; Olson, 1989, 2000) and RDT (Baxter, 1988, 2014; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, 1998) and was conceptually structured (see Figures 1, 2, & 3) to explore some relational processes and patterns that are fundamental within family systems. As a best practice for understanding relational interplay, FSD presumes that the dialectical flux of interpersonal exchange and certain communication practices within the family systems may contribute significantly to adolescents' FM, LV, and ultimately, their CC.

Family systems dialectics was constructed based on indicator variables (frequent good conversations with parents [FGCP], parents' religious posture [PRP], frequent conversations with parents about faith [FCPF], comfort with faith talk [CFT], and family worship [FW]). It was assumed that the construct family climate (FC) created through multiple factors (family happiness [FC1], level of love in family [FC2], parent-child

relationship [FC3], parents' support of child [FC4], verbal expression of love [FC5] and response to family rules [FC6]) measured family systems as being a place in which adolescents experience happiness, loving relationships with their parents, and feel supported by parents. How satisfied individuals are with their family tend to impact their overall wellbeing (Phillips, 2012). In this context, it was assumed that FC influenced (and was influenced by) FSD.

A further assumption was that FC was significantly correlated with FSD and contributed to a clearer understanding of the proposed theoretical framework governing FSD. Each variable reflected some aspects of the interpersonal interplay between parents and children in the context of family, and were measured quantitatively based on adolescents' (in this study) perceptions. Variables (including the outcome variables FM, LV, and CC) were further defined and discussed in correlation with the theoretical concepts proposed in this study. Figure 1 is a graphical synthesis illustrating the connection between the research variables and the theoretical concepts that embody FSD. The concepts FSD were adapted from FST (i.e., differentiation of self, emotional cutoff, multigenerational transmission process, societal emotional process (Bowen, 1975, 1985), cohesion, adaptability, and communication (Olson, 1989, 2000). Additional concepts (i.e., contradictions, process [change], totality, and praxis) were adapted from Baxter's and Montgomery's (1996) RDT. In essence, every relational encounter between parents and children is the embodiment of any or all of the tenets FST and RDT which potentially are manifested through FSD. Brief definitions of the theoretical concepts and their proposed connection to the variables are further outlined in Figure 1.

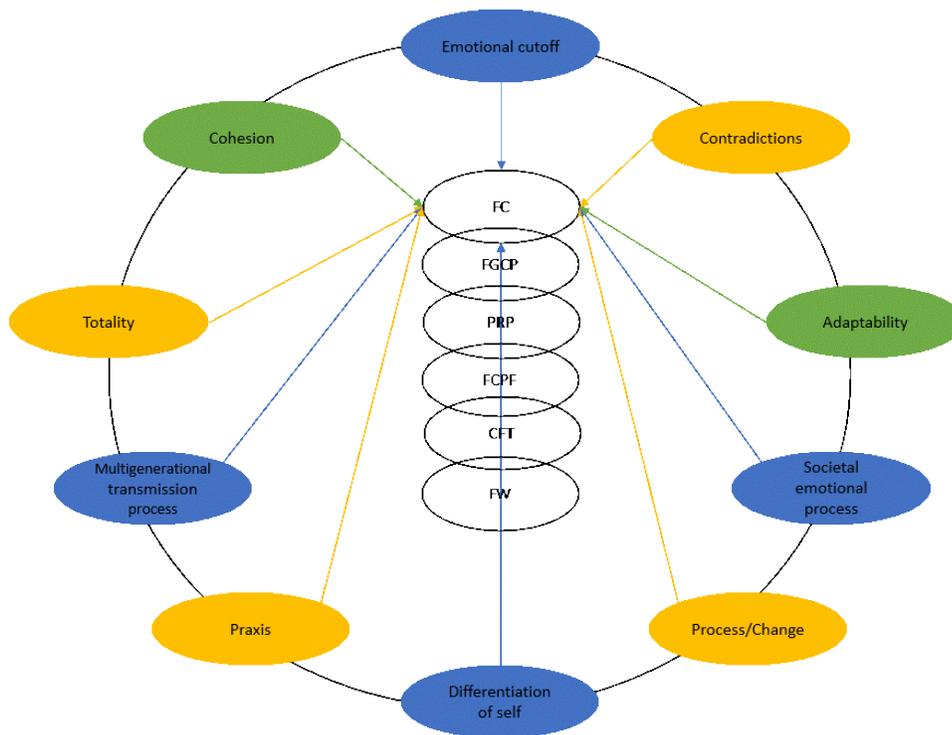


Figure 1. Synthesis of Variables and Theoretical Concepts. An illustration connecting the variables and theoretical framework explaining FSD.

To simplify the illustration, and to indicate correlations between variables, the design provides an abridged outline showing the connections of all tenets of the theoretical concepts to only one construct: FC. Though there are multiple connections between the theoretical concepts and other indicator variables (i.e., FGCP, PRP, FCPF, CFT, and FW), it was assumed that FC as a construct sets the foundation for examining family relationships (Phillips, 2012). Studies suggest that the general FC is often a reflection of “several aspects of family level functioning” (Fosco et al., 2016, p. 1140). How individuals function in relation to other family members presumably affects the general atmosphere of the family unit, and the family environment affects individuals at

the same time. Based on the systemic dialectical perspective adapted in this study, it is assumed that FC simultaneously creates the foundation for all familial relationships, even as it is impacted by the relational interactions between individual family members.

In discussing further the influence of the “general family climate,” Fosco et al. (2016) stated: “Families with positive climate [presumably, are] relatively high in cohesion and organization, and low in family conflict” (p. 1140). Based on research assumptions that families influence individuals’ developmental outcomes, several items within the Valuegenesis² data, believed to be significant factors representing parent-child relational encounters were selected to indicate FC, and the basic theoretical framework, FSD. In this context, it was assumed that FSD is a significant predictor of adolescents’ FM and LV. A further assumption was that FM and LV are mediators of the effect of FSD on adolescents’ CC. These assumptions are illustrated in Figure 2.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to test the theoretical model of the effects of FSD on adolescents’ FM, and LV, as well as the effects of FSD on adolescents’ CC as mediated by FM and LV. The study further examined the relationships between the latent constructs FSD and FC and the correlations among variables. Based on the assumption that familial relationship have significant effect on adolescents’ FM, LV, and CC, the analysis examined the variables for causal relationships and levels of significant correlations within the model.

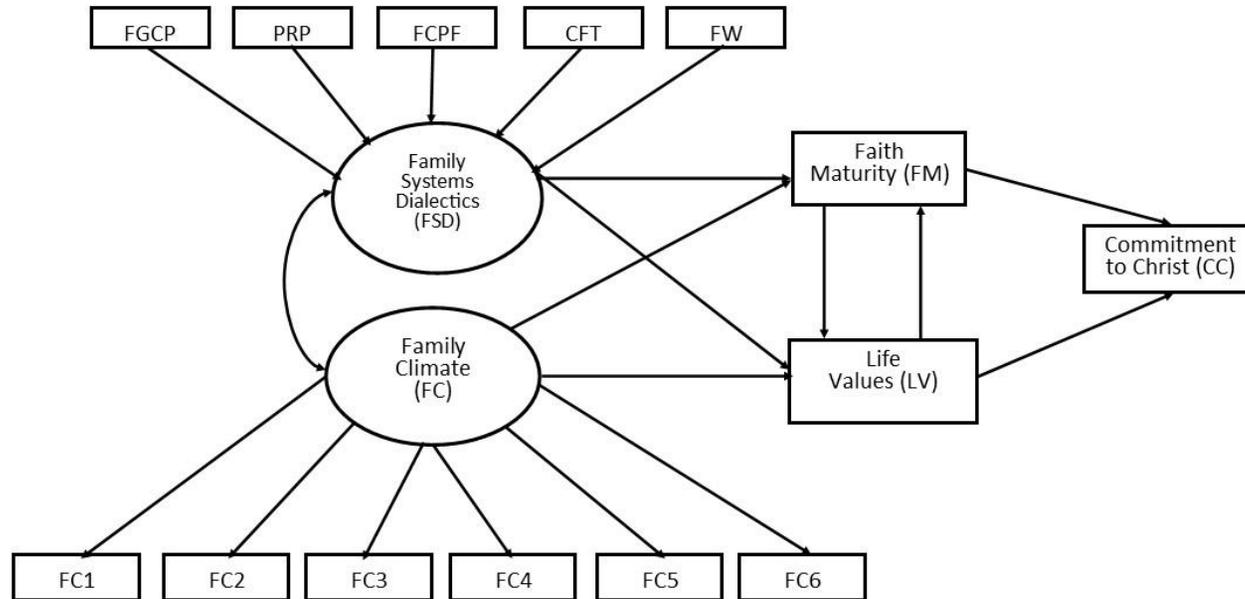


Figure 2. Hypothesized Theoretical Model. An indication of the construct FSD having direct influence on adolescents' FM and LV, and mediated effects on their CC.

Significance of the Study

Several studies proposed that family systems influence their members and society both positively and negatively. Yet, the majority of research on family and family functioning focuses more on psycho-socio-culture implications (Bowen, 1985; Erikson, 1963, 1968; McWhirter et al., 2017; Olson, 2000) and are lacking in discussions on the influence of family systems relational encounters on individuals' religious values and outcomes. Because there is limited research on how family systems impact faith in individual family members, it was of interest to examine the influence of parent-child relational encounters on adolescents' faith posture based on the perceptions of adolescents in this study. Given the assumption that faith communities were partly responsible for adolescents' apathy to faith and disengagement with communities of faith (Barna, 2018; Dean, 2010; Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2011; Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007; Paulsen, 2013; Smith & Denton, 2005), it was important that this study explore the religious implications of familial relationships (particularly parent-child relational encounters) from a biblical model of empowerment. The institution of family plays a significant role in establishing and nurturing faith in its members, especially adolescents.

The study is also significant in that it suggested a family-inclusive approach for helping adolescents experience enduring faith and LV that lead to lifelong CC. The concept of family-inclusive ministry in this context intertwines with the biblical framework of empowerment as embedded in Deut 6:4-9, along with Balswick and Balswick's (2014, pp. 3-17) model of empowerment through relationship.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks are tools used to better explain basic research assumptions prior to practical exploration of interrelated concepts. Theories are interconnected ideas that emerge through the process of formulating and systematizing information relating to certain phenomenon (Creswell, 2014, p. 54; Doherty, Boss, LaRossa, Schumm, & Steinmetz, 1993, p. 20). A meta-analytical theoretical approach (based on elements of FST [i.e., Bowen, 1985; Olson, 2000], and RDT [Baxter and Montgomery, 1996]) is adapted to support the research assumptions proposed in this study.

Family Systems Theory encompasses several elements concerning the way families function as a whole, how family members are influenced by the system, as well as how each individual affects the group. Aspects of FST (i.e., differentiation of self, emotional cutoff, multigenerational transmission process, societal transmission process [Bowen, 1985; Kerr & Bowen, 1988]; cohesion, adaptability, communication [Olson, 2000]) are used in this context to express the intricate connection between an individual and his or her family unit. Every person is a part of various social units of which the family is the core. Family systems “provide the individual with physical, emotional, and economic protection” and “shapes [each member’s] behavior through social norms” (Almagor, 2011, p. 7). The family system is apparently of essence as it is “the primary influential agent . . . which shapes and dictates the norms for its members” (Almagor, 2011, p. 8).

Family systems theory is a derivative of Bertalanffy’s (1968) general systems theory (GST) which, according to Laszlo and Krippner (1998), “does much to render the

complex dynamics of human bio-psycho-socio-cultural change comprehensible” (p. 47). Emerging in response to “increasing fragmentation and duplication of scientific and technological research and decision making” (p. 48), the systems theory proposes a viable explanation of the way components within a system are connected to and interact with one another. Studying the patterns of interpersonal exchange in a family has some similarities to studies on GST and provides a framework for understanding relationships (Segal & Bavelas, 1983, p. 63). Specific adaptation of systems theory in social science contexts paved the way for models of family relational theories including FST (Bardill, 1997; Baxter, 1990; Bowen, 1961, 1976, 1985; Bowen, Sagar, & Georgetown Family Center, 1997; Fisher, 1978; Kerr, 2000; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Hall, 1983; Olson, 2000). The systems theory framework also provides a viable alternative to linear thinking of cause-and-effect methods of evaluation (Bardill, 1997, p. 10). That is, as individuals are affecting their family, they are being affected by their family system.

Because family systems are complex, surpassing “the sum of its individual members” (Galvin, Brathwaite, & Bylund, 2015, p. 59), it is necessary to explore some possible implications arising from the interpersonal interplay or the relational encounters between family members. Galvin et al. (2015) further described a system as “a set of components that interrelate with one another to form a whole,” while proposing that “a change in one individual affects every other family member” (p. 59). One plausible assumption in this description is that in order to understand an individual, it is essential to understand the dynamics within his or her family of origin, or even the current family. Similarly, to understand the dynamics of a family, one must look at the system as a whole, rather than at the individual members in isolation (Fleming, 2003).

Significant in understanding the dynamics of relational encounter between individuals within a family system is an awareness of individuals' complex communicative interplay that vie simultaneously for fulfillment. Researchers, in discussing the complex push and pull of individuals' relational needs referred to this phenomenon as the dialectical tensions of relationship or Relational Dialectics Theory (RDT) (Baxter, 1990, 2006, 2014; Baxter & Braithwaite, 2007; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, 1998; Wozniak, Lollis, & Marshall, 2014). Baxter (2006) remarked: "Communicative life in families can be viewed as a dialectic in which different, often opposing, voices interpenetrate—some more dominant and others more marginalized" and "these unified-yet-opposed voices are dialectical contradictions" (chap. 9, para. 1). Embedded within the concept of dialectics is the paradox of contradictions or what is referred to as the "unity of opposites" that is present in interpersonal "communicative process" (Wozniak et al., 2014, p. 848). Contradictions engender competing discourses (i.e., autonomy-connection, openness-closedness, and certainty-uncertainty) through which change and stability fluctuate.

Having chosen a meta-theoretical (i.e., systemic-dialectical) approach to examine adolescents' LV and FM in this context, it is important to note that the use of these theories was limited to select components of FST. A wide-ranged use of FST consists of several tenets, including discussions on a general "social order of organization [such as] cohesiveness, altruism, cooperativeness," which entails both human and nonhuman entities (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, pp. 89-94). Nevertheless, it was necessary in this context to focus on components of Bowen's (1976, 1985) eight interlocking concepts (i.e., triangles, differentiation of self, nuclear family emotional process, family projection

process, multigenerational transmission process, emotional cutoff, sibling position, and societal emotional process) that embody interpersonal exchanges, individuals' power of reason and, their capacity to make decisions based on reason. It was essential to choose a framework that engages the dynamism of human levels of intelligence that potentially engenders change and adaptability. Other aspects of FST used in conjunction with Bowen's (1976, 1985) interlocking concepts are drawn from the Circumplex Model (i.e., cohesion, adaptability, communication) and are used to describe levels of functionality in family relationship (Olson, 2000).

The FST concepts proposed by Bowen (1976, 1985) and Olson (2000) are applicable in the entire study of family systems relational encounters. However, only select tenets (i.e., differentiation of self, emotional cutoff, multigenerational transmission process, societal emotional process [Bowen's theory], and cohesion, adaptability, communication [Olson's theory]) were discussed and applied in this context. These concepts seemed to reflect more distinctly the inevitable symbiotic nature of parent-child relational encounters being played out in family systems, and the society. It was also assumed that these concepts have significant association with the structural-developmental-relational framework that is necessary for understanding the outgrowth of faith in adolescents. At the same time, there are overlaps and similarities between the family systems concepts chosen here and other concepts (i.e., dialectics) used in the theoretical framework. It is also assumed that these similarities and overlaps between theoretical concepts add to the validity of the discussion in this context.

The issue of dialectics is significant in understanding relational exchanges in family systems. Like FST, there are several angles to dialectics including Marx's (1961)

dialectical materialism, and Bakhtin's dialogic standpoint as cited in Baxter and Braithwaite (2007, pp. 275-276). Because the focus of this study is on exploring family relationships and how they impact the outcome of individuals' lives (i.e., adolescents' values and faith posture), aspects of Baxter's and Montgomery's (1996) RDT (discussed below) are applicable to the discussion of parent-adolescents relationships. It is necessary to point out that there are some overlaps in contents and meanings, between segments of FST and RDT. Exploring the complexity in the relational dialectical interplay happening in family systems is essential in understanding adolescents' development of live values and their faith posture. Potentially, the overlaps within the theoretical framework strengthen the foundation of the proposed theory—FSD (previously introduced). Tenets of theoretical frameworks supporting FSD are briefly defined here and discussed further in Chapter 2.

Theoretical Concepts

Components from Bowen's Family Systems Theory

Fundamental to Bowen's discourse on FST is the issue of emotional functioning experienced within the family as a group, and between family members (Bowen et al., 1997; Papero, 1990). Kerr and Bowen (1988) described emotional functioning as being inclusive of "all the members of a group who significantly affect one another emotionally," adding that the process "can include nonfamily members as well as family members" (p. 263, footnote). Emotional functioning is essential in individual development and functionality, as well as the general functioning of family systems. Consequently, a better understanding of the process is likely to contribute to individuals' and families' functionality (Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

Further, Bowen's FST pinpoints eight interlocking concepts that are used in explaining the complexities of interactions within family, and their impact on individuals' and the group's development, and functionality (Bowen, 1961, 1976, 1985, 2002; Bowen & Butler, 2013; Bowen et al., 1997; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Four of these concepts (differentiation of self, emotional cutoff, multigenerational transmission process, and societal emotional process) are adapted in this study and are discussed below.

Differentiation of Self

Bowen's (1976) idea of differentiation of self encompasses the emotional self and is seemingly the foundation of his eight interlocking concepts used in discussing family systems functionality. There are various levels and approaches to understanding differentiation of self which, in its most basic terms, is defined as "the ability to be in emotional contact with others yet still autonomous in one's emotional functioning" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 145, footnote). Bardill (1997) posited that "the natural differentiation process is founded on remaining a distinct entity while connected to all vital supra- and sub-systems" (p. 12). At the same time, Kerr and Bowen (1988) stated that in "poorly differentiated [families], emotionality and subjectivity have a strong influence on family relationships" and that "high intensity of emotionality or togetherness pressure does not permit a child to grow to think, feel, and act for himself [hence], the child functions in reaction to others" (p. 96).

One assumption that may be drawn from Kerr's and Bowen's (1988) proposition on differentiation of self is that it is a process happening over time between a parent (or a caregiver) and a child, and that a child's capacity of differentiation of self is significantly influenced by the parent's or caregiver's. Presumably in this context, several variables

(i.e., FC, FGCP, FCPF, PRP, CFT, and FW) embody the environment in which the process differentiation of self can evolve through parent-child relational encounters. Parents' levels of differentiation and how they facilitate differentiation in their children is evident in the relational play between parents and adolescents. It is assumed that what happens in different relational exchanges between parents and child over time contribute to the individual's high or low differentiation of self during the stage of adolescence. Research proposes that poorly (low) differentiated individuals are likely to cutoff emotionally from other family members or situations, instead of finding ways of working through crisis moments (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, pp. 271-272).

Emotional Cutoff

As implied in the matter of self-differentiation, emotional cutoff is a process through which individuals attempt to cope by reducing or severing emotional contact with family members when there are unresolved issues. Ongoing dialogues on emotional cutoff connect it to the concept of differentiation or, more so, undifferentiation. Kerr and Bowen (1988) described emotional cutoff as “the way people manage the undifferentiation (and the emotional intensity associated with it) that exists between the generations. The greater the undifferentiation or fusion between generations, the greater the likelihood the generations will cut off from one another” (p. 271). In essence, levels of self-differentiation determine whether emotional cutoff will manifest itself in individuals connected through some relational ties. As part of the theoretical framework that sustains FSD, emotional cutoff is directly linked to the issue of self-differentiation, and is applicable to variables connected to differentiation of self.

Multigenerational Transmission Process

Multigenerational transmission process, another concept relevant in understanding FSD, is based on emotional trends within a family and outlines the implications of relationship functioning beyond the current nuclear family setting. Like the issue of emotional cutoff, multigenerational transmission process is embedded in the development of and “possible outcomes of differentiation of self” (Hall, 1983, p. 100).

Hall (1983) posited that the “multigenerational transmission process describes broad patterns of behavior between members of different generations in the same family” (p. 100). In addition, Kerr and Bowen (1988) stated that the process is “anchored in the emotional system and includes emotions, feelings, and subjectively determined attitudes, values, and beliefs that are transmitted from one generation to the next. This transmission is assumed to occur primarily through relationships” (p. 224). It is necessary to note, however, that there are variations in how the multigenerational transmission process is manifested across generations (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 224; Klever, 2004, pp. 338-339). In essence, the concept illustrates ways in which family systems process emotional experiences, and in so doing, propose outcomes, and how outcomes are transmitted and sustained across generations. Because differentiation of self is significant in the concept of multigenerational transmission process, it is assumed that it correlates with the relevant variables that are linked to differentiation of self.

Societal Emotional Process

Societal emotional process, like emotional cutoff and multigenerational transmission process, involves an embedded notion of the differentiation of self. The concept is valuable in hypothesizing the affective interplay between a system (the family)

and the supra-systems (societal institutions). Essentially, societal emotional process “represents the broadest possible tensions between individuation and togetherness . . . accounting for the impact of social influences on family process and for the impact of family processes on wider society” (Hall, 1983, p. 118). Because of the interplay between family and society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the concept of societal emotional process is relevant in understanding the dialectical flux happening between family systems and society.

Olson’s Components of Family Systems Theory

Similar to Bowen’s Theory, Olson’s Circumplex Model provides a conceptual lens for exploring family relationships and outcomes in this context. The Circumplex Model focuses on three dimensions (cohesion, adaptability, and communication) that are used to describe levels or variances of family functioning (Olson, 2000; Olson, McCubban, et al., 1983; Olson, Sprenkle, & Russell, 1979).

Olson (2000) defined family *cohesion* as “the emotional bonding that family members have toward each other,” [focusing attention on] “how the system balances its members’ “separateness” and “togetherness” (p. 145). Four levels of cohesion (disengaged, separated, connected, and enmeshed), measured on a “low to high” continuum, are used to identify the ranges of family cohesion (p. 145). In addition, Olson (2000) defined the concept of family *adaptability* as “the amount of change in its leadership, role relationships, and relationship rules” focusing on how the system manages or adapt such changes. Levels of adaptability (rigid, structured, flexible, and chaotic) are also measured on a “low to high” continuum (p. 147).

Olson (2000) considered the inclusion of a *communication* dimension that is “critical for facilitating” the dynamic interplay of cohesion and adaptability within the family system. Patterns of family communication are “measured by focusing on the family as a group” with regard to their ability to engage one another through certain intrapersonal and interpersonal communication skills (p. 149). Family communication outcomes are labeled as positive or negative based on the system’s levels of cohesion and adaptability.

In essence, Olson’s (2000) Circumplex Model is “useful for relational diagnosis because it is system-focused,” providing several categories for measuring family systems levels of functionality (pp. 144, 148). Overall, the Circumplex Model provides a three-dimensional assessment illustrating levels of family functioning ranging from low to high (balanced [high], mid-range, and unbalanced [low]). These levels indicate family members’ capacity to maintain degrees of emotional connectedness and separateness, as well as their aptitude to manage developmental or crisis issues that engender change in the family system (p. 151). In this context, aspects of Olson’s (2000) Circumplex Model like Bowen’s (1985) interlocking concepts are used theoretically to analyze family systems functionality in conjunction with religious outcomes. It is necessary to note that there are some similarities in contents and meanings between Olson’s (2000) dimensions (i.e., cohesion and adaptability) and components of Bowen’s (1985) interlocking concepts (i.e., differentiation of self and emotional cutoff). These similarities presumably add to the validity of the theoretical framework adapted in this study.

Relational Dialectics Theory

Accompanying elements of FST as part of the theoretical framework for this

study are components of Baxter's and Montgomery's (1996) RDT which is influenced by Bakhtin's (as cited in Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) discourse on the principles of dialectics. In general, dialectics is an ambiguous concept with divergent philosophical and methodological approaches to understanding its essence. In simple terms, dialectics is distinguishably "a style of reasoning or a method used to establish the truth or validity of ideas" or, "a world view or substantive conception of the nature of phenomena" (Altman, Vinsel, & Brown, 1981, p. 117). In the context of relational interplay, dialectics describes "a small set of conceptual assumptions which revolve around the notions of contradiction [opposition], change [process], praxis and totality" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 6). Relational dialectics theory developed from Baxter's and Montgomery's studies of key communication needs and exchange between individuals engaged in relational interplay (Baxter, 1987, 1990; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Relational dialectics theory is structured on four concepts (contradiction, change, praxis, and totality) that provide reference points for studying and understanding certain dynamics of interpersonal relationships.

Contradiction

The concept of contradiction, sometimes used synonymously with the concept of conflict, is significant in the understanding of dialectics and is foundational in the development of RDT. However, defining contradiction in the context of dialectical theory does not make contradiction symmetrically analogous to conflict, although conflict may arise in dialectical interchange. According to Baxter and Montgomery (1996), contradiction is "the dynamic interplay between unified opposition" (p. 8). Further, Baxter (1990) stated that

a contradiction is present whenever two tendencies or forces are interdependent (the dialectical principle of unity) yet mutually negate one another (the dialectical principle of negation). . . . The presence of paired opposites, or contradictions is essential to change and growth; the struggle of opposites thus is not evaluated negatively by dialectical thinkers. (p. 70)

In essence, contradiction, as embedded in the context of interpersonal relational exchanges, alludes to a simultaneous demand and negotiation of individuals' needs as a natural stimulus that creates balance within the process of stability and change. Studies identify the most common relational dialectical interchanges as autonomy-connection, closedness-openness, and novelty-predictability, each of which embodies contradiction. The process of contradiction is essentially manifested in the ongoing dialectics of autonomy-connection, closedness-openness, and novelty-predictability (Baxter, 1990). The key to understanding these tenets of contradiction is to see them, not as "either/or," but as "both/and," a process of fostering growth and stability simultaneously in interpersonal relational interplay. Understanding the essence of autonomy-connection is relevant in the exploration of parent-adolescents' relational interplay in this study.

Change

Change in the context of relational dialectics is embedded in the contradictions inherent in all social systems (Baxter & Montgomery, 2000, pp. 32, 34). This means that in the "the dynamic interplay of unified opposites [interdependent relationships]" situations do not stay the same and there are ongoing modifications to the relationships (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2007, p. 276). Nevertheless, change, as well as stability, is necessary in sustaining healthy interdependent relationships. According to Baxter and Braithwaite (2007), "relationships require both stability, and change to establish and sustain their wellbeing" (p. 282). In exploring family systems functionality, it is

necessary to understand the need for change, the process of change, and the results of change.

Praxis

Defining praxis in relationship to contradiction is necessary to the understanding of the essence of praxis in a dialectical context. In explaining this relationship, researchers propose that as “people are at once actors and objects of their own actions,” they embody the reality of praxis (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 13), meaning that individuals play both proactive and reactive roles in the process of interpersonal communication. In addition, Benson (1977) stated, “People under some circumstances can become active agents reconstructing their own social relations” (pp. 5-6). At some point in the cycle of communication, they are participants both as coders/decoders and senders/receivers (whether consciously or subconsciously) in the interplay of contradictions. Hence, the concept of praxis proposes that individuals have the ability to make various choices (based on past experiences) which affect the outcome of current and future communication process:

Many possible patterns of dialectical change result from a pair’s communicative choices. For example, a pair that perceives too little interdependence and too much partner autonomy in their relationship could respond in any of several ways, ranging, for example, from naively optimistic efforts to gloss over or ignore the tension, to efforts that emphasize increased interdependence and decreased autonomy to fatalistic efforts to accept the inevitability of their situation, to efforts to redefine what they mean by togetherness and separation. Whatever their choices at the moment, their future interactions will be constrained by those choices. (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 14)

Totality

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) also noted that the concept of totality in a dialectical context connotes the idea that “phenomena can be understood only in relation to other phenomena” (p. 14). Benson (1977) proposed that in the context of dialectics, totality means “that social phenomena should be studied relationally. . . with attention to their multiple interactions” (pp. 3-4). Interestingly, totality in its meaning is similar to earlier discussions on the definition of systems theory which emphasize the essence of wholeness as a way of analyzing the impacts of family interpersonal relationships. Basically, “dialectical attention is directed away from the individual as the unit of analysis and toward the dilemmas and tensions that inhere in relating” (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 15).

In summarizing the relevancy of FST and RDT in this study, it is necessary to point out that tenets of FST and RDT are inevitably intertwined in the interplay of all interpersonal transactions. At some point in the family systems, individuals consciously or unconsciously experience (or fail to experience) adequate differentiation of self. Inadequate differentiation of self potentially influences emotional cutoff, which is an individual’s way of dealing with aspects of the undifferentiated self. How a person experiences or practices differentiation of self is likely perpetuated across generations, and the interchange between individuals in the family unit and society tends to impact the development and practice of values.

Differentiation of self is incumbent on levels of cohesion in the relationships individuals share with others and the capacity to which they are able to adapt to changes in their relationships. The idea of change in interpersonal relationships embodies the

ongoing dialectical tension of individuals' contrasting needs by creating the need for ongoing negotiation and for establishing and reestablishing stability and change. It is assumed that tenets of both FST and RDT are essential in examining interactions within family systems and in explaining some implications concerning adolescents' FM, LV, and CC based on familial experiences. Figure 1 graphically illustrates aspects of FST and RDT that are embedded in the variables depicting parent-child relational encounters in the proposed theoretical framework.

Research Questions

The general research question sought to investigate whether the theoretical model was sustained by the empirical data. It was assumed that the construct of FSD indicated by FGCP, PRP, FCPF, CFT, and FW was a significant predictor of adolescents' FM and LV, and that FM and LV were mediators of the effect of FSD on CC. It was inferred that the measurement model and the structural model would concurrently indicate similarities between the theoretical covariance matrix and the empirical covariance matrix. In examining the effects between predictor and outcome variables, it was necessary to explore the following research questions:

Research Question 1: Is FSD a significant predictor of adolescents' FM and LV?

Research Question 2: Are FM and LV mediators of the effect of FSD on adolescents' CC?

Research Hypothesis

Statistical hypotheses taking the form of either an alternate or null proposition are "formalized statements that are tested" to determine a given probability (McMillan &

Schumacher, 2010, p. 297). In contrast to an alternate proposition, a null hypothesis (H_0) suggests that there are no significant differences between population means. In model-fitting research designs, hypothetical constructs are used to indicate the possible correlations between observed variables and their effects on a latent variable (Kline, 2011, p. 9). Essentially, in model-fitting research, the hypothesis is formulated based on determining whether the research theory is supported by empirical data. In this context, it was theorized that adolescents' FM, perceived LV, and capacity for CC were potentially influenced through FSD. That is, the relational encounters happening in families, particularly between parents and children contributed to how they develop faith, what they value and their propensity to be in a committed relationship with Christ. Essentially, the FSD framework is established on the basic assumption that the relational encounters between parents and child potentially influence the child's religious outcomes. Hence, it was hypothesized that the theoretical model in this research is similar to the empirical data.

This study assumed that the outcomes of relational encounters in family on adolescents' faith posture can be measured based on a synergy of different communication forums (see Figure 2) through which adolescents engaged with family members, particularly parents in various developmental practices in family relational systems. Such practices embody the differentiation of self and the freedom and ability to think critically, the capacity to process thoughts and feelings separately from others', and to be acknowledged and affirmed in the process, as well as the capacity to adapt to change (Bowen, 1985; Olson, 2000). Developmental practices also include adolescents'

ability to process adequately, elements of contradicting needs that are embedded in all interdependent relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, 1998).

Definition of Terms

Adolescents: Generally described as a group of individuals in transition from childhood to adulthood (Leigh & Peterson, 1986, p. 13). The period of adolescence is fundamental in determining an individual's identity and assertion of autonomy while maintaining a sense of togetherness with others (Erikson, 1963, 1968; Marcia, 1980). For the purpose of this research, *adolescents* refers specifically to the population in the Valuegenesis² study.

Commitment to Christ: Defined in this context, it is a volitional response of being in a covenantal relationship with Christ, and willingly ordering one's life according to the transforming character of Christ. It is the extent of an individual's intellectual-affective praxis based on fidelity to Christ.

Faith Maturity: The process in which young people adopt a way of life that exemplifies "a vibrant, life-transforming experience." It is "the degree to which one embodies the priorities, commitments, and perspectives characterizing a person of vibrant life and transforming faith" (Benson, Donahue, & Erickson, 1993, p. 3) In addition, FM represents a twofold demonstration of a meaningful relationship with God and unswerving commitment of service to others (Dudley, 1992, p. 59). The process of FM is demonstrated in varying degrees by an individual's altruism and relationship to God and humanity.

Family: Defined structurally, a group of individuals inclusive of a man (husband) and a woman (wife) and children, and involving multiple generations, bounded together

by biological and legal ties, as “networks of persons who live together over periods of time supporting each other . . . having ties of marriage and/or kinship to one another” (Galvin et al., 2015, p. 4). Further defined in this context on the basis of its’ purpose, family consists of individuals, or group(s) of individuals bonded together biologically, legally and/or, through relational encounters (interacting), who in awareness of their identity as image bearers of the Creator God, seek to fulfill *His* divine purpose for their life, and for those in their sphere of influence.

Family Climate: A construct formulated to examine adolescents’ perception of their family environment as a place where they experience love and happiness resulting from the relationships they have with their parents.

Family Communication: Defined in this context as, the essence of how families construct their lives around their verbal and symbolic dialectical exchanges which are used to create, interpret, and negotiate meaning, based on their psycho-socio-cultural background, and internal patterns of relational mutuality in the system.

Family Systems Dialectics: A conceptual approach to understanding the influence of interpersonal exchanges within family systems on adolescents’ religious development based on adaptation of aspects of FST and RDT. It represents a both/and approach to processing parent-child relational encounters that potentially influence adolescents’ religious outcomes.

Family Worship: Represents the frequency with which families within the population being studied engage in worship activities such as praying and devotional time together as a family away from church. It also signifies the value of FW engagements, based on adolescents’ perceptions of the worship experience or other religious events in their home.

Frequent Conversations with Parents about Faith: A conceptual expression of adolescents' need for, and satisfaction from, spending quality time talking with parents about their faith or religious experiences, as well as being able to share their own faith experiences.

Frequent Good Conversations with Parents: Adolescents' perceptions of time spent conversing with either of their parents. Time is qualified as 10 minutes or more in the last month.

Life Values: The way in which individuals rank or prioritize belief, experiences, and goals in relation to attitudes and behavior making up the intrinsic and extrinsic classification of what is important, based on their socialization or relational encounters with others, particularly parents.

Parents' Religious Posture: A conceptual representation of adolescents' perception of the demonstrative effects of their parents' attitude and posture regarding religious matters.

Relational Dialectics Theory: Describes the dynamic pull and push in interpersonal relationships. Scientifically, it is "a dynamic knot of contradictions in personal relationships; an unceasing interplay between contrary or opposing tendencies" (Griffin, 2012, p. 154).

Valuegenesis: A research study examining the faith and values of young people attending high schools affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. The study was conducted over a period of three decades: 1990, 2000, and 2010.

Limitations of the Study

The basic theoretical framework of this study is embedded in systems perspectives that promote inclusivity as a more accurate way to examine family dynamics relative to family members' developmental outcomes. Leigh and Peterson (1986) stated that "a more complete understanding of human development results when both the individual and group levels of the human experience are given equal consideration" (p. 13). One limitation in this study is that in using secondary data analysis, there are fixed parameters within which the researcher is able to conduct the study. The use of secondary data (Valuegenesis²) in this context provides a one-sided dialogue that limits the perspectives given in FSD construct. Ideally, the concepts proposed in this study necessitate input from the complete family unit (i.e., parents and children). However, responses in the population sample used here exclusively reflect input based on the single perspective of adolescents' perceptions of their experiences in the family. Another limitation is that the study is based on responses from subjects within the context of Seventh-day Adventist institutions and may not accurately reflect the general population of families within faith communities across North America.

Delimitations of the Study

The Valuegenesis² survey contains 396 items, most of them measuring some aspects of adolescents' faith experiences. This research is delimited to include approximately 10% of the items in the survey. The items chosen are presumably relevant indicators for examining the dynamics of family relationship. In addition, certain factors (i.e., FW and LV) were further subdivided and recoded to increase accuracy in measuring these variables and strengthen the validity of research.

Overview of Research Methodology

The proposed method of inquiry was a quantitative, non-experimental exploratory correlational design, using structural equation modeling (SEM) to determine whether the theoretical model of FSD is supported by the empirical data. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was also used to examine the correlations among indicator variables and their effects on the output variables, FM, LV, and CC. The research process involved the use of secondary data analysis using the Valuegenesis² dataset.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented an overview on the issue of adolescents' and young adults' apathy toward matters of faith and their disengagement with communities of faith. It outlines some of the assumed causes for declining interest, indicating that some research points to faith communities as part of the challenge, even as those communities seek to find solutions to the problem. From this perspective came the assumption that the church may be responsible for this declining interest (Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2011; Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007; Paulsen, 2013), but not necessarily in the contexts that research proposed. Based on the implications of certain relational (Baxter, 1990, 2014; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Galvin et al., 2015; Griffin, 2012; Olson, 1989, 2000) and developmental (Bardill, 1997; Bowen, 1961, 1985, 2002; Bowen & Butler, 2013; Kerr & Bowen, 1988) assumptions, the family system is implicated as being the primary context for faith formation (Boyatzis et al., 2006).

The basic assumption in this study was that the functioning of family systems are significantly impacted by certain developmental normalcies and anomalies that are played out through relational dialectics. It was assumed that the normality or

abnormalities of family relational exchanges contribute substantively to adolescents' faith posture. This assumption is based on the imperative that parents are the primary channel for nurturing faith in their offspring, faith that presumably leads to lifelong CC. Hence, through family-inclusive ministries, faith communities can seek to empower parents to fulfill their responsibilities to their offspring. The proposed hypothesis examined whether the empirical data supported the theory that relationships within families have significant influence on adolescents' FM, LV, and CC.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the literature on selected concepts and variables relating to family systems, hence creating a foundation for exploring the effects of parent-child relational encounters on adolescents' religious development. Elements of systems theory (i.e., FST [Bowen's theory, and Olson's Circumplex Model]), along with Baxter's and Montgomery's RDT, are examined in the process. Faith, a religious phenomenon that is significant in this research, is explored from a developmental-relational-experiential standpoint, and a biblical framework of empowerment is proposed as a foundational element in parent-child relational encounters.

In some areas of socio-psycho research, it is proposed that certain individual developmental outcomes (both positive and negative) have been linked to family functionality (Johnson et al., 2014; McBride et al., 2013; McWhirter et al., 2017; Stevenson-Hinde, 1990). Implicitly, individuals' standards and practices are potentially shaped or influenced positively or negatively through the structure, roles, and relational dynamics embedded in their family systems. Family functions such as quality time (or lack of quality time spent together) and the enactment of certain rituals are also influential factors on family members. In essence, individuals' attitudes and behaviors,

whether demonstrated in social uprightness or delinquent outbursts, are likely to be influenced by relational encounters in their family of origin.

Likewise, in religious contexts, family functionality is also associated with influencing individuals' values and faith identity formation (Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003; Choi, 2012; Martin, White, & Perlman, 2003). The extensive impact of family systems functioning in the socio-psycho-cultural development of individuals makes it a viable means for examining adolescents' LV, FM, and their CC. This review of literature is disposed to examine certain assumptions relating to variables indicating FSD, a concept derived from merging components within FST and RDT.

Family: Its Role and Primacy

The term *family*, “however defined or structured, is a human system consisting of the interactions among its members” (Becvar & Becvar, 1999, p. 69). Yet, “as families become increasingly diverse, their processes expand exponentially, rendering their identity highly discourse dependent” (Galvin, 2006, p. 2). The idea of family encompasses “far more than a collection of individuals sharing a specific physical and psychological space A family is a natural social system” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1985, 1996). Families form the nucleus of society, providing the environment for the development of attachment and relational bonding (Fraser & Danihelova, 2012, p. 56; Garland, 2012, p. 24; Mattanah, Lopez, & Govern, 2011; Stevenson-Hinde, 1990). Families are important in the development of society and have the potential to make it better or worse (White, 1980, p. 15).

Added studies posit that “the family is the principal context in which human development takes place” (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 723), and that the developmental

process has psycho-socio-cultural effects on its individual members and on the family as a whole (Bowen, 1985; Erikson, 1963, 1968; Olson, 1989, 2000). Likewise, Starbuck (2002) discussed the complexity of family as being composed of both functional micro (meeting the needs of individuals and the group) and macro (participating in the ebb and flow of society) components. The intricacy of family is also evident through the structural nature in which individuals who are “related by blood, marriage, or adoption, and who reside in a “common residence” assume distinctive roles, engage in “mutual sharing” of responsibilities, resources, goals, and values (pp. 8-10).

Within the context of family, individuals form perceptions that influence their concept of life and the way they live out their perceptions (Bowen, 1985). Studies in anthropology and developmental psychology posit various assumptions that link certain human behavior and ultimate life outcomes, both negative and positive, to the dynamics of family relationships (Balswick & Morland, 1990; McWhirter et al., 2017; McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 2013). Likewise, Boyatzis et al. (2006) proposed that the climate of “family spirituality and religiosity are linked with many desirable outcomes and inversely with negative outcomes in children and youth” (p. 297).

In spite of the integral purpose of the family, studies relating to social and religious issues show that the current trend of family functioning is a cause for concern (Anthony & Anthony, 2011, p. 43; Balswick & Morland, 1990, pp. 161-181). Whether functioning at the micro or macro level, a morphing of family structure over time (Anthony & Anthony, 2011, pp. 2-20) seems to alter its functional capacity. Hughes (1971) stated, “The organization and size of the family may vary . . . but its role as the first decisive shaper of human nature is universal” (p. 10). That is, the family

environment is the context in which individuals gain knowledge and understanding of self in relation to others, and in time, develop values that embody the way they function within the contexts of family, culture, and society, in general.

Kaslow (2001) stated that “families in virtually every country are experiencing great turbulence and living in tumultuous circumstances” and that “the broader the definition of family, the more encompassing the sense of chaos and disruption may be in families worldwide” (p. 37). Kaslow’s discourse gives a global overview of the issues and trends that confront the family, highlighting a systemic interplay between systems (family) and supra-systems (societal socio-political-economic institutions) and attempts to alert therapists and clinicians of the need to expand the relevancy of their practices to meet the ongoing needs of families. Implicitly, relevancy in meeting the needs of family may be linked to an understanding of the inevitable relational interplay within family systems and between families and supra-systems. In essence, the family influences society, and society, in turn, influences the family.

It is important to note that, over time, as the family system “[morph] into different configurations” (Anthony, 2011, p. 2) it’s structure, values and purpose are been redefined by the norms of pop culture. In this context, it is necessary to shift from a structural definition of family to focus attention on its purpose. To understand the purpose of family it is necessary to recall the origin of family. Hence, there is need to look briefly at the origin of family from a biblical, theological framework.

A Biblical, Theological Framework for Understanding Family

Issues relating to family systems functioning have socio-psycho-cultural substructures that are consequential. An exhaustive conversation on the subject discusses

both the positive and negative impacts relationships within family systems have on people (Bowen, 1961, 1985; McBride et al., 2013; McWhirter et al., 2017; Olson, 1989). Understanding the impact of the relational interplay embedded in these substructures is important for best practices for both individuals and the family as a unit. In like manner, issues relating to family systems and the way the systems function may be analyzed in a biblical theological framework, providing a model for viewing characteristics of family, both sociologically and psychologically (Gangel, 1977a, 1977b, 1977c, 1977d; Garland, 2012). Gangel (1977c) proposed that “not only does the Bible have an enormous amount of information on the family, but what it has to say is psychologically and sociologically sound and thoroughly workable even with the complexities of contemporary culture” (p. 55). Inserting a biblical theological foundation in this study helps not only in outlining the origin and purpose of the family from a systemic standpoint, but also in providing an overview of some implications of interpersonal relationships both for individual family members and for family systems, in general.

The institution of family is at the foundation of biblical history. Beginning in the creation narrative, the entity of family is embedded in the salvation-redemption-restoration theme throughout the Bible (Gen 3:15; Isa 9:6; 56:7-8; Ezek 34:26, 29-31; John 3:16; 17:17; Eph 3:9-11; Rev 21-22). In Genesis, God introduces Himself as the foundation of family, declaring, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (Gen 1:26; unless otherwise stated, citations are from the New King James Version). Various theological discussions seek to determine whether the “image and likeness of God” in mankind is physical, or abstract, or both (Estep, 2010, p. 11-33; Maston & Tillman, 1983, p. 35-39). Notwithstanding the various positions taken on the

“image and likeness of God” in mankind, a basic viewpoint embraced in this context is that God *is* the original, or sole reference point for human genealogy, and the family system.

Implicitly, the Bible echoes the identity of family in stating that, “God created man in *His* own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female” (Gen 1:27. Emphasis supplied. See also Gen 5:1-2; 9:6; Jas 3:9). Evidently, the identity of family is embedded in male and female who are made in the image and likeness of God. At the same time, God blessed and commissioned them to “be fruitful and multiply; [to] fill the earth and subdue it; [and] have dominion” over it (Gen 1:28). Apparently, the purpose of the family is succinctly outlined in this commission. Commenting on this, Marston & Tillman (1983) remarked: “There is a sense in which the [family], even the Christian [family] as is true of the Christian church, is not an end within itself but a means to a broader and more important end in the promotion of the kingdom of God” (p. 41). Hence, it is implied that the promulgation of the kingdom of God is embedded in the purpose of the family.

Further, the call to have dominion [or authority] is essential in the development of each person in the context of family. Having dominion is a portrayal of individuals’ identity and purpose, a characteristic that connects them to the Source and Benefactor of all things created (Deut 10:14; Ps 24:1; 50:10). Marks (1971) stated that the act of “procreation is both God’s gift and his command, and man’s task [purpose] from creation is to *fill the earth and subdue it*, to join in God’s will for order” (p. 4).

Inherent in the creation narrative is the *identity* and *purpose* of family. At the core of human identity is the image of God, and their basic purpose is to carry out the

instructions of God the Creator. The perpetuation of the image of God and fulfillment of His divine purpose in each person is akin to what Balswick and Balswick (2014) referred to as “empowerment,” and is best fulfilled within family systems (p. 14). At the onset, God instructed the first couple, stating: “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28). The fulfillment of this instruction is evident in the birth of children to Adam and Eve (Gen 4:1-2:25), in the children they bore (Gen 4:17; 5:6), and in many generations after (Gen 5:3-32; 11:10-26; Matt 1:2-16).

Family Identity: The *Imago Dei*

The entity of family (established in Gen 1:26-28) is the fundamental unit of society and it sets the trend for individuals’ development and contributions to the society (Anshen, 1949; Fraser & Danihelova, 2012; Garland, 2012). Although it is true that families form the basis of society, Mutter’s (2015) interjection that “the basic unit of society is the divine-human relationship” generates a need to explore further the theology of human identity based on the *origin* of family. Implicitly, a biblical theological framework of family is engrained in the distinctness of humankind’s being an expression of the *imago Dei*, the image of God (Genesis 1:26), and provides a context in which to explore the divine-human imperative. Yet, given the plethora of biblical hermeneutics, exploring the divine-human imperative of the *imago Dei* can become an inexhaustible quest (Estep, 2010, pp. 11-19; Maston & Tillman, 1983, p. 36).

Conversations regarding the *imago Dei* impose both physical and spiritual interpretations of the concept. Maston and Tillman (1983) emphasized the importance of a proper understanding of the concept, especially in the context of family relations, and suggested further that “it seems likely ‘the image’ referred to something of a deeper and

spiritual nature” (p. 36). This depth is based on the assumption relating to a person’s capacity to *think, feel, and will*. Estep (2010) viewed the *imago Dei* as “the quintessential distinction of humanity within God’s creation” (p. 11). Implicit through different concepts of the *imago Dei* are anthropomorphic descriptions pertaining to intellectual ability, the capacity for authority (i.e., to rule and have dominion), and the capacity to enjoy other beings—both God and people (Slaughter, 1996, p. 15). Such descriptions have anthropological implications in the contexts of family relationships.

Further, Maston and Tillman (1983) emphasized the “capacity and necessity for communication with other persons” as an attribute of the image of God, proposing that “in the truest sense there is no person without other persons. Even our God is three in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (pp. 36-37). Wrestling with the assumption that the *imago Dei* marks the reference point for human genetics, as well as providing the soterial basis for family (2 Cor 5:18-20), Estep (2010) posited that “the image of God is not only anthropological but adds a new dimension to the concept with one’s identity in Christ” (p. 15).

Overlapping discussions on the divine imperative, “Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness” (Gen 1:26, emphasis supplied), identifies a distinct characteristic of the Godhead—that of being relational. In essence, the divine imperative infers the plurality of the divine Personas in relationship, working together as one in the act of creation. This capacity for relationship is one of the distinctive characteristics of the Godhead that is extended vertically to humankind through the divine-human connection (Gen 1:26-28; 4; 5; 10:1-32; 11; Deut 5-6; Mal 4:4-6; Eph 3:14-15). Further, the relationality of the Trinity is evident in humankind through the horizontal

relationships they share with others. Hence, the historical foundation of family (Gen 1-3), based on a theology characterized by the model of “relationality within the Holy Trinity [i.e., Gen 1:1-2; Matt 3:16-17; 28:19; John 14:16-17; 2 Cor 13:14],” is an ongoing phenomena “throughout the Old and New Testament” (Balswick & Balswick, 2014, p. 4) and onward to contemporary times.

The relational image of God is also used as a metaphor describing His connection with humanity. Several images of family roles (i.e., God as father [Deut 32:6; Isa 63:16; Jer 3:4; 31:19; Mal 1:6; 2 Cor 6:18], God as mother [Isa 49:15; 66:12-13; Hos 11:1-4], Jesus as son/older brother [Matt 16:16; 17:5; John 3:16; 9:35-38; Acts 8:37], Jesus as the groom [Isa 61:10; Matt 25:1-12; John 3:29]) are often used to illustrate the relationship between God and humanity (Balswick & Balswick, 2007, pp. 4, 20; Estep, 2010, p. 18; Fraser & Danihelova, 2012, pp. 56-57; Garland, 2012, pp. 89-90). Such images are evidence that relationship within the Godhead is not confined among the Trinity. Because “relationality is the primary way humans reflect God’s image” (Balswick & Balswick, 2014, p. 4), it is fitting that a theological framework on family functioning should be grounded in relationality as modeled in the Trinity.

The relational character of God (Gen 1:26) illustrates the significance and complexity of togetherness and individuality as modeled in the Trinity—God being one, yet composed of three distinct Persons. Here, relationship within the Godhead reveals a distinctiveness of being as well as unity of purpose (manifested in creation [Gen 1-2] and redemption [Gen 3:15; Gal 4:4-7]) among them. Consequently, individuals are purposefully “created by a relational, triune God to be in significant and fulfilling

relationships” (Balswick & Balswick, 2014, p. 4), a process initially carried out through family relational dynamics. This aptitude for relationship, according to Slaughter (1996),

given by God with the bestowal of His image has become the hallmark of humanness. It defines the overarching principle of “family” for which community the man and the woman would become a source. From the intimacy of the man and woman would come offspring with whom they would enter uniquely into relationship as family. (p. 16)

God’s relational attribute, bequeathed to humankind made in the *imago Dei*, is manifested primarily in the family system, embodying a spousal union between a man and a woman, with or without offspring. The context of relationship provides roles—such as spouse, parent, children, siblings—and functions—such as intellectual ability, capacity for authority. Understanding the relational implications of the *imago Dei* helps in discerning the essence of the family system, its functionality, and each family member’s identity and purpose. Slaughter (1996) stated:

Though the phrase “in the image of God” could refer, at least in part, to human ability to think abstractly, or authority to rule (Gen. 1:28), human beings seem more uniquely like God in the capacity to enjoy other beings (God and people) on a deeply intimate plane of relationship. (p. 15)

One may conclude that in creating family, God designed it to be an atmosphere in which individuals are nurtured (Gen 18:19; Deut 4:9-10; 6:4-9), while nurturing others in relationships. Further espousing a biblical perspective of family, Slaughter (1996) stated:

A God-defined, God-designed family creates an atmosphere of unity in intimacy that promotes growth through a matrix of dynamic relationships. The Bible promotes family as a nurturing environment. God desires to provide a climate in which He enables people to grow to their potential as their longing to know and be known by Him and by others is fulfilled. (p. 16)

In essence, God intended the family to be a place where individuals develop through the relationships they share with Him and with other family members. This process of family

relational exchanges affirms individuals' identity as being an embodiment of God's relational character, and it contributes to the fulfillment of individuals' life purposes.

Because sin altered the dynamics of relationships between God and humanity (Genesis 3), individuals often experience complicated interpersonal exchanges that tend to impact general family dynamics. Issues such as *self-differentiation* (Bowen, 1976, 1978, 1985; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1996; Kerr, 1981), the capacity to balance togetherness and separateness, and the capacity to *adapt* in certain situations (Olson, 2000; Olson, Russell, & Sprenkle, 1983; Olson et al., 1979) are continuously challenging the functionality of relationship within family systems.

Again, the distinctive balance of individuality and togetherness in the functioning of the Godhead embodies the basis for a differentiated self and serves as a model for having balance between autonomy and interdependence. Balswick and Balswick (2014) stated: "As distinction and unity coexist in the Godhead, so is it to exist among family members" (p. 5). Such balance is fundamental for the wellbeing of family members and for the wholesome functioning of the family unit.

Family Purpose: Empowerment

Added research concerning the *imago Dei* proposes concepts such as purpose and empowerment in support of a theological understanding of family (Balswick & Balswick, 2007, 2014; Fraser & Danihelova, 2012). Both concepts (purpose and empowerment) correlate and are deemed relevant to healthy family systems' functioning. God's instruction in Genesis to "be *fruitful* and multiply, [to] fill the earth and subdue it; [to] have *dominion* over [it]" (Gen 1:28, emphasis supplied) provides the manuscript for humanity's purpose. At the same time, embedded in this command is an understanding

that God is the One who empowers humankind, giving them the ability to “be fruitful,” “to multiply,” and to “have dominion.”

Maston and Tillman (1983) identified a certain purpose of the family based on Scripture as procreation, a context for the exchange of love and nurture, and promotion of the kingdom of God (pp. 39-41). Balswick and Balswick (2014) identified purpose as empowerment, a process of equipping others through the relational encounters happening in family systems. In this context, the process of empowerment is explored in conjunction with God’s purpose for family systems. Empowerment is examined further in the framework of Deut 6:4-9 (substantiated by Gen 1:27-30; 18:19; Ps 78:3-4; Eph 6:4; 2 Tim 2:1-2) and forms the biblical theological framework in which to explore adolescents’ FM, LV, and ultimately, their CC in the context of family systems.

Old Testament Scriptures initiate a model of empowerment (Gen 1:27-30) through the command from the Creator to “be fruitful,” “multiply,” and “have “dominion,” encouraging a sense of responsibility and maturity in man. In Gen 1:27-30, the concept of empowerment is embedded in the act of creation. In instructing the first family to be “fruitful,” to “multiply,” and to have “dominion,” God enlisted their cooperation in attending to His creation. In essence, He empowered them with the capacity to add to what He had already made, and set them as His “representative over the lower order of being” (White, 1958, p. 45). Balswick and Balswick (2014) affirmed that

empowerment can be defined as the attempt to establish power in another person. Empowerment does not necessarily involve yielding to the wishes of another person or ceding one’s own power to someone else. Rather, empowerment is the active, intentional process of helping another person become empowered. The person who is empowered has been equipped, strengthened, built up, matured, and has gained skills because of the encouraging support of the other. . . . Empowerment never involves

control, coercion or force. Rather, it is a respectful, reciprocal process that takes place between people in mutually enhancing ways. (p. 14)

This matter of empowerment is reflective of the Godhead in the act of creation and salvation. Similarly, the principle of empowerment is implicit in the New Testament's assurance of salvation (John 1:12; Eph 4:1-16) and is extended to all through the process of justification and sanctification (Rom 8:29-30; John 17:17). Consequently, the concept of empowerment as embedded in practical biblical examples helps to establish a theological framework for individuals' development and the functioning of families.

Balswick and Balswick (2007) endorsed empowerment in developing family relationships between family members. Empowerment is the framework through which parents embed internal values in their children, choosing to administer consequences versus punishment (p. 107). When parents encourage children to participate in family functioning, they are engaging in the practice of empowerment (p. 141).

A further implication of empowerment in this context is that, although it involves the use of power, empowerment does not imply a hierarchical exercise of power or authority. That is, empowerment is not the use of power to benefit the one in command, but to help those with less power. Balswick and Balswick (2007) proposed that empowerment "assumes that the task of the most powerful family members is to enable the less powerful family member" (pp. 277-278). This is evident in the initial process of empowerment where, at creation, God enlisted the first family, not for His sake, but for their development. In essence, the one who seeks to empower focuses attention on others' wellbeing, "coming alongside a person to affirm . . . and build up" (Balswick & Balswick, 2014, p. 14). Viewed in this context, empowerment depicts the essence of

apprenticeship or discipleship wherein one invests time and resources for the benefit of another.

A call to such earnest investment is necessary in establishing individuals' development and wholesome family relationships, and is evident in Scripture:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I commanded you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut 6:4-9)

Symbols in this passage (the Shema) encapsulate guidelines for balanced family functioning through the act of parents' empowering their children through relational encounters. Encounter is depicted as a vertical reality happening through human-divine experience, as well as a horizontal connection (i.e., parent-child relational interchange) in which individuals learn and develop. The call to love is the basis of the relational encounter in family systems. Love begins first with "a heart focused and centered on God" as the Ultimate (Carpenter, 2009, p. 456). Love is predicated in the heart which is often alluded to in Scripture as, "the sense of reason and cognitive functions" (p. 457). This entire discourse challenges parents to experience love in relationship with God first, and then employ different ways (i.e., teach diligently, in conversation, writing, memorizing) of empowering their children to develop a love relationship with God, based on their own experiences with Him. Concerning this need, Slaughter (1996) stated:

If parents are to teach their children the truth about a relationship with God, they themselves must have hearts burning with passion for Him. They must love God with all their heart, soul, and strength; in other words, with every aspect of their being Before parents will be able to teach their children about God in an effective way, they

must have hearts filled with passion for the Lord and must be attentive to His commands. (pp. 26-27)

Further, Carpenter (2009) stated, “The heart is paired with the tongue. . . . The tongue repeats what the heart formulates, while the heart gathers information from all the senses” (p. 457) and no dissonance should exist between the message and the messenger. A parent’s relationship with God should be a practical illustration of what he or she is attempting to teach a child. Moreover, Maston and Tillman (1983) remarked: “Parents cannot teach their children effectively unless the truths they would teach have become vital parts of their own lives. . . . Parents will determine more than anyone else the direction of the lives of their children” (p. 235). The statement “these words which I have commanded you today” in Deut 6:6-7, implicitly seems to reiterate God’s expectation of parents’ responsibility to empower their children. Parents are not only challenged to nurture love encounters with God, but to be intentional in sharing them with their children. Further biblical exhortations urge parents to empower children “in the way [they] should go,” noting that “when [they are] old [they] will not depart from it” (Prov 22:6).

Westerhoff (2012) remarked on the effect of parents’ practical connection with God as they deal with their children, stating that “the responsibility of Christian parents is to endeavor to be Christian with their children” (p. 93). Furthermore, Gangel (1977c) stated that “the way parents relate to their children and to others in the extended family or the society around, and the way parents relate to God all have a profound influence on the value systems and ethical standards of their children” (p. 64). Evidently, the home or family environment is the arena primarily designed for the development of faith in children (White, 1980, 1982). The home or family environment is where children’s

education begin and where they “learn the lessons that guide [them] throughout life” (White, 1982, p. 17).

Ultimately, a biblical perspective on parent-child relational encounters calls attention to “the minuscule events of daily life. . . . How children are developing physically, mentally, emotionally and in their sense of self affects their process of faith development” (May, Posterski, Stonehouse, & Cannell, 2005, p. 152). Based on the ongoing discussions, one can assume that the responsibility of parenthood comes with different challenges. Theologically, two of these challenges are for parents a) to be what they expect their child/children to be and b) to foster a family environment where children have the capacity for wholesome development.

Understanding Family through the Lens of Systems Theory

Systems theory, according Becvar and Becvar (1999), provides a method for “understanding human behavior” through studying individuals in relation to others in their sphere of ongoing interaction (p. 6). Friedman (1992) stated that a system is a “unit made up of interdependent, interacting parts” and that “systems and their parts have both functional and structural components” (p. 115). The idea of function and structure of a system is embedded in its arrangement and organization of sub-systems—structural, and in defining and fulfilling the purpose or goals of the system—function (Friedman, 1992; Galvin et al., 2015; Starbuck, 2002). Anthony and Anthony (2011), in discussing the structure of family, called attention to how much the structure has changed overtime. New developments and advancements in technology engender changes in the original structure of the nuclear family, creating layers of subsystems (i.e., cohabiting families,

single-parent families, blended families, fragmented families, to name a few). Such changes further complicate the systemic analysis of family.

An essential characteristic of systems theory is its concept of nonsummativity, indicating that the unit as a whole is greater than the sum of its individual parts (Fisher, 1978; Friedman, 1992; Starbuck, 2002). The “principle of nonsummativity” proposes that “the components of a system do not characterize the systemic nature of the whole, but the relationships—more specifically, the interdependent relationships of the components—provide the system with its unique character of wholeness” (Fisher, 1978, pp. 197-198). Consequently, to understand the basis of systems theory, particularly in the context of family structure and functioning, one needs to examine how

components of a system interact with one another to form a whole. Rather than just focusing on each of the separate parts, a systems perspective focuses on the connectedness and the interrelation and interdependence of all the parts. A systems perspective permits one to see how a change in one component of the system affects the other components of the system, which in turns affects the initial component. The application of the systems perspective has particular relevance to the study of the family as families are comprised of individual members who share a history, have some degree of emotional bonding, and develop strategies for meeting the needs of individual members and the family as a group. *Family systems theory* allows one to understand the organizational complexity of families, as well as the interactive patterns that guide family interactions. (Fleming, 2003, para. 2)

The general implication here is that individuals’ patterns and behaviors are better understood when examined in connection to their family systems, past, and/or present. Similarly, family systems are best understood based on the characteristics of each member. This means that the capacity of differentiation of self, cohesion, or adaptability to change demonstrated by individual members in a family unit help to indicate the system’s level of functionality (Bowen, 1985; Olson, 2000).

Further discussion in favor of systems sees the theory as a “critical perspective for understanding family communication,” focusing attention on intricacies such as “meaning-making and managing dialectical tensions” (Galvin et al., 2015, p. 55). Meaning-making and dialectical interchange are natural occurrences in the development of interpersonal dyads, as well as group dynamics within the family system and by extended entities. In studying the interplay of human development from a systems perspective, Bronfenbrenner (1986) proposed an ecological model of human relationships describing four major social contexts (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem) in which human interaction takes place, and factors such as cultural conditioning influence individual wellbeing. Bronfenbrenner’s proposition on the ecology of human relationship underscores the systems’ dynamic interplay of interconnection, interrelation, and interdependence between individuals and between individuals and institutions. Consequently, FST provides a relevant paradigm for examining and explaining the way family members connect (Friedman, Bowdon, & Jones, 2003, pp. 151-152).

Components of Bowen’s Family Systems Assumptions

According to research, “individuals are tied to one another by powerful, durable, reciprocal emotional attachments and loyalties that may fluctuate in intensity over time but nevertheless persist over the lifetime of family” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1985, p. 3; 1996, p. 3). Studies on interpersonal relationships propose a durable, lifetime effect resulting from interactions and emotional exchange between family members. Segal and Bavelas (1983) stated, “All individual behavior can be understood as part of something larger, that is, interpersonal behavior, from which individual behavior derives its meaning

and motives” (p. 63). Further, Bowen (1975) posited that “man is not as separate from his family, from those about him, and from his multigenerational past as he has fancied himself to be” (p. 369). Individuals are best understood in the context of their family environment. Hence, research findings assume that interpersonal interactions and exchanges between family members have implications on the family system lifespan and on the family structure as individuals’ roles change or extend beyond the context of the family of origin.

In addition, Bowen (1961), in observing and administering psychotherapy to patients, unearthed a web of emotional entanglement between family members, leading him to propose the need for a shift in “theoretical orientation,” that is, a shift from focusing on the isolated, ill individual and instead, focusing on “the family as the unit of illness,” as well as “the family as the unit of treatment” (p. 44). See also (Bowen, 1978, 1985, 2002; Bowen & Butler, 2013; Bowen et al., 1997). Bowen’s concept of “the family as the unit of illness” and “the family as the unit of treatment” underscores a general assumption that “the individual is best understood as part of a larger social context,” particularly that of family (Segal & Bavelas, 1983, p. 63). This paradox of the family unit being the symptom, as well as the solution to certain individual issues generated the need for a systemic framework for examining some specific interpersonal exchanges within families, as well as for highlighting the implications for individual family members and society in general. Segments of Bowen’s (1985) family systems framework (i.e., differentiation of self, emotional cutoff, multigenerational transition process, and societal emotional process) examine the impact of interpersonal exchanges within the contexts of family relationships (see Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

Differentiation of Self

Differentiation of self is fundamental in individual development and functionality. According to Kerr and Bowen (1988), “the ability to be in emotional contact with others yet still autonomous in one’s emotional functioning is the essence of the concept of differentiation” (p. 145, note). Titelman (2014) described the course of differentiation as being both natural, referring to a process of change over time in mother-child symbiotic connection, and intentional, in that an individual makes choices responsibly, which lead to the formation of a basic self, distinct from others. Moreover, Kerr and Bowen (1988) proposed that such a person has the unique capacity simultaneously to be a distinct self and a participant in a group and that “the more differentiated a self, the more a person can be an individual while in emotional contact with the group”(p. 94). Concepts on differentiation indicate further a twofold nature of process wherein one has the capacity to differentiate both between self and others and between one’s intellect and emotions. This twofold nature of differentiation is essential for the wellbeing of the interpersonal dyadic between family members and the general family systems dynamics.

Friedman (1985) postulated that, to be differentiated, the individual family member must have the capacity “to define his or her own life’s goals and values apart from surrounding togetherness pressures . . . It [differentiation] includes the capacity to maintain a (relatively) non-anxious presence in the midst of anxious systems” (p. 27). Hence, the experience of differentiation seems necessary in managing the ongoing flow of relational dialectics, particularly in the context of family. Differentiation of self is vital for maintaining one’s emotional wellbeing when confronted with opposing circumstances that threaten to erode one’s sense of equilibrium.

Furthermore, Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1996) linked differentiation of self to one's ability to separate the process of intellect and emotions or to the disinclination to being governed by impulse or incomprehensible feelings. Nonetheless, they also pointed out that differentiation of self is not being aloof to one's emotions, postulating on the contrary, that

differentiation of self is demonstrated by the degree to which one is able to avoid having his or her behavior automatically driven by feelings. The ideal here is not be emotionally detached or fiercely objective or without feeling, but rather to strive for balance, achieving self-definition but not at the expense of losing the capacity for spontaneous emotional expression. (p. 169)

In essence, one's ability to remain "a distinct entity while connected to all vital systems" (Bardill, 1977, p. 12), particularly to one's family, is the instinctive expression of differentiation of self (Bardill, 1997; Friedman, 1985; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1985, 1996; Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

According to research, the process of differentiation, viewed on a continuum ranging low, moderate, or high, reflects individuals' emotional engagement or entanglement with others in their family unit or their independence from the family system. In essence, at the lowest end, individuals are considered emotionally fused to others and they react based on feelings, instead of on intellect, during times of crisis. At the highest end, they experience a healthy level of differentiation of self and are able to find the right balance between thoughts and feelings (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1996; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Titelman, 2014). Generally, the experience of differentiation of self is integral for one's functioning. However, most people experience degrees of undifferentiation, which challenge their capacity instinctively to maintain balance between the interplay of individuality and togetherness within a crisis. It is necessary that

in each context, people develop the capacity needed to distinguish between intellect and feelings (Titelman, 2014, p. 24).

Emotional Cutoff

Degrees of differentiation of self impact other aspects of Bowen's concepts on FST, possibly because of the ongoing dialectical "tension between the emotional forces of separateness and the forces of togetherness" as individuals seek to understand "connectedness between self and other" (Bardill, 1997, p. 143). Appropriate differentiation of self and others potentially results in balanced emotional attachment, yet at the other extreme of differentiation of self is what Bowen (1976) described as emotional cutoff. According to Bowen (1976), "people cut off from their families of origin to reduce the discomfort generated by being in emotional contact with them (pp. 84-86)." In the same context, Bardill (1997) described the issue of emotional cutoff as "a reactive distancing from another" (p. 143). In some cases, distancing through emotional cutoff may be expressed psychologically/emotionally, as well as physically through actual separation (Bardill, 1977, p. 143). Experiences in the family relationships process at times lead either to one's appropriate differentiation of self or to a fusion of self and others and/or fusion of intellect and feelings (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1996). Emotional cutoff is likely to develop when there is fusion of self and/or of intellect and feelings.

In addition, Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1996) discussed emotional cutoff as "flight from unresolved emotional ties to one's family of origin, typically manifested by withdrawing or running away from the parental family, or denying its current importance to one's life" (p. 422). Again, such emotional cutoffs are likely manifested by

individuals' geographical separation, erecting psychological barriers, or having a false perception of freedom from family ties as one severs contact with family or the source of anxiety. However, research shows that fleeing from one's unresolved family encounters by means of emotional cutoff is not authentic freedom. Emotional cutoff is merely a desperate effort of trying to deal with the issue of an undifferentiated self (Bowen, 1976; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1996).

Further discussions describe the issue of emotional cutoff as being a poor demonstration or absence of a differentiated self. Emotional cutoff is also explained as "the way people manage the undifferentiation (and emotional intensity associated with it) that exist between generations" and studies propose that "the greater the undifferentiation or fusion between generations the greater the likelihood the generations will cut off from one another" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 271).

Unresolved issues that incite emotional cutoff are likely to continue throughout a lifetime and be passed on knowingly or unknowingly to subsequent generations (Bowen, 1976; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1996; Kerr, 1981). Essentially, emotional cutoff is a less than adequate means of handling the ongoing emotion flux in the family relationship process. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1996) concurred with Kerr's (1981) discourse on issues of emotional cutoffs and highlights its ambivalence, pointing out that emotional cutoff simultaneously "reflects," "solves," and "creates" a problem. That is, emotional cutoff reflects a problem by calling attention to "underlying fusion between generations," solves a problem by "reducing anxiety associated with making contact," and creates a problem by "isolating people who might benefit from closer contact" (p. 177).

Multigenerational Transmission Process

According to Kerr and Bowen (1988), “every family, given sufficient generations, tends to produce people at both functional extremes and people at most post points on a continuum between these extremes” (p. 221). That is, individuals’ experiences in their family and their responses are reflections of past generations and are likely to be repeated by others in succeeding generations. This pattern of family functioning is described conceptually by Bowen (1985) as a multigenerational transmission process. According to Hall (1983), the multigenerational transmission process “consist[s] of repeated family projections or intensive intergenerational triangling” (pp. 65-66).

Like other interlocking concepts such as Bowen’s FST, the multigenerational transmission process is an expression of levels of differentiation among family members. The level of differentiation among family members and across generations determines the level of function or dysfunction experienced in the family system. Because levels of differentiation impact the family’s emotional system, researchers have assumed that the lower the differentiation in a nuclear family, the more likely the ensuing generation will be “vulnerable to anxiety and stress” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1985, p. 173).

The multigenerational transmission process within family emotional systems is genetically and relationally conveyed and involves feelings, attitude values, and beliefs (Kerr, 2000; Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 224). The process is instinctive, happening “on several interconnected levels ranging from conscious teaching and learning of information to the automatic and unconscious programming of emotional reactions and behaviors (Kerr, 2000).

Societal Emotional Process

Families influence society, and society influences families. Hence, the concept of Societal Emotional Process applied in this context can best be understood by the emotional interplay between society and family systems. Hall (1983) stated that the “emotional process in society represents the broadest possible tension between individuation and togetherness” (p. 118). Emotions trending from ongoing social dialectics concerning norms and values may result in periods of progression or regression and have implications on individuals and the family as a unit as people struggle to adapt.

To some extent, Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) discourse on the ecology of human development, outlining a web of connection among the microsystem (individual and family), mesosystem (school and peers), and exosystem (parents’ workplace and societal institutions), supports this dynamic interplay between society and family. Interestingly, Hall (1983) proposed that “insofar as togetherness or fusion forces predominate in society, they impede the differentiation of individuals and group” (p. 118).

From this, one may assume that the progression or regression of society influences what happens to the individual and the family as a system. One implication is that progression on societal values may result in less of a challenge for a parent to transmit values to a child, while a regression in societal values could find a parent struggling to instill values in a child.

Components of Olson’s Circumplex Model

Olson’s Circumplex Model embodies another approach used in various areas of research to examine functionality of family systems (1989; Olson, 2000, 2011; Olson, McCubban, et al., 1983; Olson, Russell, et al., 1983; Olson et al., 1979; Oshri et al.,

2015). Adopted as a valid and reliable means of assessing family functioning, the Circumplex Model is frequently used by researchers and clinicians in developmental and clinical psychology as a tool to examine patterns of change in family types (Baiocco, Cacioppo, Laghi, & Tafa, 2013). The Circumplex Model integrates three dimensions (cohesion, adaptability, and communication) that are relevant in understanding family relationship systems and family types (Olson et al., 1979). Dimensions of the Circumplex Model have similarities with other theories pertaining to family systems functioning such as Bowen's (1978) concept of differentiation of self (used in this study) and the McMaster model of family functioning (Epstein, Bishop, & Lewis, 1978).

Cohesion

Olson (2000) assumed that the measure of cohesion within a family system is determined by "the emotional bonding that family members" experience among one another (p. 145). Based on levels of cohesion ranging within very low (disengaged), low to moderate (separated), moderate to high (connected), and very high (enmeshed), researchers theorize that "the central balanced levels of cohesion (separated and connected) is disposed to optimal family functioning" and assume that individuals in the balanced area of cohesion are able to balance separateness from, and connectedness to, their family system in a way that optimizes the systems' level of wholesome functionality "across the life-cycle" (p. 147). Further assumptions point out that in separated relationships, individuals experience a level of emotional separateness. Time apart is usually important, but efforts are made by those in relationships for joint activities and decisions-making (Olson, 1989, p. 11).

Relationships characterized by “extremes or unbalanced levels (disengaged or enmeshed)” tend to encounter much difficulty in relating over time (p. 145). Family systems struggling to handle intense emotional encounters are likely to experience extreme separateness (disengagement) or closeness (enmeshment). In disengaged relationships, self-interest tends to predominate individuals’ time and space, leaving little or no time for collaboration on problem-solving and decision-making. In enmeshed relationships, parties have an intense emotional web of entanglement with extreme dependence between individuals and undue pressure for loyalty, and individuals tend to react to one another.

Adaptability

Significant to understanding Olson’s concept of adaptability in the context of family systems is the issue of change. Olson (1989) proposed that the essence of adaptability is a family system’s ability “to change its power structure, role of relationships, and relationship rules in situational and developmental stress” (p. 12). In the Circumplex Model, adaptability corresponds with cohesion to illustrate several levels of family system functioning, which researchers measure in a similar manner ranging from rigid (very low), to structured (low to moderate), flexible (moderate to high), and chaotic (very high).

Similar to cohesion, “it is hypothesized that central levels of adaptability (structured and flexible) are more conducive to family functioning, with the extremes (rigid and chaotic) being the most problematic” as families move through the stages of life (Olson, McCubban, et al., 1983, p. 80). Important to note is that, in this context, the essence of adaptability, “the ability to change,” seems dichotomous in the event of family

functioning since stability *is* an essential element in normal functioning. However, the issue of change in this case seems to embody adaptability further for the sake of best practice. Olson (1989) stated that “families need both stability and change and it is the ability to change when appropriate that distinguishes functional . . . families from others” (p. 12).

Communication

Based on research assumptions, the concept of communication seems ubiquitous and complex (Adler, Rodman, & DuPré, 2014; Dainton & Zelle, 2015). However, a basic definition of communication is that it is a process through which messages are encoded, transmitted, and decoded in dyadic or group interaction (Lumsden & Lumsden, 2006). Communication as described in Olson’s (1989) Circumplex Model is a means of measuring family functionality and is “considered a facilitating dimension” (p. 149). This means that communication is the impetus of cohesion and adaptability. Hence, communication in this context is not viewed the same way as cohesion and adaptability, but as the tool used by families as they interact and the means through which levels of cohesion and adaptability are observed. The communication dimension in the Circumplex Model is either positive—the ability to empathize, listen reflectively, give supportive comments—or negative—overly critical, demonstrating conflicting messages (p. 13). Other key elements of communication that are relevant in understanding family systems’ functioning are discussed further on in the context of relational dialectics.

Relational Dialectics within Family Systems: Contradictions, Change, Praxis, Totality

Relational dialectical theory is embedded in “simultaneous unity and difference” and it “embraces the ongoing contradictory tensions between consistency and inconsistency and between stability and instability” (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998, p. 2). Olson’s (2000) assumption in the Circumplex Model that communication is the tool which facilitates relationship functionality, particularly in the context of family, offers a framework for a brief examination of one of the theories of communication—relational dialectics. Although an understanding of communication seems ubiquitous, using Baxter’s (2014) succinct description—that all communication is the ongoing “interplay of differences that are often oppositional and competing”—helps to create a frame of reference for understanding the concept of relational dialectics. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) proposed four concepts (i.e., contradictions, change, praxis, and totality) that outline the dynamics of relational dialectics. In contrast to some underlying assumptions of social psychology which tend to propose individuals’ relational approaches as stable and consistent (Altman et al., 1981), the framework of relational dialectics is embedded in contradictions (Baxter, 1990).

According to Griffin (2012), “relational dialectics is a dynamic knot of *contradictions* in personal relationships; an unceasing interplay between contrary or opposing tendencies” (p. 154). Overlapping descriptions (Baxter, 1990, 2014; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Dainton & Zelle, 2015; Griffin, 2012) of the dialectical interplay of relationships “highlight the tension, struggle, and general messiness of close personal ties” (Griffin, 2012, p. 154). Baxter’s and Montgomery’s (1996) concept of relational dialectics assumes that several contrasting needs exist simultaneously in the interplay of

relationships where opposing needs are either met concurrently or one at the cost of the other through negotiation.

The simultaneous outplay of opposing relational needs is what Baxter (1990) assumed to be dialectical tensions. This interplay of opposing needs drives the need for *change*, which is another significant component of RDT. Dialectical change is inherent and may be observed from various perspectives. Change “refers to a difference in phenomenon over time,” and it offsets stagnation and create vibrancy (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2007, p. 282; Baxter & Montgomery, 1998, p. 7). Essentially, change is vital to the wellbeing of every relationship and it embodies the dynamic interplay of unified opposites. Baxter and Montgomery (2000) proposed that “the interplay of unified opposites means that all social systems experience the dynamic tension between stability and change” (p. 34).

Based on multiple research perspectives, change may be regarded as “efficient cause” or “formal cause.” This means that change is observed from the perspective of cause-effect relation (efficient cause), or it may be perceived through the patterns and flows within relational experiences (formal cause). Further, change can be purposeful, or indeterminate. That is, change may be based on “ideal end-states, or goals” (purposeful), or it may continue as ongoing interplay that involve both cyclical and linear change (Baxter & Montgomery, 2000, pp. 34-35). Interestingly, in discussing the dialectic of stability and change, Baxter and Braithwaite (2007) point out that indeterminate change often requires “simultaneous need for stability” in order to avoid chaos (p. 282). Implicitly, balance is necessary in relational dialectical interplay. It is necessary to note that the issue of balance, as inferred in the dialectical interplay, corresponds with

discussions relating to elements of FST (i.e., Olson's *adaptability* dimension in the Circumplex Model).

The issue of contractions in the context of relational dialectics is also explained through other concepts of "paired-contradicting" terms depicting both internal and external dialectics experienced in relationship transactions. Evidence of internal dialectics is prevalent within intrapersonal and dyadic communication and is best illustrated through three contradictions:

1. connection-autonomy—the tension between one's need for alone time, and the need to connect with others;
2. certainty-uncertainty—depicted in tension of one's need for security that usually comes with stability, against one's need of spontaneity and novelty; and
3. openness-closedness—the tension of wanting to be expressive, while feeling the need to remain subdued.

Likewise, external dialectics that embody interpersonal exchange and are often played out through the communication network of extended family systems are illustrated through contradictions such as inclusion-seclusion, conventionality-uniqueness, and revelation-concealment (Baxter, 1988, 1990; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Griffin, 2012).

It is important to note that the presence of pair-opposites in relational dialectics does not readily connote a negative end result. Instead, one can view such contradictions as "essential to growth and change" in relationships (Baxter, 1990, p. 70). Different factors may contribute to the dialectical tensions in diversity of relationships needs.

Highlighting the dialectical tension within connection-autonomy, Baxter (1990) further stated:

Too much connection paradoxically destroys the relationship because the individual entities become lost. Simultaneously, autonomy can be conceptualized only in terms of separation from others. But too much autonomy paradoxically destroys the individual's identity, because connections with others are necessary to identity formation and maintenance. (p. 70)

Hence, a part of the challenge in relational dialectics is to find unique balances that are suitable for different situations. Such balance is dependent on the interplay between stability and change, and becomes "the result of the struggle and tension of contradiction from a dialectical perspective" (Baxter, 1990, p. 70). A significant part of the implications of seeking to understand the dialectical interplay of relationships is to be able to gauge the flow of tensions, and in the process, create a functional balance of interdependence.

The third concept of relational dialectics, *praxis*, proposes that individuals are simultaneously actors and objects in the parts they play in the scheme of relational dialectics. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) stated:

People function as proactive actors who make communicative choices in how to function in their social world. Simultaneously, however, they become reactive objects. . . . People are actors in giving communicative life to the contradictions that organize their social life, but these contradictions in turn affect their subsequent communicative actions. Every interaction event is a unique moment at the same time that each is informed by the historicity of prior interaction events and informs future events. (pp. 13-14)

Implicit in this statement is that the idea of *praxis* simultaneously embodies both stability and change. It assumes that individuals have the capacity to create relational change, and at the same time, maintain relational stability. How individuals act in a moment of dialectical tension indicates whether they momentarily reconstruct the past (enforce

stability) or create the future (engender change). Based on empiricism, Baxter (1990) posited response strategies such as the act of selection, separation, neutralization, and reframing as being proactive methods that influence individuals' praxis in dialectical moments (pp. 72-73).

The fourth and final tenet of relational dialectics is the concept of *totality* which does not denote "completeness." Instead, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) proposed that it "is a way to think about the world as a process of relations or interdependence" (p. 15). Hence, in this context, totality is synonymous to the concept of systems perspective in that a full understanding of relational dialectics is better grasped by giving attention to the frequent interplay of the components of relational dialectics (i.e., internal and external dialectics). In essence, the concept of totality lends support to the *interdependence* element that characterizes systems theory. Interdependence here "implies mutual dependence among components such that any change in one component automatically and inherently affects every other component" (Fisher, 1978, p. 197). This mutual dependence undergirds the FC4 in family systems.

Parent-Child Relational Dialectics

As proposed in the relational dialectics concept, relationships are inevitably embedded in webs of contradictions or dialectical tensions. Hence, parent-child relational tensions are not unique phenomena. Basically, parent-child relational tension is a relentless issue most families face. Tension is stimulated by "the sequential development of personality" in view of socialization as parents decelerate and the child accelerates (Davis, 1940, p. 524). Ongoing studies reveal similarities and overlaps on the issue of parent-child dialectical relationships (Aquilino & Supple, 2001; Ashbourne, 2009; Davis,

1940; Van Doorn, Branje, & Meeus, 2008; Williams, 2003).

In addition, Davis (1940), in reviewing certain dynamics of relationship between parents and children, compared cultural correlations in parent-youth conflicts, identifying factors which prompt polarized responses such as rebellion and docility in children. The challenges of parent-youth relationship vary based on culture or societal development, but some constructs seem to have a universally impacting trend. Though Davis (1940) worked under the assumption that parent-youth relational tension seems more pronounced and prevalent in Western civilization, his studies reveal significant factors that have implications now for parent-youth relationship in a multicultural context (pp. 523-535).

Further, Davis (1940) discussed factors relating to sociocultural structures, competing authority, the birth cycle, decelerating socialization, physiological changes, and differences in both youth and their parents, all of which seem to contribute to the dialectical flux between parents and youth. Additional studies identify parental styles and practices (Lee, Daniels, & Kissinger, 2006), FC (Phillips, 2012), and family communication patterns (Schrodt et al., 2009) as impacting parent-child relational encounters and adolescents' developmental process. From a religious standpoint, Peterson's (1994) approach to parent-child dialectical tension focused on the labeled period of adolescence:

The moment an adolescent appears in a family (*intrudes* is what it feels like) the home is no longer ordinary. Because it [adolescence] takes place so suddenly, and is so unprecedented and unheralded, parents assume that something exceptional is going on in their home. (p. 1)

To some extent, these studies indicate perceived impacts of the family relationship dynamics that can be attributed to ongoing contradictions in the parent-child encounter.

From the standpoint of best practice, Ashbourne (2009) proposed that dialogue as a means of improving relational “interaction and social construction of meanings” within parent-child relational encounters, may be a viable means of negotiation in parent-adolescents’ relational dialectics (p. 211).

A feasible approach to the issue of parent-adolescents’ relational dialectics is the need to understand and embrace adolescents’ developmental process. This may involve parent-child’s willingness to dialogue and negotiate in potential dialectical tensions that tend to develop from adolescents’ push against parent-child’s previous symbiotic connection. Psychoanalytical studies refer to this development need as the second individuation process of adolescence (Blos, 1967; Boles, 1999; Kroger, 1989). According to Kroger (1989) “the second individuation process of adolescence involves the relinquishing of those very intra-psychic parental representations which [adolescents] internalized during toddlerhood and [which] formed the structure of childhood identity” (p. 48).

The overarching need for separation and individuation which begins and fluctuates in the infancy/childhood stages is necessary for character formation (Erikson, 1963; Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 2000). Because “character formation involves progressively higher levels of differentiation and independence” of the parent-child previous symbiotic relationship, this second individuation is integral in helping adolescents define self as a separate emotional entity from their parents (Kroger, 1989, p. 49). It is necessary to note that Blos’ (1967), and Kroger’s (1989) discussions on the second individuation process corroborates with ongoing dialogues (Bowen, 1985; Bowen & Butler, 2013; Hall, 1983; Kerr, 2000; Kerr & Bowen, 1988) on the issue of

differentiation of self discussed earlier. Evidently, developmental processes that contribute to individuals' awareness and assertion of the autonomous self while functioning in relationship with others are necessary processes that are likely expressed in the context of parent-child relational interplay.

Adolescents' Development and Identity Formation: Their Implications on Faith

Psycho-socio studies on individuals' developmental process identify adolescence as the transitional period between childhood and adulthood, approximately between eleven and nineteen years of age. However, according to Marcia (1980), "one difficulty in studying adolescence is the definition of the period itself," because at the onset, adolescence is marked by distinct physiological changes but is "highly variable in its end" (p. 159). According to Hanawalt (2008), "no other stage in the life cycle has engaged . . . so much debate" (p. 19). Yet, the significance of what the period of adolescence embodies should override the discrepancies concerning biological determinants or the actual time span that it lasts.

Inquiries in areas of psycho-socio development mark the period of adolescence distinguishably as the identity versus role confusion, a time when individuals' need for independence lead to exploration and assertion of self-identity (Erikson, 1963, pp. 261-263; Marcia, 1980, pp. 159-161). This identity of self encapsulates "a self-structure—an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, belief" based on past and present experiences (Marcia, 1980, p. 159). In some cases, adolescents' response to changes in their "physical development, cognitive skills, and social expectations" (Marcia, 1980, p. 160) are subjected to childhood perception, creating a need to help

them think beyond childhood and ahead towards adulthood. The influence of significant relationships is important in this process.

Erikson (1968) proposed that during the adolescence period, adolescents are “often curiously, preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are, and with the question of how to connect the roles and skills cultivated earlier with the ideal prototypes of the day” (p. 128). This indicates that adolescents’ sense of identity is influenced by others’ perception of them, particularly those in close relationships. Fowler (1981) agreed that adolescents are influenced by others, stating, “He or she needs the eyes and ears of a few trusted others in which to see the image of personality emerging and to get a hearing for new feelings, insights, anxieties and commitments that are forming and seeking expression” (p. 151).

Adolescents’ identity is also impacted by how they feel about their abilities. However, other events beyond the time of adolescence have an impact on how adolescents’ feel about their abilities and their overall identity.

Erikson (1968) pointed out that the search for identity at this stage sometimes necessitates the need for some adolescents to work through crises of previous stages of development before they can establish a “final identity.” Marcia (1980) seemed to support Erikson’s (1968) point, proposing that “the identity process neither begins nor ends with adolescence. . . . It begins with self-object differentiation at infancy” (p. 160). Moreover, Marcia alluded to proximal influence on adolescents’ identity based on the preceding industry versus inferiority stage of development. The inference here is that adolescents’ identity is likely impacted by what transpired at the previous stage. Furthermore, Marcia (1980) suggested that the successive stage (i.e., intimacy versus

isolation) will potentially be influenced by the identity versus role confusion stage, as well as that of industry versus inferiority (p. 160).

In addition, in discussing the implications of adolescents' identity formation, Marcia (1980) pointed out that the process happens in a "gradual and nonconscious way" and that ongoing experiences contribute bit by bit to the process (p. 161). Throughout the period of adolescence, an individual's identity emerges over time. Hence, Marcia (1980) proposed four concepts (or identity statuses) used to describe different phases of the process: identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, and identity achievement (p. 161). Based on the assumption that identity development embodies a period of exploration and commitment, an understanding of Marcia's (1980) exploration of adolescents' identity statuses is significant in this context.

Marcia (1980) proposed that the diffusion stage symbolizes adolescents who are not inclined to explore or commit to any particular beliefs or values and are less likely to have established life goals. Identity foreclosure indicates that when individuals are not enthusiastically trying to decide on what is important to them, they are more inclined to tacitly accept the beliefs and values of others and accept the goals of others for their lives. In contrast, moratorium represents individuals who eagerly explore and experiment with different values and beliefs, but do not readily commit to any particular belief or value on impulse. The stage of identity achievement signifies a state of balance between exploration and commitment where there is active exploration of values, beliefs, and goals identification. During this stage, commitment is made based on individuals' thoughtful decision that the beliefs and values under scrutiny are important to them fulfilling their purpose and goals in life (pp. 161-162). In this context, it is assumed that

adolescents' manifest stages of identity statuses are influenced by familial relational experiences, which influences how they mature in faith and develop LV that lead to CC.

An Overview of Faith

According to Dykstra (2005), "faith is a complex reality" that is not easily defined. Faith is sometimes described broadly as "general human phenomena" (p. 17) (believing, trusting, committing and orienting life), or, expressed as confidence in something or someone. Based on Dykstra's description, faith seems inclusive of both active and passive encounters. In further discussion of the complexity of faith, Nelson (1989) hinted at a theological and philosophical underpinning of faith, proposing that "faith is often used as a synonym for religion" (as doctrinal beliefs) or as a contrast to reason (p. 127). However, studies suggests that the dynamics of faith seem much more than exclusive concepts or theories of theology or philosophy.

Fowler (1981) proposed that faith encompasses more than the religions, traditions, rituals, and beliefs through which it is often expressed, arguing that

faith, at once deeper and more personal than religion, is the person's or group's way of responding to transcendent value and power as perceived and grasped through the forms of the cumulative tradition The cumulative tradition is selectively renewed as its contents prove capable of evoking and shaping the faith of new generations. Faith is awakened and nurtured by elements from the tradition. As these elements come to be expressive of the faith of new adherents, the tradition is extended and modified, thus gaining fresh vitality. (pp. 9-10)

An aspect of faith, as described here, seems to be a notion inevitably embedded in a person's being and is manifested through life experiences. In essence, faith in a person is stimulated and preserved to some extent by tradition and is passed on to others through tradition. Faith seems complex in that the embodiment of faith in one person in a particular context, and that which is passed on to another, is both similar and different at

the same time. In essence, the traditional symbols of faith may find new meaning and expressions from generation to generation.

Consequently, Fowler (1986) also underscored the complexity of faith by stating, “Faith has to do with the making, maintenance, and transformation of human meaning. It is a mode of knowing and being” (p. 15). Embracing a developmental perspective, he discussed aspects of faith as embodying attachment in the context of relationship in which virtues such as trust, commitment, and loyalty are mutually expressed. Faith, as proposed in this context, seems to engender a comprehensive, ongoing relational web of knowing and acting, which may be better understood as a structural developmental concept:

Faith in the structural-developmental sense is never a static, completed formula. Faith exists in activity, in the ways we use religious symbols, in the ways we express our loyalties and commitment, in the ways we form our human relationships. To understand faith as a structure is to think of it as a verb, as a way of doing, of knowing, a way of committing and thus being. (Fowler & Lovin, 1980, p. 20)

The experience of faith, examined through the lens of structural development, indicates that the process is dynamic. This supports Fowler’s (1981) belief that as faith is passed on through tradition, the experience is “modified” and “gains fresh vitality” for each person. While the notion of faith in itself does not change, each person’s faith-encounter embodies his or her own unique perception, interpretation, and way of responding to faith. Because faith entails commitment and loyalty and is expressed through activities and the use of symbols in a relational context, its outcome is contingent on interpersonal implications (p. 10).

In addition, Fowler (1981) posited that “there is always *another* in faith. I trust *in* and am loyal *to*” (p. 16). This indicates that faith is relational. Fowler’s proposal here is a

fitting platform from which to propose that the context of relationship is significant for the formation and nurturing of faith. Faith happens horizontally and vertically in relation with another (Gillespie, Donahue, Boyatt, & Gane, 2004, pp. 97-103; Kozlowski, Ferrari, & Odahl, 2014, pp. 427-428; Roehlkepartain, 1990, p. 497). Fowler's relational paradigm of faith also coincides with other developmental structures such as Piaget's (1932) cognitive, Erikson's (1963) psycho-socio, and Kohlberg's and Hersh's (1977) moral stages of a person's process of growth. In essence, these frameworks (i.e., faith, cognitive, psychosocial, and moral) of developmental structures are fundamentally linked to a relational paradigm.

Fowler's (1981) idea that faith embodies relationship also lends support to the proposed theory used in discussing FM within the context of family systems relationships. In discussing the relational aspect of faith, he alluded to a "triadic dynamic faith" (one's sense of self within an environment, relationship with other(s) in the environment, and response to situations in the environment) as being part of the psychology of human development and sense-making (pp. 91-97).

Fowler's (1981) thought on faith development is expressed in conjunction with Piaget's (1932), Erikson's (1963), and Kohlberg's and Hersh's (1977) structural-developmental approach to understanding how a person's cognitive, psycho-socio, and moral experiences emerge over a lifetime. His conceptualization provides a helpful schema of faith described in his proposal of seven operational aspects (undifferentiated, intuitive-projective, mythic-literal, synthetic-conventional, individuating-reflective, conjunctive, and universalizing) and is applicable in the understanding of the faith-

development process throughout an individual's life experience. Six of these stages may be measured empirically (pp. 117-199).

Fowler's Structural-Developmental Approach to Understanding Faith

Corresponding with Erikson's (1963) and Piaget's (1932) initial psycho-socio cognitive (trust versus mistrust and sensorimotor) phase of development is Fowler's (1981) undifferentiated (or pre-stage) faith. The period of undifferentiated faith, although not considered an empirical stage of faith, is fundamental for the ensuing stages of faith development. Fowler refers to this period as the time that "seeds of trust, courage, hope and love are fused in an undifferentiated way and contend with sensed threats of abandonment, inconsistencies and deprivation in the infant's environment" (Fowler, 1981, p. 121). Essentially, the infant's experience with parents or other caregivers becomes his or her prime reality, and faith is unconsciously developed in relations with his or her interaction with these individuals. Hence, "attachment between the infant and her or his parent/caregiver is a process with important implications for the child's future relationships" (Fowler & Dell, 2006, p. 37).

Comparable with Fowler's (1981) undifferentiated faith is Piaget's (1932) concept of the sensorimotor phase of development, described as a time when a child's awareness of reality is subjected mainly to his or her use of the senses. The child uses the senses to gather information which influences his perception of reality (Balswick & Balswick, 2014, pp. 131-133; Piaget, 1932). This period of undifferentiated faith also coincides with Erikson's (1963) notion of how crises moments may incite either hope or fear and suspicion in the infant's life, resulting in either "trust" or "mistrust" as the child

transitions to ensuing stages of development (pp. 247-251). Consequently, one may conclude that both Piaget's (1932) and Erikson's (1963) initial developmental concepts seem to support Fowler's proposition on the emergence of faith during the period of infancy. In essence, undifferentiated faith is incumbent on a trust that develops over time through shared relational exchange, and this faith later influences the succeeding stages of faith and has implications on the child's image of self in relation to others.

Fowler's (1981) first empirical stage of faith development—Intuitive-Projective—also has structural similarity with Erikson's (1963) childhood phases of development—autonomy versus shame/doubt and initiative versus guilt, as well as Piaget's (1932) preoperational stage. According to Fowler, this period marks a child's first stage of self-awareness and a conscious experience of faith. During this time, “tools of speech and symbolic representation” help children create meaning and make sense of the environment through the stories and images introduced to them by parents or caregivers. At this stage, children continue to depend on others, but are now able to use the imagination to experience life through images from the stories to which others introduce them (Fowler, 1981, pp. 134-135).

Again, this stage of faith development coincides with Piaget's (1932) assumption concerning the preoperational stages as the time that children begin to use their mental capacity in engaging others through the use of words. Likewise, Erikson's (1963) autonomy versus shame/doubt is identified as a time that the child begins to experience the autonomous self by asserting a level of independence, a process that, if not encouraged by others, results in the child's embodying shame or doubt and ultimately, a lack of self-esteem. Further, children's relational encounters with others and the

responses they experience during the initiative versus guilt stage determines whether they will develop a healthy sense of purpose or feelings of inadequacies (Erikson, 1963, pp. 251-258).

Again, both Piaget's (1932) and Erikson's (1963) developmental models validate the relational implications during the intuitive-projective faith developmental stages of a person. In addition, developmental psychologist Vygotsky (1986) discussed factors that are integral in "the relations between the growth of [a] child's thinking ability and his social development" (p. 9), alluding to socio-cultural impacts of the relational exchange between the child and others in the developmental environment. Fowler's (1981) discourse identifies the initial stage of faith development (intuitive-projective) as a significant time when a child's perspective is influenced by interaction with others in his environment, a time when he encounters experiences that have far-reaching implications for developing age-appropriate faith. Based on research findings pertaining to the intuitive-projective stage of faith Fowler (1981) stated:

For every child whose significant others have shared religious stories, images and symbols in ways that prove life-opening and sustaining of love, faith and courage, there must be at least one other for whom the introduction to religion, while equally powerful, give rise to fear, rigidity, and the brutalization of souls—both one's own those of others. There are religious groups who subject Intuitive-Projective children to the kind of preaching and teaching that vividly emphasize the pervasiveness and power of the devil, the sinfulness of all people without Christ and the hell of fiery torment that await the unrepentant. This kind of formation—and its equivalent in other religious traditions—can ensure a dramatic "conversion experience" by the time the child is seven or eight. It runs the grave risk, however, of leading to what Philip Helfaer calls "precocious identity formation" in which the child at conversion, takes on the adult faith identity called for by the religious group. (p. 132)

In essence, this statement calls attention to the need for age-appropriate methods of engaging children in religious experiences. Likewise, Bushnell (1960) advocated the need for seamless approaches in engaging children in faith experiences, proposing that "the

child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise” (p. 4).

Fowler’s (1981) observation duly challenges caregivers to be conscientious in their interactions with children at the intuitive-projective stage of faith development, while fulfilling their responsibilities in homes, schools, or religious communities, particularly when they convey content knowledge. However, what might prove more challenging is to understand the faith perspectives of adults in these contexts. What knowledge do they have, and what were their own initial experiences as children, and now, as adults? Will individuals likely share with others based on their own experiences? Theories concerning individuals’ socio-psycho developmental process (Barna, 2003; Bowen, 1961; Bushnell, 1960; Erikson, 1963, 1968; May et al., 2005; McWhirter et al., 2017; Piaget, 1932) in the context of family may be helpful in determining the answer to some of these questions.

Fowler’s (1981) second stage of faith—mythic-literal, paralleling Piaget’s (1932) concrete operational and Erikson’s (1963) industry versus inferiority, also corresponds with Kohlberg’s and Hersh’s (1977) initial stage of moral development—preconventional level. Mythic-literal faith embodies the significance of stories as being a “way of giving unity and value” to one’s experience (Fowler & Lovin, 1980, p. 26). Children (and even adults) in this stage tend to accept without questioning the information given to them by others. The knowledge gathered from stories forms their beliefs system without reflecting their own views. The mythic-literal stage is based on the notion that people create meaning and find their place in communities through “stories, beliefs and observances” symbolic of the communities of which they are a part. At this stage, the place of community is essential in the child’s understanding self (Fowler, 1981, pp. 135-150).

In conjunction with Fowler's idea, Piaget's (1932) proposal concerning the corresponding stage of development (concrete-operational) underscores the increased mental capacity of the child during this period. Similarly, Erikson's (1963) industry versus inferiority phase posits that the children more readily engage in activities and are more likely to experience a sense of competence and confidence when they feel affirmed in their engagements. However, feelings of inferiority develop when the child's engagement meets with disapproval (pp. 258-261). At the same time, Kohlberg's and Hersh's (1977) theory on moral development—that people's moral reasoning changes as they grow, beginning at the pre-conventional level—supports the assumption that a child's mental capacity increases during the stages of development. Two classifications at the pre-conventional level (heteronomous morality and instrumental exchange) endorse the notion that a child has the mental capacity to reason and make decisions which are based either on consequences or in relation to autonomy (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977, p. 54). Kohlberg's and Hersh's (1977) pre-conventional level parallels Fowler's (1981) mythical-literal stage of faith development.

The third stage in Fowler's (1981) structural developmental model of faith is synthetic-conventional, a point at which many individuals begin to experience a sense of balance of self in relation to others. Emerging during the period of adolescence, synthetic-conventional is a time that individuals are able to think abstractly and integrate multiple perspectives on ideas as their experience of the world extends beyond family to include peers, school, work, peers, faith groups, media, and society. Critical thinking skills are limited during this time, and individuals rely on others' perspectives or support to confirm decisions (pp. 172-173).

Fowler's (1981) synthetic-conventional stage of faith marks the initial transition of childhood to adulthood. Hence the individual's need of "the eyes and ears of a few trusted others in which to see the image of personality emerging and to get a hearing for the new feelings, insights, anxieties and commitments that are forming and seeking expression" (p. 151). This indicates that individuals get a sense of being based on what they see in or hear from those close to them. A further assumption is that at the synthetic-conventional stage of faith development, people comprehend their sense of self and purpose based on their idea of how significant others view them. Using the concept "mutual interpersonal perspective taking," Fowler (1981) explained the complexity of how individuals create images of the self, based on their own perception of how others see them (p. 153). Values formed during the synthetic-conventional faith stage are based on what was taught or experienced during past stages of faith, a personal reflection of past encounters, and the capacity to process present feelings. However, people hold values and commitment at this stage tacitly as they tend to embrace the values and norms of others in their sphere of influence without much critical reflection (p. 162).

Again, in a comparison of Fowler's synthetic-conventional stage with other developmental theories, similarities may lend support to the concept of faith's being a structural developmental process. Piaget's (1932) final stage, the formal operational, is associated with the individual's remaining lifespan and is conceptualized as the time when the child's ability to think and reflect emerges; he or she is able to reason like an adult and is able to grasp abstract concepts (pp. 49-59).

Similarly, the concept of synthetic-conventional parallels Erikson's argument surrounding the psycho-socio stage of identity versus role confusion—referred to as a

period when an individual's need for independence is likely to lead to exploration and emergence of a sense of self (Erikson, 1963, pp. 261-263). In like manner, Kohlberg's and Hersh's (1977) conventional level (constructed on mutual interpersonal relations, social system, and conscience) supports Fowler's assumptions on the synthetic conventional stage of faith development. Kohlberg and Hersh's (1977) conventional level assumes that individuals at this stage tend to conform to different groups' norms in an effort to avoid disdain or guilt (p. 55). Essentially, the correlations in these overlapping assumptions indicate that at this developmental phase, a person's sense of self is more pronounced and they tend to be more conscious of how others view them.

The need to move from the synthetic-conventional stage of faith development to the fourth stage—individuated-reflective—is critical as individuals in this phase face the imperative of determining the self beyond their roles, social status, or vocation. At the individuated-reflective stage, individuals no longer rely on external sources and authority, but now critically evaluate the values and beliefs passed on to them by others. Hence, they take responsibility for their own beliefs and commitments. Fowler (1981) stated, "It is in this transition that the late adolescent or adult must begin to take seriously the burden of responsibility for his or her own commitment, lifestyles, beliefs and attitudes" (p. 182). This means that the tacit values and beliefs accepted at stage three are examined critically at stage four and are either personally embraced or discarded. Essentially, "the self previously sustained in its identity and faith compositions by an interpersonal circle of significant others, now claims an identity no longer defined by the composite of one's roles or meaning to other" (Fowler, 1981, p. 182). This process

sometimes generates unavoidable tension as people assert their individuality against group conformity.

Influenced by the preceding stages of faith development, the individuative-reflective phase is significant in that it initiates what one might call “the independent adult self” as individuals engage their capacity to make choices and decisions independently of others. Looking at Erikson’s stage of intimacy versus isolation, one is likely to see some parallels with Fowler’s (1981) notion of individuative-reflective faith. In Erikson’s (1963) view, intimacy versus isolation is a pivotal time during the adult life when many individuals choose to share more intimately with others for the sake of finding love and, ideally, long-term committed relationships. On the contrary, some may embrace isolation instead of intimacy and are likely to experience loneliness instead of fulfilling relationship with others (Erikson, 1963, pp. 263-266).

Further, Kohlberg’s and Hersh’s (1977) postconventional principled level of moral development seems to correspond with Fowler’s (1981) individuative-reflective stage of faith development and supports the role of the independent adult self. The postconventional principled level of moral development encapsulates the ultimate stages of moral development, drawing attention to individuals’ potential to display autonomy and a sense of self-governance. Emerging at this stage is individuals’ capacity to think critically and their potential to act based on perceived judicious considerations which sometimes supersede social norms (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977, p. 55). In essence, the commonalities in all these overlapping assumptions seem to be the sense of autonomy which emerges with ensuing dialectical tensions.

Fowler's (1981) fifth stage of development—conjunctive faith—is complex. The Conjunctive stage is a dialectical interplay between individuals' loyalty based on attributes of their own faith and multiplicity on the logic of faith. Fowler (1981) discussed Conjunctive faith as “a way of seeing of knowing, of committing” and moving “beyond the dichotomizing logic of Stage 4's ‘either/or’” (p. 185). In essence, it involves going beyond the overt ideological practices and distinctness evident during the intuitive-reflective phase and reaching into the complex self. Individuals at the conjunctive faith stage experience a deeper awareness of the self within.

Such a response sustains a simultaneous effect where individuals are said to be conscious of opposing or contradictory ideologies and to respect and validate such ideologies while remaining committed to their own. At the same time, they are able to confront and accept the difficulties of life and, in the process, learn to exercise faith in a way beyond their logical control. Individuals are more likely to be humble and respectful in attitude and tend to embrace an eclectic approach to multiplicity of ideologies. Fowler and Dell (2006) stated that “individuals in the conjunctive stage express a principled interest in and openness to truths of other cultural and religious traditions, and believe that dialogue with those different others may lead to deepened understandings and new insights in their own traditions” (p. 41).

In effect, the period of conjunctive faith seems to include having a balanced embodiment of self and others, as opposed to focusing on the self in previous faith stages. The dichotomy between “I and thou” or “us and them” gives way to mutual engagements that tend to enhance relationships and symbols, and practices once seen as insignificant or held in abhorrence take on new meaning.

Similar to previous stages of faith, conjunctive faith correlates with other developmental structures. Conjunctive faith corresponds with Erikson's (1963) mid-adult phase known as generativity versus stagnation, which symbolizes the period when individuals are settled into careers, have solid family relationships, and exhibit a sense of caring as demonstrated through the contributions they make to society (pp. 266-268). Individuals who sense their inability to contribute in this manner tend to experience feelings of unproductivity and stagnation. Erikson's (1963) assumption concerning the stage of generativity versus stagnation presumably also supports the notion of otherness indicated in Fowler's fifth stage of faith development as individuals show care or concern for others or for the society in general.

The final stage (universalizing faith) in Fowler's framework of faith development emerges from dialectical reflections and interactions experienced at the previous (conjunctive) stage. Influenced by the awareness of certain issues and their implications on others and society, individuals at the universalizing faith stage are inclined to value and advocate for extreme benevolence. This means that individuals at this stage are unmindful of preserving self and are disposed valiantly to champion humanitarian causes for the wellbeing of others and the benefit of a better society regardless of "nationality, social class, gender, age, race, political ideology, and religious tradition," and "those once seen as enemies may be understood also to be children of God and deserving of unconditional love" (Fowler & Dell, 2006, p. 41). Further, Fowler (1981) proposed that individuals at the universalizing level of faith development tend to exhibit qualities beyond status quo. Relatively fewer persons transition to this stage (p. 200).

Similar to previous stages, Fowler's universalizing faith has some correlations with Erikson's (1963) psycho-socio stage of development—ego integrity versus despair, simply described as the “post-narcissistic love of the human ego” (p. 268). Here, individuals tend to evaluate self based on their contributions to life in general, and self-interest is abandoned for the good of others. Continuing to build on the experiences of previous stages, individuals' outlook at the self-integrity-despair is incumbent on how they negotiated those previous stages.

A summary of Fowler's (1981) discourse on faith's being a structural developmental experience bears evidence to the complexity of the faith process as proposed by Dykstra (2005). At the same time, Fowler's (1981) model provides a helpful framework for understanding faith progression. However, Fowler's (1981) structural developmental model of faith is not a means of determining the validity or sincerity of individuals' faith experiences or a measure of the quality of their religious practices. In essence, Fowler's hypothesis on the stages of faith is not intended to be a measure of one's religiosity. Instead, it is a viable means of describing “patterns of knowing and relating through assessing cognitive, moral, and other forms of development that constitute a person's relationship to the transcendent or the Higher Being . . . and with other humans, both inside and outside a person's particular faith community” (Fowler & Dell, 2006, p. 40).

While Fowler's theory is widely accepted and used as a framework for understanding faith, there are some disparaging discussions regarding his perspective. His attempt at universalizing faith as an inevitable human experience highlights his belief in the inclusiveness of faith in that no person is exempt from the experience and that the

experience is fundamental in all human experience whether people are religious or not. This inclusive nature of faith has theological (the attempt to define biblically what faith is), philosophical (the epistemological focus of faith as a way of knowing), and dialectical (a both/and phenomena) implications which create ongoing discussions among some who struggle to understand the essence of faith.

As Fowler (1981) juxtaposed faith in the context of psycho-socio structural development in an attempt, seemingly, to minimize abstraction and provide a relational model for easier understanding of faith phenomenon, potential rebuttals come with this way of viewing faith. One potential challenge to a structural developmental model for understanding faith is the temptation to impose a general sequence of linear progression of the phenomenon. However, Fowler and Dell (2006) cautioned against viewing the experience of faith as an inevitable transition “from one stage to another” (p. 40). Though Fowler’s framework for examining and explaining faith indicates that faith is not a static phenomenon, people should not assume that faith entails linear progressive experience. At the same time, the stages of faith based on chronological years represent a level of maturity, and it is possible for individuals to experience levels of faith contrary to their chronological years.

Westerhoff’s Four Styles of Faith

Another perspective to Fowler’s understanding of faith which merits consideration in this context is Westerhoff’s (2012) four styles of faith. Paralleling Fowler’s (1981) description of faith, Westerhoff (2012) proposed that “faith is a way of behaving which involves knowing, being, and willing. . . . It results from our actions with others, it changes and expands through our actions with others, and it expresses itself

daily in our actions with others” (p. 89). The commonality between both perspectives is that faith is a dynamic phenomenon that involves interaction based on some form of relationship. Hence, Westerhoff (2012) made generalizations about four styles of faith: experienced faith, which is based on initiated acts and responses to certain basic needs; affiliative faith, which is centered on identifying and acting with others in an accepting community; searching faith, in which one establishes one’s own identity through critical thought and reflection; and owned faith, which is the conversion resulting from experience, affiliation, and personal searching (pp. 89-98). Each dimension of Westerhoff’s (2012) style of faith represents a chronological period, but like Fowler’s (1981) stages, it is not rigidly imposed on individuals’ chronological stages of development.

Dimensions of Faith

Another description of faith is based on dimensions—vertical, horizontal, undeveloped, and integrated (Gillespie et al., 2004, pp. 102-103; Roehlkepartain, 1990, p. 497). These four dimensions of faith are embedded in a vertical/horizontal construct that measures a person’s faith based on relationship with God (vertical) and with others (horizontal). Gillespie et al., (2004) proposed that people with undeveloped faith are “low on both the vertical and horizontal scales, while those having integrated faith measure “high on both vertical and horizontal faith scales” (p. 102). In-between are vertical faith (individuals are strong in relationship with God, but low in relationship with others) and horizontal faith (individuals are high in relationship with others, but low in relationship with God).

Having looked at faith in a broad sense, it is necessary in this context to focus

attention fundamentally on faith being formed and nurtured through relationship with others and God, based on a biblical theological framework of empowerment (Deut 6:4-9; Ps 78:3-4; Eph 6:4; 2 Tim 2:1-2). Hence, it is necessary to look at the practicality of how relationships in family impact adolescents' identity formation of values that potentially influence faith and commitment.

Faith Maturity

Studies show that the process of determining mature faith is as complex as the understanding of faith itself. Faith maturity, according to Benson et al. (1993), is “the degree to which a person embodies the priorities, commitments and perspectives characteristic of vibrant and life-transforming faith” (p. 3). Ongoing empirical examinations have proposed various hypotheses correlating FM with issues such as religious ego identity, religious socialization, intrinsic and extrinsic orientation, identity formation, youth volunteering motivation, and parent-child communication (Armet, 2009; Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003; Choi, 2012; Erickson, 1992; Gane & Kijai, 2006; Martin et al., 2003; Sanders, 1998).

Like faith itself, FM seems to be a dynamic process that is incumbent on experience, affiliation, searching, evaluating, and ultimately owning (Westerhoff, 2012). Although Westerhoff (2012), in describing faith, did not label any of his styles of faith as mature faith, the fourth style, *owned faith*, to some extent models the concept of mature faith. A faith that is mature encapsulates the cognitive-affective (belief-behavior) capacity of a person and has significant spiritual implication whereby one's relationship with a personal God leads to “life-transforming experiences” (Gillespie et al., 2004, p. 97). Further, Roehlkepartain (1990) asserted that “a person of mature faith experiences

both a life-transforming relationship to a loving God—the vertical theme—and a consistent devotion to others—the horizontal theme” (p. 497).

The general discussion of faith thus far, embraces a relational framework, from which one can infer that faith is an inevitable existential phenomenon that is common to all people. Based on the structural-developmental-relational context from which faith have been examined, it can be further assumed that maturing faith is a progressive life phenomenon, rather than an achievement or a destination. However, it is of interest to point out that though the propensity of faith is inevitably embedded in all people, there is a necessary volitional response to faith that is needed for the process to mature in each person. A biblical perspective on faith helps in the understanding of what constitutes mature faith.

Like the developmental-relational viewpoint espoused in psycho-socio context, there is indication that faith from a biblical standpoint is predicated through relationships—both vertical and horizontal (Eph 4:1-6). From a Christian perspective, faith (*pistis*, as referred to in Eph 1:15; 3:12, 17; 4:3; Heb 11:1-3, 6;) may be defined as a moral conviction or persuasion of religious truth or, “the truthfulness of God.” It is constancy in professing or, demonstrating with assurance and fidelity, one’s complete “reliance upon God for salvation” (Strong, 2007, pp. 341, 1660). This implies that there is a cognitive aspect to the encounter of faith, since the process of knowing precedes the act of being persuaded (Rom 10:17). To be persuaded is to be influenced by what is known (i.e., religious truth or, the truthfulness of God). What is anticipated from the effect of knowing and being persuaded is a demonstration of fidelity (Heb 3:12-15). Hence, there is also an affective and, a volitional aspect of faith (Rom 10:10; John 7:17).

Faith, from a biblical standpoint is demonstrated as individuals assert their identity and purpose through their engagement in a covenantal relationship with God.

From this perspective on faith comes an underlying assumption that mature faith is a volitional vibrant expression of belief and trust in God resulting from the Holy Spirit working in an individual, through his or her relational encounters with others, and the Transcendent God. Faith begins to mature as knowledge leads to conviction that evokes passion and unswerving commitment to a relationship with God and service to humanity.

A further assumption is that as faith matures, individuals' values tend to reflect their fidelity and commitment to the Transcendent God. Ultimately, that which is of value in an individual's existential practices (Matt 6:21) potentially contributes to mature faith. The instrumental definition of adolescents' FM in this context (i.e., "often", "sometimes", "once in a while", "rarely" and "never") conceptualizes their experience in fostering relationship with God and sharing with others about their knowledge of God, as well as their expressed involvement in service to humanity.

Life Values

Consciously or unconsciously, every individual "operates on a system of values," whether such values are good or not. When people are faced with making daily choices, their values determine how they make choices (Dudley, 2007, p. 86). Values are important in the process of individuals' development. Hence, the importance of values necessitates the exploration of the meaning of values and the way that they are formed.

Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) described values as "concepts or beliefs about desirable end states or behaviors that transcend specific situations, guide selection or evaluation of behavior or events, and are ordered by relative importance" (p. 551).

Gillespie (1993) stated that value “in a general sense refers to what is good, desirable, and worthwhile” and that “in a religious sense, what we value indicates what we see as being in balance with, in harmony with, and central to the expressed will of God” (p. 9). These definitions indicate that the concept of values encompasses a broad basis of individuals’ experiences influencing how they think and behave. Values challenge people’s “attitude and interests, and informs their beliefs and convictions” (Gillespie, 1993, p. 11). Dudley (2007) further proposed that the concept of value is both a *product* (what one values) and a *process* (the means by which one develops values), a “process which begins in early childhood and continues” throughout a lifetime (p. 87).

Values are “actively developed” by the worth individuals assign to animate and/or inanimate objects after “sorting through available options” and “weighing respective merits” (Case & Dudley, 1993, p 48). Presumably, the process of developing values is motivated and instilled based on cultural and/or religious influences and on a person’s materialistic, altruistic, or religious goals. It is assumed that at the core of the cultural/religious ideologies that influence individuals’ formation of values is the matter of identity and purpose. This means that as individuals’ identity and purpose are understood through the lens of culture, or religious creeds, their values are potentially influenced and viewed in the same way. Gillespie’s (1993) remark, that “what [people] value indicates what [they] see as being in balance with, in harmony with, and central to the expressed will of God [and vis-à-vis culture]” (p. 9), suggests that individuals’ understanding of their identity and purpose influence their values.

Looking at the notion of values, and the process of forming values, from a biblical context, the concepts are apparently intertwined with individuals’ awareness of their

identity and purpose. In earlier discussions in this context on the divine-human imperative, individuals' (and family systems) identity and purpose are significantly tied to being created in the image of God. Hence, the biblical admonition to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt 6:33; see also 6:21) is seemingly a suitable precursor to the pursuance of, or, attainment of that which a person considers of interest, and benefit.

Individuals' values are also influenced through the relationships they have with others (i.e., family members, friends, teachers and pastors) hence, the transmission of values are potentially impacted by parent-child relational encounters, particularly during the developmental stages of childhood (Barni et al., 2011, p. 105-107; Case and Dudley, 1993, p. 47-51). It is assumed that if there are incongruences between parents' personal values and the values they are endeavoring to transmit to their children there may be tension in the parent-child dialectical interplay, and ramifications for developmental outcomes. Consequently, the biblical edict for parents to "train up a child in the way he should go, [assuming that] when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6) may be relative to the parents' own value system.

Because studies indicate that the context of family and the way the unit functions have psycho-socio-cultural impact on individual family members' development, and that the relational encounters in family systems influence how values are formed and upheld, it is necessary in this context to explore the factor of LV in correlation with the dialectical interplays in adolescents' (in this study) experiences family systems, their levels of FM, and CC.

Commitment to Christ: Identity Exploration and Commitment

Research specific to the matter of adolescents' CC seems sparse. Most studies examine issues pertaining to adolescents' religious development and commitment from a general perspective, inclusive of individuals' religious beliefs, identity, traditions, and their engagement in religious rituals (Erickson, 1992; Layton, Dollahite, & Hardy, 2011). In several studies on adolescents' identity development that includes their religious stance, the term exploration is often a precursor to commitment. Marcia's (1980) discussion on adolescents' identity statuses (diffusion—no exploration or commitment, foreclosure—commitment without exploration, moratorium—exploration without commitment, and achievement—exploration and commitment) provides a standpoint from which one can look at the issue of commitment in relation to exploration (p. 161). Dean (2010) stated that “teenagers—like centuries of young people before them—find themselves in search of a faith, religious or otherwise, that they can call their own” (p. 9).

Implicit in Marcia's (1980) concept of exploration and commitment in the context of adolescents' ego identity is the fact that the process of exploration is important (Layton, Hardy, & Dollahite, 2012), and that commitment is likely manifested when value (intrinsic or extrinsic) is ascribed to something or someone. Interestingly, some studies relating to adolescents' religious commitment tend to be more focused on religious tenets such as traditions, rituals, doctrines, and liturgy, and less focused on the person's relational experience. Dean (2010) proposed that “decades of research consistently link high levels of adolescent religiosity with prosocial behavior and success in both academic and social and familial relationships.” However, in all of this, young people “are largely immune to religion's existential claims and unaware of religion's

effect on their daily lives” (p. 16). One seeming implication here is that though there are cognitive evidences of religious identity and practices (often driven by traditions) among some adolescents, religion does not necessarily provide the basis for life’s meaning or how they live each moment.

Further, in studying adolescents’ religious exploration Layton et al. (2012) “highlight[ed] the importance of relational contexts” as significant for understanding adolescents’ commitment (p. 157). Based on these assumptions that exploration is vital for commitment and that the contexts of relationship is important for exploration, it is necessary in this study to examine certain constructs of family relational functioning that may be contributing factors to adolescents’ levels of CC.

At the same time, it is necessary to note that while Marcia’s exploration-commitment identity framework is a valuable means of conceptualizing adolescents’ faith identity-commitment progression, the stage of achievement is only a means to an end, since commitment is not a static encounter. Consequently, a biblical perspective concerning the matter of commitment is vital in the attempt to understand adolescents’ encounter of being in committed relationships with Christ.

In this context, aspects of the operational definition (i.e., “My commitment to Christ developed gradually over a period of time” and “I’ve been committed to Christ since I was young, and continue to be committed to Christ”) of the variable measuring adolescents’ commitment denotes progression; a continuous encounter. This indicates that the act of commitment merits highlighting the moment or onset of a covenantal act of coming into a relationship with Christ.

But further thought must be given to the experience that follows the moment of commitment. Metaphorically, to be committed in a relationship with Christ is comparable to the commitment individuals experience in a spousal relationship. The precise encounters leading up to the performance of religious rituals and publicly authenticating the relationship between the individual and Christ may be compared to the engagement-wedding stage of a spousal relationship. Yet, after a wedding the couple encounter life together in a marriage relationship that is based on their love for each other. By forsaking all other allegiance they embark on a lifetime of togetherness (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:5; Eph 5:31). Likewise, commitment to Christ is a dynamic relational encounter where an individual forgoes all other loyalties and clings to Christ (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23).

What follows a person's commitment-achievement—the point where the self is identified as being in a relationship with Christ, is an expression of covenantal agreement predicated on covenantal love as inferred in Jer 31:3, Matt 22:37-38, John 3:16, and 14:15. To be committed in a relationship with Christ calls for complete surrender that identifies Christ as the lone authority directing the way one lives (Gal 2:20). This type of commitment (though not opposed to the practice of religious rituals) transcends ritualistic religious engagements, evoking a volitional response of fidelity as first modeled by Christ (Rom 5:8). It engenders a life of selflessness, sacrifice, and service to God and humanity; a life that daily leads individuals to become transformed into the character Christ. It is assumed that this level of commitment in adolescents is influenced by the faith and values developed through their relational encounters with parents.

Family Systems Dialectics

Having explored some of the literature relating to components of family systems relational functioning in conjunction with rudiments of relational dialectics, it is necessary to consider briefly how these elements work together in establishing the construct, FSD. The concept of FSD represents a meta-analytical model that is designed as a best practice for understanding potential effects of family relational interplay on individuals' religious outcomes. Figure 3 illustrates how tenets of FST and RDT merge to create FSD. In this context, FSD is an approach from which to examine the potential effects of familial relational experiences on adolescents' LV, faith outcome, and ultimately, their CC.

In a general sense, fundamentals of FSD (see Figure 3) highlight the entity of family as a unit or a system that consists of individuals who experience dynamic interpersonal interplay. Such relation interplay potentially influences individuals' unique development, as well as the overall functioning of the unit (Bowen, 1961, 1985). This dynamic interconnectedness stems from a constant relational pull and push that is taking place directly or indirectly, consciously or subconsciously, as individuals' communitive needs simultaneously vie for fulfillment. Referred to as dialectical tensions (Baxter, 1990; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) the process is not necessarily negative and is essential in the routine of all relational interchange. What results from the dialectical interchange can potentially determine the degree to which individuals' experience cohesion—that is, a level of “emotional bonding that family members”—needs to be experienced among one another (Olson, 2000, p. 145). Adequate emotional bonding is vital for individuals' process of development and normal functioning in relationships

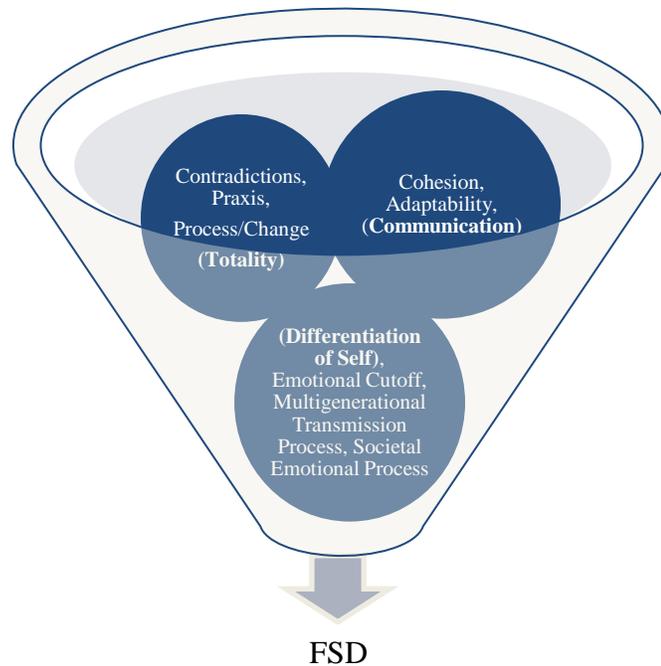


Figure 3. Family Systems Dialectics (FSD) Model. An illustration of how elements of FST and RDT merge in creating FSD.

with others. It is necessary to point out that Olson’s (2000) concept of cohesion has similarities to Bowen’s (1985) concept of differentiation of self. Both concepts seem to examine people’s levels of emotional capacity and the outcomes of those emotions in relational dialectics interchanges.

A part of the dynamics of relational dialectics interchange is the constancy of change and the cyclical outcome of change in the push and pull of individuals’ contrasting needs. The need for change is ongoing and the process may be expressed positively or negatively based on individuals’ capacity to adapt in situations. Change is an essential aspect of individual family members’ developmental process and is necessary for the stability of the family as a unit.

As a component of FSD, family is defined as people joined together by legal or biological ties, who share space and time, and who are potentially impacted by repeated generational trends. Based on a morphing of family from its original nuclear structure of husband, wife, and offspring, the contemporary family configuration includes single parent, blended, foster, adoptive, and extended family structure (Anthony, 2011, pp. 2-20). Changes in family structures tend to augment the complex webs of interpersonal exchange and impact individuals' developmental process. A study of certain principles of interpersonal exchange creates a lens through which to examine the complexity of family relational systems and how family relationships impact people's development and outcome (Bowen, 1961, 1985; Leigh & Peterson, 1986; Olson, 2000).

Select tenets of FST (i.e., differentiation of self, emotional cutoff, multigenerational transmission process, and societal emotional process (Bowen, 1961, 1985), cohesion, and adaptability (Olson, 1989, 2000)) are played out in people's experiences in family. This means that a mother's capacity of differentiation of self may affect a fetus during gestation. After birth, ongoing interactions with parents and caregivers determine a child's ability to self-differentiate. In addition, the child's capacity to differentiate may later influence other relational interchanges.

Levels of differentiation of self determine whether (and to what extent) a person will be emotionally cutoff from other family members due to some relational crisis. If the issues causing emotional cutoff are not dealt with within the immediate family context (i.e., biological), it is likely that its effects will be transferred into another family context (i.e., marital). This transfer initiates the multigenerational transmission process. It is important to note that families' emotional climate is sometimes influenced by what

happens in society. Families (especially those with children) are potentially influenced by the progression or regression of society's value system. In essence, a regression in society's value system may result in parents' finding it difficult to transmit certain necessary values that are conducive to a child's healthy development.

Like components of FST, tenets of RDT—contradictions (i.e., autonomy versus connectedness), praxis, and totality (Baxter, 1990; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996)—are embedded in people's experiences through relationship with others. Here, the concept of autonomy versus connectedness is similar to that of Kerr's and Bowen's (1981) differentiation of self and is evident in people's contradicting needs to be an independent self while remaining connected in relationship with others. The extent to which people connected in relationships are presumably aware of their opposing needs determines the effectiveness of their response in the dialectical struggles. Individuals' conscious or subconscious response in the dialectical interplay contributes to certain relational outcomes. How people act (the concept of praxis) indicates their potential to engender change. According to Baxter and Montgomery (1996), "people function as proactive actors who make communication choices in how to function" (p. 13). In essence, choice is consequential in people's levels of functionality. The level of individuals' differentiation of self influences choices, how they manage crisis, and their capacity to adapt to changes in an ongoing relational phenomenon.

The complexities of FSD are inevitably embedded in ongoing relational interactions. The levels of complexity stem from a repeated multigenerational transmission process. This happens when people in marital relationships bring with them the experiences of at least two separate systems and begin to create (consciously or

subconsciously) a joint “new” system. This new system is often just an extension of older systems. In essence, families are built on a web of relational entanglement. The relational context in which children develop into adolescents is potentially influenced by the distinct outplay of the parents’ joint “new” system, as well as their personal inherited relational background. The cycle is repeated as children take their places as adults and start families of their own; the complexities of FSD increase and are forthcoming for other generations. Because of this, research suggests that in order to respond adequately to certain issues (particularly relating to children or adolescents), it is necessary to look at families, and not just at the isolated person (Bowen, 1961, 1978, 1985, 2002; Bowen & Butler, 2013; Bowen et al., 1997). From this standpoint, Bowen (1961) proposed the concept of viewing families as both “ the unit of illness,” as well as “the unit of treatment” (p. 44). Hence, the insertion of the FSD construct in this context is a means of understanding and responding to adolescents’ faith outcome. Because the relational aspect of faith is emphasized in this study, it is necessary to look at correlations between certain family relational experiences and adolescents’ FM, LV, and CC.

Chapter Summary

This review of literature is an exploration of issues relating to the institution of family, factors influencing family members’ developmental process, the complexity of faith, and the outgrowth of adolescents’ faith through the family relational system. Families are evidently integral to individuals’ development and the general wellbeing of society. The systemic effects of relationships in the context of family have psycho-socio-cultural impacts on both individual family members and society, in general. Several factors influence individuals’ developmental wellbeing and the overall functioning of

family systems. Such factors comprise a person's capacity to be an individuated self while simultaneously maintaining emotional connectedness with other family members. It also includes competence in managing the dialectics of change and stability that are necessary in the process of an individual's development.

Family relational effectiveness can be improved by a biblical theological approach that is embedded in a framework of empowerment through relationship. This model of empowerment through relationship reflects the divine imperative of God's interaction with humanity and His desire for their wellbeing. Family interactions are subjected to ongoing dialectical tensions as they relate to one another. Such relational dialectics are the constant push and pull people experience through interpersonal communication. Relational dialectics are inevitably played out in parent-adolescents interaction based on individuals' contradicting needs vying for simultaneous fulfillment.

The dialectical process is still necessary in creating a platform for negotiating relational meaning and for creating and affirming individuals' and family values. Values are based on cultural, religious, and family norms, and people tend to assign intrinsic or extrinsic values to such norms. The issue of faith as value (intrinsic or extrinsic) seems ubiquitous, having cultural and religious significance for individuals' and family systems structure. Based on research, faith may seem complex, having experiential, developmental, and relational components, yet a both/and approach is necessary even while proposing a relational perspective for understanding issues surrounding adolescents' FM.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research examined aspects of familial relationships in an attempt to see whether certain variables pertaining to interpersonal dynamics within family systems influenced adolescents' LV, FM, and their overall CC. The study explored components of FST (i.e., Bowen's Family Theory and Olson's Circumplex Model) and RDT (Baxter and Montgomery), guided by the assumption that these were viable methods for understanding levels family functioning. In the process, certain parent-child dyadic and communication outcomes within family systems were examined. Specifically, the study examined whether certain variables (i.e., FGCP, PRP, FCPF, CFT, FW) were factors that contributed significantly to adolescents' FM, LV, and CC.

Research Design

In this study, a quantitative non-experimental exploratory correlational research design utilizing secondary data analysis was used to test the hypothesis of FSD as impacting adolescents' FM, LV, and CC. Studies proposed that quantitative research methods may be used not only to determine the cause of an effect, but also to provide the means through which the effect of a phenomenon can be measured (Beinenstock, Hummel-Rossi, McIlwain, & Mattis, 2006). Likewise, quantitative research designs,

according to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), “emphasize objectivity in measuring and describing a phenomena . . . by using numbers, statistics, structure and control” (p. 21), while addressing a need to determine cause/effect in a study (Beinenstock et al., 2006).

The objectivity of the design increases the quality of analysis procedures by controlling for biases or subjectivity. In this context, the use of quantitative methods increased the objectivity of the study and restricted any predisposed biases. The study was non-experimental, involving correlational assessment of relationships between a number of constructs using secondary data analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 22). Correlational assessment is a means of determining “the association between two or more variables” (Grajales, 2013, p. 97). Furthermore, the process is essential in observing “relationships that may exist among naturally occurring phenomena, without trying in any way to alter these phenomena” (Grajales, 2013, p. 127).

Subsequently, one of the statistical designs employed in testing the research assumption, and examining bivariate correlations was CFA—used to examine the existing relationships between variables and “test the validity of a hypothesized factor structure” (Byrne, 2010; Meyers et al., 2013, p. 850). In addition, SEM, a method retained in the study of hypothesized measurement model and structural model simultaneously (Byrne, 2010, pp. 12-13), was also used to examine the research hypothesis. It is necessary to note also that the use secondary data in this study has several advantages including cost-effectiveness and the benefit of a large sample size (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p 242-246).

Population and Sample

The adolescent population in this study consisted of subjects within the Valuegenesis² 2000 - 2001 census that was conducted in schools affiliated with Seventh-day Adventists and comprised of students in grades 6-8 and 9-12 (Gillespie, 2002; Gillespie et al., 2004). A replica of the 1990 Valuegenesis¹ census, the Valuegenesis² census was initially conducted with approximately 16,000 participants and accounted for over 11,400 subjects (5374 males, 6,107 females) following the initial data cleansing. Further elimination of missing cases increased the reliability of the study and reduced the sample size to 4,675. Character demographics of Valuegenesis² included age, gender, school type, grade, family structure, denomination, and ethnicity. In this study, the demography was limited to gender, age, ethnicity, and family structure.

Research Hypothesis

Studies indicated that through statistical modeling and evaluation, a hypothesized model is likely to explain the levels of consistency within data being analyzed (Byrne, 2010, p. 97). Grajales (2013) proposed that “in quantitative studies inferential statistics are used to test null hypotheses” (p. 178). In this study, the null hypothesis was used to test whether the theoretical model of FSD (see Figure 4) was supported by empirical data. The proposed theoretical model assumed bivariate correlations among certain variables (FGCP, PRP, FCPF, CFT, and FW), proposing that they were significant indicators of the latent construct FSD. Further, the theoretical model suggested that FM and LV were mediators of FSD on adolescents’ CC. A corollary in the study of FSD on the relational encounter in family systems is the influence of the overall FC. As previously indicated, FC accounts for adolescents’ perception of their family environment being a place where

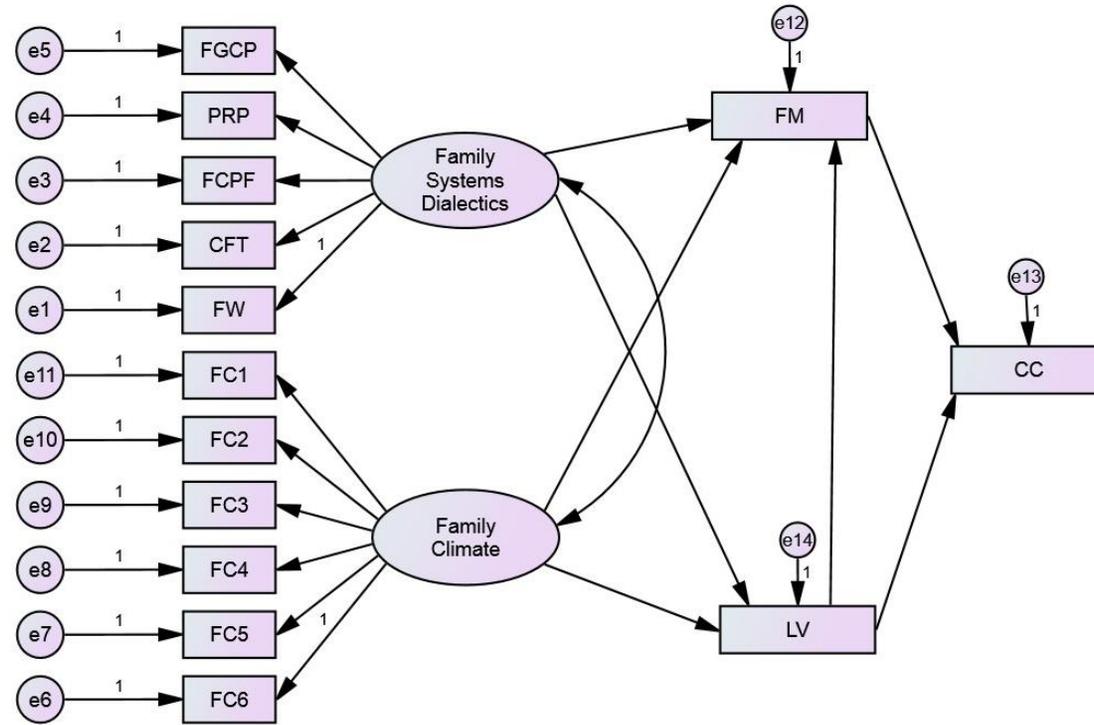


Figure 4. A SEM outline of the Hypothesized Theoretical Model. The model illustrates causal relationships of indicator variables on the constructs, FSD and FC, correlations between latent variables (FSD and FC), and between outcome variables FM and LV and mediated effects of FSD on CC.

they experience happiness through various relational encounters with their parents. It was assumed that significant correlations existed between FSD and FC.

The FSD model was based on a theoretical framework which discussed elements of FST (Bowen's Family Theory and Olson's Circumplex Model) and RDT (Baxter & Montgomery) and which assumed that relational encounters in family systems (particularly between parents and children influence adolescents' FM, LV, and CC. The study sought to examine whether the empirical covariance matrix supported the theoretical covariance matrix, hence the following research hypothesis:

The theoretical covariance matrix is similar or identical to the empirical covariance matrix. Further bivariate correlational testing will address the assumptions that

1. Family Systems Dialectics is a significant predictor of adolescents' FM and LV.
2. Faith maturity and LV are mediators of the effect of FSD on adolescents' CC.

Variables Definition

The variables in this study were extracted from Valuegenesis² survey items. One of the benefits of using the Valuegenesis instrument was the availability of a large sample size and the accessible list of variables that measured adolescents' encounters in the context of home, church and school. With a large sample size "comes greater flexibility . . . improved reliability, and generally credible results" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 243). The aim of this study was to examine the theoretical framework regarding the possible influence of parent-child relational encounters in family systems, on adolescents' religious developmental outcomes. Hence, it was necessary to extract from

Valugenessis² variables that seemed to represent the interpersonal relational exchange between adolescents in this study and their parents.

Through a general scrutiny of the survey, 66 items (16%) which seemed to reflect interpersonal exchanges between the subjects and their parents were chosen out of 396. Through the process of factor analysis 41 of the 66 items were selected and, 14 variables (eleven indicator variables and three outcome variables) were constructed. The 41 items and were defined conceptually, instrumentally, and operationally in alignment with their classifications. These variables were chosen on the assumption that they seemed to reflect certain relational interplay taking place within the family systems being studied, particularly, between adolescents and their parents.

Family systems dialectics, a latent construct indicated by five observed variables (FGCP, PRP, FCPF, CFT, and FW) , was defined conceptually as a meta-analytical model designed as a best practice for understanding potential effects of family relational encounters in family systems on adolescents' religious phenomena. It illustrated the complexity of interactions within family units, proposing that these interactions impact adolescents' LV, FM, and ultimately, their CC. At the same time, the dialectical interplay of the family systems relationships determines the general atmosphere, or the climate of the family and vis-à-vis. Research suggested that the general FC is a reflection of several aspects of family level functioning (Fosco et al., 2016, p. 1140).

Based on the systemic dialectical perspective adapted in this study, it was assumed that FC creates the atmosphere for all relational encounters even as it is affected by the relational encounter between family members. Hence the inclusion of the construct FC in studying the dialectics of family systems. The construct FC was indicated by six

observed variables: FC1, FC2, FC3, FC4, FC5, and FC6. Conceptually, FC represented adolescents' perception of their family as a place where they experience love and happiness, and get along with and feel supported by parents. It was assumed that there were significant correlations between the constructs, FSD, and FC.

Variables Indicating Family Systems Dialectics

Frequent Good Conversation with Parents

Frequent good conversation with parents was qualitatively perceived to be adolescents' recollection of time spent conversing with either of their parents and was represented by item 173 in Valuegenesis² data set. Time was qualified as 10 minutes or more in the last month and measured descriptively as *never, once, twice, 3 times, or 4 or more times*.

Parents' Religious Posture

Conceptually, PRP represented adolescents' perception regarding the demonstrative effects of their PRP. Parents' religious posture was represented in Valuegenesis² by items 189 (perception of father) and 190 (perception of mother). Both items were measured through one of six descriptions:

1. This question does not apply to me;
2. He/She is not religious at all;
3. He/She is not very religious;
4. He/She does religious things, but it doesn't seem to matter much how he/she leads his/her life;
5. Although he/she is religious, it is not easy to tell how it influences his/ her life;

6. He/she is deeply religious. It is evident that his/ her faith has a big impact on how he/she lives his/her life.

Frequent Conversation with Parents about Faith

A conceptual representation of the variable FCPF was established on adolescents' need to spend time, and satisfaction from spending quality time, talking with parents about their faith or religious experiences, as well as being able to share their own faith experiences. Frequent conversation with parents about faith was instrumentally defined by four items (191-194) of Valuegenesis² and was measured descriptively by nine criteria:

1. This question does not apply to me,
2. Never,
3. Less than once a month,
4. About once a month,
5. About 2-3 times a month,
6. About once a week,
7. Several times a week,
8. Once a day, and
9. More than once a day.

Comfort with Faith Talk

Comfort with faith talk described adolescents' perception of their own comfort level, as well as their parents' in talking to others about their faith and about what God

meant to them. Instrumentally, CFT is listed in Valuegenesis² as items 195-197 and was measured on a Likert scale of 1-4:

1. This question does not apply to me,
2. Not comfortable,
3. Comfortable, and
4. Very comfortable.

Family Worship

Family worship represented the frequency with which families within the population engaged in worship activities such as praying and having devotional time together as a family away from church. It also accounted for how adolescents perceived or the value they attributed to FW or other religious events in their home. Frequency of FW, represented by item 198 in the survey, was measured descriptively by one of eight criteria:

1. Never,
2. Less than once a month,
3. About once a month,
4. About 2-3 times a month,
5. About once a week,
6. Several times a week,
7. Once a day, and
8. More than once a day.

Adolescents' perception of the value of FW and other religious events in their home was represented by items 199-201 with criteria based on a *yes* or *no* response, and was

described as “interesting,” “meaningful” or, “a waste of time.”

Indicators of Family Climate

Family Climate was indicated by six measured variables described as FC1, FC2, FC3, FC4, FC5, and FC6. Conceptually defined, FC represents adolescents’ perception of their family environment as being a place where they experience love and happiness and get along with and feel supported by parents. Indicators of FC were instrumentally defined by items 174-179 in Valuegenesis² survey and were measured on a Likert scale of 1-6:

1. No opinion,
2. I definitely disagree,
3. I tend to disagree,
4. I am not sure,
5. I tend to agree, and
6. I definitely agree.

Outcome Variables

Faith Maturity

Faith maturity was conceptualized as a way of life through which adolescents’ lives exemplify “a vibrant, life-transforming experience” (Dudley, 1992, p. 59). Faith maturity was represented as a twofold demonstration of meaningful relationship with God, and unswerving commitment of service to others (Dudley, 1992, p. 59). It was also represented as adolescents’ expression of their experience with God, their awareness of responsibility, and their commitment to serve others. An instrumental description of FM

was based on items 1-12 of Valuegenesis² and was measured on a Likert scale of 1-5:

1. Never,
2. Rarely,
3. Once in a while,
4. Sometimes, and
5. Often.

Life Values

Life value was conceptually defined as goals that adolescents considered important to them. Goals were classified as intrinsic (humanitarian and character development) and extrinsic (material acquisitions and accomplishments). Instrumentally, eight items represented LV (99-106) in Valuegenesis² data and was measured on a Likert scale of 1-4:

1. Not at all important,
2. Somewhat important,
3. Quite important, and
4. Extremely important.

Commitment to Christ

Commitment to Christ was conceptually expressed as adolescents' perception of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, exemplified through the faith and values they embraced. Commitment to Christ was described instrumentally through item 13 in Valuegenesis² and measured by five descriptive criteria:

1. I am not committed to Christ;

2. I am not sure if I am committed to Christ;
3. I committed my life to Christ at a specific moment in my life, but it didn't last;
4. My CC has developed gradually over a period of time; and
5. I committed myself to Christ when I was a young child, and continue to be committed to Christ.

Instrumentation

Data in the Valuegenesis² studies (an upgrade of the Valuegenesis¹ instrumentation), represented a survey instrument consisting of 396 items used by researchers at the Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry, La Sierra University, and the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists Project Department of Education. The census was administered to students enrolled in schools affiliated with the Seventh-day-Adventist Church (grades 6-8 and 9-12), collecting and analyzing data that measured adolescents' perceptions of and experiences with faith in the context of family, church, and school.

The Valuegenesis² instrument was originally intended to “explore how faith is developed, and how commitment is learned” with the hope of providing a “basis for new approaches, new dialogues, and new way to help youth find their Savior” (Dudley, 1992, pp. viii-ix). Select measured variables (FGCP, PRP, FCPF, CFT, FW, FM, LV, and CC) and latent constructs (FSD and FC) were extracted as instrumentation for this study. Each variable and construct was previously defined conceptually, instrumentally, and operationally.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The validity of a study relies on whether a test measures what it was designed to measure, while minimizing systematic errors or biases (Dalli, Lary, Swift, & Fortunato, 2003). A key factor contributing to the validity of an instrument is the capacity for generalization across population, ensuring that what is being studied can be measured consistently in repeated studies (Beinenstock et al., 2006; Dalli et al., 2003). Valuegenesis instruments have been used repeatedly to measure adolescents' development of faith, values, and commitment in the contexts family, church, and school (Beagles, 2009; Carlson, 1996; Gane & Kijai, 2006; Nagy, 2014; Schulze, 2012). However, the use of Valuegenesis instruments have been limited to institutions affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Reliability of the Valuegenesis² instrument was evident through the use of multiple items which persistently measured a single concept (Gillespie, 2002). Multiple items in Valuegenesis² have been used repeatedly (see also Valuegenesis¹ [1990] and Valuegenesis³ [2010] scales) to measure aspects of adolescents faith posture, LV, and religious commitment (Beagles, 2009; Carlson, 1996; Gane & Kijai, 2006; Nagy, 2014; Schulze, 2012). Data cleansing was also carried out in the Valuegenesis² scale to increase the validity and reliability of the instrument, eliminating surveys that contained random responses, and missing relevant cases (Gillespie, 2002). Initial data purging narrowed the data set to 11,481, from 16,020.

For this study, further elimination of missing cases was carried out, reducing the sample size to 4,675. The elimination of missing cases involves the use of traditional or modern procedures both of which have advantages and disadvantages based on the study

undertaken, and the method of elimination used (Allison, 2003; Meyer et al., 2013). The “traditional method focus on *deleting missing cases* . . . [while] modern methods emphasize *maximum likelihood estimation* procedures” (Meyer et al., 2013, p. 48). Table 1 provides a preliminary analysis of the frequency of variables with missing cases prior to reduction of the sample size.

Because SEM research design (used in this context to test the research hypothesis) is sensitive to sample sizes and missing cases (Bryne, 2010; Kline, 2011), it was necessary to eliminate the missing data on the variables used, and also reduce the sample size. The traditional listwise procedure was used in the process of deleting missing the cases. Listwise deletion assumes that the data are missing completely at random (MCAR), an indication that the reduced sample is essentially a reliable random sample of the original sample. Listwise process of removing missing data is advantageous in the use of various “multivariate techniques” and requires minimal statistical computations (Meyer et al., 2013, p. 49).

As part of the validity and reliability measures, Cronbach’s coefficient alpha analysis was conducted to assess the internal reliability of the subscales indicating the variables and constructs. Cronbach’s alpha measures the degree to which participants in a study respond consistently to items in a subscale. A reliability value of .7 is considered acceptable (Meyers et al., 2013, p.722). However, there are some discrepancy surrounding this suggested value as the Cronbach’s “coefficient alpha wrongly assumes that all items contribute equally to reliability.” Hence, it is recommended that additional validity and reliability assessment be conducted to provide a robust value (Assaker, 2010, p. 37). The use of composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE)

Table 1

Valuegenesis2 Missing Cases Processing Summary

Variables	Valid		Cases Missing		Total	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
FGCP	11,415	99.4%	66	0.6%	11,481	100%
PRP	11,411	99.4%	70	0.6%	“	“
FCPF	11,392	99.2%	89	0.8%	“	“
CFT	11,390	99.2%	91	0.8%	“	“
FW	8,878	77.3%	2,603	22.7%	“	“
FM	11,481	100.0%	0	0.0%	“	“
LV	11,426	99.5%	55	0.5%	“	“
CC	11,481	100.0%	0	0.0%	“	“
FC1	11,453	99.8%	21	0.2%	“	“
FC2	11,445	99.7%	36	0.3%	“	“
FC3	11,406	99.3%	75	0.7%	“	“
FC4	11,426	99.5%	55	0.5%	“	“
FC5	11,435	99.6%	46	0.4%	“	“
FC6	11,422	99.7%	39	0.3%	“	“

**N* = 11,481; % = 100

are additional methods used to further assess the validity and reliability of a proposed model. Composite reliability “measures reliability based on standardized loadings and measurement error for each item” in a subscale, while the AVE method “reflects the amount of variance in the indicators accounted for by a construct” (Assaker, 2010, p. 37).

Table 2 provides Cronbach’s alpha values for the variables used in this study.

Data Collection Procedures

The use of secondary data analysis provides several benefits which include “cost effectiveness, data quality [and], increased sample size” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 242). Secondary data used in carrying out this study was provided by researchers at the Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry, La Sierra University, and the North

Table 2

Items from Valuegenesis² Reflecting Variables Used in the Family Systems Dialectics Model

Latent Variables	Observed Variables	Items	Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)
<i>Family Systems Dialectics (FSD)</i>	<i>Indicators of FSD</i>		.71
	Frequent Good Conversation with Parents (FGCP)	173	---
	Parents' Religious Posture (PRP)	189-190	.54
	Frequent Conversation with Parents about Faith (FCPF)	191-194	.84
	Comfort with Faith Talk (CFT)	195-197	.60
	Family Worship (FW)	198-201	.10
<i>Family Climate (FC)</i>			.86
	<i>Indicators of FC</i>		
	Family Happiness (FC1)	174	---
	Level of Love in Family (FC2)	175	---
	Parent-child Relationship (FC3)	176	---
	Parents' Support of Child (FC4)	177	---
	Verbal Expression of Love (FC5)	178	---
	Response to Family Rules (FC6)	179	---
	<i>Outcome Variables</i>		
	Faith Maturity	1-12	.86
	Life Values	99-106	.63
	Commitment to Christ	13	---

American Division of Seventh-day Adventists Department of Education (Gillespie et al., 2004). A request to use Valuegenesis data sets was submitted via email and follow-up telephone calls to the Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry, Riverside, California (see Appendix A). Permission to use Valuegenesis data sets was granted by email (pending a response from the research committee (see Appendix A) and was later confirmed by telephone conversation with V. Bailey Gillespie. The use of Valuegenesis² in this study required the extraction of specific variables and constructs that were relevant to the theoretical model of FSD. These variables and constructs were defined in Chapter 1, Definition of Terms, and previously in this chapter (see section on Variables Definition). Table 2 provides an overview of the Valuegenesis² survey items that were extracted to test the research hypothesis (see Appendix B for details).

Analysis of Data

Analysis of data were carried out using the International Business Machine (IBM) Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 24) and Analysis of a Moment Structures (AMOS 24). Forty-one measured items selected from Valuegenesis² instrument were considered fundamental in testing the research hypothesis. These items were transformed using SPSS 24 to create mean scores of observed variables. Statistical methods incorporated the use of SEM and CFA. Structural equation modeling design is able to analyze both observed and latent variables (Kline, 2011, p. 9) and is adequate to test model-fitting theories as the process “takes a confirmatory (i.e., hypothesis testing) approach” in analyzing a theory (Byrne, 2010, p. 3).

Structural equation modeling analysis infers that causal effects in a study are

represented by “structural equations” and that the “structural relations can be modeled pictorially” to enhance the underlying concepts of a proposed theory (Byrne, 2010, p. 3). Basic composites of SEM include a measurement model which “defines the relations between observed and unobserved variables” and a structural model which “defines the relations among unobserved variables” (Byrne, 2010, pp. 12-13). Further, in applying various procedures in SEM, indicator variables (FGCP, PRP, FCPF, CFT, and FW) were used to “estimate the quantitative causal effect” on two outcome variables (i.e., FM and LV). A further assumption was that FM and LV were mediators of the effect of the latent construct FSD on CC (see Figure 4).

Confirmatory factor analysis was used initially to examine the relationships between observed variables and their relationships with the underlying latent construct (Kline, 2011, p. 287). Used as the measurement model, CFA “assesses the statistical quality of the factors based on the variables” represented (Meyers et al., 2013, pp. 850-851). The relevancy of CFA in this context was based on the assumption that there were significant effects of the latent construct FSD (observed by the five indicator variables [i.e., FGCP, PRP, FCPF, CFT, and FW]) on the outcome variables: FM, LV, and CC.

This study focused on analyzing the research model and tested the validity of the hypothesized structural model in comparison with the measurement model. Hence, the following criteria were used to examine model “fit measures” (Arbuckle, 2016; Blunch, 2008, pp.98, 110-116): The chi-squared (χ^2) likelihood ratio statistic, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the normed fit index (NFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA).

Based on statistical reports, the χ^2 likelihood ratio statistics is the most significant absolute fit index, testing the difference between the theoretical model and the empirical model (Arbuckle, 2016; Blunch, 2008; Meyers et al., 2013). A significant χ^2 indicates that the theoretical model does not fit the empirical data, whereas a good model fit is indicated by a non-significant χ^2 . The GFI is similar to the “coefficient determination” (R^2) in multiple regression, measuring the model variance and covariance. Goodness-of-fit index values equaling .90 or greater imply a good model fit (Blunch, 2008, pp. 110, 114). The NFI analyzes the difference between the χ^2 values of the hypothesized model and the independent model (Blunch, 2008, p. 114). The target value for the NFI is .90 or greater. The CFI analyzes differences between the empirical model and the theoretical model. The target value CFI should be $\geq .90$, which indicates a good model fit. The RMSEA measures approximation error between observed covariance and the covariance of the hypothesized model, and in a general sense, an approximation of 0.10 indicates an acceptable fit. Blunch (2008) suggested that an approximation of “0.05 is considered a sign of good fits and models” (p. 116). In essence, the multiple model fit indices available through structural equation modeling provide adequate means of testing and explaining the proposed hypothesized model.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented details on the research design, population and sample, conceptual, operational, and instrumental definition of variables, as well as an overview of statistical procedures that were used in the research analyses. A quantitative, non-experimental, correlational design using secondary data analysis forms the basic research design. The research population consisted of adolescents, and the sample comprised the

Valuegenesis² census conducted among students (grades 6-12) enrolled in schools affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventists Church.

Five variables (FGCP, FRP, FCPF, CFT, and FW) were considered significant indicators of FSD. Family systems dialectics was presumably a significant predictor of adolescents' LV and FM. The ultimate assumption was that FM and LV were mediators of the effect of FSD on adolescents' CC. The Valuegenesis² survey instrument consisted of 396 items and validity was enhanced using multiple items measuring a single phenomenon. Cronbach's alpha reliability value indicated that the items chosen for this study were acceptable for assessing the underlying assumption. Forty-one items were selected for use in this study. Permission was granted by the Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry, La Sierra University, Riverside, California, to use Valuegenesis² instrument in the current study. The instrument was used to test whether the theoretical covariance matrix was similar to the observed covariance matrix, and to examine bivariate correlations among indicator variables. Data analyses were carried out using CFA and SEM methods by means of SPSS 24 and AMOS 24 statistical techniques.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH RESULTS

Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to test the theoretical model of the influence of FSD on adolescents' FM, LV, and CC. The preceding chapters discussed issues concerning family systems relational encounter (i.e., parent-child) in correlation with certain adolescents' developmental outcomes. Several studies proposed that there are significant correlations between family systems dynamics and individuals' psycho-socio-cultural developmental outcomes, but few studies examine whether there are significant correlations between family systems relational encounter and adolescents' religious outcomes. This chapter presents an analysis of the hypothesized model that supports the assumption that there are significant correlations between the relational encounter in family systems, particularly between parents and children, and adolescents' FM, LV, and CC.

Sample Demographics

The data used in this study is drawn from the Valuegenesis² dataset that was collected in 2000-2001 in high schools affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Initial purging of the data reduced the sample from 16,000 to 11,481. To increase the reliability and validity of this study, a further elimination of missing cases reduced the

sample size to 4,675. Based on the research design used (i.e., SEM, AMOS 24), the elimination of missing cases enhances model testing. In essence, a smaller sample size increases the ratio of likelihood indices for a good model fit (Byrne, 2010, p. 76). The Valuegenesis² study demographics consists of several characteristics including gender, ethnicity, age, and family structure that were included in this analysis. Frequency analysis of the data revealed that a greater percentage of the participants were females (51.6%), with males comprising 48.4% ($N = 4,675$). Participants in the study were predominantly White (53%). Other ethnic characteristics included individuals of mixed racial background (14%), Latino/Hispanic (11%), Black/Black American (10%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (11%) and American Indian (1%). Participants' age varied from 11 to 20, with a greater percentage (88%) being in the 15 – 19 age range.

The general framework of this study was established on the exploration of the dialectical interplay within relationships in family systems and the potential influence on adolescents' faith development, LV, and their CC. Hence, it was necessary to include participants' family structures in the demographic of characteristics. Various studies include family structure as a significant indicator of children's developmental outcomes (Freistadt & Strohschein, 2012; Kalil, Ryan, & Chor, 2014; Kurdek & Fine, 1993). The family structures of participants in Valuegenesis² study were characterized by two criteria: a) living or not living in a two-parent home (85% and 15% respectively) and b) parents' marital status: not divorced/not separated 79%, divorced or separated 19%, never married 2%. Table 3 provides a summary of demographic characteristics.

Table 3

Frequency and Percentage of Selected Demographic Characteristics in Valuegenesis²

Variables	N*	%*
Gender		
Female	2,411	51.6
Male	2,264	48.4
Ethnicity		
American Indian	43	.9
Asian or Pacific Islander	493	10.5
Black or African American	478	10.2
Latino or Hispanic	513	11.0
White	2,494	53.3
More than one racial background	654	14.0
Age		
11	10	.2
12	56	1.2
13	160	3.4
14	236	5.0
15	456	9.8
16	981	21.0
17	1,027	22.0
18	1,003	21.5
19	634	13.6
20	112	2.4
Family Structure		
Living in two-parent home	3,994	85.4
Not living in two-parent home	681	14.6
Parents are divorced/separated	886	19.0
Parents are not divorced/separated	3,685	78.8
Parents were never married	73	1.6
Not sure	31	.7
Total	4,675	100

*N = 4,675; % = 100

Variables Description

This section provides a brief descriptive overview of the measured variables.

Eleven observed variables are used to indicate the constructs FSD and FC. Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation of all measured variables. Descriptive statistics reported significant correlations among measured variables, and between the constructs FSD and FC.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Measured Variables

Measured Variables	<i>N</i>	M	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
FGCP	4,675	4.090	1.273	1.00	5.00	-1.127	-.067
PRP	"	5.239	.999	1.00	6.00	-2.018	4.924
FCPF	"	4.626	1.657	1.00	9.00	.323	-.394
CFT	"	3.199	.573	1.00	4.00	-.701	.979
FW	"	2.328	.552	1.00	4.00	-.191	-.848
FM	"	3.492	.683	1.00	5.00	-.478	.020
LV	"	2.860	.433	1.00	4.00	-.146	.019
CC	"	4.018	.924	1.00	5.00	-.884	.341
FC1	"	4.842	1.214	1.00	6.00	-1.288	1.260
FC2	"	5.171	1.132	1.00	6.00	-1.740	2.975
FC3	"	4.900	1.235	1.00	6.00	-1.314	1.196
FC4	"	5.223	1.137	1.00	6.00	-1.827	3.173
FC5	"	5.243	1.177	1.00	6.00	-1.860	3.030
FC6	"	4.717	1.315	1.00	6.00	-1.143	.695

N represents the population sample. Standard error of skewness = .036, and Kurtosis = .072

On observation, variables distributions are negatively skewed. Inference from the kurtosis output also indicate asymmetric distributions. In general, values reflecting a

skewness and kurtosis greater than plus or minus 1.0 ($> \pm 1.0$) indicate that variable distributions are outside the range of normality. However, with large sample size (as in this study), it is possible to override the rule of normality and it is recommended that the shape of the distribution be inspected, instead of depending on the inference of skewness and kurtosis (Meyers et al., 2013, pp. 63-65). Another alternative when dealing with large sample sizes is to rely on the “absolute values” of skewness and kurtosis index. Kline (2011) suggests $SI \leq 3.0$ and $KI \leq 10$ as reasonable absolute value indices (p. 63). Descriptive statistics presented in Table 4 show that skewness and kurtosis fall within the recommended absolute value indices range.

Measured Variables

In previous research, Valuegenesis¹, Valuegenesis², and Valuegenesis³ datasets have been used to explore adolescents’ faith development in the context of home, church, and school (Beagles, 2009; Carlson, 1996; Nagy, 2014; Schulze, 2012). In this study, several items (see Appendix B) in the Valuegenesis² instrument were isolated to create the variables used to explore the dialectics of selected parent-child relational encounters and to explore whether they potentially influence adolescents’ FM, LV, and their CC. It is assumed that these isolated factors are relevant indicators of parent-adolescents relational encounter, providing support for the theoretical framework of this study. Forty-one items were selected and were used to create fourteen variables (see Appendix B) through factor analysis and total mean score computation. Factor analysis contributes to the internal structure and validity of the study as it illustrates “how items are related to each other” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 176).

Each variable provides a summary of adolescents' responses based on their perception of specified relational encounters in their family, and parents in particular. Five of these observed variables (FGCP, PRP, FCPF, CFT, and FW) are indicators of the major theoretical construct FSD. The concept of FSD provides a synthesis of several parent-child relational encounters that influence adolescents' developmental outcomes. In addition, the latent variable, FC which reflects different aspects of family functioning (Fosco et al., 2016), creates a platform for exploring and understanding the fundamentals of FSD. Family climate is indicated by six observed variables: FC1, FC2, FC3, FC4, FC5, and FC6.

Frequent Good Conversations with Parents

The variable FGCP indicates adolescents' perceived recollection of frequency and quality time (ten minutes or more) spent conversing with their fathers and mothers. Measured on a Likert scale (1-5) the criteria for assessing adolescents' FGCP ranged from "Never" to "Four or more times per month." Statistical analysis of FGCP ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.27$) indicated that 59% of adolescents in this study reported having four or more good conversations with their parents on a monthly basis; 13%, three times monthly; 12%, two times; 10%, only once per month; and 6%, never having good conversations with either parent.

Parents' Religious Posture

Parents' Religious Posture is indicated by adolescents' assessments regarding the practicality of their parents' religion. Six criteria on a Likert scale (1-6) were used to examine how adolescents viewed their PRP (see Table 5 for details). Descriptive and frequency analyses of PRP ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 1.00$) indicated that at least half the

Table 5

Adolescents' Perception of Parents' Religious Posture

Variable (PRP)	N*	%*
<i>Father Religious Posture</i>		
"This question does not apply to me."	223	4.8
"Not religious at all."	167	3.6
"Not very religious."	288	6.2
"Religion does not seem to matter much."	270	5.8
"Not easy to tell how religion is an influence."	1,375	29.4
"Deeply religious, it has an impact."	2,352	50.3
<i>Mother Religious Posture</i>		
"This question does not apply to me."	113	2.4
"Not religious at all."	31	.7
"Not very religious."	98	2.1
"Religion does not seem to matter much."	179	3.8
"Not easy to tell how religion is an influence."	1,213	25.9
"Deeply religious, it has an impact."	3,041	65.0

N=4,675, % = 100

population in this study perceived both their parents (50%, father; 65%, mother) as deeply religious and reported that their parents' religiosity influenced how they lived.

Frequent Conversations with Parents about Faith

The variable FCPF reflects adolescents' encounter of quality time spent talking and sharing with parents about faith or religious experiences. This variable was measured on a Likert scale of 1-9 ("This question does not apply to me," "Never," "Less than once a month," "About once a month," "About 2-3 times a month," "About once a week," "Several times a week," "Once a day," and "More than once a day"). Statistical analyses of FCPF ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 1.66$) indicated that approximately 73% of adolescents in this

Table 6

Adolescents' Perception of Frequent Conversation with Parents about Parents' Faith and Religion

Variable (FCPF)	N*	%*
<i>FCPF with father about his faith</i>		
"This question does not apply to me."	243	5.2
"Never."	791	16.9
"Less than once a month."	907	19.4
"About once a month."	560	12.0
"About 2-3 times a month."	650	13.9
"About once a week."	521	11.1
"Several times a week."	597	12.8
"Once a day."	169	3.6
"More than once a day."	229	4.9
Missing cases	8	.2
<i>FCPF with mother her faith</i>		
"This question does not apply to me."	112	2.4
"Never."	373	8.0
"Less than once a month."	785	16.8
"About once a month."	622	13.3
"About 2-3 times a month."	810	17.3
"About once a week."	664	14.2
"Several times a week."	769	16.4
"Once a day."	247	5.3
"More than once a day."	290	6.2
Missing cases	3	.1

N = 4,675, % = 100

study reported having quality time at least once per month talking and sharing with their mothers (58% with their fathers) about their parents' faith or religious experiences. At the same time, 70% adolescents reported that they were able to talk with their mothers (56% indicated talking with their fathers) about their own faith or religious experience (See Tables 6 and 7 for details).

Table 7

Adolescents' Perception of Frequent Conversation with Parents about Their Own Faith and Religion

Variable (FCPF)	N*	%*
<i>FCPF with father about their own faith</i>		
"This question does not apply to me."	219	4.7
"Never."	835	17.9
"Less than once a month."	1,011	21.4
"About once a month."	643	13.8
"About 2-3 times a month."	716	15.3
"About once a week."	557	11.9
"Several times a week."	477	10.2
"Once a day."	113	2.4
"More than once a day."	98	2.1
Missing cases	6	.1
<i>FCPF with mother their own faith</i>		
"This question does not apply to me."	105	2.2
"Never."	413	8.8
"Less than once a month."	900	19.3
"About once a month."	711	15.2
"About 2-3 times a month."	875	18.7
"About once a week."	668	14.3
"Several times a week."	624	13.3
"Once a day."	196	4.2
"More than once a day."	180	3.9
Missing cases	3	.1

N=4,675, % = 100

Comfort with Faith Talk

Comfort with faith talk examined adolescents' perception of their parents' and their own levels of comfort in talking with others about faith and what God means to them. Table 8 shows the details of adolescents' perceptions. Measured on a scale of 1 - 4 ranging from "This question does not apply to me," to "Very comfortable," the results

Table 8

Frequency of Parents and Adolescents' Comfort Level in Discussing and Sharing Faith

Variable	Criteria	Father	Mother	Adolescents
Comfort with faith talk (CFT)	"The question does not apply to me."	6%	2%	2%
	"Not comfortable."	15%	8%	18%
	"Comfortable."	36%	40%	52%
	"Very Comfortable."	43%	50%	28%

N=4,675, % = 100

showed that mothers (50%) are more likely than fathers (43%) to be very comfortable discussing and sharing their faith with others. Further analysis revealed that 51% of adolescents' in this study are comfortable with discussing and sharing their faith with others, while only 28% are very comfortable.

Family Worship

The variable FW was used to examine adolescents' perceptions of the frequency and value of religious practices in which family members habitually engaged in.

Religious practices involved worship activities such as praying and having devotional time together as a family away from church. It also accounted for the measure of value adolescents attached to worship activities carried out in the home. Frequency statistics for FW ($M = 2.33$, $SD = .552$) shows that approximately 59% of the families represented in this study have FW at least once per week (see Table 9 for further details). Regarding adolescents' assessments of the value of FW, 66% said FW is interesting, 78% believed it is meaningful, and 83% believed that it is not a waste of time.

Table 9

Frequency and Value of Family Worship

Variable	Criteria	Frequency (N*)	%*
Family	“Never.”	154	3.3%
Worship	“Less than once a month.”	872	18.8%
(FW)	“About once a month.”	427	9.1%
	“About 2-3 times a month”	474	10.2%
	“About once a week.”	941	20.2%
	“Several times a week.”	653	14.0%
	“Once a day.”	804	17.3%
	“More than once a day.”	324	7.0%
	Missing cases	26	.6%
	<i>Value (1)</i> “Family worship or other religious events at home are interesting.” (Yes)	3,064	65.5%
	<i>Value (2)</i> “Family worship or other religious events at home are meaningful.” (Yes)	3,641	77.9%
	<i>Value (3)</i> “Family worship or other home religious events are a waste of time.” (No)	3,861	82.6.0%

N = 4675, % = 100

Variables Indicating Family Climate

The general FC influences the relational encounters between family members even as the FC is impacted by the interplay of relationships. Six variables measured FC as being a place in which adolescents’ experience happiness, loving relationships with, and support from their parents. Frequency and percentage statistics indicated that almost two-thirds (74%) of the respondents perceived their family life as a happy experience; 82% agreed that there is lots of love in their family; 76% agreed to getting along well

with their parents; 83% agreed that their parents help and support them when they needed it; and 84% agreed that their parents often express their love for them verbally. At the same time, 70% disagreed that they were punished by parents when in violation of family rules. Table 10 shows details of frequencies and percentages of the variables indicating FC.

Variables Relationships

Statistical analyses revealed several correlations among the variables. Significant correlation ($r = .52, p < .001$), was indicated between the latent variables FSD and FC. Moderate correlations were indicated among outcome variables: ($r = .40, p < .001$), between FM: ($M = 3.49, SD = .68$) and LV: ($M = 2.86, SD = .43$); and ($r = .44, p < .001$), between FM and CC ($M = 4.01, SD = .92$). Small correlation ($r = .22, p < .001$) was indicated between LV and CC.

The observed variables were also examined for levels of correlations (see Table 11). Path coefficients indicate statistical significance and the strength of the linear relationship between variables. Levels of significance determine whether the observed correlations do exist in the sample being studied (Meyers et al., 2013, pp. 292-294). Several significant positive correlations exist among the observed variables. Statistical analyses showed variations in the levels of correlations between variables.

The strength of statistical significance (i.e., 0.1 = small, 0.3 = moderate, and 0.5 = large) regarding correlations among variables may vary based on research (Meyer et al., 2013, pp. 294-296). Correlation coefficients among the variables indicating the latent construct FSD ranged from moderate to large between FCPF and FGCP ($r = .35, p < .001$); FCPF and PRP ($r = .42, p < .001$); CFT and PRP ($r = .38, p < .001$); and CFT and

Table 10

Frequencies and Percentages of Adolescents' Perceptions of Their Family Climate

Variable	Criteria	N	%
<i>Perceptions of Family Happiness</i>			
Family happiness (FC1)	"No opinion."	110	2.4
	"I definitely disagree."	170	3.8
	"I tend to disagree."	411	8.8
	"I am not sure."	475	10.2
	"I tend to agree."	1,972	42.2
	"I definitely agree."	1,530	32.7
<i>Perceptions of love in their Family</i>			
Love in Family (FC2)	"No opinion."	91	1.9
	"I definitely disagree."	114	2.4
	"I tend to disagree."	216	4.6
	"I am not sure."	420	9.0
	"I tend to agree."	1,477	31.6
	"I definitely agree."	2,357	50.4
<i>Perceptions of Parent-child Relationship</i>			
Parent-child relationship (FC3)	"No opinion."	101	2.2
	"I definitely disagree."	205	4.4
	"I tend to disagree."	383	8.2
	"I am not sure."	439	9.4
	"I tend to agree."	1,798	38.5
	"I definitely agree."	1,749	37.4
<i>Perception of Parental support</i>			
Parents' support of child (FC4)	"No opinion."	90	1.9
	"I definitely disagree."	115	2.5
	"I tend to disagree."	226	4.8
	"I am not sure."	351	7.5
	"I tend to agree."	1,345	28.8
	"I definitely agree."	2,548	54.5

Table 10—Continued.

Variable	Criteria	N	%
<i>Perceptions of Parents Verbal expression of Love</i>			
Verbal expression of love (FC5)	“No opinion.”	96	2.1
	“I definitely disagree.”	135	2.9
	“I tend to disagree.”	252	5.4
	“I am not sure.”	280	6.0
	“I tend to agree.”	1,204	25.8
	“I definitely agree.”	2,708	57.9
<i>Perceptions of Parents’ Response to Adolescents’ Violation of Family Rules</i>			
Response to family rules (FC6)	“No opinion.”	175	3.7
	“I definitely agree.”	179	3.8
	“I tend to agree.”	502	10.7
	“I am not sure.”	564	12.1
	“I tend to disagree.”	1,775	38.0
	“I definitely disagree.”	1,480	31.7

$N = 4,675$, % = 100

FCPF ($r = .44$, $p < .001$). Large correlations ($r = .70$, $p < .001$) were shown among several of the variables (i.e., FC1 to FC2; FC4 to FC5; and FC2 to FC3), indicating the construct FC. Statistical analysis also indicated that FC6 had small correlations to FCGP ($r = .10$, $p < .001$); to LV ($r = .08$, $p < .001$); and to CC ($r = .07$, $p < .001$). The path coefficient ($r = .04$, $p \geq .003$) indicated that the relationship between LV and PRP was non-significant.

Table 11 provides details of existing correlations among all observed variables.

Hypothesis Testing

The main purpose of this study was to examine whether the theoretical model of the effect of FSD on adolescents’ FM, LV and CC was supported by the empirical data.

Table 11

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlations among Measured Variables (N = 4,675)

	FGCP	PRP	FCPF	CFT	FW	FM	LV	CC	FC1	FC2	FC3	FC4	FC5	FC6
FGCP	--													
PRP	.210**	--												
FCPF	.350**	.424**	--											
CFT	.276**	.381**	.443**	--										
FW	.166**	.255**	.400**	.227**	--									
FM	.290**	.173**	.318**	.329**	.195**	--								
LV	.100**	.044	.196**	.208**	.158**	.387**	--							
CC	.207**	.149**	.191**	.247**	.143**	.443**	.221**	--						
FC1	.375**	.257**	.273**	.292**	.176**	.261**	.131**	.219**	--					
FC2	.378**	.257**	.273**	.309**	.174**	.289**	.160**	.197**	.693**	--				
FC3	.418**	.223**	.261**	.287**	.142**	.282**	.151**	.224**	.694**	.651**	--			
FC4	.401**	.230**	.270**	.307**	.172**	.283**	.168**	.201**	.609**	.638**	.681**	--		
FC5	.382**	.211**	.275**	.280**	.159**	.249**	.138**	.185**	.522**	.589**	.545**	.622**	--	
FC6	.096**	.142**	.151**	.139**	.125**	.103**	.078**	.071**	.164**	.193**	.127**	.182**	.209**	--
Mean	4.090	5.240	4.626	3.199	2.328	3.492	2.860	4.018	4.842	5.171	4.900	5.223	5.243	4.717
SD	1.273	.999	1.657	.573	.552	.683	.433	.924	1.214	1.132	1.235	1.137	1.177	1.315

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

The research hypothesis suggested that the theoretical covariance matrix was identical or similar to the empirical covariance matrix. Further bivariate correlations testing addressed the assumption that

1. FSD was a significant predictor of adolescent's FM and LV;
2. FM and LV were mediators of the effect of FSD on adolescents' CC.

In testing the hypothesis, AMOS 24 statistical design was used to create a compound diagram illustrating both a measurement and a structural model. Figure 5 illustrates both measurement and structural model. The observed model indicated bivariate correlations between the latent variables FSD and FC, direct causal relationships between the latent variables and two output variables, FM and LV, and mediated effects of the latent variables on the third outcome variable, CC. Table 12 shows the correlations ($r = .52, p \leq .000$) between the latent variables FSD and FC, indicating that relational encounters in family systems are influenced by the general climate of the family and vis-à-vis.

The predictive effects of FSD undergird the theoretical framework of this study. Both FSD and FC were predictors of two outcome variables FM and LV. Further predictions were based on the mediated effects of FM and LV on the third outcome variable, CC. However, non-significant correlation was indicated between FC and LV. In general, studies have shown that FC potentially facilitates value transmissions, in that an environment “characterized by warmth and emotional bonding [is potentially] useful for providing an atmosphere of receptiveness toward other family members’ value preferences (Roset et al., 2009, p.154). It is not clear in this context why there is non-significant correlation between FC and LV, and further analysis may be necessary to assess the probability of relationship between the variables.

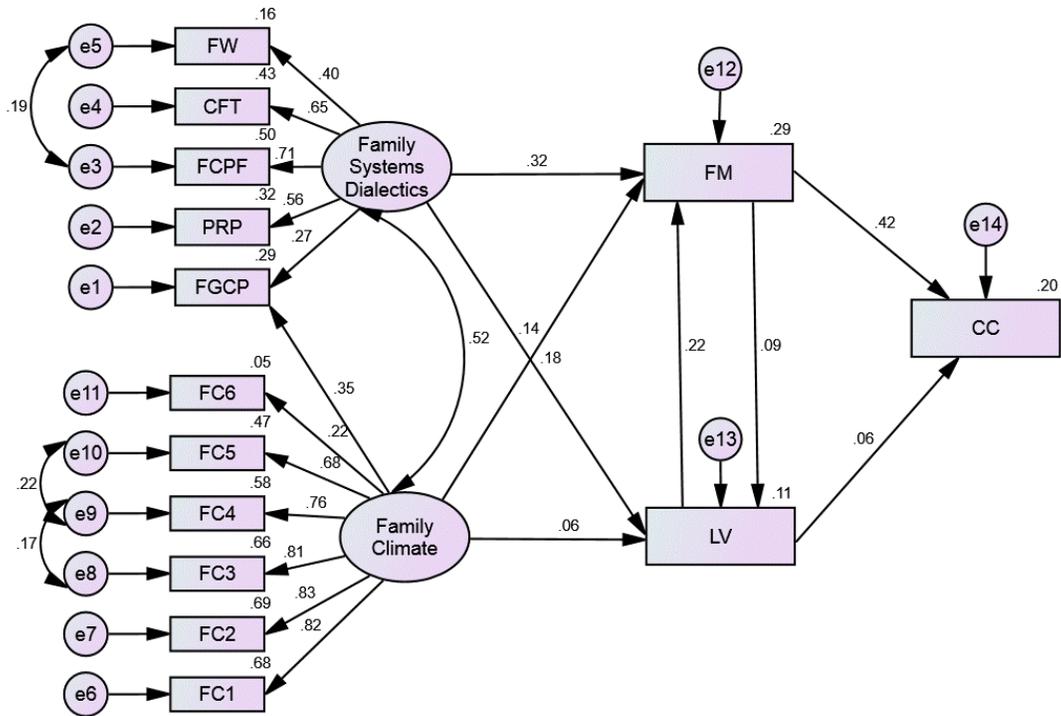


Figure 5. Standardized Theoretical Model. Illustration of the path coefficients and variances explaining the effects of FSD on adolescents' FM, LV, and CC.

Table 12

Correlation between the Latent Variables in the Structural Model

Relationships	<i>r</i>	S.E.	<i>p</i>
Family Climate => Family Systems Dialectics	.52	.003	.000

Table 13 summarized the path coefficients and variances explained, within the structural model. The variables FSD ($\beta = .32, p = .000$), FC ($\beta = .14, p = .000$), and LV ($\beta = .22, p = .000$) were significant predictors of FM. Family systems dialectics was also a significant predictor of LV ($\beta = .18, p = .000$), and FC was non-significant in predicting LV ($\beta = .06, p = .002$). Faith maturity ($\beta = .42, p = .000$), and LV ($\beta = .06, p = .000$) were

Table 13

Path Coefficients for the Structural Model

Relationships	β	R ²	S.E.	<i>p</i>
<i>Faith Maturity</i>		.29		
Fam Systems Dialectics => Faith Maturity	.32		.074	.000
Family Climate => Faith Maturity	.14		.047	.000
Life Value => Faith Maturity	.22			
<i>Life Values</i>		.11		
Family Climate => Life Values	.06		.029	.002
Family Systems Dialectics => Life Values	.18		.047	.000
Faith Maturity => Life Values	.09		.011	
<i>Commitment to Christ</i>		.20		
Faith Maturity => Commitment to Christ	.42		.019	.000
Life Values => Commitment to Christ	.06		.030	.000

significant predictors of CC. The path coefficients of the variables within the measurement model, and the variances explained are outlined in Table 14. A summary of the path relationships within the empirical model can be observed in Figure 5.

In SEM analyses, CR is a more robust means of measuring the reliability of indicator variables and their correlations with the latent constructs (Assaker, 2010, p.37). Composite reliability measure was utilized to assess the path relationships within the measurement model and indices of 0.71 and 0.86 indicated acceptable measures for FSD, and FC respectively. These values suggested that several items within the model were significantly correlated. Further statistical analyses suggested that FSD accounted for significant variances within the indicator variables (i.e., FGCP [$\beta = .27, p = .000, 29\%$]; PRP [$\beta = .56, p = .000, 32\%$]; FCPF [$\beta = .71, p = .000, 50\%$]; CFT [$\beta = .65, p = .000,$

Table 14

Path Coefficients, and Variances Explained for the Measurement Model

Details	β	R ²
<i>Family Systems Dialectics</i>		
FGCP	.27	.29
PRP	.56	.32
FCPF	.71	.50
CFT	.65	.43
FW	.40	.16
<i>Family Climate</i>		
Family happiness (FC1)	.82	.68
Level of love in family (FC2)	.83	.69
Parent-child relationship (FC3)	.81	.66
Parents' support of child (FC4)	.76	.58
Verbal expression of love (FC5)	.68	.47
Response to family rules (FC6)	.22	.05

43%]; and FW [$\beta = .40, p = .000, 16\%$]). It was also assumed that FC accounted for the variances in FC1 ($\beta = .82, p = .000, 68\%$), FC2 ($\beta = .83, p = .000, 69\%$), FC3 ($\beta = .81, p = .000, 66\%$), FC4 ($\beta = .76, p = .000, 58\%$), FC5 ($\beta = .68, p = .000, 47\%$), and FC6 ($\beta = .22, p = .000, 5\%$). Table 14 summarized the path coefficients, and variances explained, in the measurement model.

The evaluation of the empirical model was based on five statistical criteria: Chi square (χ^2) likelihood ratio, GFI, NFI, CFI, and the RMSEA. Evaluation of the model based on the χ^2 likelihood ratio showed statistical significance $\chi^2 (68, N = 4,675) = 822.00, p = .000$, indicating that the hypothesized model did not fit the empirical data. It

was assumed that the significant χ^2 was potentially due to the large sample size used in this study. With large sample sizes, it is recommended that other model fitting criteria be used alongside the chi square χ^2 test of statistical significance (Meyers et al., 2013, pp. 863-873).

Four other criteria were chosen to evaluate the empirical model, all of which exceeded the target values for model fit indices. Goodness-of-fit index yielded a value of .98; NFI; .96; CFI, .97; and RMSEA, .049. Further observation of the reported RMSEA based on a 90% confidence interval indicated a range of .046 to .052. A p value for the test of close fit (PCLOSE) was equal to .727. Bryne (2010) suggested that a PCLOSE value $> .05$ indicates that the RMSEA value derived at in the model is a good one (p.81). Collectively, the values of these indices indicated that the theoretical model fit the empirical data. Table 15 provides a summary of the fit indices of the observed model.

In addition to testing the research hypothesis, the path coefficients showed that FSD was a significant predictor of the outcome variables FM ($\beta = .32, p = .000$) and LV ($\beta = .14, p = .000$). Further observation showed that FM was influenced by the direct effect of FSD, FC and LV, which accounted for about 29% of the variance in FM. Life values was also influenced by the direct effect of FSD and FM, which accounted for 11% of the variance in LV. Family climate ($\beta = .06, p = .002$) had non-significant effect on LV. At the same time, the path coefficients FM ($\beta = .42, p = .000$) and LV ($\beta = .06, p = .000$) were mediators of the effect of FSD on CC. Commitment to Christ was influenced by mediated effect of FSD on FM and LV, which accounted for about 20% of the variances in CC.

Table 15

Fit Indices of Hypothesized Model

Fit Index	Hypothesized Model	Suggested/Minimal Level	References
χ^2	822.003; $p \leq .000$ df = 68	$p > .05$	Kline, 2011
GFI	.98	$\geq .90$	Meyers et al., 2013
NFI	.96	$\geq .90$	Bryne, 2010
CFI	.97	$\geq .90$	Bryne, 2010
RMSEA	.049	$\leq .08$	Meyers et al., 2013

Summary of Major Findings

In this chapter, statistical analyses was carried out testing the structural equation model for the influence of FSD on adolescents' FM, LV and CC. The hypothesized model was tested using a modified version ($N = 4,675$) of Valugenesis² data. The structural model assessed nine parameters, eight of which were statistically significant (Tables 12 and 13 summarized the results). Analyses of several model fitting indices indicated that the theoretical model fit the observed model; hence, the null hypothesis was retained. Composite reliability test indicated consistency in items contributing to the factor loadings in the measurement model. Path coefficients suggested that there were several significant correlations among variables in the model. Family systems dialectics was a significant predictor of two outcome variables: FM and LV, and had mediated effects on the third outcome variable, CC.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION OF RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Relational encounters in family systems are configurations of unceasing dialectical interplay that occur directly or indirectly, consciously or subconsciously. These encounters potentially influence the family functioning as well as individuals' development outcomes. Several studies indicated that individuals' psycho-socio-cultural developmental outcomes are often linked to certain dynamics in family systems (Davis, 1940; Fosco et al., 2016; Grossmann et al., 2005; Johnson et al., 2014; McBride et al., 2013; McWhirter et al., 2017; Raby et al., 2015; Sroufe et al., 2010; Stevenson-Hinde, 1990). In addition, studies showed that relationships dynamics within family systems were also associated with influencing individuals' values and faith identity formation (Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003; Choi, 2012; Martin et al., 2003). Stiltner (2016) remarked: "The positive and negative influences among families, their members, and society are critical to the well-being of all" (p. 133). All this is indicative of the far-reaching influence of relational encounters in family systems.

With ongoing research on family systems, various frameworks are used in observing relational encounters among family members. These frameworks provide different lenses for assessing the influence of family relational encounters on an

individual's psycho-socio-cultural capacity to function and develop. The praxis of parents and children spending quality time together tend to "nurture and reinforce the family relationship," enhance the relational bonds between them, and contribute to less at-risk behaviors in children (Johnson et al., 2014, p. 210). Although several studies indicated that there are psycho-socio-cultural connections between family relationships and individuals' developmental outcomes (Fosco et al., 2016; Johnson et al., 2014; McBride et al., 2013; McWhirter et al., 2017; Stiltner, 2016), none explored any direct correlations between the relational encounter in family systems, and adolescents' FM, LV and CC.

Amidst a growing concern on adolescents' and young adults' posture and attitudes toward faith and their relationship with faith communities, it was indicated that young people reflect the religious posture of their parents and also that of their faith communities (Dean, 2010). In highlighting the integral role of parents and faith communities in shaping the religious posture of young people, Anthony (2012) stated: "The church needs family empowered ministries not only to raise up a generation of faith followers, but to raise up a generation of spiritually minded parents as well" (p. 37). Apparently, parents "constitute the strongest influence" on children's faith development (Regnerus et al., 2003, p. 10). This study evolved from an interest to explore certain parent-child relational encounters in family systems that potentially influence LV, FM, and CC during adolescence.

The assumption that parent-child relational encounters influence LV and FM in adolescents is grounded in a metatheoretical framework (i.e., FSD), adopted from tenets of FST and RDT. This metatheoretical approach was created as a synthesis for analyzing the complex interplay and outcomes of relational encounters within family systems. It

was designed to facilitate a systemic dialectical thinking and approach to examining adolescents' values and faith, and ultimately their CC.

Embedded in the concept of FSD is the idea that family systems contribute to situations which have existential impact on family members, and that through the process of dialectical discourses, the family system as a whole potentially influences the outcomes of given situations. From the perspective of best practices, FSD underscores the need to explore *both/and* approaches in assessing the effects of family systems relational experience. Essentially, it is a lens through which to view the dialectical interplay of parent-child interpersonal encounters and potential religious outcomes. Assuming that relational encounters in families (particularly between parents and child) have significant influence on adolescents' FM, LV, and CC, it was hypothesized that the FSD theoretical model could be substantiated by empirical data analysis.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to test the hypothesized model FSD of the direct effects of FSD on adolescents' FM and LV, and further, the indirect effects of FSD on adolescents' CC as mediated by FM, and LV.

Literature Review Summary

Theoretical Framework

Relationships within family systems are dynamic, and no one theory completely describes the intricacies of the relational encounters taking place, particularly between parents and children. Hence, a metatheoretical approach (i.e., FSD framework) was adopted as a synthesis for exploring likely religious outcomes of relational encounters

between parents and child. The FSD model was used to conceptualize the correlations between select variables embodying the parent-child relational encounter (particularly in this study), and adolescents' FM, LV, and CC. The concept of FSD evolves from theories governing family systems (Bowen, 1961, 1985; Olson, 2000), and relational dialectics (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, 1998).

Emerging from GST (Bertalanffy, 1968), FST is a practical approach to understanding complex layers of relationships and their effects on family members. Relational encounters in family systems seem more complicated when exploring the intricacies and possible outcomes of parent-child interpersonal encounters across generations and on the society. Implicit in FST is the notion that every relational encounter develops from previous encounters and creates segues to forthcoming encounters. Four of Bowen's (1961, 1985) interlocking concepts (i.e., differentiation of self, emotional cutoff, multigenerational transmission process, and societal emotional process) which illustrate family systems' interpersonal relationships and functionality are adopted in the FSD framework.

The idea of *differentiation* assesses an individuals' capacity to be a distinct self while remaining emotionally connected to others and to be able to distinguish between thoughts and feelings in relational encounters. Levels of differentiation of self determine whether an individual will engage in *emotional cutoff*—a process through which individuals attempt to cope by reducing or severing emotional contact from family members or a situation whenever there are relational tensions or misapprehensions. Levels of differentiation of self are transferable biologically and socially across generations, and the issue of emotional cutoff potentially becomes a trend in family

systems. This transfer of emotional behavior patterns across generations is referred to as *multigenerational transmission process*. Individuals' and generational emotion patterns are not the only phenomena affecting family systems. Family is also influenced by the interplay between other systems in society (McWhirter et al., 2017; McWhirter et al., 2013). Bowen (1985) refers to this interplay between family systems and society as *societal emotional process* (see also Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

Similar to Bowen's (1961, 1985) perspective on relational encounters in family systems are Olson's (2000) dimensions (cohesion, adaptability, and communication) which focus on the emotional flux taking place within the family system. Olson's dimensions explore levels of emotional connectedness within the system and the capacity of family members to adapt to changes in the system.

Baxter's and Montgomery's (1996, 1998) RDT, another component in the FSD model conceptualizes how individuals' lives revolve around the fluidity of relational phenomena, focusing particularly on the construction of meaning in dyadic or multifaceted contexts. As Baxter and Montgomery (1996) indicated in the study of RDT, the principle of "unified oppositions" undergirds relational dialectics whereby individuals in interdependent relationships balance competing discourses in the process of meaning-making (p. 8). Built around the notions of contradictions, change, praxis, and totality, the dialectical idea portrays the absurdity of "simultaneous unity and difference" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998, p. 2).

From a dialectical perspective, *contradictions* are constant in the web of relational encounters and are not deemed negative. They "are the basic drivers of change" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 7) and may best be understood from a 'both/and' perspective

where change and stability evolves simultaneously. Dialectical contradictions illustrate the fluctuation of the opposing needs and desires of individuals in shared familial relationships. Such dialectical flux is often played out simultaneously in the parleying of autonomy-connection though logically, it is hardly possible to segregate one's need for autonomy from the need for connection in interdependent interplay. Hence, the dialectical tension because of individuals' concurrent needs for both.

At the same time, *change*, defined in this context as “a difference in some phenomenon over time,” is inevitable in the dialectical flux of relational encounters as individuals act and react to others through interdependent relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998, p. 7). Because change is imminent as “individuals both act and are acted on,” another tenet of relational dialectics—*praxis*—characterized as the stimulus for change is deemed integral to the RDT framework (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998, p. 9). Relationships are not static, hence, the notion of praxis proposes that individuals’ “actions in the present are constrained and enabled by prior actions and function to create the conditions to which they will respond in the future” (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998, p.9). Interdependence forms the basis of relational dialectics as “one contradiction cannot be considered in isolation of other contradictions with which it is integrally linked” (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998, p. 11). Hence, the premise of *totality* in the context of relational dialectics highlights the core of interdependence in the dialectical flux. Totality, in essence, conveys the idea that “phenomena can be understood only in relation to other phenomena” (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p.14).

It is necessary to note that there is some overlap between aspects of FST and RDT. Embedded within the overlap is the recurring notion that individuals or situations

are best understood, not in isolation, but in their relation or place within a system or phenomenon (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, 1998; Bowen, 1961, 1985; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Such understanding is fundamental in understanding adolescents' development of LV and faith. Integrating a systemic dialectical perspective in this study lends support to assumptions concerning parent-adolescents relational encounters and potential outcomes for LV and faith. A systemic dialectical perspective also aligns with the relational standpoint of faith espoused in this study.

Faith: A Relational Factor

The idea of faith is deemed an existential phenomenon for many individuals. Yet, differing perspectives in the study of faith denote the complexity of the subject.

Conversely, a relational standpoint on faith embraced by researchers (Dykstra, 2005; Fowler, 1981; Fowler & Dell, 2006; Fowler & Lovin, 1980; Gillespie et al., 2004) seems to align aptly with a systemic dialectical approach to exploring the influence of parent-child relational encounters on adolescents' LV and faith development. Dykstra (2005) sees faith as a "human activity . . . [that] is set in the context of a relationship, and that relationship depends on the prior activity of God" (p. 17). This implies that though "sometimes described broadly as "general human phenomena" (believing, trusting, committing and orienting life), or, expressed as confidence in something or someone, faith is evidently a relational occurrence embodying both active and passive experience with another (p. 17).

In support of a relational perspective is Westerhoff's (2012) remark that "[faith] results from our actions with others, it changes and expands through our actions with others, and it expresses itself daily in our actions with others" (p. 89). Added support

concerning faith being a dynamic experience happening in relational encounters with another is the belief that

faith is an action which includes thinking, feeling, and willing and it is transmitted, sustained and expanded through our interaction with [others] We can be faithful and share our life and our faith with another . . . [and] through this sharing we each sustain, transmit, and expand our faith (Westerhoff, 2012, pp. 91, 92).

Faith as action is experienced through intrapersonal reflection and interpersonal experiences. Interestingly, Westerhoff (2012) pointed out that the first experience of faith is not necessarily the acceptance of a theological creed, but rather, an enactment of trust, love, and acceptance (p. 92) which leads to a sense of belonging (affiliation), and ultimately to conversion, or a process in which an individual embraces the phenomenon as ontologically significant.

Indicating support on the relationality of faith, Fowler (1986) proposed that “faith has to do with the making, maintenance, and transformation of human meaning, [and with] knowing and being” (p. 15). The relational perspective of faith involves commitment and loyalty and there is always another; one to whom loyalty, trust, and commitment is exercised (Fowler, 1986, p. 16). At the same time, Fowler (1981) sees faith as a “developmental process in [individuals] that makes both ontological and ontogenetic sense [that is] a constitutive knowing by which we construct (and therefore ‘know’) self-others-world as related to the transcendence ” (p. 297). This developmental-structural perspective of faith aligns with other psycho-socio-cognition ideas surrounding a person’s development (See Erikson, 1963; Kohlberg, 2008; Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977; Piaget, 1932).

In viewing the intricacies of faith, a structural development approach does not characterize the eminence of an individual’s religious habits, nor is it a means of

determining the authenticity or sincerity of one's faith. However, it is a feasible means of depicting "patterns of knowing and relating through assessing cognitive, moral, and other forms of development that constitute a person's relationship to the transcendent or the Higher Being . . . and with other humans, both inside and outside a person's particular faith community" (Fowler and Dell, 2006, p. 40). In this context, a structural developmental perspective validates the assumption that faith is relational. It supports the metatheoretical approach used to explore the potential influence of the relational encounters in family on adolescents' LV, FM, and ultimately, their CC. It is important to note that a volitional response is vital for faith to develop beyond the notion of an individual's intuitiveness.

Methodology

This study was based on a quantitative non-experimental correlational research design used to test the assumption that there were significant correlations between parent-child relational encounters and certain religious developmental outcomes (i.e., LV, FM, and CC). The use of quantitative research method increases objectivity, mitigates personal biases, and provides indiscriminate reports about phenomena being studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 21). Data inquiry procedures were carried out using IBM - SPSS 24 to analyze Valuegenesis², a survey conducted in 2000 - 2001 among adolescents attending high schools affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.

Several items that examined adolescents' perceptions of certain relational encounters between their parents and themselves were extracted and used to create variables that indicated the FSD theoretical framework. Using factor analysis and mean

score calculation, fourteen observed variables were created, three of which were outcome variables (FM, LV, and CC). Eleven observed variables indicated the latent constructs FSD and FC.

Further analyses and model testing were carried out using AMOS 24 to perform SEM. The SEM method was designed to analyze both observed and latent variables (Kline, 2011, p. 9) and is adequate to test model-fitting theories since the process “takes a confirmatory approach” in analyzing a theory (Byrne, 2010, p. 3). Structural equation modeling infers that causal effects in a study are represented by “structural equations” and that the “structural relations can be modeled pictorially” to enhance the underlying concepts of a proposed theory (Byrne, 2010, p. 3).

Several criteria such as the chi-square (χ^2) likelihood ratio statistic, GFI, NFI, CFI, and RMSEA were used to examine model fit measures. The χ^2 likelihood ratio statistics is the significant absolute fit index, testing the difference between the theoretical model and the empirical model (Arbuckle, 2016; Blunch, 2008; Meyers et al., 2013). A significant χ^2 implies that the theoretical model does not fit the empirical data, whereas a non-significant χ^2 indicates a good model fit. However, in cases of large sample size, there are exceptions.

The GFI measures the variance and covariance of the model, the NFI analyzes the difference between the χ^2 values of the hypothesized model and the independent model, and the CFI examines the differences between the empirical model and the theoretical model. Acceptable index values for GFI, NFI, AND CFI are estimated as $\geq .90$ (Blunch, 2008, p. 110; Byrne, 2010, pp. 76-79). In addition, the RMSEA assesses approximation error between observed covariance and the covariance of the hypothesized model.

Generally, an appropriation of 0.10 is considered acceptable, but Blunch (2008) suggested that an approximation of “0.05 is considered a sign of good fits and models” (p. 116). The use of multiple model fit indices contributed to the adequacy of testing and explaining the proposed hypothesized model. Criteria for normal distribution of variables were met based on the absolute value index for skewness and kurtosis: $SI \leq 3.0$ and $KI \leq 10$, which is acceptable with the use of large sample size (Kline, 2011, 63).

Summary of Findings

In testing the FSD model under the assumption that parent-child relational encounters in family systems have direct effect on adolescents' LV, FM, and mediated effect on CC, SEM procedures indicated an acceptable fit between the theoretical covariance matrix and the observed covariance matrix. Significant correlations were found among all observed variables (with exception between LV and PRP). Non-significant correlation between LV and PRP suggests that adolescents' values are not necessarily contingent on their perceptions of their parents' level of religiosity even though frequency analyses (see Table 5) reported that at least 50% of adolescents in this study were impacted by parents who were deeply religious. Hence, there is need to further define clearly *how* adolescents are impacted by their parents' religious posture.

Further inspection of the observed model indicated regression between latent variables FC and FSD with a path coefficient of .52. Regression was observed between other variables (i.e., $FSD \Rightarrow FM$, [$\beta = .32, p = .000$]; and $FSD \Rightarrow LV$, [$\beta = .18, p = .000$]). These findings suggested that based on the proposed theoretical framework—FSD, there were indications of direct causal effects of various parent-child relational encounters such as FGCP, PRP, FCPF, CFT, and FW on adolescents' FM and LV.

Regression between the latent construct FC and outcome variable FM ($\beta = .14, p = .000$) suggest that FC does contribute to relational encounters in family systems while lending support to other studies which indicate that FC is influential in the overall functioning of the family unit (Fosco et al., 2016). At the same time, non-significant regression was indicated between FC and LV ($\beta = .06, p = .002$). Indicators of FC in this study reflected adolescents' perceptions of family environment being a place where they feel supported, experience love, and happiness because of their relationship with their parents.

Mediated effects of FSD (FM \Rightarrow CC [$\beta = .42, p = .000$]; LV \Rightarrow CC [$\beta = .06, p = .000$]; LV \Rightarrow FM [$\beta = .22, p = .000$]) were indicated among outcome variables. Further SEM analysis showed that FM and LV were influenced by the direct effect of FSD which accounted for 29% of the variance in FM and 11% of the variance in LV. The mediated effects of FSD through FM and LV accounted for approximately 20% of the variance in CC.

These findings from testing the research hypothesis of the influence of parent-child relational encounters on adolescents' faith and value development indicated that the theoretical model FSD which embodies elements of FST (Bowen, 1961, 1985) and RDT (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, 1998) was supported by the empirical data. The structural model consisted of nine basic parameters, eight of which were statistically significant.

Discussion

The integration of a systemic dialectical perspective in this study supports the assumption that relational encounters in family systems, particularly between parents and children, influence adolescents' religious development. The results indicated that the

hypothesized theoretical covariance was similar to the observed covariance matrix. The hypothesized framework (FSD) embodies the notion that individuals are best understood within the context of the family as a whole (Bowen, 1961, 1985; Olson, 2000) and that individuals in family systems are in a dialectical flux (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, 1998) in which they consciously or subconsciously negotiate existential meaning and identity. Embedded suppositions within FSD framework suggest that

1) individuals' existential perspectives and their developmental outcomes are influenced by their relational encounters (particularly with parents) within family systems,

2) parent-child relational encounters are influenced by current and past phenomena within the system, as well as cross-generational and societal interactions,

3) relational encounters are undergirded by individuals' opposing discourses in a dialectical flux of change and stability, and

4) a both/and perspective is necessary for best practices in a) assessing the influence and religious outcomes of parent-child relational encounters and b) engaging in strategic family-inclusive ministry.

Demographics characteristics of this study indicated an ethnically diverse (i.e., American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Black/Black American, Latino/Hispanic) population with the majority being White (53%) females (51.6%). The age range for participants ranged from 11 to 20, and the majority (88%) were 15 to 19 years old. Approximately 85% of the participants indicated that they were living in a two-parent home, and 79% reported that their parents were "not divorced/not separated."

Several variables used to indicate the research model provided significant data regarding adolescents' perceptions of certain relational encounters with parents. Presumably, the type, frequency, and quality of conversations adolescents have with their parents, parents' expression of love to them, as well as levels of family happiness, contribute to their formation of LV, maturity in faith, and commitment to relationship with Christ. It is important to note that these variables represented more than the encounters happening through religious rituals conducted within the family system. The common factor across all variables was the parent-child relationality, developed through various encounters.

As studies in the socio-psych context have shown, positive parent-child relationality contributes to increased functionality and more favorable outcomes (McBride et al., 2013; Yang et al., 2015). Essentially, the "nature of parent-child relationships may serve an important protective role for adolescents' psychological wellbeing" Yang, et al., 2015, p. 26). Likewise, based on the findings in this study parent-child relational encounters potentially influence adolescents' religious outcomes.

The subscale used to measure adolescents' perception of their encounters with parents through religious rituals (i.e., FW) reported not just the frequency, but also their perceived value of the encounter. Almost 60.0% of adolescents in this study reported frequent FW encounters ranging from "once a week" to "more than once a day," 65.5% reported that FW or other religious events at home was interesting, 77.9% reported that it was meaningful, and 83.0% thought it was not a waste of time. On a broader scope, other items selected from the Valuegenesis² scale assessed adolescents' perception of their relational encounters of having valuable conversations with parents (FGCP), four or more

times per month. More than fifty percent (59%) reported that they frequently had valuable conversations with their parents.

While the results indicated that adolescents' relational encounters with both mothers and fathers potentially influenced their LV, FM, and ultimately, their CC, adolescents seemed more likely to have faith conversations (FCPF) with their mothers (73%) than with their fathers (58%). Referring to the path coefficient (.71) of FCPF shown in Figure 5, it can be assumed that these conversations are highly significant in the dialectical exchange between parent-child relational encounter in family systems. This mutual exchange between parents and child underscores faith being a relational phenomenon, and one that is necessary in adolescents' faith developmental outcome. Further, adolescents' views of their parents' religiosity (PRP) indicated that they perceived their mothers (65%) and fathers (50%) as deeply religious, and that their parents' religious practices influenced their own lives.

It was interesting to note the differences between adolescents' perceptions of their parents' comfort levels in talking with others about faith and what God means to them (CFT), and their own levels of comfort in doing so. Mothers (ranging from "comfortable" [40%] to "very comfortable" [50%]), more than fathers (from "comfortable" [36%] to "very comfortable" [43%]) were perceived to be more comfortable with sharing their faith encounters with others. Interestingly, when asked about how comfortable they were talking about their faith and what God meant to them, adolescents were just about as "comfortable" (52%) as their parents, but at the same time, were less inclined than their parents to be "very comfortable" (28%) doing so.

Outcome variables frequencies indicated that about 77.9% of adolescents within this study experienced levels of FM. A summary of items measuring FM included adolescents' relationship and time spent with God, relationship with others through witnessing, their identity in God, and dependence on God. At the same time, adolescents' perceptions on LV were measured extrinsically and intrinsically. Based on adolescents' perceptions of the importance placed on extrinsic values (i.e., material things such as money or possession), the result showed that 65.3% of the population thought it was "not important" or "somewhat important."

Intrinsic values measured the level at which adolescents valued relationship with God and others and service to humanity, and 96.7% of the population perceived that it was either "somewhat important," "quite important," or "extremely important." In looking at adolescents' level of CC, more individuals (44.7%) indicated that their CC developed gradually over time, while 33.3% said they were committed since their childhood stage. At the same time, 13.2% indicated that they were committed at a specific time, but it did not last; 7.9% were not sure if they were committed, and 1% said they were not committed.

The goal of testing the hypothesized model was to explore potential effects of parent-child relational encounters on adolescents' values and religious posture. The results indicated that parent-child relational encounters do influence adolescents' FM, LV, and ultimately their CC. Apparently, parent-child encounters through religious rituals such as FW are not the only significant factors contributing to adolescents' LV, FM, and their CC. Presumably, certain dialectical interplay (i.e., FGCP, FCPF, CFT, FC1, FC2, FC3, FC4, and FC5), contributed significantly to meaningful parent-child

relational encounters. Such encounters seemed to influence the development of faith (and to some extent, LV) in adolescents and influence their CC. Results also indicated that adolescents' perceptions of their parents' personal faith encounter were likely to influence their own LV and faith posture. This affirms earlier propositions (Anthony, 2010, 2012; Boyatzis et al., 2006; Bunge, 2008; Dean, 2010; Regnerus et al., 2003; Sedlacek & Sedlacek, 2014) that parents play integral roles in children's religious development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The basic conclusion drawn from the findings of this study is that the inclusive relational encounters between parents and children influence adolescents' development of faith and values, as well as their level of CC. While assumptions regarding the functionality of family systems and individuals' developmental outcomes are discussed widely from a psycho-socio perspective (Bowen, 1976, 1985; Johnson et al., 2014), limited discussions are being carried out in religious contexts. The developmental process of faith is a complex phenomenon that is common to every person and cannot be measured precisely by using empirical instruments. Yet, there are factors through which the outgrowth of Christian faith in an individual may be observed.

At the core of the Christian faith is individuals' *belief* and *trust* in the Sovereign God, and how their *belief* and *trust* in God inform their existential encounter with self and others. Critical in the understanding of faith in the Christian context is the question of "how does a person develop trust in the God revealed . . . in the Bible—particularly in Jesus Christ—and what does that faith mean in his life?" (Nelson, 1952, p. 9). Scripture affirms that it is the Holy Spirit that gives to each person "a measure of faith (Rom 12:3),

yet the evidence of faith is manifested through individuals' relationships with God and others. In essence, faith is influenced by the way a person is "socialized by the adults who cared for him as a child" (Nelson, 1952, p. 9). A person ascribes meaning to faith through past and present relational encounters with others and the Transcendent using them to make sense of life. Adolescents' faith in the Transcendent God matures through the relational encounters shared with others, particularly their parents.

As attempts are being made to address the decline of young people's interest in faith and their relationships with faith communities, one possible approach to reaching them on a long-term basis is through inclusion of the whole family (Garland, 2012, pp. 85-88). This is necessary since individuals are often influenced by what goes on in their families, particularly by the relationships they have with their parents. Beginning in infancy, parent-child relational encounters expand over time and undergo necessary experiences of growth and stability (dialectical fluctuation) a process which contributes to the shaping of a child's reality. In looking at several studies concerning interpersonal exchange within family systems, different factors are seen embedded in the dialectical interplay of parent-child relational encounters.

Decades ago, Davis (1940) referred to the cyclical effect of personality development and socialization as contributing factors to the dialectical tension between parents and adolescents, pointing out that parents and child are at once in different stages of development. This implies that the socialization of the early years of a child's life is influenced by the parents, but as the child moves into the adolescence phase, the parents' influence is relegated. Essentially, the child's need and attempts to establish greater autonomy and to be differentiated from his or her parents become pronounced at this

stage. A person's need to be an individuated self begins in infancy (Erikson, 1963; Mahler et al., 2000) and becomes more distinct during the stage of adolescence. This need to assert autonomy during the adolescent years is a normal part of the developmental process.

Implicit in developmental inquiries concerning the stages of infancy leading up to early adolescence is the assumption that parents/caregivers have significant influence on children (Bowen, 1961, 1985; Erikson, 1963; Fowler, 1981; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). This means that children's tacit perceptions of reality are linked to the significant adults in their lives. Furthermore, studies on developmental theories identify the stage of adolescence as the time when individuals start to "develop higher levels of thinking They begin to develop arguments and reason"; questioning beliefs and commitments they once held tacitly, and eventually establishing, and committing to identity on their own (Maddix & Estep, 2017, p. 92). Marcia (1980) used four levels to categorize the dialectical flux in adolescents' experience of crises that lead to the development and assertion of identity in various domains of life:

- 1) Diffusion: a state of being obliviousness, or unwillingness to make commitments;
- 2) Foreclosure: a willingness to make premature or tacit commitments based on the influence of someone significant (i.e., a parent);
- 3) Moratorium: active exploration of various potential for commitments but without making any commitment; and
- 4) Identity achievement: making commitment after exploration.

It is necessary to point out that these levels are not sequential and that in religious contexts, it is likely that what is often seen as apathy to faith may be a time of searching (moratorium) for some adolescents.

Along with an adolescent's developmental need for autonomy and to be a differentiated self, contemporary issues such as relevance, and the need to experience authenticity and transparency (Barna, 2001; Erikson, 1963; Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2011; Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007; Paulsen, 2013) are at the core of parent-adolescents' dialectical flux. Misapprehension of the dialectical flux taking place within family systems, particularly between parents and child, as well as in adolescents' religious development and identity formation may have far-reaching implications for faith communities in their efforts in discipleship.

For Best Practice

The FSD model illustrated how various relational encounters within family systems correlate in influencing faith and value in adolescents. As a result, a family-inclusive approach is recommended as a viable means to the development of faith and values in adolescents and their parents. With current studies on the issue of faith, incredulity seems to rise on the shoulder of apathy to faith as many teenagers have opposed the Christian faith and unabashedly embraced atheistic worldviews. Compared to an average of 6% for others in the past, teens today seem to usher in a post-Christian generation with 13% of the 13 – 18 years old population identifying themselves as atheists (Barna, 2018). Apparently, several issues (including debates on science and the Bible, and the polarized understanding of good and evil) contribute to the increased opposition to the Christian faith. Faith communities are now at a crossroads, attempting

to navigate pathways that will rekindle and sustain faith in young people.

In the general context, efforts are being made to address the concerns of youth and young adults regarding their relationships with faith communities, as well as to mitigate further loss of interest in and devotion to the Christian faith (Paulsen, 2013; Powell et al., 2016). Some institutions of faith are finding strategic ways to address the situation. Recent trends usher in strategic efforts such as the Growing Young study, initiated at the Fuller Theological Seminary (Powell et al., 2016), the Growing Young Adventists project, an adaptation of Growing Young study (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, 2017), and the Church of Refuge initiative by the Center for Youth Evangelism (n.d.). At the core of these initiatives is the effort to build and nurture multigenerational relationships, integration of decentralized leadership, and the empowerment and inclusion of young people within local congregations.

Like these initiatives, the FSD framework introduced in this study can be a practical means through which faith communities nurture multigenerational relationships and empower young people and their families. Given the reports from studies which explored the effects of family systems functioning on individuals' psycho-socio-cultural learning and development, and the outcome of the theoretical assumption examined in this study, it is consequential to suggest a family-inclusive approach to discipling not just youth and young adults, but also entire family systems within faith communities.

The concept of family-inclusive discipleship is possible through a relational triadic as depicted in Figure 6. Under the guidance of God, faith is affirmed and nurtured through sequence of relationships: between faith communities and parents, between parents and children, and between faith communities and children. In family-inclusive

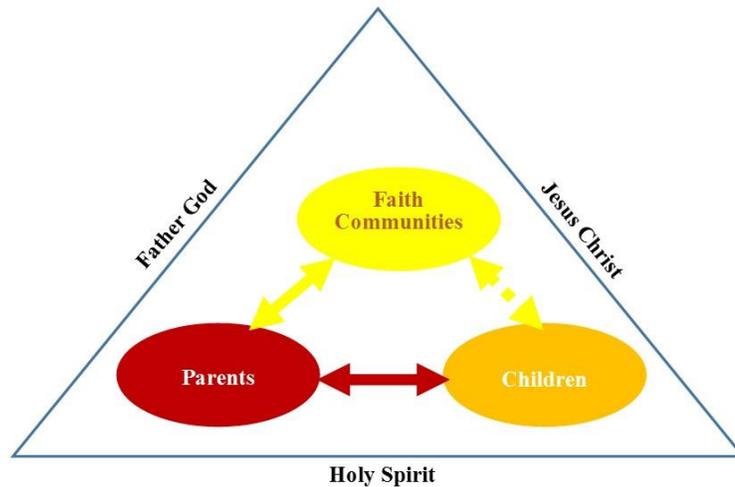


Figure 6. Family-Inclusive Approach to Discipleship. Triadic relationship between faith communities and parents, parents and children, and church communities and children.

discipleship, faith communities can take steps to nurture and equip parents to fulfill their role as primary disciplers of their children, while maintaining a secondary or supporting role (as indicated with dotted lines in Figure 6). However, it is necessary to point out that in settings where children and youth are from homes of unchurched parents, faith communities assume the firsthand responsibility of discipling them.

The fundamental principle of family-inclusive discipleship is that faith communities should be intentional in empowering not just children and adolescents but entire families to fulfill their purpose in society and in preparation for eternity. From a biblical standpoint, empowerment is entrenched in relationality; the idea of “building up . . . one another in the Christian faith . . . helping [others] mature spiritually” (Balswick & Balswick, 2014, p. 105). Further, the principle of empowerment challenges parents to fulfill their designated duties; to “teach diligently” and consistently, and in doing so, transmit LV that lead to lasting faith in children (Deut 6:7; see also, Ps 78:2-7). Yet, parents are “to be supported and nurtured in a vital faith community” (May et al., 2005, p.

151). In today's environment, parents are inundated by the trends of pop culture and are prone to overlook or misconceive the essence of diligence and consistency in teaching their children. Parents are urged to guard "the formative period of their children's life [endeavoring] to surround [them] with right influences, influences that will give them correct views of life and its true success" (White, 2015, p. 53).

While parents may be overwhelmed with the demands of life and may feel inadequate in their efforts to empower their children with values that are lasting and transformative, through family-inclusive discipleship, faith communities can be the stabilizing foundation of the parent-child relational encounter. At the onset of family-inclusive discipleship, faith communities take the initiative to come alongside parents and help them become grounded in their personal faith encounter. Many parents are challenged by complex issues of life that potentially influence their general wellbeing, as well as their faith posture. Ideally, faith communities can become places of refuge that help parents sort through some of life's chaos and, in the process, help them affirm their place in the narrative of the Transcendent, notwithstanding the outcomes of the chaos of life.

Furthermore, family-inclusive discipleship can guide faith communities in instilling in parents a sense of commitment to their biblical responsibility of fostering the development of faith in their children. Generally, the development of LV and faith in children is incumbent on parents, but often, they are either unaware or afraid of their responsibility to their children (Anthony, 2010, 2012; White, 1980, 1982). Hence "the church [should be] poised to inspire and shepherd parents to not merely spend their hours but invest their days during [the] critical years of child rearing"(Anthony, 2012, p. 36).

While the call for parents to empower children may seem overwhelming, parents are not called to be perfect, but to be diligent and vigilant in their responsibility to their children.

White (1980) remarked:

When parents are diligent and vigilant in their instruction, and train their children with an eye single to the glory of God, they co-operate with God When Christ is in [their] heart, He is brought into the family. The father and mother feel the importance of living in obedience to the Holy Spirit so the heavenly angels . . . will minister to them as teachers in the home, educating and training them for the work of teaching the children.” (pp. 317, 323)

Through simple deeds such as increasing quality time with their children, by listening and paying attention to what they are saying, or not saying, parents are empowering their children (Fraser, 2017, p. 6). Moreover, parents can “cultivate environments in [their] homes that will allow [their] children to not only hear God’s word but to also have [opportunities] to put them into practice” (Anthony, 2010, p. 38). Such environments include storytelling events that allow children to discover their identity in the metanarrative of Christ. It involves parents modeling faith through the expression of love and respect within the family system and their active engagement in service to God and humanity (Anthony, 2010, pp. 39-41). It also involves parents’ demonstration of transparency and authenticity in their daily experiences in the issues of life.

Through the family-inclusive approach to discipleship, faith communities can invest tangibly in equipping parents to fulfill their roles as the primary source of developing LV and faith in their children’s lives. Quite often, faith communities invest significant time and resources in recruiting and training volunteers for children and youth ministry. Similar efforts can be made to mobilize parents to better fulfill their biblical responsibility to their children. In providing parents with opportunities to develop in their relationships with God and with their children and by creating relevant curricula that

meet the needs of the entire family, faith communities can help both parents and children develop lasting faith and CC.

A family-inclusive approach should be contextualized to meet the needs of families within a particular sphere of influence and consequently, the need to create opportunities for dialogue and collaborative efforts between faith communities and families. In today's culture, the structure of the nuclear family systems has "morphed into so many different configurations" which now include nontraditional families, fragmented families, single-parent families, and blended families (Anthony, 2011, p. 2). For this reason, family-inclusive initiatives cannot be a one-size-fit-all approach.

At the inception of family-inclusive ministry, faith communities may feel inundated by the diverse needs based on the different family structures represented in their congregation. One basic way to approach these differing needs is to create alliances between the families represented in the congregation whereby individuals can learn from and support one another. Apart from forming alliances among families, faith communities can assess their particular congregation to determine their needs and the best way of incorporating family-inclusive curricula that will meet the necessities of families as a whole.

For Future Research

The use of secondary data in this study is based on a unilateral approach to exploring the connection between parent-child relational encounters in family systems and adolescents' development of LV and faith. A one-sided perspective of subjects within the study leaves room for a biased report on parent-child relational encounters. This makes it necessary for other studies to be conducted inclusive of the perspectives of

both parents and adolescents concerning relational encounters in family systems and the potential influence on adolescents' LV and religious outcomes.

It is not unusual for FM to be measured by the practice or absence of religious rituals. The measure of faith in this context was approached as a developmental phenomenon happening through relational encounters with others. The variable FW represented adolescents' perceptions concerning the frequency and value of the rituals of worship experiences at home with family. Compared to other variables FW had a significantly low reliability index. The probability of conducting further research inclusive of both adolescents' and parents' perspectives necessitates making adjustments to some subscales (i.e., FW) to increase or meet the basic level of reliability.

Based on the theoretical framework adapted in this study, it is of interest to note that further studies on the issue of parent-child relational encounters can also be explored from a systemic dialectical perspective incorporating the use of primary analysis instruments that are directly related to FST, as well as RDT.

Chapter Summary

This chapter's discussion surrounds the assumptions of the effects of relational encounters within family systems as postulated in the FSD theoretical framework. The effects of FSD become pronounced during the adolescence years, though the process is influenced over time by ongoing relational encounters between parents and children. Beyond the discussion of the purpose of the study to test the theoretical model against empirical data, it was conceptualized that faith communities can play an active role in FSD that directly influence adolescents' LV and FM, and indirectly CC. This is possible

through facilitating environments for the development of intergenerational experiences that foster intentional parent-child relational encounters.

In becoming aware of the importance of parent-child relational encounters, faith communities are encouraged to partner with parents by helping them assume the primary responsibility of modeling faith for their children. Faith communities can foster ongoing collaboration with parents through planning and implementing relevant multigenerational curricula that benefits both parents and child and by encouraging parent-child relational encounters beyond the environment of the faith community. Recommendations for further research were based on the need to get balanced perspectives on parent-child relational encounters.

APPENDIX A

REQUEST-PERMISSION TO USE VALUEGENESIS

DATA SETS

fraserj@andrews.edu (AU Gmail)

From: Jasmine Fraser <fraserj@andrews.edu>
Sent: Monday, December 2, 2013 5:13 PM
To: hcyfm@lasierra.edu
Subject: Permission/procedure to use Valuegenesis data in research project

Importance: High

Hello,

I am a doctoral student at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, in the initial stage of developing my research proposal. I am interested in using the Valuegenesis3 as part of the instrumentation for my research.

Please advise me on the procedures required for using this data.

Thank you.

Sincerely
Jasmine Fraser

fraserj@andrews.edu (AU Gmail)

From: V. Bailey Gillespie <gillba@icloud.com>
Sent: Monday, December 2, 2013 6:38 PM
To: Jasmine Fraser
Subject: Re: Permission/procedure to use Valuegenesis data in research project
Importance: High

Thank you for your request, our requirements for use of any Valuegenesis instrument or data sets require the following:

A brief (1-2 page proposal as to how you plan on using Valuegenesis with a letter requesting just what you need from our research team.

A signed document we will send to you which requires that you provide to our research team any results, paper, article, publication, thesis or dissertation that uses the data or instrument. (We send this to you after approval) A proposed time-line of your research.

We have a research committee meeting in about three weeks and we can ask our team here at La Sierra University, in the Divinity School to approve your request. make sure you provide complete contact information and any faculty who are on your research committee or thesis committee.

We are happy to consider your request and look forward to receiving the necessary materials for us to grant approval.

V. Bailey Gillespie, Ph.D.
Professor of Theology & Personality
HMS Richards Divinity School
La Sierra University
4500 Riverwalk Parkway
Riverside, CA 92515
bgillesp@lasierra.edu

For information about our 2014 summer Study Tour to Israel/Jordan/Turkey visit:
www.experiencetours.info

8712 Maplewood Drive
Berrien Springs
Michigan 49103

December 3, 2014

V. Bailey Gillespie, Ph.D.
Professor of Theology & Personality
HMS Richards Divinity School
La Sierra University
4500 Riverwalk Parkway
Riverside, CA 92515

Dear Dr. Gillespie,

Currently, I am enrolled in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, pursuing doctoral studies in the discipline of Religious Education.

I am writing to request the use of the following Valuegenesis data sets, questionnaires, and variable coding/scales:

1. Valuegenesis1, questionnaire, variable coding/scales
2. Valuegenesis2, questionnaire, variable coding/scales
3. Valuegenesis3, questionnaire, variable coding/scales

Listed below are the essential items that I am interested in using for the proposed study:

1. Family Composition
2. Gender
3. Family Climate
4. Family Worship
5. Religious Affiliation of Parents
6. Frequency of Conversation with Parents
7. Frequency of Conversation with Parents about Faith
8. Church Congregation climate
9. Strict Enforcement of Adventist Standards
10. Personal Endorsement of Adventist Standards
11. Importance of Religion
12. Baptism
13. Worship Motivation (intrinsic/extrinsic)

V. Bailey Gillespie, Ph.D.
December 3, 2014
Page 2

14. Loyalty to Denomination
15. Commitment to Jesus
16. Life Values
17. Personal Devotion
18. Understanding Salvation (Grace versus works)
19. Frequency of Worship Services
20. Belief Orthodoxy
21. Faith Maturity
22. Commitment to Jesus
23. Any other items that reflect the relational contexts of parents and children

Please see below a request form and an overview of the research to be undertaken. Signature for one member of my committee is missing as she now resides in another state. However, she is well aware of the proposed study and has given her approval. If you have additional questions regarding the proposed research, or the use of the Valuegenesis data sets please do let me know. I will be happy to provide the necessary details.

Thank you for assisting me with this.

Regards,

Jasmine Fraser

Jasmine Fraser
Religious Education Doctoral student
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University

RESEARCH PROPOSAL APPLICATION FORM
REQUEST FOR THE USE OF VALUEGENESIS DATASETS

Name: Jasmine Fraser
Home address: 8712 Maplewood Dr. City: Berrien Springs
State: MI Zip: 49103 E-mail: fraserj@andrews.edu
Institution: Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventists Theological Seminary

Proposed Research Topic:

Relational Dialectics: A Systemic Exploration of Parents-Adolescents Relationships and
the Implications on Adolescents' Christian Spirituality and Faith Formation

Committee Members:

David Sedlacek, PhD (Chair)
sedlacek@andrews.edu

Signed: David Sedlacek Date: 10/9/14

Delyse Steyn, PhD
dsteyn@andrews.edu

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Tevni Grajeles, PhD
tevni@andrews.edu

Signed: Tevni Grajeles Date: 10/9/14

The attached is a brief research proposal, requesting the use of the Valuegenesis data sets. In signing this document, I am agreeing to adhere to the requirements binding the use of the Valuegenesis data sets.

Jasmine Fraser

Signed: Jasmine Fraser Date: 10-9-14

Relational Dialectics: A Systemic Exploration of Parents-Adolescents Relationships and the Implications on Adolescents' Christian Spirituality and Faith Formation

Overview

Families are important in the development of civilization, and to a great extent shape society for better, or for worse. Various researches infer that the dynamics within a family have psycho-social effects on individuals. These effects are often manifested in varying positive and/or negative outcomes of the individuals' day to day lives. In light of these assumptions, the proposed hypothesis in this study is that the effects of family dynamics extend beyond the psycho-social to encapsulate the spiritual contexts, and may have significant effect on individuals' faith maturity. Several analyses will be conducted to study family relationship climate, and patterns of communication between parents and children. The objective is to determine whether certain patterns within family relationship may have some significant effect on children's faith maturity and life values. The end result is to reaffirm the primary role family environment plays in nurturing faith development in adolescents and young adults, and to highlight the need for new paradigm for ministries to family.

Background

Interest in pursuing this study evolved from the incessant quest of researchers to understand adolescents' and young adults' growing apathy to Christianity, and the varied attempts to find an ideal solution to this growing concern. One of the most debated topics in current religious dialogues is the issue of faith, youth and young adults, and their religious posture. In general, studies indicate that almost 60% of children leave the church after age fifteen (Kinnaman, 2011)¹. Another report proposes that "three out of every five kids in church youth group will eventually shrug off the institution entirely" (Gregston, 2012)². Studies conducted within Seventh-day Adventists forums regarding this issue indicated that among those baptized in their midteens, "40 to 50% will drop out by the time they are halfway through their 20s" (Dudley, 2000)³. These findings have piqued various studies on matters assumed to be contributing factors to adolescents and young adults' apathy to faith.

Exploring the far-reaching impact of psycho-social family dynamics could lend support to a presupposition that family relationship climate may have significant effect on adolescents and young adults' attitude on issues of faith. This study assumes that

¹ Kinnaman, D. *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity* 2007. Grand Rapids, MI. Baker Publishing Group.

² Gregston, M. "Why Teens Are Leaving the Church." Parenting Today's teen 2012. Web.

³ Dudley, Roger L. *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories from a 10-Year Study*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000.

relational transactions within the family have significant implications on adolescents and young adults' faith developmental process.

Research methodology

In this research, familial relationships will be studied in an effort to see whether certain variables pertaining to family relationship/communication process, within the Valuegenesis datasets, contribute (negatively, or positively) to adolescents' and young adults' faith maturity. A proposed longitudinal study will be conducted using valuegenesis1, 2 and 3 to first identify the patterns in parents and adolescents family communication and relationship, and also to see whether certain variables are significant contributing factors to the establishment of life values which may lead youth and young adults to positively embrace, own, and practice their faith in God.

Initial regression analyses will be conducted for each data set, to determine the level of significance of the hypothesis. A process of structural equation modeling (factor analysis and path analysis) will be used to classify variables, extract other latent variables, measure the effect of the correlation between variables, and ultimately determine the best model fit to explain the hypothesis being tested.

With the assumption that the study will indicate significant correlations between family relationship and adolescents and young adults' faith maturity, this research will reveal the need for a paradigm shift in ministries to adolescents', young adults, and their families.

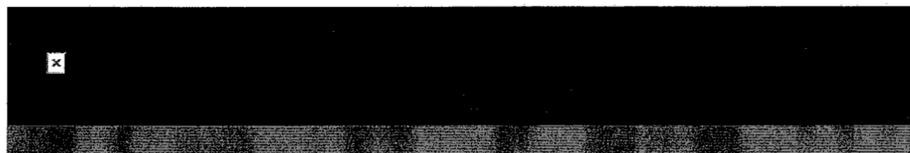
Possible limitations

One limitation to this study is that while results from the analysis of data may indicate significant correlations which signify that positive family relational climate contributes substantially to faith maturity and influence life values in adolescents and young adults, its findings are not conclusive evidence that absence of a positive family relational climate is the cause of failed or diminished faith maturity in individuals. However, the study is vital for highlighting the need to have new focus and intention for ministries to family. It is an attempt to point out that the potential solutions for retention is a long-term endeavor, which begins with family-focused goals and objectives.

fraserj@andrews.edu (AU Gmail)

From: Bailey Gillespie <mail@sf-notifications.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2015 8:55 PM
To: fraserj@andrews.edu
Subject: Valuegenesis 3 Data Sets

Flag Status: Flagged



Bailey Gillespie has sent you files.

[Click here to download this one really copy.dat](#)

Note From Bailey:

Greetings. Here are the files you requested. Remember they are for your use only and may not be shared with anyone else except those who assist you with your data analysis. And, in addition, we require a copy of your use of the data in any documents, publications, abstracts, or books. You have permission to use the data as you requested.

I am sorry this is so late in coming. Our statistician has been very ill and only last week recovered enough to work with us for a short time. Best of luck as you work with the third data set you requested. I believe Andrews University already has the first two data sets available for use (1990, 2000). This is the 2010 data set.

Keep us posted as to your findings and use of the files.

Bailey Gillespie, PhD, Associate Dean and
Coordinator of the Valuegenesis Research Project
HMS Richards Divinity School
La Sierra University



April 21, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

Jasmine Fraser was approved by the La Sierra University research team and Dr. V. Bailey Gillespie from the Divinity School to use the ValueGenesis instruments and data sets.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "F. Ninow", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Friedbert Ninow
Dean

HMS Richards Divinity School
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APPENDIX B

VALUEGENESIS² SURVEY ITEMS USED IN THIS STUDY

Variables Extracted from Valuegenesis²

No.	Variable ID	Construct	Item	Response
1	Q001	Faith maturity (FM)	I help others with their religious questions and struggles.	1 = "Never" 2 = "Rarely" 3 = "Once in a while" 4 = "Sometimes" 5 = "Often"
2	Q002		I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.	1 = "Never" 2 = "Rarely" 3 = "Once in a while" 4 = "Sometimes" 5 = "Often"
3	Q003		I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world.	1 = "Never" 2 = "Rarely" 3 = "Once in a while" 4 = "Sometimes" 5 = "Often"
4	Q004		I give significant portions of time and money to help other people.	1 = "Never" 2 = "Rarely" 3 = "Once in a while" 4 = "Sometimes" 5 = "Often"
5	Q005		I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people.	1 = "Never" 2 = "Rarely" 3 = "Once in a while" 4 = "Sometimes" 5 = "Often"
6	Q006		I feel my life is filled with meaning and purpose.	1 = "Never" 2 = "Rarely" 3 = "Once in a while" 4 = "Sometimes" 5 = "Often"
7	Q007		I show that I care a great deal about reducing poverty in my country and throughout the world.	1 = "Never" 2 = "Rarely" 3 = "Once in a while" 4 = "Sometimes" 5 = "Often"
8	Q008		I apply my faith to political and social issues.	1 = "Never" 2 = "Rarely" 3 = "Once in a while" 4 = "Sometimes" 5 = "Often"
9	Q009		The things I do reflect a commitment to Jesus Christ.	1 = "Never" 2 = "Rarely" 3 = "Once in a while" 4 = "Sometimes" 5 = "Often"

10	Q010		I talk with other people about my faith.	1 = "Never" 2 = "Rarely" 3 = "Once in a while" 4 = "Sometimes" 5 = "Often"
11	Q011		I have a real sense that God is guiding me.	1 = "Never" 2 = "Rarely" 3 = "Once in a while" 4 = "Sometimes" 5 = "Often"
12	Q012		I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation.	1 = "Never" 2 = "Rarely" 3 = "Once in a while" 4 = "Sometimes" 5 = "Often"
13	Q013	Commitment to Christ (CC)	Which of the following best describes your commitment to Jesus Christ?	1 = "Not committed to Christ." 2 = "Not sure if I am committed to Christ." 3 = "Committed at a specific moment, but it did not last." 4 = "My commitment has developed gradually." 5 = "Committed since I was a young child."
14	Q099	Life values (LV)	How important is it to you as a personal goals to spend time helping people?	1 = "Not at all important" 2 = "Somewhat important" 3 = "Quite important" 4 = "Extremely important"
15	Q100		How important is it to you as a personal goals to live your life according to Adventist standards?	1 = "Not at all important" 2 = "Somewhat important" 3 = "Quite important" 4 = "Extremely important"
16	Q101		How important is it to you as a personal goals to have lots of nice things?	1 = "Not at all important" 2 = "Somewhat important" 3 = "Quite important" 4 = "Extremely important"

17	Q102		How important is it to you as a personal goal to help people who are poor or hungry?	1 = "Not at all important" 2 = "Somewhat important" 3 = "Quite important" 4 = "Extremely important"
18	Q103		How important is it to you as a personal goal to have lots of money?	1 = "Not at all important" 2 = "Somewhat important" 3 = "Quite important" 4 = "Extremely important"
19	Q104		How important is it to you as a personal goal to be active in the Adventist church?	1 = "Not at all important" 2 = "Somewhat important" 3 = "Quite important" 4 = "Extremely important"
20	Q105		How important is it to you as a personal goal to show love to other people?	1 = "Not at all important" 2 = "Somewhat important" 3 = "Quite important" 4 = "Extremely important"
21	Q106		How important is it to you as a personal goal to help promote social equality?	1 = "Not at all important" 2 = "Somewhat important" 3 = "Quite important" 4 = "Extremely important"
22	Q173	Frequent good conversation with parents (FGCP)	Frequency in the last month: a good conversation with your parents that lasted 10 minutes or more.	1 = "Never" 2 = "Once" 3 = "Twice" 4 = "3 times" 5 = "4 or more times"
23	Q174	Family Environment (FE)	My family life is happy.	1 = "No opinion" 2 = "I definitely disagree" 3 = "I tend to disagree" 4 = "I am not sure" 5 = "I tend to agree" 6 = "I definitely agree"

24	Q175		There is a lot of love in my family.	1 = "No opinion" 2 = "I definitely disagree" 3 = "I tend to disagree" 4 = "I am not sure" 5 = "I tend to agree" 6 = "I definitely agree"
25	Q176		I get along well with my parents.	1 = "No opinion" 2 = "I definitely disagree" 3 = "I tend to disagree" 4 = "I am not sure" 5 = "I tend to agree" 6 = "I definitely agree"
26	Q177		My parents give me help and support when I need it.	1 = "No opinion" 2 = "I definitely disagree" 3 = "I tend to disagree" 4 = "I am not sure" 5 = "I tend to agree" 6 = "I definitely agree"
27	Q178		My parents often tell me they love me.	1 = "No opinion" 2 = "I definitely disagree" 3 = "I tend to disagree" 4 = "I am not sure" 5 = "I tend to agree" 6 = "I definitely agree"
28	Q179		If I break one of the rules set by my parents, I usually get punished.	1 = "No opinion" 2 = "I definitely disagree" 3 = "I tend to disagree" 4 = "I am not sure" 5 = "I tend to agree" 6 = "I definitely agree"
29	Q189	Parents' religious posture (PRP)	Which of the following best describes the way your father is religious?	1 = "This question does not apply to me." 2 = "Not religious at all." 3 = "Not very religious." 4 = "Religion does not seem to matter much." 5 = "Not easy to tell how religion is an influence." 6 = "Deeply religious; it has a big impact."

30	Q190		Which of the following best describes the way your mother is religious?	<p>1 = "This question does not apply to me." 2 = "Not religious at all." 3 = "Not very religious." 4 = "Religion does not seem to matter much." 5 = "Not easy to tell how religion is an influence." 6 = "Deeply religious; it has a big impact."</p>
31	Q191	Frequent conversation with parents about faith (FCPF)	How often does your father talk to you about his faith or religious experiences he has had?	<p>1 = "This question does not apply to me." 2 = "Never" 3 = "Less than once a month." 4 = "About once a month." 5 = "About 2-3 times a month." 6 = "About once a week." 7 = "Several times a week" 8 = "Once a day" 9 = "More than once a day"</p>
32	Q192		How often does your mother talk to you about her faith or religious experiences she has had?	<p>1 = "This question does not apply to me." 2 = "Never" 3 = "Less than once a month." 4 = "About once a month." 5 = "About 2-3 times a month." 6 = "About once a week." 7 = "Several times a week" 8 = "Once a day" 9 = "More than once a day"</p>

33	Q193		How often do you and your father talk together about faith or religion?	<p>1 = "This question does not apply to me." 2 = "Never" 3 = "Less than once a month." 4 = "About once a month." 5 = "About 2-3 times a month." 6 = "About once a week." 7 = "Several times a week" 8 = "Once a day" 9 = "More than once a day"</p>
34	Q194.		How often do you and your mother talk together about faith or religion?	<p>1 = "This question does not apply to me." 2 = "Never" 3 = "Less than once a month." 4 = "About once a month." 5 = "About 2-3 times a month." 6 = "About once a week." 7 = "Several times a week" 8 = "Once a day" 9 = "More than once a day"</p>
35	Q195	Comfort with faith talk (CFT)	How comfortable is your father in talking with others about faith and what God means to him?	<p>1 = "This question does not apply to me." 2 = "Not comfortable" 3 = "Comfortable" 4 = "Very comfortable"</p>
36	Q196		How comfortable is your mother in talking with others about faith and what God means to her?	<p>1 = "This question does not apply to me." 2 = "Not comfortable" 3 = "Comfortable" 4 = "Very comfortable"</p>
37	Q197		How comfortable are you in talking with others about faith and what God means to you?	<p>1 = "This question does not apply to me." 2 = "Not comfortable" 3 = "Comfortable" 4 = "Very comfortable"</p>

38	Q198	Family worship (FW)	How often does your family have family worship (prayer or devotions away from church?)	1 = "Never" 2 = "Less than once a month." 3 = "About once a month." 4 = "About 2-3 times a month" 5 = "About once a week" 6 = "Several times a week" 7 = "Once a day" 8 = "More than once a day"
39	Q199		When you think about family worship or other religious events in your home are they interesting?	1 = "No" 2 = "Yes"
40	Q200		When you think about family worship or other religious events in your home are they meaningful?	1 = "No" 2 = "Yes"
41	Q201		When you think about family worship or other home religious events are they a waste of time?	1 = "No" 2 = "Yes"

Table of Definitions of Variables

Variables	Conceptual Definition	Instrumental Definition	Operational Definition
<i>(Latent variable)</i> Family systems dialectics (FSD)	An approach to understanding the impacts of interpersonal exchanges, and family systems functionality on adolescents' development, based on an adaptation of aspects of FST and RDT.	A construct based on indicator variables (i.e., FC, FGCP, PRP, FCPF, CFT, FW) which examines whether relational exchanges in the context of family systems impact adolescents' faith maturity, life values and commitment to Christ.	FSD is a significant predictor of adolescents' faith maturity, life values, and commitment to Christ.
<i>(Observed variable)</i> Frequent good conversations with parents (FGCP)	Adolescents' perceived recollection of time spent conversing with either of their parents.	1. Frequency in the last month: a good conversation with your parents that lasted 10 minutes or more.	1 = "Never" 2 = "Once" 3 = "Twice" 4 = "3 times" 5 = "4 or more times"
<i>(Observed variable)</i> Parents religious posture (PRP)	Adolescents' perception regarding the extent of their parents' religious posture.	1. Which of the following best describes the way your father is religious? 2. Which of the following best describes the way your mother is religious?	1 = "This question does not apply to me." 2 = "Not religious at all." 3 = "Not very religious." 4 = "Religion does not seem to matter much." 5 = "Not easy to tell how religion is an influence." 6 = "Deeply religious; it has a big impact."
<i>(Observed variable)</i> Frequent conversation with parents about faith (FCPF)	Adolescents' need to spend quality time, and satisfaction from spending quality time, talk with parents about their (parents') faith or religious experiences, as well as being able to share their (adolescents') own faith	1. How often does your father talk to you about his faith or religious experiences he has had? 2. How often does your mother talk to you about her faith or religious experiences she has had? 3. How often do you and your father	1 = "This question does not apply to me." 2 = "Never" 3 = "Less than once a month." 4 = "About once a month." 5 = "About 2-3 times a month." 6 = "About once a week." 7 = "Several times a week"

Table of Definitions of Variables—*Continued*

Variables	Conceptual Definition	Instrumental Definition	Operational Definition
<i>(Observed variable)</i> Frequent conversation with parents about faith (FCPF)	experiences.	talk together about faith or religion? 4. How often do you and your mother talk together about faith or religion?	8 = "Once a day" 9 = "More than once a day"
<i>(Observed variable)</i> Comfort with Faith Talk (CFT)	Adolescents' perceptions of their fathers' levels of comfort, mothers' levels of comfort, and their levels of comfort in talking with others about faith and what God means to them.	1. How comfortable is your father in talking with others about his faith and what God means to him? 2. How comfortable is your mother in talking with others about her faith and what God means to her? 3. How comfortable are you in talking with others about your faith and what God means to you?	1 = "This question does not apply to me." 2 = "Not comfortable." 3 = "Comfortable." 4 = "Very comfortable."
<i>(Observed variable)</i> Family worship (FW)	A representation of the frequency with which families within the population engage in worship activities such as praying and having devotional time together as a family away from church. It also accounts for adolescents' perception of the value of the worship activities carried out in the home.	1. How often does your family have family worship (prayer or devotions away from church)? 2. When you think about family worship or other religious events in your home, are they interesting? 3. When you think about family worship or other religious events in your home, are they meaningful? 4. When you think about family worship or other home religious events, are they a waste of time?	Frequency 1 = "Never" 2 = "Less than once a month." 3 = "About once a month." 4 = "About 2-3 times a month" 5 = "About once a week" 6 = "Several times a week" 7 = "Once a day" 8 = "More than once a day" Value 1 = "No" 2 = "Yes"
<i>(Latent variable)</i> Family climate (FC)	A construct formulated to examine adolescents' perception of their family environment being a place	A construct based on the variables FC1 to FC6. FC is foundational in the examination of the theoretical	FC is significantly correlated with FSD, and potentially contributes to adolescents' developmental outcomes

Table of Definitions of Variables—*Continued*

Variables	Conceptual Definition	Instrumental Definition	Operational Definition
<i>(Latent variable)</i> Family climate (FC)	where they experience love, and happiness, resulting from the relationship they have with their parents. Family climate is also based on adolescents' perceptions of the experience of being, or becoming an autonomous self (individuation) as influenced by relational exchanges with their fathers, and mothers throughout the process of development.	construct, FSD, significantly influencing (while being influenced) the dialectical relational encounter in family systems. 1. My family life is happy. 2. There is a lot of love in my family. 3. My parents often tell me they love me. 4. I get along well with my parents. 5. My parents give me help and support when I need it. If I break one of the rules set by my parents, I usually get punished.	(i.e., faith maturity, life values, and commitment to Christ). 1 = "No opinion" 2 = "I definitely disagree" 3 = "I tend to disagree" 4 = "I am not sure" 5 = "I tend to agree" 6 = "I definitely agree"
<i>(Observed variable)</i> Family happiness (FC1)	Adolescents' perception of their family atmosphere as being a place where they experience love and happiness, and get along with, and feel supported by parents.	1. My family life is happy,	1 = "No opinion" 2 = "I definitely disagree" 3 = "I tend to disagree" 4 = "I am not sure" 5 = "I tend to agree" 6 = "I definitely agree"
(Observed variable) Level of love in family (FC2)	Adolescents' perception of the level of love in their family.	1. There is a lot of love in my family.	1 = "No opinion" 2 = "I definitely disagree" 3 = "I tend to disagree" 4 = "I am not sure" 5 = "I tend to agree" 6 = "I definitely agree"
<i>(Observed variable)</i> Parent-child relationship (FC3)	Adolescents' perception of their relationship with their parents.	1. I get along with my parents.	1 = "No opinion" 2 = "I definitely disagree" 3 = "I tend to disagree" 4 = "I am not sure"

Table of Definitions of Variables—*Continued*

Variables	Conceptual Definition	Instrumental Definition	Operational Definition
<i>(Observed variable)</i> Parent-child relationship (FC3)			5 = “I tend to agree” 6 = “I definitely agree”
<i>(Observed variable)</i> Parents’ support of child (FC4)	Adolescents’ perception of the level of help and support received from parents.	1. My parents give me help and support when I need it.	1 = “No opinion” 2 = “I definitely disagree” 3 = “I tend to disagree” 4 = “I am not sure” 5 = “I tend to agree” 6 = “I definitely agree”
<i>(Observed variable)</i> Verbal expression of love (FC5)	Adolescents’ perception of verbal expression of love from their parents.	1. My parents often tell me they love me.	1 = “No opinion” 2 = “I definitely disagree” 3 = “I tend to disagree” 4 = “I am not sure” 5 = “I tend to agree” 6 = “I definitely agree”
<i>(Observed variable)</i> Response to family rules (FC6)	Adolescents’ perception of parents’ response to violation of family rules.	1. If I break one of the rules set by my parents, I usually get punished.	1 = “No opinion” 2 = “I definitely disagree” 3 = “I tend to disagree” 4 = “I am not sure” 5 = “I tend to agree” 6 = “I definitely agree”
<i>(Observed variable)</i> Live values (LV)	A factor used to distinguish between adolescents’ perceptions of what is of intrinsic\ extrinsic value to them.	1. Spend time helping people. 2. Live my life according to Adventists standards. 3. Have lots of nice things. 4. Help people who are poor and hungry 5. Have lots of money. 6. Be active in the Adventist Church	1 = “Extremely important” 2 = “Quite important” 3 = “Somewhat important” 4 = “Not at all important”

Table of Definitions of Variables—*Continued*

Variables	Conceptual Definition	Instrumental Definition	Operational Definition
<p><i>(Outcome variable)</i> Faith Maturity (FM)</p>	<p>A representation of a way of life whereby adolescents' lives exemplify "a vibrant life-transforming experience, manifested through a meaningful relationship with God, and unswerving commitment of service to others.</p>	<p>7. Show love to people. 8. Help promote social equality.</p> <p>1. I help others with their religious questions and struggles. 2. I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually. 3. I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world. 4. I give significant portions of time and money to help other people. 5. I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people. 6. I feel my life is filled with meaning and purpose. 7. I show that I care a great deal about reducing poverty in my country and throughout the world. 8. I apply my faith to political and social issues. 9. The things I do reflect a commitment to Jesus Christ. 10. I talk with other people about my faith. 11. I have a real sense that God is guiding me. 12. I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation.</p>	<p>1 = "Never" 2 = "Rarely" 3 = "Once in a while" 4 = "Sometimes" 5 = "Often"</p>
<p><i>(Outcome variable)</i> Commitment to Christ (CC)</p>	<p>Developing daily in relationship with Christ and embracing a lifestyle that is in keeping with the character of Christ</p>	<p>1. Which of the following best describes your commitment to Jesus Christ?</p>	<p>1 = "I am not committed to Christ." 2 = "I am not sure if I am committed to Christ." 3 = "I committed my life to Christ at a specific moment in my life, but it didn't last."</p>

Table of Definitions of Variables—*Continued*

Variables	Conceptual Definition	Instrumental Definition	Operational Definition
<p><i>(Outcome variable)</i> Commitment to Christ (CC)</p>			<p>4 = “My commitment to Christ has developed gradually over a period of time.” 5 = “I’ve been committed to Christ since I was young, and continue to be committed to Christ.”</p>

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