Abstract: At the core of human ecology¹ are individuals living together in microsystems of collaborative relationships. Families systems are significant entities at the microsystems level impacting all other systems in society. They are places where people learn through relational encounter. The relational encounter in family is undergirded by complex dialectical connections which influence individuals socially and emotionally, contributing to their learning and development. From a metatheoretical framework, this study used quantitative secondary data analysis to explore potential correlations between relational encounter in family systems and adolescents’ life values and faith posture. Understanding the connections between relational encounter in family systems and adolescents learning and developmental outcomes have potentials for best practices in religious education.

Overview

Relational encounter in family systems are configurations of unceasing dialectical interplay which occur directly or indirectly, consciously or subconsciously. These encounters affect the group’s functioning, as well as individuals’ learning, and developmental outcomes. The process of learning is dynamic, transcending the label of schooling.² Martin (2011) proposes that education [learning] happens through encounter³ and that learning through encounter is not limited to individuals’ acquisition of knowledge in a formal setting. Learning through encounter also encompasses cultural [and by proxy, relational] phenomena. Likewise, the issue of development is broad, encapsulating psycho-socio-cultural elements of individuals’ encounter and outgrowth. Studies regarding human development provide different lenses for assessing a person’s capacity to function.⁴ With ongoing studies on family systems, various frameworks⁵ are

¹ An ecological model of human development proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) consists of microsystem (i.e., family, school, church, etc.), mesosystem (relationships among microsystems), exosystem (public policy, political structures), macrosystem (social norms, gender roles, cultural values.). See McWhirter et al., (2007, pp. 17-18).
² Sometimes education and schooling are used synonymously or interchangeably, but studies have shown that there are differences between schooling and education. Learning happens through education but education is not limited to schooling. Learning happens through “experience” [encounter] (see Kolb, 2015, p. 49).
³ According to Martin (2011) “education involves an encounter between an individual and something external and that [it is] this encounter [that] brings about change” (p.7).
⁴ A significant aspect of the psycho-socio developmental process is an individual’s level of differentiation of self. Differentiation of self is determined by one’s capacity to simultaneously balance an autonomous self and maintain healthy attachment in interdependent relationships with others. See Kerr and Bowen (1988, pp. 97-106).
⁵ Various methods (i.e., Bowen’s [1961, 1985] Family Theory, Olson’s (2000) Circumplex Model, and McMaster’s Model of Family Functioning [Epstein et al., 2003]), are used to explain some dynamics of relational encounter in family systems.
used in observing certain functions and outcomes of the relational encounter between individuals. The relational encounter in family is one factor through which individuals’ learning and developmental outcomes are assessed. Based on research, one may assume that relational encounter in family systems influences a person’s perception, attitudes, concept of reality, and how he or she acts or responds to life encounters.

Although studies have been conducted regarding the psycho-socio-cultural connections between family relationship and individuals’ learning and developmental outcomes, few studies explore any direct connection between family systems relational encounter, and adolescents’ life values and faith posture. In this discussion, it is presumed that because family systems encounter has far-reaching psycho-socio-cultural impacts on individuals’ learning and developmental outcomes, there are also likely effects for certain religious outcomes. Consequently, it is assumed that the parent-child relational encounter potentially influences the child’s values and attitudes regarding faith during the stage of adolescence.

In exploring the impact of parent-child relational encounter on adolescents’ faith posture and life values, it is necessary to establish briefly a biblical foundation, discuss faith as a developmental encounter which happens in relationship with another, and outline the theoretical framework of this study. Some elements of family systems theory and tenets of relational dialectics theory form the major theoretical construct (i.e., Family Systems Dialectics [FSD]) from which certain parent-adolescent relational encounter is explored. A brief summary of the research methodology, data analysis procedures, research findings, and implications is also presented.

A Biblical Framework for Family Relational Encounter

Family relational encounter is at the foundation of biblical history. The Bible is replete with manifestations of family relational encounter. Beginning with the creation narrative, family relationships are intertwined with the divine-human encounter and continue with myriads of interpersonal encounters between kinfolks. Deuteronomy outlines a pattern for learning through relational encounter in family:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! 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

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6 Individuals’ developmental outcomes, are often linked to relational encounters in families. (Fosco et al., 2016; Grossmann et al., 2005; Johnson et al., 2014; McBride et al., 2013; McWhirter, 2007; Raby et al., 2015; Sroufe et al., 2010; Stevenson-Hinde, 1990). Family relationships are also associated with influencing individuals’ values and faith identity formation (Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003; Choi, 2012; Martin et al., 2003).

7 The concept of Family Systems Dialectics (FSD) is a metatheoretical approach adapted in this study as a framework for exploring relational encounters in family systems. FSD is a synthesis of concepts extracted from family systems and relational dialectics theories, and used to conceptualize the outcomes of complex relational encounter in family. This complexity is evident in contradictions—defined as “the dynamic interplay between unified opposition” evident in interdependent relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 8). The relational encounter in family is predicated in inevitable tensions based on individuals’ contradicting needs. The capacity to negotiate meaning in relational encounter, and to embrace a both/and (instead of either/or) approach creates a platform for collaborative initiatives. FSD is also based on assumptions drawn from Bowen’s (1985), and Olson’s (2000) concepts of family functionality. Elements of Bowen’s concepts, along with Olson’s family dimensions, undergird the systemic context of FSD.

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. 6:4-9 (NKJV).\textsuperscript{9}

Symbols in this passage encapsulate different levels of encounter. Encounter is depicted as a vertical reality (happening through divine-human experience) as well as a horizontal connection (relational interchange between parent-child) in which individuals learn and develop. The call to “love” is the basis of encounter. The encounter of love begins with “a heart focused and centered on God” as the Ultimate. Love as an encounter is predicated in the heart, “the sense of reason and cognitive functions” Carpenter (2009, p. 457). In essence, parents are challenged to first experience love as an encounter with God, and then employ distinct ways (i.e., teach diligently, in different conversations, writing, memorizing) of helping their children encounter God’s love in personal and meaningful ways. Concerning this need, Slaughter (1996) stated:

If parents are to teach their children the truth about a relationship [an encounter] 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 that “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), implying that no dissonance should exist between the message and the messenger. Evidently, parents’ encounter with God should be practical illustrations of what they are attempting to teach children. Maston and Tillman (1983) remarked that: “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). It is important to note further in Deut 6:6-7, that the statement “these words which I have commanded you today . . . you shall teach . . . diligently to your children” underscores God’s expectation of parents regarding their children. Essentially, parents are not only challenged to foster love encounters with God, but to be intentional in sharing them with their children\textsuperscript{10}. Westerhoff (2012) remarked on the effect of a parent’s practical connection with God on a child’s encounter, stating that “the responsibility of Christian parents is to endeavor to be Christian with their children” (p. 93). Furthermore, Gangel (1977) stated that “the way parents relate to their children and to others in the extended family or the society around, and the way parents [encounter] God all have a profound influence on the value systems and ethical standards of their children” (p. 64).

Ultimately, a biblical perspective on relational encounter in family calls attention to the “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 et al., 2005, p. 152). A biblical perspective highlights the need for parents to model what they expect of their children, and to foster an environment in which children will encounter life values that serves as scaffolds for faith development.

\textsuperscript{9} NKJV is used for biblical citations unless otherwise indicated.

\textsuperscript{10} See Prov 22:6; Eph 6:4; 2 Tim 3:15.
Faith: A Complex, Developmental Encounter

Differing perspectives connote the complexity of faith. According to Dykstra (2005) “faith is a complex reality.” 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. Here, faith denotes active and passive encounters. Further discussions on the complexity of faith has theological and philosophical underpinnings, suggesting that “faith is often used as a synonym for religion” (as doctrinal beliefs) or as a contrast to reason (Nelson, 1989 p. 127). Still, other studies imply that the dynamic encounter of faith is much more than exclusive concepts or theories of theology or philosophy.

Fowler’s (1986) remark that, “Faith has to do with the making, maintenance, and transformation of human meaning, [and with] knowing and being” (p. 15), underscores the complexity of faith. Embracing a developmental perspective, Fowler discussed aspects of faith as embodying attachment in the context of relationships in which virtues such as trust, commitment, and loyalty are mutually expressed. Faith embodies a comprehensive, ongoing relational encounter of knowing and acting:

Faith examined through a structural development lens indicates that the encounter is dynamic. As faith is passed on through encounter it “gains fresh vitality” for each person (Fowler, 1981, p. 10). Faith entails commitment and loyalty, and is expressed through activities and the use of symbols in a relational context. Fowler (1981) remarked that “there is always another in faith. I trust in and am loyal to” (p. 16), an indication that faith is relational, happening horizontally and vertically in connection with another. Fowler’s (1981) concept of faith, being a developmental

11 Embracing a relational approach to faith, Westerhoff (2012) proposed four styles of faith: experienced faith, which are based on initiated acts and responses to certain basic needs; Affiliative faith, centered on identifying and acting with others in an accepting community; searching faith, the process of establishing one’s own identity through critical thought and reflection; and owned faith, the conversion which results from experience, affiliation, and personal searching (pp. 89-98). Westerhoff’s relational approach is practical, and relevant in understanding faith. Faith is “a way of behaving which involves knowing, being, and willing. . . . [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). Each dimension of Westerhoff’s styles of faith represents a chronological period, but the experience of faith is not bound to a linear sequence base on individuals’ chronological age/stages of development.

12 See Gillespie et al., (2004), pp. 97-103; Kozlowski et al., (2014) pp. 427-428; Roehlkepartain (1990) p. 497 for discussions on dimensions (vertical, horizontal, undeveloped, integrated) of faith. Faith is based on one’s 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 deemed strong in their relationship with God, but low in their relationship with others) and horizontal faith (individuals are high in their relationship with others, but low in their relationship with God).

13 Fowler (1981) described seven possible stages of faith development (six of which are measurable) during an individual’s lifespan: Undifferentiated (unmeasurable), Intuitive-Projective, Mythic-Literal, Synthetic-Conventional, Individuative-Reflective, Conjunctive, and Universalizing (pp. 117-199). Though each stage is linked chronologically to a developmental time frame, the progression from one stage not necessarily sequential.
encounter is compared with other structural-developmental approaches on how a person’s cognitive, psycho-socio, and moral experiences emerge over a lifetime.

A structural developmental approach to understanding the complexity of faith is not a measure of the quality of an individual’s religious practices or a means of determining the validity or sincerity of one’s faith. However, 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). In this context, a structural developmental perspective validates the assumption that faith is relational. It supports the metatheoretical approach used to explore the potential impacts of the relational encounter in family on adolescents’ faith posture and life values.

A Metatheoretical Approach to Family Relational Encounter

Interpersonal relationships are dynamic, and no one theory completely describes the intricacies of the relational encounter within family systems. Hence, the attempt to use a metatheoretical approach to conceptualize the connections between family systems relational encounter, and individuals’ learning and developmental processes. This method combines elements of family systems theory (Bowen [1985]; Olson [2000]) and relational dialectics theory (Baxter and Montgomery [1996]) as a synthesis for explaining complex family relational encounters. The concept of family systems is based on the principle of nonsummativity which suggests that individuals are best understood in connection with other members of their family unit. Essentially, what affects one part of the system impacts the whole system. Emerging from the perspective of systems theory, family systems theory is a practical way of explaining complex layers of the relational encounter. Broderick (1993) describes family systems as being open and ongoing hinting at their complex structure and function. Implicitly, every relational encounter evolves on the heels of previous encounters and creates segues to future encounters.

Relational encounter in family systems seems even more complex as one explores the intricacies and possible outcomes of parent-child interpersonal encounter across generations. Bowen (1985) uses eight concepts to discuss the likely effects of such encounters on individual

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14 See Piaget and Gabain (1932) on cognitive development, Erikson (1963) on psycho-socio development, and Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) on moral development.

15 Select concepts are adopted to create a metatheoretical framework for this discussion. However, empirical instrumentations connected to Bowen’s (1985), Olson’s (2000), theory of family systems, and Baxter and Montgomery’s (1996) discourse on relational dialectics are not used as methodological tools in the study.

16 Bowen (1961), in observing and administering psychotherapy to patients, unearthed a web of emotional entanglement between family members, creating 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). These concepts underscore 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).

17 Discussions in General System Theory, Bertalanffy, (1993, 3-9, 192-194) provide an overview of the emergence of systems theory within the industrial/technological context, and also its re-orientation in the study of human relationships. Systems theory provides a viable explanation of the way components within a system connect and interact with each other.

18 Broderick’s (1993) discussion regarding the open, ongoing nature characterizing family systems implies that there is an internal and external encounter between the system and its environment, and that the encounter is modified by time and change.

19 In studying human behavior Bowen (1961, 1985) employed the use of systems thinking in which he described the family as an emotional system where individuals are intricately connected with one another. He proposed that
members and across generations. Four of these concepts (i.e., differentiation of self, emotional cutoff, multigenerational transmission process, societal emotional process) are adopted in the FSD framework proposed in this study.

The idea of differentiation encompasses the emotional self; being able to be a distinct self while remaining emotionally connected to others. 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 with family members whenever there are unresolved issues. 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. The transfer of emotional behavior patterns across generations is referred to as multigenerational transmission process. Family systems are not only impacted by individuals’ and generational emotional patterns; they are also impacted by the interplay between other systems in society. Bowen (1985) refers to this encounter between family and society as societal emotional process. Similar to Bowen’s (1985) perspective are Olson’s (1979, 2000) dimensions (cohesion, adaptability, and communication) on family relational encounter, which focus on the system’s emotional climate. 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 & Montgomery’s (1996) relational dialectics theory is another component in the FSD framework. It assumes that relational encounter is undergirded by the dialectical principles of “unified oppositions” built around the notion of contradictions, change, praxis, and totality. From a dialectical perspective contradictions are the basic drivers of change in a web of relational encounters, and is best understood as a “both/and” way of fostering growth and stability simultaneously (pp. 6–8). Change occurs in relational encounter as individuals act and react to others, and is necessary in sustaining healthy interdependent relationships. The concept

individuals are emotionally interdependent, and what affects one person impacts another as well as the family unit in general. He used eight concepts (triangles, nuclear family emotional process, family projection process, sibling position, differentiation of self, emotional cutoff, multigenerational transmission process, and societal transmission process) to explain relational encounters and outcomes in family systems.

Cohesion, adaptability and communication are dimensions used in Olson’s (2000) model to assess individuals’ capacity to balance “separateness” and “togetherness”, and how changes in relationships are managed. Family cohesion describes “the emotional bonding that family members have toward each other,” and 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). Family adaptability describes “the amount of change in [family] leadership, role relationships, and relationship rules”, and how the system manages such changes. Levels of adaptability (rigid, structured, flexible, and chaotic) are also measured on a “low to high” continuum (p. 147). The inclusion of a communication dimension is “critical for facilitating” the dynamic interplay of cohesion and adaptability in family systems (p. 149). Patterns of family communication are “measured by focusing on the family as a group” assessing their capacity to engage one another in interpersonal communication (p. 149). Family communication outcomes are labeled as positive or negative, based on the system’s levels of cohesion, and adaptability.

The essence of the dialectical principle is embedded in simultaneous expression of unity and differences. It is a way of understanding “the ongoing contradictory tensions between consistency and inconsistency and between stability and instability” (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998, p. 2). Griffin (2012) describes relational dialectics as “a dynamic knot of contradictions in personal relationships; an unceasing interplay between contrary or opposing tendencies” (p.154). Baxter (1990) states 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; [and] the struggle of opposites thus is not evaluated negatively by dialectical thinkers” (p.70). In essence, the dialectical encounter creates a need for negotiation, and the capacity to find balance in the process.
of praxis encompasses individuals’ conscious or subconscious engagement in relational
encounter as coders/decoders and senders/receivers illustrating both proactive and reactive roles
in relational interplay. Totality\textsuperscript{22} in a dialectical contexts connotes that “phenomena can be
understood only in relation to other phenomena” (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996, p.14).
Interestingly, there are overlaps between components of family systems theory and relational
dialectical theory, and it is necessary to note that these components are not sequential, but are
manifested concurrently in the relational encounter. Consequently, it is assumed that relational
encounter in family systems can be understood from the framework of family systems dialectics
as influencing the overall learning and development of individuals. Figure 1 in the Appendix is a
synthesis of elements of family systems theory and relational dialectical theory creating the FSD
model.

Methodology
A quantitative nonexperimental research design utilizing secondary data analysis was
used to test the FSD model which assumes that there are significant connections between family
systems relational encounter and adolescents’ life values and faith posture. Quantitative research
methods “emphasize objectivity in measuring and describing a phenomena . . . by using
numbers, statistics, structure and control” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 21). The research
process involves analysis of data extracted from Valuegenesis\textsuperscript{2} dataset. Valuegenesis (1, 2 & 3)
research were conducted over a period of three decades (1990, 2000, and 2010), examining the
faith and values of adolescents attending high schools affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist
Church in North America. Initially, data purging reduced the sample size from 16,000 to 11,481.
Further elimination of missing cases increased reliability while reducing the sample size to
4,675. Forty-one (41) items (out of 396) were selected based on adolescents’ perceived relational
encounter with parents. Through factor analysis and mean score calculation fourteen observed
variables were created. Six observed variables contribute to the construct, family climate\textsuperscript{23}, and
five are indicators of the FSD construct\textsuperscript{24}. It is assumed that FSD is a predictor of outcome
variables: adolescents’ life values (LV), and faith posture (FP).
The Valuegenesis\textsuperscript{2} study demographic characteristics include gender, ethnicity, age, and
family structure. A greater percentage of the sample were females (51.2%) with males
comprising 48.8% (N = 4,675), and the population sample was predominantly White (53%).
Other ethnic characteristics are of mixed racial background (14%), Latino/Hispanic (11%),

\textsuperscript{22} Totality, a concept similar in meaning to Bowen’s concept of systems, denotes that “phenomena can be
understood only in relation to other phenomena” (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996, p. 14). Further, in discussing
totality Benson (1977) remarked “that social phenomena should be studied relationally . . . with attention to their
multiple interactions” (pp. 3-4). Essentially, “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).

\textsuperscript{23} The construct family climate is indicated by six measured variables: family life 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). Conceptually, family climate represents adolescents’ perception of their family as a
place where they experience love and happiness, get along with, and feel supported by parents. Research suggests
that the general family climate is a reflection of several aspects of family level functioning (Fosco et al., p.1140).
Based on the systemic perspective adopted in this study it is assumed that family climate creates the atmosphere for
all relational encounter even as it is affected by the relational encounter between family members.

\textsuperscript{24} The FSD construct is indicated by family worship (FW), parents’ religious posture (PRP), frequent conversation
with parents about faith (FCPF), comfort with faith talk (CFT), and frequent good conversation with parents
(FGCP).
Asian/Pacific Islanders (11%), Black/American (10%), and American Indian (1%). Participants’ age varied from 11 to 20, with a greater percentage (78.7%) being in the 15–18 age range. Participants’ family structure is 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%.

**Analysis Procedures**

Analysis of data was carried out using the International Business Machine (IBM) Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS 24) and, Analysis of a Moment Structures (AMOS 24) used to perform structural equation modeling (SEM). SEM design is able 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 (i.e., hypothesis testing) approach” in analyzing a theory (Byrne, 2010, p. 3). SEM 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).

The following criteria were used to examine model “fit measures” (Arbuckle, 2016; Blunch, 2008, pp. 98, 110-116): The chi-square ($\chi^2$) 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 estimation (RMSEA). Based on statistical reports, the $\chi^2$ 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 $\chi^2$ indicates that the theoretical model does not fit the empirical data, whereas a good model fit is indicated by a non-significant $\chi^2$, but there are exceptions when using large sample size. The GFI is similar to the “coefficient determination” ($R^2$) in multiple regression, measuring the model variance and covariance. GFI index values equaling .90 or greater imply a good model fit (Blunch, 2008, pp. 110, 114). The NFI analyzes the difference between the $\chi^2$ values of the hypothesized model, and the independent model (Blunch, 2008, p. 114). Ideally, NFI index values are .90 or greater. The CFI analyzes differences between the empirical model and the theoretical model. A CFI index value of .90 or more 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.
Findings and Discussions

The variance covariance matrix indicates significant positive correlations between observed variables. These results reflect adolescents’ perception of the relational encounter (particularly with their parents) in their family systems. The strongest correlations (r = .70, p < .001) were found between family life happiness (M = 4.83, SD = 1.22) and level of love in family (M = 5.17, SD = 1.14); family life happiness (M = 4.83, SD = 1.22) and verbal expression of love (M = 4.89, SD = 1.25); level of love in family (M = 5.17, SD = 1.14) and verbal expression of love (M = 4.89, SD = 1.25); and parent-child relationship (M = 5.21, SD = 1.15) and verbal expression of love (M = 4.89, SD = 1.25). These results indicate that level of love, and parents’ increased verbal expression of love contribute to adolescents’ relationships with their parents, and to family life happiness. The weakest correlation (r = .10, p < .001) existed between response to family rules (M = 4.72, SD = 1.32 and frequent good conversation with parents (M = 4.08, SD = 1.28). Moderate correlation (r = .60, p < .001) was also found between outcome variables faith posture (M = 3.48, SD = .69) and life values (M = 2.98, SD = .49). Criteria for normal distribution of variables was met based on the absolute value index for skewness and kurtosis: SI ≤ 3.0 and KI ≤ 10 (see Appendix, Table 2) which is acceptable with the use of large sample size (Kline, 2011, p. 63).

The study reveals that the hypothesized model of FSD, which is a synthesis of family relational encounters influencing adolescents’ life values and faith posture, was supported by the empirical data. The research hypothesis proposed that the theoretical covariance matrix is similar or identical to the empirical covariance matrix, and further suggest that the construct FSD is a significant predictor of adolescents’ life values and faith posture. Evaluation of the structural model based on likelihood ratio statistic: \( \chi^2 (61, N = 4,675) = 1372.07, p = .000 \) indicate a misfit between the theoretical model and the data. However the misfit reflected in the \( \chi^2 \) is potentially due to the large sample size. Four other criteria were used to evaluate the structural model, all of which yielded acceptable fit indices: GFI = .96, NFI = .94, CFI = .94, and RMSEA = .068 (see Appendix, Table 3).

The fit indices indicated similarities between the covariance matrices, providing empirical support for the theoretical model (see Appendix, Figure 2, Tables 3, 4, 5, and Model Fit Summary). Significant correlation was found between the latent variables family systems dialectics (FSD) and family climate (FC) \( r = .60, p = .000 \). Family systems dialectics is a significant predictor of adolescents’ faith posture (effect size .40) and life values (.10). There is significant correlation between family climate and faith posture (.12), but no statistical significance between family climate and life values. Faith posture and life values are highly correlated with a path coefficient of .54. Twenty three percent (23%) of the variance in faith posture was influenced by the direct effect of family systems dialectics, and 35% of the variance in life values was influenced by family climate.

In testing the assumption that family relational encounter significantly influences adolescents’ life values and faith posture, the theoretical model was supported by the empirical data. The theoretical model assumed bivariate correlations between the latent constructs family systems dialectics (FSD) and family climate (FC), and direct causal relationship between latent variables and outcome variables faith posture (FP), and life values (LV). The observed model

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25 LV = life values, FP = faith posture, FC1 = family life happiness, FC2 = level of love in family, FC3 = verbal expression of love, FC4 = parent-child relationship, FC5 = parents’ support of child, FC6 = response to family rules. Figure 2 in the Appendix outlines the hypothesized model which indicates causal relationships between variables.
consisted of six parameters five of which were statistically significant (see Appendix, Tables 4 and 5), indicating that the model is a good fit.

**Conclusion and Implication for Religious Education Best Practice**

This study indicates that there are significant connections between adolescents’ relational encounter in family systems and their development of values and faith. This means that certain relational encounters (i.e., frequent good conversations with parents, frequent conversations with parents on the issue of faith, comfort level with faith talks, parents’ support, level of love experienced in family, and parents’ verbal expression of love), contribute to meaningful parent-child relational encounter, which tend to influence the development of life values and faith in adolescents. Results also indicate that adolescents’ perceptions of their parents’ personal faith encounter are likely to influence their own life values and faith posture.

At a time when ongoing studies on the issue of faith reveal that youth and young adults’ interest in faith and faith communities is on the decline, faith communities are at a crossroad attempting to navigate a path that will rekindle faith in young people. Referring to reports that family systems relational encounter influences individuals’ psycho-socio-cultural learning and development, this study suggests a family-inclusive approach to discipleship can create opportunities for collaborative efforts between faith communities and families. Understanding the significant impact of parent-child relational encounter, ministry leaders and mentors are encouraged to partner with parents, first by helping them assume the primary responsibility of modeling faith for their children. Additionally, faith communities may foster ongoing collaboration with parents by planning and implementing more intergenerational curricula that encourage parents-child encounter beyond the environment of the faith community.

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26 Anthony (2012) proposed that faith communities need “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. Parents today need the church to inspire them, equip them, and support them in this incredible endeavor” (p. 37).
REFERENCE LIST


Figure 1. Family systems dialectics (FSD) model: A synthesis of tenets family systems theory, and relational dialectics theories illustrating how relational encounter in family systems merge together potentially impacting adolescents life values and faith posture.
### Table 2

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FGCP</th>
<th>PRP</th>
<th>FCPF</th>
<th>CFT</th>
<th>FW</th>
<th>FP</th>
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Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Standard error of skewness = .036, and Kurtosis = .072
Table 3

Summary of Fit Indices of the Hypothesized Model ($N = 4,675$)

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<th>References</th>
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Figure 2

Figure 2. Hypothesized theoretical model illustrating causal relationships of indicator variables on the latent constructs family systems dialectics (FSD), family climate (FC) and the mediated effects of FSD on adolescents’ life values and faith posture.
Table 4

Correlation between the Latent Variables in the Structural Model

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Table 5

Path Coefficients for the Structural Model

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<th>$R^2$</th>
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Model Fit Summary

CMIN

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RMR, GFI

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### Scalar Estimates (Group number 1 - Default model)

#### Maximum Likelihood Estimates

#### Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

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**Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)**

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**Covariances: (Group number 1 - Default model)**

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**Correlations: (Group number 1 - Default model)**
### Variances: (Group number 1 - Default model)

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### Squared Multiple Correlations: (Group number 1 - Default model)

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