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The Association Between Teacher Attachment Style and Student Engagement

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,

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Abstract

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by

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MA, Walden University, 2010

BS, Northern Arizona University, 1990

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

The teacher-student relationship is an important dynamic in student engagement. Higher education retention strategies include the teacher-student relationship as a focus. The present study focused on the attachment style of the teacher and the impact that it has on student engagement. The theoretical basis for this study was Bowlby's attachment theory. Student engagement, both behavioral and academic, was measured after 9 weeks of a semester in general education classes. A quantitative design was used to determine the relationship between the teacher's attachment style and student engagement. A one-way multivariate analysis of variance was used to analyze the results. Significant differences were found between secure and insecure teacher attachment styles for control and relevance of schoolwork, F (1, 55) = 5.089, p = .028, η^2 = .085, and extrinsic motivation, F (1, 55) = 6.965, p = .011, η^2 = .112. These findings suggested that students in classrooms taught by teachers with a secure attachment style had higher levels of control and relevance of school, which showed that those students had higher levels of understanding related to the expectations of the coursework and their ability to complete the assignments to meet the course requirements. Those students also had significantly higher levels of academic engagement specific to extrinsic motivation. That is, those students were more likely to believe that they would be rewarded through grades and academic success. The findings in this study may lead to positive social change by creating teacher awareness around how their behavior impacts student engagement. For institutions, the results of this study may be used to increase both student success and institutional effectiveness by incorporating training modules into teacher training that addresses teacher attachment style.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Researchers have found that the emotions of a teacher have an influence on student engagement (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Quilan, 2016). Hagenauer and Volet (2014) and Quilan (2016) suggested that there is a mirrored emotional relationship between teacher and student. Emotions shared between the student and teacher can impact their engagement both negatively and positively; the more positive the emotional experience, the greater the student's enjoyment, confidence in the work produced, and belief in their ability to achieve competencies (Appleton et al., 2002; Quinlan, 2016; Trowler, 2010). In addition, researchers have shown that when individuals have experienced negative emotional interactions, they experience increased feelings of shame, disengagement from the material presented, potential feelings of boredom and frustration, lowered belief in their ability to achieve competencies, and increased anxiety (Quinlan, 2016; Trowler, 2010). Attachment style has been correlated with an individual's ability to regulate his or her emotions when interacting with others (van der Meer et al., 2015; Vrticka, Bondolfi et al., 2012). Attachment styles affect self-esteem and relatedness to others, two psychological factors that contribute to student engagement (Appleton et al., 2008; Trowler, 2010), by predicting how a person will react emotionally to interactions with others (Bifulco et al., 2002).

Attachment style predicts interpersonal relationships between people and has been linked to positive self-esteem and feelings of emotional support by others when in a secure state (Bulfico et al., 2002). Adult attachment style has also been found to be malleable (Crosling & Heagney, 2009; Fraley et al., 2011; Gore & Rogers, 2010; Green et al., 2011). There was a gap in the literature regarding the possible relationship between

adult attachment style and teacher and student engagement. A study on the attachment style of teachers and its association with student engagement was warranted and needed because the literature had shown that the teacher-student relationship influences student engagement and student success. This research expanded the current knowledge base and has practical implications for creating more engaging classroom environments.

In Chapter 1, I discuss the problem statement and formally state the research questions and hypotheses. I then discuss Bowlby's attachment theory and the nature of the study. Definitions are also discussed in this chapter. The assumptions of this research study are also discussed, along with the scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of this study.

Background

The leaders of higher learning institutions are looking at more effective ways to meet budgetary restraints, increase competitiveness in the market, and focus on student success through engagement (Trowler, 2010). Research suggests that the emotions of the teacher impact student engagement (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Quinlan, 2016). The more positive and supportive the emotional experience between student and teacher, the better the interaction between student and teacher (Appleton et al., 2002; Bulfico et al., 2002; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Quilan, 2016; Trowler, 2010; van der Meer et al., 2015; Vrticka et al., 2012). When students perceive strong emotional support from the teacher, it results in higher student self-esteem and increased student engagement (Appleton et al., 2002; Bulfico et al., 2002; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Quilan, 2016; Trowler, 2010; van der Meer et al., 2015; Vrticka et al., 2012). Student success and the teacher-student relationship seem to support each other in creating a mutually successful academic

experience (Appleton et al., 2008; Trowler, 2010). Gore and Rogers (2010), Reilly (2012), Richardson and Arker (2010), and Trowler (2010) explained that the relationship between teacher and student may be one of the best predictors of academic success.

There are many studies that have been done that indicate that student engagement is linked to student attachment style (Antonio & Tuffley, 2015; Christenson et al., 2012; Garrett, 2011; Trowler, 2010; Trowler & Trowler, 2010). The attachment style of the student originates from the relationship with his or her parent or caregiver (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1951, 1958). There have been numerous studies on student attachment style and student engagement where adjustment to successful academic achievement at college has been found (Bifulco et al., 2002; Marmarosh, 2009; Wilson & Gore, 2013). These studies have reported that when students' attachment style to their parents is secure, it is associated with students' successful academic achievement (Bifulco et al., 2002; Marmarosh, 2009; Wilson & Gore, 2013).

This research expanded the current literature on the teacher-student relationship by providing insight on the impact of teacher attachment style on student engagement. As previously discussed, the teacher-student relationship has been shown to impact student retention and increase graduation rates. This research addressed the gap in the literature on the teacher-student relationship by focusing on the attachment style of the teacher and its impact on student behavioral and academic engagement. The attachment style of the student has already been linked to student engagement (Elliot & Reis, 2003; Perrine & King, 2004; Reio et al., 2009). This research provided institutions with another way to enhance the teacher-student relationship.

Problem Statement

Higher educational institutions focus on first attracting students to their programs and then retaining those students through to completion of their courses of study (Trowler, 2010). One strategy that is considered more important than adding structural enhancements to meet those goals is to focus on creating effective student engagement strategies (Trowler, 2010). Student engagement is considered a valuable intervention tool and gauge that institutions can use to predict dropout rates and to mediate the gradual disconnect from school (Appleton et al., 2008; Trowler, 2010). Student engagement can collectively be defined as purposeful and willful participation by students in lectures and coursework that lead to successful completion of course competencies, as well as what the institution does to attract and motivate students into activities that lead to that successful completion (Trowler, 2010). This in turn creates "value for money" and should increase market interest and reputation for the institution (Trowler, 2010). This research addressed student engagement as it related to teacher attachment style. Student engagement is considered by institutions a driving force in student completion and retention rates. However, there has been limited research on what factors contribute to a strong, positive teacher-student relationship. Teacher attachment style is one such factor and was examined in this study in relation to how it influenced student engagement.

Three types of student engagement have been identified: behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement (Trowler, 2010). Positive engagement occurs when both student and the higher education institution's goals are met by behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement (Trowler, 2010). Behavioral engagement is described as occurring when the student is actively participating and

attending lectures; emotional engagement is described as occurring when the student is interested in the topic on some level; and cognitive engagement is described as occurring when the student can meet or exceed assignment requirements (Trowler, 2010). Research suggests that quality of instruction and the teacher-student relationship have the most influence and impact on student engagement (Richardson & Arker, 2010; Trowler, 2010). When students experience positive feelings toward their teacher, their ability to learn and develop tends to increase (Appleton et al., 2008; Trowler, 2010). There is also a correlation between positive engagement and psychosocial development of the student (Trowler, 2010). When psychosocial development occurs, students can apply the knowledge learned in an effective way as they enter the workforce and begin interacting with others in a professional setting (Trowler, 2010). Appleton et al. (2008) suggested that psychological engagement begins with the student's relationship with the teacher.

As the adult relationship between teacher and student grows in a supportive way, higher levels of engagement have been reported as student self-esteem increases (Appleton et al., 2008). Increased levels of relatedness that the student has toward the teacher have also been found to increase student engagement (Appleton et al., 2008). Relatedness can be described as feelings of emotional security and the basic human need for closeness, whatever the level that may be (Appleton et al., 2008). In sum, students who believe that their teachers care about them and are connected to them will positively engage in course requirements (Appleton et al., 2008).

Attachment style theory has been linked to the psychosocial development of self-esteem and feelings of emotional support by other adults (Bifulco et al., 2002). Researchers have found that the attachment styles of students are related to their level of

college and academic adjustment, ability to attach to peer groups in college (Marmarosh, 2009; Wilson & Gore, 2013), use of and belief in support services available to students (Wilson & Gore, 2013), reason for studying (Gore & Rogers, 2010), and overall connectedness to the institution (Wilson & Gore, 2013), as well as how they are motivated to study (Gore & Rogers, 2010) and the reliability and availability of faculty support (Wilson & Gore, 2013).

Previous researchers have examined the attachment style of students, but the impact of teacher attachment style on student engagement has not been previously investigated. Researchers examining attachment style have concluded that student attachment style is related to student engagement (Appleton et al., 2002; Bulfico et al., 2002; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Quilan, 2016; Trowler, 2010; van der Meer et al, 2015; Vrticka et al., 2012), but researchers have not examined whether teacher attachment style is related to student engagement. There was a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between college teachers' attachment style and the components of student engagement (behavioral and academic engagement) in college students. This study assessed several components of behavioral and academic engagement. For behavioral engagement**,** the teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, and family support in learning were assessed. In terms of academic engagement, student control and relevance of schoolwork, future aspirations and goals, and extrinsic motivation were assessed. In addition, overall student engagement was assessed. The implications for positive social change of this study include providing institutions with a better understanding of how to enhance positive teacher-student relationships, create better retention strategies, and increase student completion rates.

Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative survey study was to examine the relation of teacher attachment styles (secure, ambivalent/anxious, avoidant) to various components of student engagement (behavioral and academic engagement) in a community college setting. To address this gap in the research, the independent variable was teacher attachment style (secure, ambivalent/anxious, and avoidant). The dependent variables were components of student engagement (behavioral and academic engagement).

Research Questions

This research addressed the following research questions and hypotheses:

RQ1. To what extent is college teacher attachment style (secure, ambivalent/anxious, avoidant), as measured by the Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire-Revised (ECR-R), associated with behavioral engagement (teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, family support in learning, and overall behavior engagement) of college students, as measured by the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI)?

H_0. There are no significant differences in behavioral engagement of college students based on teacher attachment styles (secure, ambivalent/anxious, avoidant).

H_1. There are significant differences in behavioral engagement of college students based on teacher attachment styles (secure, ambivalent/anxious, avoidant).

RQ2. To what extent is college teacher attachment style (secure, ambivalent/anxious, avoidant), as measured by the Experiences in Close

Relationships Questionnaire-Revised (ECR-R), associated with academic engagement (control and relevance of school work, future aspirations and goals, extrinsic motivation, and overall academic engagement) of college students, as measured by the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI)?

H_0. There are no significant differences in academic engagement of college students based on teacher attachment styles (secure, ambivalent/anxious, avoidant).

H_1. There are significant differences in academic engagement of college students based on teacher attachment styles (secure, ambivalent/anxious, avoidant).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical base used for this study was Bowlby's attachment theory (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Bowlby suggested that early relationships with caregivers can provide the basis for how relationships are developed as people grow older as well as how people respond to relationships and mold them into the proceeding conceptual framework, whether the behavior is appropriate for the current situation or not (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Attachment style predicts that the relationship that a child forms with adult caretakers will influence how the child forms all other interpersonal relationships in the future (Gore & Rogers, 2010). Attachment styles are usually described in three distinct categories: secure attachment, ambivalent/anxious attachment, and avoidant attachment (Gore & Rogers, 2010).

Children with a secure attachment style usually have caregivers who are responsive to their needs as they are growing up (Gore & Rogers, 2010). When adults

have a secure attachment style, they are more confident and comfortable when approaching relationships. This improves their ability to collaborate with others and seek support (Wilson & Gore, 2013). Adults with a secure attachment style are also more comfortable with interpersonal interaction (Wilson & Gore, 2013). Ambivalent/anxious attachment style adults may have a strong desire for close relationships but fear that they will not last (Gore & Rogers, 2010). Adults with an ambivalent/anxious attachment style worry so much about the relationships that they desire that they begin to make the constant worry over relationships work against them in both the relationship and their ability to concentrate on what is important in the interpersonal relationship (Dan et al., 2014). Avoidant attachment style adults are more autonomous and cut themselves off from meaningful close relationships (Gore & Rogers, 2010). Adults with an avoidant attachment style actively work on minimizing the risks that they feel in relationships and take on self-protective or defensive behaviors to avoid uncomfortable feelings in interpersonal relationships (Dan et al., 2014).

Student engagement is and should be educators' focus in order to do their part in supporting the institutional goals of retention and completion (Crosling & Heagney, 2009; Reilly 2012). Studies have shown that the emotions of the professor have an influence on student engagement (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Quilan, 2016). As discussed previously, Hagenauer and Volet (2014) and Quilan (2016) suggested that emotions are mirrored between teacher and student based on how they are expressing their emotions toward each other. These mirrored emotions can have a positive or negative impact on student engagement; the more positive the emotional experience, the greater enjoyment, confidence in work produced, and belief in the ability to achieve the competencies is

experienced (Quinlan, 2016). When students perceive a more negative emotional interaction, they experience increased feelings of shame, disengagement, boredom, and frustration (Quinlan, 2016). In addition, the belief in their ability to achieve academic competencies is reduced (Quinlan, 2016). Attachment style is linked to emotions, and securely attached individuals generally expect consistency when approaching others for support and expect that others are available for support for them (Fraley et al., 2011). Green et al. (2011) suggested that even secure individuals will mold their behavior to the person that they are wishing to connect with subconsciously, even if they are molding that behavior from a secure base to an insecure base. This could have a reciprocal negative impact on teacher/student relationships if teachers are unaware of their attachment style and the influence that they may be having on relationships as a result of the attachment style. This may consequently predict how much a student will engage. The attachment style of the teacher may predict how successful the teacher is when seeking to engage students in the learning process. For example, an avoidant attachment style would potentially lead the teacher to avoid providing emotional support to the student. As discussed previously, positive emotional interaction between student and teacher in the learning environment seems to promote student success.

Nature of the Study

This study used a nonexperimental quantitative design using survey methodology. This quantitative study measured student engagement and assessed its association to teacher attachment style using surveys for both measurements. The independent variable was the teachers' attachment style (secure; ambivalent/anxious; avoidant), and the dependent variables were student engagement, measured academically (control and

relevance of school work, future aspirations and goals, and extrinsic motivation), behaviorally (teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, family support in learning), and overall. Teachers and students were recruited through the community college email system. A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with three levels of the categorical independent variable (secure; ambivalent/anxious; avoidant attachment styles) and two continuous dependent variables (behavioral and academic engagement) was used for this research. Survey methodology was used, and teachers and students completed self-report instruments to measure attachment style and academic and behavioral engagement.

Definitions

Ambivalent/anxious attachment style: Displayed in interpersonal relationships when adults feel a strong desire for close relationships but do not allow relationships with others to develop out of fear of them not lasting (Gore & Rogers, 2010). The fear becomes intense worry, which in turn works against them in the relationship as they push others away from them as they lose focus and concentration on what is important in the relationship (Dan et al., 2014).

Avoidant attachment style: Displayed in interpersonal relationships through lack of developing meaningful relationships (Gore & Rogers, 2010). Adults will appear to be autonomous as they avoid developing interpersonal relationships in an effort to minimize any risks of being hurt in a relationship (Dan et al., 2014). Self-protective and/or defensive behaviors work to ensure that the discomfort feelings in interpersonal relationships do not occur through distancing from others (Dan et al., 2014).

Secure attachment style: Displayed in interpersonal relationships when adults seem confident and comfortable approaching and developing relationships with others (Wilson & Gore, 2013). Collaboration, openness to receiving support from others, and comfort in interpersonal relationships is evident (Wilson & Gore, 2013).

Student academic engagement: The components of academic engagement include the student's perception of his or her feelings of control and the relevance of the school work, the student's future aspirations and goals, and the extrinsic motivation of the student (Appleton et al., 2006).

Student behavioral engagement: The components of behavioral engagement include the student's perception of positive feelings about the teacher-student relationship, the student's perception of peer support at school, and the student's perception of family support in learning (Appleton et al., 2006).

Assumptions

The first assumption centered around the survey. Teachers and students completed self-report questionnaires for this research. I assumed that the teachers and students were able to read and understand the questions and were honest in the answers they provided. As McDonald (2008) asserted, sometimes self-report surveys become a more self-serving opportunity for individuals to present themselves as their ideal selves rather than how they really are.

I also assumed that 9 or 10 weeks of classroom interaction was enough time for teachers to display their attachment style through their interactions with the students. In addition, the students had an opportunity to observe the teacher's attachment style. In order for a relationship to exist between teacher attachment style and student

engagement, the assumption was that the students had reacted to the attachment style through their engagement. Thus, if there is a relationship between teachers' attachment style and student engagement, it was assumed that the relationship between those variables would be present after nine to ten weeks of interaction between teacher and student. This was a limited amount of time, as classes generally meet for approximately 2 hours per week. It was my assumption that teachers would have had adequate time to create rapport with their students in this time. Student engagement occurs when a positive relationship is built between the student and teacher (Appleton et al., 2002; Quinlan, 2016; Trowler, 2010). Semesters are generally 16 weeks, so building rapport with students in this time frame is important for the students to engage in the coursework.

Attachment style is stable over time (Fraley et al., 2011) and the assumption was that the teacher would demonstrate the attachment style after 9 to 10 weeks of classroom interaction. The limited amount of time that the student and teacher had to interact before the surveys were completed may have been more accurate with more interaction between student and teacher.

Scope and Delimitations

The focus of this research was attachment style and student engagement. The association between the attachment style of the teacher and student engagement had not been investigated previously in the literature. Extending the current research regarding student engagement and the teacher-student relationship was the focus of this research. Many elements of student engagement have been studied as they relate to a higher education setting and building successful retention strategies for student success (Antonio & Tuffley, 2015; Christensen et al., 2012; Garrett, 2011; Trowler, 2010; Trowler &

Trowler, 2010). Student engagement has been identified as a contributor to student retention (Appleton et al., 2008; Christensen et al., 2012; Trowler, 2010; Trowler & Trowler, 2010). A key element in student engagement has been identified in the perceived teacher-student relationship of the student being positively supported and cared about, and feeling a sense of belongingness created by the teacher (Coley et al., 2016; Elliot & Reis, 2003; Perrine & King, 2004; Reio et al., 2009; Richardson & Arker, 2010; Trowler, 2010).

A number of researchers have examined the impact of attachment style on student engagement, and results have shown significant impact in the higher educational setting (Christensen et al., 2012; Garett, 2011; Trowler, 2010; Trowler & Trowler, 2010). For example, attachment style between parent and student also plays a significant role in college success (Ames et al., 2011; Larose et al., 2005; Lopez, 1997; Trowler, 2010; Wilson & Gore, 2013). There is a lack of research on the teacher's attachment style and whether it impacts the relationship between teacher and student in higher education. It is known that there is a link between the teacher-student relationship and student engagement (Christensen et al., 2012; Garett, 2011; Trowler, 2010; Trowler & Trowler, 2010), and further study needs to be done to look at ways to improve those relationships. Improving teacher/student relationships may provide a more beneficial environment for both the teacher and student, which may in turn allow the institution to reach its goals of retaining and awarding degrees to students.

Generalizability may be limited because community college students represent a unique population, and the demographics of this population may be different from other college students. In all cases, there is a relationship between the teacher and the student,

and attachment style is a predictor of future interpersonal relationships (Rogers & Gore, 2010). Because this research was done in the southwest, the geographic location could have affected and also limited generalizability.

Limitations

One limitation of this research was that it specifically examined the attachment style of teachers, when there are other factors, or characteristics of the teacher, that may also influence the teacher-student relationship. These factors include teacher personality, home life of the teacher, the number of years the teacher has been teaching, the quality of teaching delivered by the teacher, and teaching style. Because of the lack of research specifically on teacher attachment style and student engagement, this research was limited in scope to teacher attachment style only.

Another limitation was related to other student characteristics that might influence engagement. For example, there may be differences in students' academic readiness and/or motivational level. These factors, and others, might contribute to an increase or decrease in student engagement. These variables were beyond the scope of this research but may be a consideration when assessing student engagement as it relates to college students.

Another limitation was that the assessments took place after only nine or ten weeks of classes. The limited amount of time that the relationship had to develop may not be as informative as a longer time frame. Interactions between the teacher and student may not have yet occurred during the semester that would elicit a student engagement response to the teacher's attachment style response. A longer time frame might have

enhanced the validity of the study by ensuring that enough interaction between the teacher and student had occurred. The time chosen was the middle of the semester, when it was assumed that some rapport had been developed between the teachers and students. It was my hope that the rapport developed at that point would be enough for the students to be able to accurately assess their level of engagement. In addition to this limitation, some students may have had more or less interaction with the teacher for a variety of reasons that may have affected their ability to assess their teacher's attachment style.

This research used a non-experimental design. Using a non-experimental design limited the ability to determine cause and effect, as there was not any manipulation of the independent variable and the students were not randomly chosen. This research only determined whether there was a relationship between teacher attachment style and student engagement.

Significance

This research provides educators with a broader understanding of the impact that teachers have on student engagement based on the teacher's attachment style. Creating greater personal awareness for teachers as they begin to understand how their own attachment style may influence how they approach student engagement, and how student engagement levels may be influenced by their attachment style, is a positive contribution to higher education. The results of this study could be used to create more engaging classroom environments and promote greater teacher job satisfaction. In addition, the results of this study could also be used to increase both student success and institutional effectiveness in terms of student support. The results of this research could also help to

provide information that could lead to the development of methods to improve the student-teacher relationship through providing insight into positive student-teacher interactions.

The research addressed a gap in the literature, as this topic had not been examined before, and represents an important step in the field of student engagement. Attachment style is malleable with awareness (Ainsworth & Bolby, 1991; Crosling & Heagney, 2009; Fraley et al., 2011; Gore & Rogers, 2010; Green et al., 2011). Student engagement is also malleable (Trowler, 2010). The proposed research could instigate positive social changes by leading to strategies to help teachers learn more effective strategies to engage students and therefore improve student retention and graduation rates.

Summary

Chapter 1 provided the background for the current study, including the significance that higher educational institutions place on retention strategies. The teacher-student relationship is a focus of some of those strategies. The problem statement presented the gap in the literature on the teacher-student relationship based on attachment style, and how teacher attachment style may impact that relationship. The research questions and hypotheses were also provided. The delimitations, scope, and limitations of the research were discussed. The theoretical and conceptual framework as well as definitions were provided for both attachment style and student engagement. Chapter two will provide a review of the current literature on both attachment style and student engagement.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The teacher-student relationship contributes to the engagement of the student in the higher education setting (Coley et al., 2016; Elliot & Reis, 2003; Hanover Report, 2014; Perrine & King, 2004; Reio et al., 2009; Richardson & Arker, 2010; Trowler, 2010). Researchers have determined that student engagement is a key component of retention, and this is discussed in detail in this chapter. Many aspects of student engagement have been studied from the student's perspective, and this is also discussed in this chapter. Research on the teacher's impact in the student relationship and sense of belongness to the institution is also discussed. The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between teacher attachment style and student engagement.

Attachment style theory has been linked to the psychosocial development of self-esteem and feelings of emotional support by other adults (Bifulco et al., 2002). Researchers have found that the attachment styles of students are related to their level of college and academic adjustment (Marmarosh, 2009; Wilson & Gore, 2013). The attachment styles of students are also related to their ability to attach to peer groups in college, their use of support services, their levels of motivation related to study habits, and their overall connectedness to the institution (Gore & Rogers, 2010; Marmarosh, 2009; Wilson & Gore, 2013). Attachment style has been studied from the student's perspective, but research has been lacking from the teacher perspective. If students' attachment style affects their engagement in studying and staying motivated to complete their degree, it is worth considering whether the teacher's attachment style affects the student in this process. The research in this study was relevant to providing further

insight into retention and completion strategies for students through the teacher-student relationship.

In 2015, President Barack Obama launched several initiatives to increase student completion of 2-year and 4-year college degree programs (Coley et al., 2016; The White House of President Barack Obama, n.d.). Obama's policy adjustments were made in response to the United States dropping in rank in 4-year degree program completion rates (Coley et al., 2016; The White House of President Barack Obama, n.d.). In 1990, the United States was ranked first in the world for 4-year completion of college; this number dropped to 12th in the world in 2015 (The White House of President Barack Obama, n.d.). As a provision of determining level of federal funding, Obama implemented accountability measures for colleges and universities in ensuring that students would get through their degree programs more quickly and therefore with less debt incurred (Coley et al., 2016; The White House of President Barack Obama, n.d.). The top thirty job occupations, which are increasing in number of people required to fill job demands, require 4-year degrees (The White House of President Barack Obama, n.d.). The Obama administration created a website on colleges and universities for families and prospective students to view, *The College Scorecard,* which includes services and programs that the institutions have in place to support the successful completion of their degree programs (Coley et al., 2016; The White House of President Barack Obama, n.d.). The website also includes 4-year completion rates (Coley et al., 2016; The White House of President Barack Obama, n.d.). Because of these changes, colleges and universities have examined their programs, services, and retention strategies (Coley et al., 2016; Hanover Report, 2014; The White House of President Barack Obama, n.d.).

Higher educational institutions focus on first attracting students to their programs and then retaining those students through to completion of their courses of study (Antonio & Tuffley, 2015; Christenson et al., 2012; Trowler, 2010; Trowler & Trowler, 2010). One strategy that is considered more important than adding structural enhancements to meet the preceding goals is to focus on creating effective student engagement strategies (Antonio & Tuffley, 2015; Christenson et al., 2012; Garrett, 2011; Trowler, 2010; Trowler & Trowler, 2010). Student engagement strategies that stimulate both behavioral and academic commitment to degree completion are considered tools that institutions can use to predict dropout rates and to mediate disconnect from school (Appleton et al., 2008; Christenson et al., 2012; Trowler, 2010; Trowler & Trowler, 2010). Researchers have found that student engagement occurs when students believe in their ability to complete their degree program, view education as relevant to achieving their occupational goals, and have a sense of belonging to the institution (Coley et al., 2016; Hanover Report, 2014; Tinto, 2016). Thus, those are key factors contributing to completion of degree programs.

Student engagement has been the focus of retention strategies in recent years for higher learning institutions as these institutions strive to create "value for money" and an environment where students both thrive academically and complete their degree programs (France et al., 2010; Hiester et al., 2009; Hixenbaugh et al., 2012; Trowler, 2010). A feeling of connectedness to the institution has been described as student engagement on three levels: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive (Tinto, 2016; Trowler, 2010; Wilson & Gore, 2013). When a student is positively engaged at the institution, the likelihood of retention and completion of the student's degree program increases, thus

achieving both student goals and institutional goals (Coley et al., 2016; France et al., 2010; Hanover Report, 2014; Hiester et al., 2009; Hixenbaugh et al., 2012; Tinto, 2016; Trowler, 2010; Wilson & Gore, 2013).

In this chapter, I describe the literature search strategy used. The theoretical framework, Bowlby's theory of attachment style, is also explained, and the relevant research that has applied the theory in similar areas is reviewed. Research examining teacher-student relationships and parent-student relationships as they relate to attachment style and student engagement are also reviewed.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search was first focused on peer-reviewed journal articles and conducted through Walden University's digital library, University of Phoenix's digital library, and Google Scholar. I conducted searches for relevant research between 2008 and the present and for theoretical information as far back as 1951. The search engines used were PsycINFO, ERIC, Sage Journals, Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, EBSCOhost, ProQuest Central, PsycARTICLES, and Thoreau Multi-Database Search. Educational reports were also used through the Thoreau Multi-Database Search, Education Research Complete, and ERIC for student engagement reports, conference presentations, theoretical articles, seminal works, and educational forum presentations. Newsletters that were published by professional organizations in education were also used. Conference material was also used for institutional expectations of teachers and student engagement. When searching for information on those databases, the following terms were used: *attachment style, Bowlby attachment style, Ainsworth attachment style, student centered learning environments, learning centered environment, learning*

centered classroom, student centered learning, student engagement, teaching styles, student learning, student personality, teacher personality, attachment style in higher education, higher education retention, higher education institutional focus, Obama administration college funding, *Obama administration government funding of higher learning institutions; institutional expectations of teachers, teacher evaluation in higher education, classroom management, institutional effectiveness, student engagement assessment tools, student engagement measurements, student engagement questionnaires, adult attachment style, adult attachment style measurement, adult attachment style questionnaires, student teacher interaction, student-teacher relationship, teacher emotions*, and *retention strategies.*

Theoretical Foundation

Bowlby's Attachment Theory

The theoretical foundation used for this study was Bowlby's attachment theory (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1951, 1958). Bowlby suggested that early relationships with caregivers are the basis for the development of relationships as infants grow to adulthood (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1951, 1958). Bowlby believed that attachment style develops in infancy in relation to caregivers and that it is a predictor of how people will respond to and develop relationships outside the relationship with their caregivers throughout their lifetime (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991, Bowlby, 1951, 1958). The development of attachment style serves as a response basis to any interpersonal contact, whether the behavior is appropriate for the current situation or not (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1951, 1958).

Ainsworth continued Bowlby's research with infants, and the behavior that she observed prompted her to expand Bowlby's original theory into three distinct categories of attachment (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bretherton, 1982; Innerhofer, 2013). These three categories are secure attachment, ambivalent/anxious attachment, and avoidant attachment (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bretherton, 1992; Gore & Rogers, 2010; Innerhofer, 2013). Adults with a secure attachment style are more confident and comfortable when approaching relationships, are better able to collaborate and receive support, and are more comfortable in their interpersonal interactions (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Wilson & Gore, 2013). Ambivalent/anxious attachment style adults may have a strong desire for close relationships but fear that they will not last (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Gore & Rogers, 2010). Adults with an ambivalent/anxious attachment style worry so much about the relationships that they desire that they begin to make the constant worry over relationships work against them in both the relationship and their ability to concentrate on what is important in the interpersonal relationship (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Dan et al., 2014). Avoidant attachment style adults are more autonomous and will cut themselves off from meaningful close relationships (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Gore & Rogers, 2010). Adults with an avoidant attachment style will actively work on minimizing the risks that they feel in relationships and take on self-protective or defensive behaviors to avoid uncomfortable feelings in an interpersonal relationship (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Dan et al., 2014).

A number of researchers have demonstrated that attachment style is malleable (Ainsworth & Bolby, 1991; Bowlby, 1951, 1958; Bretherton, 1992; Crosling & Heagney, 2009; Fraley et al., 2011; Gore & Rogers, 2010; Green et al., 2011; Innerhofer, 2013;

Wilson & Gore, 2013). Green et al. (2011) suggested that even secure individuals will mold their behavior to the person with whom they are wishing to connect with subconsciously, and that this holds true even if they are molding that behavior from a secure base to an insecure base.

Konrath et al. (2014) reviewed 94 studies that measured students and their attachment style that included 25,243 students between 1988 and 2011, and a difference in attachment styles between cohorts of the college students was noted. Konrath et al. observed that in 2011, approximately 77% of college students had an insecure attachment style, and this represented an increase from 62.95% recorded in 1988. Perrine (1998) collected data from 97 college students on their attachment style during the first semester of their first year in college. One month later, the same college students' stress levels were measured (Perrine, 1998). After two semesters, students who persisted (i.e., those who remained in college after a second semester) had their perceived stress levels assessed again (Perrine, 1998). The author noted that college students with an insecure attachment style were at a greater risk than those with a secure attachment style of dropping out before completion of their degree due to perceived stress (Perrine, 1998). Students with a secure attachment style were at less risk of dropping out of school, approximately 5.4%, compared to 13.65% for students with an insecure attachment style (Perrine, 1998).

Attachment Style and Parent-Student Relationship

Wilson and Gore (2013) considered the attachment style of college students to parents and the relation that it had with university connectedness. University connectedness, as defined by Wilson and Gore, was described as a subjective belief held

by students that they fit into the university environment and could rely on the services of the university for support, inclusion, respect, and acceptance during their years at the university. University connectedness has been linked to success at college and completion (Trowler, 2010; Wilson & Gore, 2013). The authors examined the attachment style of 542 undergraduate students to their parents as a predictor of future relationships with peers at the university. Wilson and Gore indicated that parental attachment style transfers to peers (e.g., other university students) as older children mature into adulthood. Students with an avoidant attachment style tended to view support offered by their peers as negative (Wilson & Gore, 2013). The negative view of support from peers extended to feeling negatively about university support services that were offered to the students (Wilson & Gore, 2013). Students with anxious/ambivalent attachment styles toward their peers also viewed faculty support negatively (Wilson & Gore, 2013). The authors asserted that connectedness to an environment occurs when people feel supported by the people in that environment. In the case of the university, these people would include peers, support services, and faculty (Wilson & Gore, 2013). Lopez (1997) concluded that college students with a secure attachment style to their parents felt more secure with their teachers, more connected to their social lives, and to the university itself. Lopez also observed that students with an insecure attachment style to their parents felt less connected to the college, their peers, and the university.

A key factor in attachment style is a feeling of security (or lack of security) from others in the environment (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1951, 1958). Larose et al. (2005) found that college students with a secure attachment style to their parents tended to feel more secure in the transition from high school to

college than students with an insecure attachment style. The fear of failure experienced by the students with an insecure attachment style was not prevalent among students with a secure attachment style (Larose et al., 2005). Students with an insecure attachment style experienced a fear of failure by the middle of the first semester in college and were not comfortable seeking help from teachers (Larose et al., 2005). Preparation time for exams and study time also diminished because of fear and isolation (Larose et al., 2005). Ames et al. (2011) supported Larose et al.'s (2005) finding regarding parental attachment style of students and the successful transition to college. Securely attached students felt more supported in the process of transition by their parents, peers, and the institution that they were transferring to than insecurely attached students (Ames et al., 2011). Insecurely attached students felt lonely and depressed; these feelings led to decreased attendance in the transitional group meetings, which in turn affected their transition to university negatively (Ames et al., 2011).

The addition of stress from the academic expectations of college and lack of coping skills eventuating from the fear-based behaviors of students with an insecure attachment style have also been linked to noncompletion of college (Beauchamp et al., 2015). Beauchamp et al. (2015) surveyed 378 college freshmen and measured attachment style, grade point average, and difficulty with academic studies and found that students with a secure attachment style had higher grade point averages and less academic difficulties. Beauchamp et al. replicated Wilson and Gore's (2013) findings and concluded that the insecure students were suspicious of resources available to help them and did not use available support services or teachers' assistance.

Attachment Style and Teacher-Student Relationship

Reio et al. (2009) linked high school General Educational Development (GED) achievement completion rates to the teacher-student relationship. One-hundred twenty-seven females and 117 males were surveyed for attachment style, and the result was measured against completion of GED and teacher relationship. The authors reported that if a student had a secure attachment style, that student was less afraid of failure and more willing to seek assistance from teachers when necessary as compared to students who had anxious/ambivalent or avoidant attachment styles (Reio et al., 2009). The secure attachment style students had positive relationships not only with their teachers, but also with their peers (Reio et al., 2009). Students with anxious/ambivalent or avoidant attachment styles were less likely to complete GED requirements and less likely to seek out necessary assistance compared to students with a secure attachment style. In addition, students with anxious/ambivalent or avoidant attachment styles reported that they were more isolated from their teachers and peers (Reio et al., 2009). Reio et al. stated that adult attachment relationships may generalize to peers and teachers as education continues.

Elliot and Reis (2003) also found that college students with secure attachment styles were more likely to succeed in college completion and goals without the fear of failure. Those with anxious/ambivalent and avoidant attachment styles seemed to fear failure and avoid goal setting (Elliot & Reis, 2003). Elliot and Reis asserted that relationships were related to achieving goals for anxious/ambivalent and avoidant attachment students, and supportive attachment figures were likely to have a positive impact on achievement for these students.

Perrine and King (2004) linked student attachment style to the student-teacher relationship by measuring college student's reactions to how the teacher worded a request to see the student. The students were given a request by the teacher that stated, "I would like to help you understand this material. Please see me." (Perrine & King, 2004, p. 5). In this quantitative study, 294 students completed an attachment style survey to determine their attachment style and then were given a note from the professor and asked to rate negative reactions, affective reactions, and cognitive reactions on a 6-point Likert scale. Students with secure attachment felt less threatened by the note and believed the teacher wanted to assist the student (Perrine & King, 2004). Students with anxious/ambivalent and avoidant attachment styles felt more threatened by the note and did not necessarily believe the teacher wanted to help the student (Perrine & King, 2004). The authors linked fear of failure attached to insecure attachment styles to feelings of threat experienced by the students, indicating they felt the teacher thought of them as stupid, and felt that the meeting was going to validate that they were stupid. This made them afraid to seek out the assistance from the instructor (Perrine & King, 2004).

Attachment style has been correlated with emotional regulation of interpersonal relationships. Specifically, people with secure attachment styles tend to read other's emotions in a more objective way and are able to regulate emotional reactions more positively (van der Meer et al., 2015; Vrticka et al., 2012). Attachment styles affect self-esteem and relatedness to others (Bifulco et al., 2002), two psychological factors that contribute to student engagement (Appleton et al., 2008; Trowler, 2010).

Student Engagement

Student engagement can collectively be defined as the purposeful and willful participation by students in lectures and course work that lead to successful completion of course competences, as well as what the institution does to attract and motivate students into activities that lead to that successful completion (Christenson et al., 2012; Garrett, 2011; Trowler, 2010; Trowler & Trowler, 2010). Student engagement has also been collectively described as a relationship of trust and collaboration between teacher and student (Christenson et al., 2012; Garrett, 2011; Trowler, 2010; Trowler & Trowler, 2010). Though student engagement has been studied and can be predicted through behavioral (teacher-student relationships, peer-support at school, and family support in learning) and cognitive traits (control and belief that school work is relevant, future goals, extrinsic motivation), student engagement is malleable (i.e., it can be increased) when perceived support is forthcoming from teacher and institution and school content is relevant to goals (Trowler, 2010; Wang & Eccles, 2013).

Three types of student engagement have been identified and include behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement (Christenson et al., 2012; Trowler, 2010). Behavioral engagement is described as when the student is actively participating and attending lectures and adhering to the school's rules (Antonio & Tuffley, 2015; Christenson et al., 2012; Kozan et al., 2014; Trowler, 2010; Trowler & Trowler, 2010; Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013). Emotional engagement is described as when the student is interested in the topic on some level and appreciates the challenge of the work, is interacting with the teacher and peers, completes school work, and identifies with the school and its purpose (Antonio & Tuffley, 2015; Christenson et al. 2012; Kozan

et al., 2014; Trowler, 2010; Trowler & Trowler, 2010; Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013). Cognitive engagement is described as when the student can meet or exceed assignment requirements, completes homework, invests necessary study time to meet exam and meets assignment goals (Antonio & Tuffley, 2015; Christenson et al., 2012; Kozan et al., 2014; Trowler, 2010; Trowler & Trowler, 2010; Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013). In this study I assessed specific components of behavioral engagement that included the teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, family support in learning, and overall behavioral engagement. I also assessed specific components of student academic (cognitive) engagement that included control and relevance of school work, future aspirations and goals, extrinsic motivation, and overall cognitive engagement. Emotional engagement was not be investigated in this study.

Student Engagement and Parental Relationship

Several meta-analytic studies have concluded that parents' support and the positive relationship with their child has an impact on student engagement (Kantamneni, McCain, Shada, Hellwege, & Tate, 2018; Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013; You, Hong, & Ho, 2011). These meta-analyses reviewed a number of studies that included more than 25,000 students from over 1,050 schools (Kantamneni et al., 2018; Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013; You et al., 2011). Upadyaya and Salmela-Aro (2013) asserted that the positive support needed from a parent included not only support of the child's attendance in college, but affection was important and had a positive impact on the student's engagement. You et al. (2011) found that perceived support from parents was as powerful a motivator in student engagement as physical support from parents. That is, when the students believed their parents supported them academically but were not actually present

in the college environment, students were motivated to achieve their goals (You et al., 2011).

Student Engagement and Teacher-Student Relationship

Wang and Eccles (2013) found that both peer and teacher-student relationships are important for students to engage in their studies. Wang and Eccles surveyed 1157 ethnically diverse urban adolescents from 23 high schools. The surveys assessed the students beliefs about academic and emotional support (Wang & Eccle, 2013). The researchers also examined academic performance records over time (Wang & Eccles, 2013). Student engagement occurred when teachers were clear about their expectations of the student academically and were emotionally supportive and expressed care toward the student (Wang & Eccles, 2013). Students began to feel safe in the environment and were not afraid to engage in classroom activities, were more committed outside the classroom to complete work, and experienced enjoyment in the learning process when they were engaged (Wang & Eccles, 2013). Kiefer and Pennington's (2017) research replicated the findings of Wang and Eccles. Two hundred-nine students were surveyed with scales measuring autonomy support and structure, classroom engagement, and school belongingness along with grade point averages (Kiefer & Pennington, 2017). They found that higher levels of intrinsic motivation, feelings of belongingness, and achievement were reported by the high school students when they felt the teacher was engaged in their learning process and cared about their success (Kiefer & Pennington, 2017).

Derri, Vasiliadou, and Kiomourtzoglou (2015) measured student engagement and student perceived teacher support in an experiment in which 32 teachers were randomly assigned to experimental and non-experimental groups to measure levels of perceived

teacher support. The experimental group was provided with professional training on teacher support and student engagement and the non-experimental group received no training (Derri et al., 2015). The students that believed there was more teacher support in the learning process engaged in more time and attempts to complete an assignment successfully (Derri et al., 2015). Similarly, Newberry (2010) concluded that supportive interactions with the teacher promoted cognitive, behavioral, and emotional student engagement. This also worked in reverse, if the teacher was not supportive, student engagement decreased (Derri et al., 2015; Newberry, 2010; Strati, Schmidt, & Maier, 2016). Students that expressed enjoyment in learning and participated in class discussions also reported a positive, trusting relationship with the teacher (Derri et al., 2015; Newberry, 2010). Students who perceived their teachers as caring about them and their success, had experienced an increase in the levels of their engagement (Zimmerman, Schmidt, Becker, Petersen, & Surdick, 2014).

Zimmerman et al.'s (2014) research supports Derri et al. (2015) and Newberry's (2010) conclusions regarding the positive impact of teacher support on student engagement. Zimmerman et al. (2014) surveyed over 9,300 university students over four semesters for perceived teacher support and student engagement. Students that believed their teachers cared about them and their academic success had higher levels of engagement in the course work (Zimmerman et al., 2014). Frisby, Berger, Burchett, Herovic and Strawser (2014) asked 189 university students to complete Likert-type surveys on classroom interactions with the teacher that included rapport, participation and participation apprehension, and positive and negative face support. Students who felt they had a good rapport with their classmates and teacher believed that the teacher would offer

support sensitive to their needs during discussions, participated more in the classroom, and reported higher levels of belongingness (Frisby et al., 2014).

Davis and Dupper (2004) researched student engagement in at-risk high school students. The students involved in the research came from disadvantaged backgrounds with little familial support (Davis & Dupper, 2004). They reported that when teachers demonstrated positive, supportive relationships with the students, it gave the students an incentive to attend school (Davis & Dupper, 2004). Davis and Dupper concluded that the teacher needed to believe in the student's ability in order to build a positive relationship and for a foundation of trust to occur. Bonet and Walters (2016) replicated the findings of Davis and Dupper's research in a research study consisting of 267 at-risk students at the community college level. When the at-risk students reported that they had a positive and supportive relationship with their teachers and understood what the teachers' expectations were, they were more engaged and their sense of belongingness also increased (Bonet & Walters, 2016).

College level minority students reported to be more engaged in their studies when they perceived support and care through their relationships with their teachers (Yamauchi, Taira, & Trevorrow, 2016). Yamauchi et al. (2016) noted increased persistence levels in students when the teacher-student relationship was perceived as supportive. First generation students in college often find less support in their studies at home, and are considered at a greater risk of dropping out of school if they do not feel a sense of belonging to the institution (Kantamneni et al., 2018; Soria & Stebleton, 2012). Soria and Stebleton's (2012) conducted a survey of 1,864 university students and reported that student engagement for first generation college students was higher for

students when the teacher expectations were clear, and teachers reached out to build relationships with them. Students' sense of belongness and persistence in their studies resulted when the perceived teacher-student relationships were positive (Soria & Stebleton, 2012).

Positive emotions displayed by the teacher were also supportive of student engagement in research by Zhang and Zhang (2013). Three hundred sixty-two college students (165 from a medium size university, and 197 from a large university) completed self-report surveys on positive emotions and student engagement (Zhang & Zhang, 2013). Zhang and Zhang pointed out the reciprocal nature of emotions and concluded that teacher and student emotions impact each other. Because student engagement is malleable, when the student was not displaying positive emotions but the teacher was, the teacher could shift the behavior of the student into a more positive emotion and increase his or her engagement (Zhang & Zhang, 2013).

Additional studies have supported Zhang and Zhang's (2013) findings and shown that the emotions of the professor have an influence on student engagement (Antonio & Tuffley, 2015; Christenson et al., 2012; ; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Quilan, 2016). Hagenauer and Volet (2014) and Quilan (2016) suggested that there is a mirrored relationship that occurs between professor and student. Emotions shared between the student and professor can impact student and professor engagement negatively and positively. For example, the more positive the perceived emotional experience for the student the greater enjoyment experienced by the student (Christenson et al., 2012; Quinlan, 2016). In addition, the more positive perceived emotional experience resulted in greater the levels of confidence in work produced, and increased beliefs in ability to

achieve academic competencies (Christenson et al., 2012; Quinlan, 2016). However, negative emotional interaction results in increased feelings of shame, disengagement from the material presented, potential feelings of boredom, frustration, lowered belief in ability to achieve competences, and anxiety (Christenson et al., 2012; Quinlan, 2016).

Summary and Conclusions

The significance of this study is that attachment style is malleable with awareness as previously described (Ainsworth & Bolby, 1991; Crosling & Heagney, 2009; Fraley, Vicary, Brumbaugh, & Roisman, 2011; Gore & Rogers, 2010; Green, Furrer, & McAllister, 2011). Student engagement is also malleable (Trowler, 2010). Student engagement is considered an important aspect of student and institutional effectiveness and success (Antonio & Tuffley, 2015; Coley et al., 2016; Christenson, Reschley, & Wylie, 2012; Hanover Report, 2014; Garrett, 2011; Tinto, 2016; Trowler, 2010; Trowler & Trowler, 2010). This chapter discussed the relevance of this current study as it supports the direction of higher education institutions, student retention and completion of degree programs. Student engagement was discussed as being a relevant factor in student commitment to completion of the degree program. The teacher-student relationship was discussed as being directly related to the student engagement process. There was a lack of research in the teacher's influence in this process, and more research is necessary. There is a great deal of evidence supporting the role of the student's attachment style in student engagement (Appleton et al., 2002; Bulfico et al., 2002; Hagenauer & Volet 2014; Quilan 2016; Trowler, 2010; van der Meer et al., 2015; Vrticka et al., 2012). Given those findings, it is reasonable to conclude that teacher attachment style may also play an important role in the relationship between teacher and student and hence influence

student engagement. Teacher attachment style, however, has not been adequately researched as a factor in student engagement until now. The preceding literature review built the foundation for this research study. The methodology used for this research is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the association between teacher attachment style and student engagement. This chapter describes the research design, the population and sampling procedures, how the data were measured, how the data was collected, and the statistical analysis used.

Research Design and Rationale

The independent variable in this study was teacher attachment style, with three categories (secure, anxious/ambivalent, and avoidant). The dependent variables were student behavioral and academic engagement, including four variables assessing behavioral engagement (teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, family support in learning, and overall behavioral engagement) and four variables assessing academic engagement (control and relevance of school work, future aspirations and goals, extrinsic motivation, and overall academic engagement). A one-way MANOVA was used to test the hypotheses. A quantitative survey design was appropriate for this research because I wanted to assess the relationship between the independent variable (attachment style) and dependent variables (behavioral and academic student engagement). All of the variables could be measured quantitatively with reliable and valid established measures. In this study, the teachers and the students assessed their own beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, as they related to the attachment style of the teacher and engagement of the student. The use of a survey design allowed for the collection of large amounts of data in a short period of time, which also allowed the data to be more generalizable to the community college population.

The disadvantage of using a MANOVA was the resulting complexity of the data (Frost, 2017; Warne, 2014). I ensured that the appropriate post hoc tests were used when the data needed further clarification to assist in providing more clarity to specific outcomes and to assist in avoiding attributing impact to the wrong influence (Frost, 2017; Warne, 2014).

Methodology

Population

The population was targeted for this research and was teachers and students at community colleges in the southwestern United States. The sample of teachers and students included any adult and individuals of any sex and ethnicity. The courses that were surveyed included those that are considered general education requirements for students.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

Nonprobability convenience samples for both the teacher participants and the student participants were used to recruit teachers and students for this study through community colleges in the southwestern United States. Recruitment of teachers was solicited through a request for volunteers through the community college email system shortly after the semester began (Appendix A). The student participants were then recruited from the general education classes of the teacher participants. The recruitment of students was on a volunteer basis, and students were asked if they would participate through email correspondence once the teacher had been recruited for the research. The email that I sent out to the students in the classroom with teacher participants included the link to the survey. The email was sent out approximately nine weeks into the semester

(Appendix B). Those students who wished to participate then filled out the questionnaire anonymously through the survey link. General education classes are usually taken as required classes in the first 2 years of a 4-year degree program, so it was likely that the students would be in their freshman or sophomore year of college. Teachers completed a self-report-style questionnaire on their attachment style as well as a brief demographics questionnaire. Students completed a self-report-style questionnaire on student engagement as well as a brief demographics questionnaire.

Though the sampling procedure was not random because volunteers were recruited, it should not have biased the sample because attachment style, which was the independent variable, was not influenced by the process. The sample was large enough to ensure that each attachment style was represented. Convenience sampling statistical power increased as the sample size increased (Etikan et al., 2016).

Non-probability convenience samples are appropriate when there is a very large population or when the researcher has limited resources and time (Etikan et al., 2016). The proximity of the population is also a factor (Etikan et al., 2016). Another reason for using a non-probability convenience sample that was applicable to this research was that the criteria that were being analyzed were easily accessed by me as the researcher through data collection (Etikan et al., 2016).

Using a non-probability convenience sample does potentially bias the sample as the researcher is subjectively selecting the sample based on the criteria of the research (Etikan et al., 2016). This limitation may impact the researcher's ability to generalize the results of the research back to the population (Etikan et al., 2016).

Power analysis was conducted for MANOVA a priori to determine the required minimum sample size using G*Power software (Faul et al., 2007). Previous research assessing the effects of attachment style was used as a guide (Blalock et al., 2015; Wang & Eccles, 2013; Wilson & Gore, 2013; Zhang & Zhang, 2013). Using a medium effect size of .25, an alpha level of .05, and power of .95, a recommended minimum sample size of 66 participants was determined (Faul et al., 2007). There were three groups; this number was equivalent to the number of attachment styles (independent variable) used. There were eight measurements, which referred to the number of student engagement (dependent variables) variables measured.

Procedures for Recruitment and Participation

I presented my proposal to the community college district office's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for consideration after obtaining approval from the Walden University IRB (APA Ethics Code, Standard 8.01, 2002). I had already received verbal confirmation that the community college system found the research appropriate and that it would be considered. Once approval was given, recruiting of teacher participants through email solicitation began through the district office. If a teacher responded and was willing to participate in the study, I sent them a unique link. Upon accessing this link, the teacher completed a consent form, a brief demographic questionnaire, and an attachment style survey via Survey Monkey. The unique code assigned to the teacher would be used to match students to that classroom. After the teacher had completed the survey, an email was sent out to all of the students in that classroom. I sent an email to the students in the classroom inviting them to participate. A link that contained the consent form, a brief demographic survey, and the student engagement survey via Survey

Monkey included in the email. The survey link sent to the students included the teacher's unique code.

The process ensured that the teacher did not know who would be participating in the study. Teachers and students completed the surveys online. Each teacher participant was given a code, and the student email invitation was linked to the code when they completed the survey.

Informed consent for the research needed to be given by each participant, and the consent form included participant rights, limits of confidentiality, and the right to withdraw (APA Ethics Code, Standard 8.02). The consent form was provided when the teacher or student agreed to participate. Demographic data for the teachers were collected and included age, gender, years of teaching experience, and ethnicity. Demographic data collected for students included age, gender, and ethnicity.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

The Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory-Revised

The Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory-Revised (ECR-R; Fraley et al., 2000) was given to the teacher participants only and used to measure Bowlby's attachment styles. The ECR-R measured three attachment styles as defined by Bowlby: ambivalent/anxious attachment style, avoidant attachment style, and secure attachment style (Fraley et al., 2000).

The ERC-R is a 36-item Likert scaled self-report measure of adult attachment style (Fraley et al., 2000). The ECR-R utilizes two subscales of attachment, ambivalent/anxious and avoidant, to measure all three categories of attachment style (Fraley et al., 2000). Eighteen items measure attachment-related anxiety, and 18 items

measure attachment-related avoidance (Fraley et al., 2000). High scores, averaging more than four points on the related scale, are considered ambivalent/anxious or avoidant based on the average scores from the 18 questions (Fraley et al., 2000). Both ambivalent/anxious and avoidant scores are distinguished from each other by categorical score (Fraley et al., 2000). Low scores, or scores of less than four in both categories, are categorized as secure (Fraley et al., 2000).

Two studies assessed the reliability and validity of the ECR-R (Sibley et al., 2005; Sibley & Lui, 2004). Both the anxiety and the avoidance subscales for the ECR-R produced test-retest correlations in the low .90s over a three-week retest time (Sibley et al., 2005). Sibley and Liu (2004) also reported strong test-retest correlations after six weeks (anxiety subscale, $r = .94$, avoidance subscale, $r = .93$).

The ECR-R has demonstrated strong test-retest reliability for attachment-related anxiety, .92 and .86, and attachment-related avoidance, .74 and .98 (Sibley et al., 2005). A structural analysis of the factors was measured using the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ), another attachment style self-report measurement tool often used (Sibley et al., 2005). The ECR-R was found to measure similar factor structure with similar results. A confirmatory factor analysis was done and yielded a discriminatory pattern between the two constructs, avoidance and anxiety, confirming the two distinct dimensions of the test, $\chi 2d.ff(1) = 3{,}480.86$, $p < .001$ (Sibley et al., 2005).

Hierarchal linear modeling further validated the use of the ECR-R for measuring attachment style and social interactions between family members and friends, suggesting that it explained between 30%-40% of the between-person variation (Sibley et al., 2005). Attachment style measured by the ECR-R was a significant predictor of social

interactions, suggesting that the ECR-R is a valid measure for social interactions with different types of relationships (Sibley et al., 2005). Sibley et al. (2005) concluded that the ECR-R demonstrates more stability across global attachment style measurements than any other scale being used and accurately measures the two constructs, avoidance and anxiety.

The Student Engagement Instrument

The Student Engagement Instrument (SEI) was used to measure student engagement in the student sample (Appleton et al., 2006). The SEI consists of a 35-item Likert-type self-report with 19 items that measure behavioral engagement (teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, family support in learning) and 16 items that measure academic engagement (control and relevance of school work, future aspirations and goals, and extrinsic motivation; Appleton et al., 2006). The scores range from 1 (corresponding to the lowest engagement) to 4 (corresponding to the highest engagement; Appleton et al., 2006). In addition to the subscales each receiving individual subscale scores, there is a category total for overall student engagement (Appleton et al., 2006).

Appleton et al. (2006) calculated internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha and reported the following reliability values: Factor 1 (teacher–student relationships, alpha = .88), Factor 2 (control and relevance of school work, alpha = .80), Factor 3 (peer support for learning, alpha = .82), Factor 4 (future aspirations and goals, alpha = .78), Factor 5 (family support for learning, alpha = .76), and Factor 6 (extrinsic motivation, alpha = .72).

Appleton et al. (2006) assessed the convergent and discriminant validity of the subscales by correlating them with the various academic and interpersonal variables.

Academic achievement measures, such as higher GPA, higher levels of extrinsic motivation, and goal achievement significantly and positively correlated with perceived teacher, family and peer relationships (Appleton et al., 2006). Conversely, negative student relationships significantly increased the likelihood of school suspensions and lower motivation toward academic achievement (Appleton et al., 2006).

Data Analysis Plan

This study used a quantitative survey approach. The independent variable was the teachers' attachment style, with three categories, and the dependent variables were student engagement, with eight variables representing the subscales of the SEI.

This research addressed the following research questions and hypotheses:

RQ1. To what extent is college teacher attachment style (secure, ambivalent/anxious, avoidant), as measured by Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire-Revised (ECR-R), associated with behavioral engagement (teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, family support in learning, and overall behavior engagement) of college students, as measured by the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI)?

H_0. There are no significant differences in behavioral engagement of college students based on teacher attachment styles (secure, ambivalent/anxious, avoidant).

H_1. There are significant differences in behavioral engagement of college students based on teacher attachment styles (secure, ambivalent/anxious, avoidant).

RQ2. To what extent is college teacher attachment style (secure, ambivalent/anxious, avoidant), as measured by Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire-Revised (ECR-R), associated with academic engagement (control and relevance of school work, future aspirations and goals, extrinsic motivation, and overall academic engagement) of college students, as measured by the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI)?

H_0. There are no significant differences in academic engagement of college students based on teacher attachment styles (secure, ambivalent/anxious, avoidant).

H_1. There are significant differences in academic engagement of college students based on teacher attachment styles (secure, ambivalent/anxious, avoidant).

Data were analyzed using SPSS 18.0 software.

The independent variable in this study was teacher attachment style, with three levels (secure, anxious/ambivalent, and avoidant). The eight dependent variables belonged to two categories of student engagement and included behavioral engagement (teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, family support in learning, and overall behavioral engagement) and academic engagement (control and relevance of school work, future aspirations and goals, extrinsic motivation, and overall academic engagement).

A one-way MANOVA was used to test the hypotheses. The assumptions of a MANOVA include that the independent variable is categorical and the dependent variables are continuous or ratio variables, that the dependent variables cannot be

correlated so closely that $r = .90$ or above would result, that the distribution of the dependent variables is normal, and that the variance between the groups is equal (homogeneity of variance). The independent variable was categorized as secure, anxious/ambivalent, and avoidant attachment styles, and the scores of the ECR-R were used to categorize the teacher participants into one of the three attachment style categories. MANOVA is not usually susceptible to violations of a normal distribution as long as adequate samples are selected. Frequency distributions for the dependent variables were examined for normality. In addition, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov was run for normality, and Levene's test of equality of variances was also run to ensure that the variance between the groups was equal.

MANOVA can simultaneously analyze the impact of one or more independent variables on multiple dependent variables while distinguishing the significance of the impact of each independent variable (Frost, 2017; Warne, 2014). Because there were eight dependent variables being analyzed in this research, using a MANOVA reduced the risk of a Type 1 error, decreasing the possibility of rejecting a true null hypothesis (Frost, 2017; Warne, 2014). MANOVA was also useful in detecting small but significant patterns in the data that an ANOVA would not detect (Frost, 2017; Warne, 2014).

The hypotheses were then tested using a MANOVA to consider the association that attachment style had on the eight levels of student engagement that were measured. The interpretations of the results were assessed using a two-tailed test with an alpha level of .05. The effect size was evaluated using a partial et square (η^2). If there was a significant effect of attachment style, a post hoc Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) test was run to determine where the significant differences lied.

Threats to Validity

Convenience samples pose threats to both the sampling procedure, random sampling versus selective sampling criteria, and the researcher's ability to generalize the results (Etikan et al., 2016). When a targeted, willing sample is obtained through convenience sampling there is a risk of self-selection bias (Etikan et al., 2016). The results of studies that use convenience sampling are not definitive because the sample does not include those participants unwilling to participate, making generalizability limited (Etikan et al., 2016). One way to address this is to use cautionary language when discussing the results (Etikan et al., 2016). Ensuring that the sample size is large should reduce the likelihood of these problems arising (Etikan et al., 2016).

Self-reports come with many internal threats that test designers have made efforts to combat (McDonald, 2008). For teachers, a desire to look good to colleagues may have teachers potentially guess what they would consider the normal and healthy responses to the questions. Researchers have termed this as response bias and response bias occurs when test takers answer questions based on what they believe is socially desirable or they feel would make them appear in a more favorable light (McDonald, 2008). Students could potentially be focused on the teacher's perception of them or their friends.

Self-reports also can lead to a distortion in perception of self, and people may respond by rating themselves differently than they are (McDonald, 2008). Selecting self-reports that have gone through rigorous processes for reliability and validity should assist in reducing this issue.

Ethical Considerations

Walden University requires Internal Review Board (IRB) approval. MCCCD requires IRB approval. Approval was obtained prior to conducting the research. Though there was a risk for both confidentiality and psychological distress, the risk level was low. Both IRBs required the researcher complete an application process. The application process ensures that the researcher would adhere to ensuring that the participants best interests are being considered. This included questions pertaining to adhering to an informed consent process, participation was voluntary, and all data was confidential or anonymous. I addressed the preceding concerns in the Procedures for Recruitment and Participation section.

Adding to the confidentiality plan, I encoded all participants by number, not name. When the results were displayed in the results section of the research teachers were coded as well as their students. Students were linked to the teacher in data alone and not by demographical data that was collected. Likewise, teachers were not linked to the demographic data collected. I was the only one with access to the data as the data was collected, input, and prepared for storage. As per American Psychological Association guidelines all documents pertaining to the research project and the participants will be destroyed in five years. Because the data was collected through online surveys, when statistics were complete, the data collected was downloaded to a disc and put into locked location in my home. All files related to the data collection were deleted and purged once this was done. Five years after the research the disc will be destroyed.

Any teachers or students that may have experienced discomfort as a result of participation in this research had counseling available to them, should they have needed

counseling, during and after their participation in this research. The process for accessing the counseling services was provided to the participants during the informed consent process. Teachers had access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) counseling services or arrangements were made through campus counseling services, and students had access to campus-based counseling.

Summary

This chapter provided a detailed explanation for the research design and rationale. The population was higher education instructors teaching general education classes and the sample recruited from community colleges in southwest United States. Recruitment was conducted through email requests through the employee email system. Participation was voluntary. The two self-report tests, ECR-R and SEI were discussed in detail including the reliability and validity processes for each test. In the data analysis plan the hypotheses that was used to test the impact of teacher attachment style on student engagement were presented as well as the overall plan for data analysis (MANOVA). Finally, the ethical considerations were summarized in the ethical considerations section.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the association between teacher attachment style categories (secure vs. insecure) and student engagement (teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, family support in learning, control and relevance of schoolwork, future aspirations and goals, extrinsic motivation, and overall student engagement). During the data collection phase, I discovered that most teachers had secure attachment styles and very few had insecure attachment styles in either the anxious/ambivalent or avoidant attachment styles. Thus, I combined the two insecure attachment styles because there were very few teachers in these categories. Though previous research has shown that the student-teacher relationship impacts student retention and increases graduation rates, there has been no research focusing on the attachment style of the teacher and its impact on student behavioral and academic engagement. To address this gap, I examined the teacher-student relationship focusing on teacher attachment style and student behavioral and academic engagement. Two research questions and hypotheses were assessed linked to these variables:

RQ1. To what extent is college teacher attachment style (secure, insecure), as measured by the Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire-Revised (ECR-R), associated with behavioral engagement (teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, family support in learning) of college students, as measured by the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI)?

H_0. There are no significant differences in behavioral engagement of college students based on teacher attachment styles (secure, insecure).

H_1. There are significant differences in behavioral engagement of college students based on teacher attachment styles (secure, insecure).

RQ2. To what extent is college teacher attachment style (secure, insecure), as measured by the Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire-Revised (ECR-R), associated with academic engagement (control and relevance of schoolwork, future aspirations and goals, extrinsic motivation, and overall student engagement) of college students, as measured by the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI)?

H_0. There are no significant differences in academic engagement of college students based on teacher attachment styles (secure, insecure).

H_1. There are significant differences in academic engagement of college students based on teacher attachment styles (secure, insecure).

In this chapter, the data collection procedure is discussed in detail, including data collection time frames, necessary procedural changes, response rates, and other relevant information related to the data collection process. Basic demographic data of the teacher and student samples are also discussed. An evaluation of the statistical assumptions and the results from the one-way MANOVA is presented.

Data Collection

Data collection began on February 26, 2020, at 4:00 p.m. and concluded on November 17, 2020, at 12 midnight. Approximately three weeks into the spring semester, on February 26, 2020, at 4:00 p.m., recruitment of teachers began through a request for volunteers through the community college email system. Only teachers teaching general education classes were asked to participate, and a link to the consent form and survey was included in the invitation. Teachers were again recruited in the fall semester, on September 21, 2020, at 11:30 a.m., approximately three weeks into the semester. The student participants were recruited through email correspondence once the teacher had been recruited for the research. The students were provided with the link to the survey and the consent form with the invitation to participate. The students were recruited for the spring semester on April 5, 2020, at 1:15 p.m., and for the fall semester on October 20, 2020, at 4:45 p.m. Both dates were approximately nine weeks into the semester. Data collection concluded on November 17, 2020, at 12 midnight.

The center for learning and innovation at the district office of the community college system sent the invitation to the teachers. I was not provided a list of faculty who were on the list nor how many teachers were at each community college. I sent an email to each college's vice president of academic affairs, and two offered to forward the invitation to the faculty on their campuses. I was not provided with a list of faculty who were sent the invitation. I received 24 teacher responses in February 2020, six in March 2020, one in May 2020, and 10 in September 2020. I received a total of 41 teacher responses. Data collection from students with teachers in the insecure category was a challenge because only four of the 41 teachers were categorized as insecure. I received 48

student responses in April 2020, two in March 2020, one in May 2020, four in October 2020, and two in November 2020, for a total of 57 student responses. I made multiple attempts to request participation by teachers and the participating teachers' students throughout the allocated time frame for data collection. Without the total number of faculty and student numbers in each class, it is difficult to identify a response rate. The recommended sample size from the power analysis was 66 participants. Data collection was to conclude after the first semester, Spring 2020, but I only had 51 students participating. To increase sample size, I collected data for the Fall 2020 semester. I waited until the IRB-approved data collection expiration date as well as the end of the quarter at Walden University, on November 17, 2020, to conclude data collection.

Procedural Changes to Data Collection

The original data collection was completed after classrooms had met face to face in the classroom for 9 weeks. This was the case for 51 of the students who participated in the study. Because of the COVID-19 quarantine, the remaining six student participants were still in face-to-face classrooms synchronously, but online and not in face-to-face classrooms. Students were given an extra week of spring break as the community college system worked to determine how the Spring 2020 semester would be completed while implementing the new quarantine requirements. Teachers moved from in-person, face-to-face instruction to synchronistic Zoom classrooms. Synchronous classes met online via Zoom once or twice a week. All other procedures were followed.

Results

Possible associations between teacher attachment style (secure vs. insecure) and components of student engagement (teacher-student relationship, peer support at school,

family support in learning, control and relevance of schoolwork, future aspirations and goals, extrinsic motivation, and overall student engagement) were analyzed using a one-way MANOVA. Descriptive statistics, the evaluation of statistical assumptions, and results from the MANOVA analyses are presented in the following sections.

Descriptive Statistics

The sample consisted of 41 general education community college teachers and 57 students. The independent variable, teacher attachment style, was unevenly distributed, with 37 (90.2%) teacher participants categorized as secure and four (9.8%) teacher participants categorized as insecure. Age, gender, ethnicity, years teaching, and highest degree earned were collected for the teachers. Responses to the question of gender showed that there were more female teachers (n = 34; 83%) than male teachers (n = 7; 17%). The national statistics for community college teachers show that a majority are male (males n = 216,600, 60%; females n = 144,400, 40%; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2008). Though there were more males working in the community college system, this study had more female participants. The ages of the teachers varied as follows: 28-37 years of age (n = 6; 14.6%), 38-47 years of age (n = 10; 24.4%), 48-57 years of age (n = 20; 48.8%), and 58+ years of age (n = 5; 12.2%). Teachers' ethnicity varied as well: one Asian/Pacific Islander (2.4%), eight Hispanic (19.5%), 27 White/Caucasian (65.9%), and five participants from multiple ethnicities (12.2%). National statistics for community college teacher ethnicity breaks down as follows: Asian, 3%; Hispanic, 5%; Black/African American, 7%; Native American, 1%; and White/Caucasian, 84% (NCES, 2008). The number of years that the teachers had been teaching were as follows: 1-5 years (n = 6; 14.6%), 6-10 years (n = 7; 17%), 11-15 years

(*n* = 12; 29.3%), 16-20 years (*n* = 12; 29.3%), and 21-26 years (*n* = 4; 9.8%). Demographic characteristics for the teachers are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Teachers

Variable	*n*	%
Gender		
Male	7	17.0
Female	34	83.0
Age		
28-37	6	14.6
38-47	10	24.4
48-57	20	48.8
58+	5	12.2
Ethnicity		
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	2.4
Hispanic	8	19.5
White/Caucasian	27	65.9
Multiple ethnicities	5	12.2
Years teaching		
1-5	6	14.6
6-10	7	17.0
11-15	12	29.3
16-20	12	29.3
21-26	4	9.8

The subject areas that the teachers taught were as follows: math (*n* = 4; 9.8%), English (*n* = 6; 14.6%), communication/humanities/art (*n* = 3; 7.3%), social and behavioral sciences (*n* = 9; 22%), biological sciences (*n* = 10; 24.4%), science (*n* = 3; 7.3%), business/computer technology (*n* = 1; 2.4%), college preparation (*n* = 4; 9.8%), and education (*n* = 1, 2.4%). A summary of subjects taught by teachers is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Subject Areas Taught by Teachers

Subject	*n*	*%*
Math	4	9.8
English	6	14.6
Communication/humanities/art	3	7.3
Social and behavioral sciences	9	22.0
Biological Science	10	24.4
Science	3	7.3
Business/computer technology	1	2.4
College preparation	4	9.8
Education	1	2.4
Total	41	100.0

Demographic information was also collected for the sample of students. Demographic information included age, gender, ethnicity, if the student had class with the teacher prior to the survey, and if the student had interactions with the teacher outside of the classroom prior to the survey. Fifty-seven students participated in the study. A majority of the student participants were female (n = 42; 73.7%) compared to male student participants (n = 15; 26.3%). Students' ages varied as follows: 18-19 years of age (n = 29; 50.9%), 20-25 years of age (n = 16; 28.1%), and 26+ years of age (n= 12; 21%). Ethnicity of the students varied as follows: Black/African American (n = 5; 8.8%), Hispanic (n = 14; 24.6%), White/Caucasian (n = 34; 59.6%), and mixed ethnicities (n = 4; 7%). A summary of the demographic characteristics for the students is shown in Table 3. National statistics on students' ethnicities at community colleges were 7% Asian, 13% Black/African American, 25% Hispanic, and 45% White/Caucasian (NCES, 2020). Thus, this study had an underrepresentation of Asian students. In addition to these demographic

characteristics, students were asked if they had previously taken another class with the same teacher. A majority of the students responded that they did not have the teacher in a previous course (*n* = 53, 93%). Only four students had the same teacher in a previous course (7%). Students were also asked if they had interactions with the teacher outside of the classroom. A majority of students who had teachers with a secure attachment style did not report any interactions with the teacher outside of the classroom (*n* = 38; 90%). Only four (10%) students with teachers who had a secure attachment style reported interactions with the teacher outside of the classroom. For students who had a teacher with an insecure attachment style, approximately half of those students did have interactions with the teacher outside of the classroom (*n* = 8; 53%), and approximately half of those students did not have interactions with the teacher outside of the classroom (*n* = 7; 47%).

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of Students

Variable		*n*	*%*
Gender			
Male	15	26.3	
Female		42	73.7
Age			
18-19	29	50.9	
20-25	16	28.1	
26+		12	21.0
Ethnicity			
Black/African American		5	8.8
Hispanic		14	24.6
White/Caucasian		34	59.6
Multiple ethnicities		4	7.0

Evaluation of Statistical Assumptions

Statistical assumptions for the one-way MANOVA related to the dependent variables of student engagement (control and relevance of schoolwork, future aspirations and goals, extrinsic motivation, teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, family support in learning) and overall student engagement were evaluated. Multivariate outliers were evaluated using Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests and reported scores on some of the dependent variables did not demonstrate a normal distribution, overall student engagement (D (57) = 0.104, p = .190), control and relevance of schoolwork (D (57) = 0.176, p = .000), future aspirations and goals (D (57) = 0.157, p = .001), extrinsic motivation (D (57) = 0.233, p = .000), teacher-student relationship (D (57) = 0.186, p = .000), peer support at school (D (57) = 0.19, p = .000), and family support and learning (D (57) = 0.163, p = .001). Although some of the data were not normally distributed, MANOVA is a robust test even when the assumption of normality is not met (Frost, 2017; Warne, 2014). Though the data did not represent a normal distribution, the results did demonstrate homogeneity of variance. Levene's test showed that homogeneity of variance was found in overall student engagement, (F (1,55) = .206, p = .651); control and relevance of schoolwork, (F (1,55) = .955, p = .333); future aspiration and goals, (F (1,55) = .511, p = .478); extrinsic motivation, (F (1,55) = 2.226, p = .141); teacher-student relationship, (F (1,55) = .955, p = .642); peer support at school, (F (1,55) = .269, p = .606); and family support in learning, (F (1,55) = .112, p = .740). Table 4 shows the skewness and kurtosis values for student engagement and outliers.

Table 4

Shapiro-Wilk Normality Testing for Student Engagement

Dependent variable	Skewness	Kurtosis	Statistic	*p* value
Overall student engagement	.423	-.508	.970	1.760
Control and relevance of schoolwork	-.379	-.081	.938	.006
Future aspirations and goals	-.264	-1.090	.909	.000
Extrinsic motivation	-.314	-0.426	.830	.000
Teacher-student relationship	.635	-0.646	.911	.000
Peer support at school	-.770	2.768	.925	.002
Family support and learning	-.379	-0.081	.949	.018

Cronbach's alpha scores for teacher attachment style and student engagement were calculated to assess internal consistency of each survey. Cronbach's alpha for the Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory-Revised, which was used to assess teacher attachment style, was .925. Cronbach's alpha for the Student Engagement Instrument was .907. Cronbach's alphas for the student engagement subscales were as follows: teacher-student relationship (.858), peer support at school (.887), family support in learning (.604), control and relevance of schoolwork (.741), future aspirations and goals (.626), and extrinsic motivation (.743). The Cronbach's alpha scores for attachment style and student engagement demonstrated satisfactory levels of internal consistency.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance

Research Questions 1 and 2 were assessed using a one-way MANOVA to analyze the extent to which teacher attachment style (secure vs. insecure) was associated with student engagement (control and relevance of schoolwork, future aspirations and goals, extrinsic motivation, teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, family support in learning, and overall student engagement). It was hypothesized that there are

significant differences in behavioral engagement (teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, and family support in learning) of college students based on teacher attachment styles (secure versus insecure; H_1). It was also hypothesized that there are significant differences in academic engagement (control and relevance of schoolwork, future aspirations and goals, and extrinsic motivation) of college students based on teacher attachment styles (secure versus insecure; H_2).

The overall MANOVA model was significant using Pillai's Trace, F (6, 50) = 2.469, p = .036, η^2 = .229. This result demonstrated that there were significant differences in student engagement based on teacher attachment style. To further examine the components of behavioral and academic student engagement, tests of between-subjects effects were analyzed and evaluated using an alpha level of .05.

The between-subjects tests for the components of student behavioral engagement were not significant when comparing secure versus insecure teacher attachment styles. More specifically, there were no significant differences for: teacher-student relationship, F (1, 55) = .947, p = .335, η^2 = .017; peer support at school, F (1, 55) = 1.207, p = .277, η^2 = .021; family support in learning, F (1, 55) = .002, p = .964, η^2 = .000; and overall student engagement, F (1, 55) = .234, p = .631, η^2 = .004.

The between-subjects tests for two of the components of student academic engagement were significantly different when comparing secure versus insecure teacher attachment styles. More specifically, there was a significant difference between secure and insecure teacher attachment styles for control and relevance of schoolwork, F (1, 55) = 5.089, p = .028, η^2 = .085. This result demonstrated that students with teachers who had a secure attachment style had higher levels of academic engagement specific to control

and relevance of schoolwork compared to the students who had teachers with an insecure attachment style. This means that these students reported believing they had higher levels of understanding related to the expectations of the course work and their ability to complete the assignments to meet the course requirements. In addition, there was a significant difference between secure and insecure teacher attachment styles for extrinsic motivation, F (1, 55) = 6.965, p = .011, η^2 = .112. This result demonstrated that students with teachers who had a secure attachment style had higher levels of academic engagement specific to extrinsic motivation compared to students who had teachers with an insecure attachment style. That is, those students had higher levels of extrinsic motivation meaning they were more likely to believe they would be rewarded through grades and academic success in the classroom for their work. The third component of student academic engagement, future aspirations and goals was not significant, F (1, 55) = .013, p = .909, η^2 = .000.

Summary

For this study, I hypothesized that significant differences would be found in teacher attachment style (secure versus insecure) and student engagement. Two components of student academic engagement, extrinsic motivation and student control and relevance of schoolwork, were significant. The results indicate that the students who were in classes with teachers with a secure attachment style had higher levels of academic engagement in both control and relevance of schoolwork and extrinsic motivation. That is, these students had higher levels of understanding expectations of the coursework and their ability to complete the assignments. In addition, those students had higher levels of extrinsic motivation meaning they were more likely to believe they

would be rewarded through grades and academic success in the classroom for their work. There were no significant differences in the mean levels of student behavioral engagement (teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, family support in learning) or the academic engagement component of future aspirations and goals. Lastly, there was no significant difference in the mean level of overall student engagement. In Chapter 5 I will discuss the interpretations of findings, the limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative survey study was to examine the relationship between teacher attachment style (secure vs. insecure) and various components of student engagement (behavioral and academic engagement) in a community college setting. Despite previous research examining attachment style of students and its impact on student engagement, the impact of teacher attachment style on student engagement has not been investigated. There was a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between college teachers' attachment style and the components of student engagement (behavioral and academic engagement) in college students. Examining these variables provided insight into the association between teacher attachment style and components of student engagement. This may provide institutions with a better understanding of how to enhance positive teacher-student relationships, create better institutional retention strategies, and increase student completion rates.

I compared teacher attachment style (secure; insecure) based on self-reports using the ECR-R. I also analyzed student engagement (behavioral and academic) based on self-reports using the SEI approximately 9 weeks into the semester and after students had the opportunity for interactions with their teachers. I conducted a one-way MANOVA to test the association between teacher attachment style and student engagement. Teacher attachment style was examined across two domains (secure, insecure), and student engagement was examined across seven domains (teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, family support in learning, control and relevance of schoolwork, future aspirations and goals, extrinsic motivation, and overall student engagement).

The results of the one-way MANOVA showed that there were no significant differences in the mean levels of student behavioral engagement (teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, family support in learning), one domain of student academic engagement (future aspirations and goals), and in student engagement overall. The results of the one-way MANOVA showed that there were significant differences in the mean levels of two components of academic student engagement (i.e., control and relevance of schoolwork, and extrinsic motivation). This result demonstrated that students with teachers who had a secure attachment style had higher levels of academic engagement specific to control and relevance of schoolwork compared to students who had teachers with an insecure attachment style. This meant that these students reported believing that they had higher levels of understanding related to the expectations of the coursework and their ability to complete the assignments to meet the course requirements. In addition, there was a significant difference in student extrinsic motivation between students who had a teacher with a secure attachment style and students who had a teacher with an insecure attachment style. This result demonstrated that students with teachers who had a secure attachment style had significantly higher levels of academic engagement specific to extrinsic motivation compared to students who had teachers with an insecure attachment style. That is, those students were more likely to believe that they would be rewarded through grades and academic success in the classroom for their work.

Interpretation of the Findings

The ECR-R was used to measure two attachment styles (secure and insecure) for this study, as defined by Bowlby (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Ainsworth et al., 1978;

Bowlby, 1951, 1958; Fraley et al., 2000). Attachment style served as the independent variable in this study to determine its association with student engagement. Student engagement can collectively be defined as the purposeful and willful participation by students in lectures and coursework that leads to successful completion of course competencies (Christenson et al., 2012; Garrett, 2011; Trowler, 2010; Trowler & Trowler, 2010). Previous researchers have examined the attachment style of students and have shown higher levels of student engagement for students who have secure attachment styles, but the impact of teacher attachment style on student engagement has not been investigated. Previous research on attachment style and the influence that it may have on student engagement and success has focused on the student's perspective.

Researchers have examined the impact of the student having a secure attachment style on engagement and successful participation in college studies (Ames et al., 2011; Beauchamp et al., 2015; Larose et al., 2005). Larose et al. (2005) found that college students with a secure attachment style to their parents tended to be more confident with their ability to transition from high school to college than students with an insecure attachment style. Ames et al. (2011) supported Larose et al.'s finding regarding parental attachment style of students and successful transition to college. Securely attached students reported receiving more support in the process of transition from their parents, peers, and the institution that they were transferring to than insecurely attached students (Ames et al., 2011). Insecurely attached students had significantly higher levels of loneliness and depression and decreased attendance in transitional group meetings, which, in turn, negatively affected their transition to the university (Ames et al., 2011). In addition, fear of failure experienced by the students with an insecure attachment style was

not prevalent among students with a secure attachment style (Larose et al., 2005). Students with an insecure attachment style experienced a fear of failure by the middle of the first semester in college and were not comfortable seeking help from teachers (Larose et al., 2005). Preparation time for exams and study time were significantly lower for students with an insecure attachment style (Larose et al., 2005). The addition of stress from the academic expectations of college and lack of coping skills eventuating from the fear-based behaviors of students with an insecure attachment style have also been linked to noncompletion of college (Beauchamp et al., 2015).

Research on attachment style of the parent and the student has shown a significant role in college success and completion (Ames et al., 2011; Larose et al., 2005; Lopez, 1997; Trowler, 2010; Wilson & Gore, 2013). For example, students with secure attachment styles have been found to have higher rates of persistence when faced with challenges while at college and to be more likely to finish their degrees (Perrine, 1998). In addition, Elliot and Reis (2003) found that college students with secure attachment styles were more likely to succeed in college completion and goals without the fear of failure. Attachment styles also positively affect student self-esteem and relatedness to others (Bifulco et al., 2002), two psychological factors that contribute to student engagement on a behavioral level (Appleton et al., 2008; Trowler, 2010). Recent research has shown a relationship between academic outcomes of university students in their first year and their attachment style (Humphreys, 2020). Those students with a secure attachment style showed significantly higher levels of positive adjustment and participation outcomes in the academic environment that included better student-teacher relationships, adjustment to university environment, student engagement, academic locus

of control, and self-rated attendance at seminars and lectures (Humphreys, 2020). In addition, research has demonstrated that university students with secure attachment style were associated with effective emotional regulation strategies at school (Prosen & Vitulic, 2018). Peer attachment style was also found to positively affect students' self-esteem and school connectedness in adolescents who were associated with students with a secure attachment style and increase student engagement (Millings et al., 2012). Furthermore, depression in students who lacked peer relationships with secure attachment styles was shown to decrease student engagement (Millings et al., 2012). The results of my study concerning student engagement in the classroom would be predicted by Bowlby's attachment theory. The teacher behavior and student-teacher interactions in the classroom would not affect the components of student engagement related to interactions with peers, family, and the student's future aspirations and goals because the teacher does not influence those relationships. However, student-teacher interactions and behavior of the teacher do impact two components of academic student engagement: control and relevance of schoolwork and extrinsic motivation. Thus, the findings of this study are consistent with previous research that tied student attachment style to student engagement and the student's relationship with their parent and peers to the components of behavioral student engagement.

A key element related to student engagement is the teacher-student relationship. More specifically, higher levels of student engagement occur when students perceive that they are being positively supported and cared about and when they have a sense of belongingness created by the teacher (Coley et al., 2016; Elliot & Reis, 2003; Perrine & King, 2004; Reio et al., 2009; Richardson & Arker, 2010; Trowler, 2010). The current

study addressed teacher attachment style and its association with components of student engagement. Students in classrooms with teachers with secure attachment styles had higher levels of control and relevance of schoolwork and extrinsic motivation. This is consistent with and extends previous research on teacher-student relationship and student engagement that showed that a secure attachment style supports positive interpersonal interactions. Thus, positive interpersonal interactions lead to a sense of support and being cared about, as well as a sense of belongingness created by the teacher with a secure attachment style.

Researchers examining attachment style have concluded that student attachment style is related to student engagement (Appleton et al., 2002; Bulfico et al., 2002; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Quilan, 2016; Trowler, 2010; van der Meer et al., 2015; Vrticka et al., 2012). However, researchers have not examined whether teacher attachment style is related to student engagement. More recent studies—in particular, studies published by Humphreys (2020) and Prosen and Vitulic (2018)—have continued to address student attachment style and its association with student engagement. There was a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between college teachers' attachment style and the components of student engagement (behavioral and academic engagement) in college students. This study addressed the gap and focused on teacher attachment style and its association with student engagement, and as in previous studies addressing student attachment style and its impact on student engagement, the teacher attachment style was also found to impact student engagement. Again, this aligns with previous research that demonstrated an association between student engagement, student success, and the influence of other relationships. The current study showed that a specific

aspect of the teacher-student relationship (teacher attachment style) has an impact on some components of student engagement. More specifically, students with teachers who had a secure attachment style were found to have higher levels of academic engagement (control and relevance of schoolwork and extrinsic motivation).

This study assessed several components of student behavioral and academic engagement. For behavioral engagement**,** the teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, and family support in learning were assessed. In terms of academic engagement, student control and relevance of schoolwork, future aspirations and goals, and extrinsic motivation were assessed. Lastly, overall student engagement was assessed. The SEI measured student engagement (Appleton et al., 2006). The SEI measured three components of behavioral engagement (teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, and family support in learning), three components of academic engagement (control and relevance of schoolwork, future aspirations and goals, and extrinsic motivation), and overall student engagement (Appleton et al., 2006). These seven categories of student engagement served as the dependent variables.

The results of this study showed that there were significant mean differences in two categories of academic engagement: control and relevance of schoolwork and extrinsic motivation. This result demonstrated that students with teachers who had a secure attachment style had higher levels of academic engagement specific to control and relevance of schoolwork compared to the students who had teachers with an insecure attachment style. This means that these students reported higher levels of understanding related to the expectations of the coursework and their ability to complete the assignments to meet the course requirements. In addition, students with teachers who had

a secure attachment style had higher levels of academic engagement specific to extrinsic motivation compared to students who had teachers with an insecure attachment style. That is, those students had higher levels of extrinsic motivation, meaning that they were more likely to believe that they would be rewarded through grades and academic success in the classroom for their work. This study extends previous research on the impact of attachment style and student engagement by addressing another important interpersonal relationship the student has in college—the teacher relationship—and how the teacher's attachment style impacts student engagement.

Theoretical Framework and Research Findings

This study was based on Bowlby's attachment theory (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1951, 1958). This theory was used to support the hypotheses of there being a significant association between teacher attachment style and student engagement. Attachment theory explains that the developed attachment style of an individual serves as a response basis to any interpersonal contact, whether the behavior is appropriate for the current situation or not (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1951, 1958). Attachment theory explains how adult interpersonal interactions are either collaborative or defensive in nature and are developed by an individual based on what has been learned through relationship interactions (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1951, 1958). Research suggests that quality of instruction and the teacher-student relationship seem to have the most influence and impact on student engagement (Richardson & Arker, 2010; Trowler, 2010).

Attachment style theory supported this study because it laid the foundation for the teacher's learned emotional response in interpersonal relationships. According to

attachment theory, there are three categories of attachment style: secure attachment, ambivalent/anxious attachment, and avoidant attachment (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bretherton, 1992; Gore & Rogers, 2010; Innerhofer, 2013). Research has shown the beneficial aspects of having a secure attachment style, which include being more confident when approaching relationships and better able to collaborate, receive support, and be more comfortable in interpersonal interaction (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Wilson & Gore, 2013). The ambivalent/anxious attachment style is considered an insecure attachment style, and adults who are in this category may have a strong desire for close relationships but fear that they will not last (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Gore & Rogers, 2010). Furthermore, adults with an ambivalent/anxious attachment style tend to worry so much about the relationships that they desire that they begin to make the constant worry over relationships work against them in both the relationship and their ability to concentrate on what is important in the interpersonal relationship (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Dan et al., 2014). The avoidant attachment style, also considered an insecure attachment style, is seen in adults who are more autonomous in nature and who cut themselves off from meaningful close relationships (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Gore & Rogers, 2010). Consequently, adults with an avoidant attachment style actively work on minimizing the risks that they feel in relationships and take on self-protective or defensive behaviors to avoid uncomfortable feelings in the interpersonal relationship (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Dan et al., 2014). Given that attachment style impacts relationships, it was hypothesized that instructors with a secure attachment style would be beneficial to students based on the appropriateness of teacher behavior/responses and the quality of student-instructor

interactions because the teacher would be more confident and comfortable in their interpersonal relationships.

The results of this study revealed that the attachment style of another person, the teacher, had an impact on two components of academic student engagement. The two components of academic student engagement that were significantly associated with teacher attachment style involved interactions that included teacher behavior and the teacher's interpersonal communication with the student. Both control and relevance of schoolwork and extrinsic motivation are affected by the teacher. The teacher is responsible for delivering instruction based on the curriculum; therefore, the teacher has control of the schoolwork delivery and furthering the student's understanding of the schoolwork. The teacher also impacts the interpretation of the coursework and is responsible for linking the curriculum to the relevance of the coursework for the student outside the course. Finally, the teacher is responsible for providing feedback to the student on how well the student is interpreting and applying the coursework through grades. These components of academic student engagement involve teacher-student interactions and interpersonal communication. The remaining component of academic student engagement, future aspirations and goals, as well as the three components of behavioral student engagement, teacher-student relationship, peer support at school, and family support and learning, were not found to be significant. These components of academic student engagement would not be significant in relationship to student engagement and the teacher-student relationship, as these components involve relationships with other people and the teacher does not impact those relationships because they are not directly connected to the teacher. The teacher behavior and teacher-

student relationship do not impact other situations or individuals outside of the classroom. Obviously, in any academic environment, the teacher is not the only individual who impacts student engagement. In sum, the present results demonstrated that teacher attachment style (a secure attachment style) was positively related to specific components of student academic engagement (control and relevance of schoolwork and extrinsic motivation) that directly involve instructor behavior and student-instructor interactions. These results also support attachment style theory and the importance of attachment style as a basis for how individuals behave and respond to interpersonal contact, and whether the behavior (responses) is appropriate in the specific context or situation.

Limitations

The first limitation of this research is that there may be other factors or characteristics of the teacher that may influence student engagement. These factors include teacher personality, home life of the teacher, the number of years that the teacher has been teaching, and the quality of teaching delivered by the teacher. Because of the lack of research specifically on teacher attachment style and student engagement, this research was limited in scope to teacher attachment style only.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have also impacted the current research and may limit the generalizability of the results. New remote learning classroom formats were being introduced during the first week of data collection, approximately 9 weeks into the semester. Thus, the first group of student participants and many teachers were learning new technologies and adjusting to a synchronous remote classroom as they tried to finish the semester. Although the second data collection occurred the second term in which

synchronous classrooms were occurring and remote learning was more organized as it was the second term of teaching in synchronous classrooms, it was still a departure from the traditional classroom setting. Research during the pandemic has reported that young adult students were experiencing higher levels of stress due to insufficient support services being available to them (Emery et al., 2021). In addition to disruptions in their personal lives and academic processes, there was also a disruption to the social interactions the students attending face-to-face classes would have expected. Because of remote learning the amount and variety of social interactions student would have experienced on campus and face to face classroom interaction would have been reduced. Students may have experienced a lack of engagement in classes due to limited social interactions. This may have also impacted the results.

Another limitation to this study was related to other student characteristics that might influence engagement. For example, there may be differences in students' academic readiness and/or motivational level. These factors, and others, might contribute to increases or decreases in student engagement. For instance, if the student's parents were the decision makers to attend college and not the student, the student may not care about his or her grades and engaging in the coursework, thus decreasing motivation for student engagement.

Another possible limitation was that the students completed the survey after only nine or ten weeks of classes. This may not have been enough time for the student to have significant interactions (amount and quality of interactions) with the teacher to influence student engagement. In addition, some students may have had fewer interactions with the

teacher for a variety of other reasons that may have affected their ability to assess their teacher's attachment style.

This research also used a non-experimental design. Using a non-experimental design limits the ability to determine cause and effect as there was no manipulation of the independent variable, and the students were not randomly chosen. In addition, because a convenience sample was used, the students and teacher that participated may not be representative of the population. In addition, because the survey was not distributed in a controlled setting, the participant responses to the survey may have been influenced by factors in the environment where they completed the survey (Thompson & Pancek, 2007).

Recommendations

Further studies focusing on student engagement and teacher attachment style are warranted. A comparison of retention rates and grades of students in classes taught by teachers-with secure and insecure attachment style categories would provide more information regarding whether the experience a student has with a teacher (and their attachment style) facilitates or disrupts student success outcomes. Specifically, research looking at whether the student's extrinsic motivation to complete his or her academic coursework or the belief the coursework is not relevant to the student's goals are linked to grades, retention rates, and teacher attachment style and student outcomes would add to the current literature. In addition, researchers should examine the relationship between attachment style of the teacher and student engagement over longer periods of time. For example, students completing their master's thesis or dissertation typically work with a specific mentor over a longer period of time and this may provide an opportunity to

examine how attachment style influences the faculty member's mentoring style, students' stress and satisfaction with their mentor, and success in completing their degree. For example, Harrison, Gemmell, and Reed's (2014) found that students in master level dissertation courses had higher levels of overall satisfaction with the dissertation process and success when there was positive mentor-student interaction.

Future research might also examine teacher-related factors such as personality, work-life balance, job-related stress, the quality of teaching, and student engagement. Other factors specific to students that may be related to engagement include possible differences in students' academic readiness and/or motivational levels. In addition, replication of this study post COVID-19 quarantine would also aid in understanding if the quarantine guidelines and the contributing stress to both teachers and students during this transitional time and unusual learning circumstances played a role in student engagement.

Demographic information highlighted two areas that may provide deeper insights into student engagement and teacher attachment style. Most of the teachers in this study had a secure attachment style. This may indicate that teachers in a community college setting are more likely have a secure attachment style. Alternatively, it may be that teachers with secure attachment styles were more motivated to participate in a community survey and willing to answer questions related to their interpersonal relationships. There is an abundance of research that supports the assumption that people with secure attachment styles are more likely to trust in relationships and be more open about themselves personally than people with an insecure attachment style (Ardenghi et al., 2020; Beeney et al., 2019; Fraley & Roisman, 2019; Rek et al., 2018). The demographic data also indicated only 10% of the students in classes with teachers with

secure attachment styles had teacher-student interactions outside of the classroom, compared to 53% of the students with insecure teacher attachment styles. This data suggests that attachment style of the teacher may have an effect on the amount (and possibly the quality) of teacher-student interaction. It may be that teachers with a secure attachment style provide the necessary positive interaction with students in the classroom, while students with insecure teachers seek additional (outside the classroom) interactions because they do not receive it in the classroom. Future research should examine these issues.

Implications

The current study demonstrated that two of the components of student academic engagement (control and relevance of schoolwork and extrinsic motivation) had significant differences in mean levels associated with teacher attachment style. These two domains are more closely tied to teacher attachment style than the other domains of student engagement because there are teacher-student interactions involved in these domains. My results add to the literature regarding aspects of teacher behavior that are important to student engagement. Teaching styles and student-centered learning have been main topics in student engagement and this research added to that literature. The findings in this study may lead to positive social change by creating teacher awareness around how their behavior impacts student engagement. If teachers are aware of this impact, it can assist them in developing more effective strategies to engage students, and therefore improve student retention and graduation rates. Educational institutions may add and incorporate the component of teacher attachment style into teacher training through training modules. Specifically, this research has provided a broader

understanding of the impact teachers have on student engagement based on their own attachment style, a consideration that had not been researched previously. For institutions, the results of this study may be used to increase both student success through more externally motivated engagement and institutional effectiveness in terms of increasing student's perceptions of control and relevance of the course work to their academic goals by incorporating training modules into teacher training that address teacher attachment style. In addition, the results of this study could lead to the development of methods to improve student engagement through providing insight into positive student-teacher interactions with a focus on teacher attachment style.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine the association between teacher attachment style and student engagement. The findings in this research suggested teacher attachment style had an impact on student engagement. There were significant differences in the mean levels of two components of academic student engagement, specifically, control and relevance of schoolwork and extrinsic motivation. Students believed they had higher levels of understanding the expectations of the coursework and their ability to complete assignments to the expected standard in classes with teachers with secure attachment styles. Students also believed they would be rewarded through grades and academic success in classes with teachers with secure attachment styles. This study added to the literature on teacher behavior and its impact on student engagement in demonstrating teacher attachment style is related to student engagement in the classroom. A specific type of attachment style seems to be beneficial to student engagement which warrants further research. Attachment style of the teacher may not only impact teacher-student

interactions and student engagement, but also the quality of teaching and other areas of student academic success.

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Appendix A: Teacher Recruitment Email

RE: Research Participation Opportunity ~ Faculty teaching General Education Classes

My name is Susan Bonnell and I am a writing my dissertation at Walden University. I am inviting you to participate in my research study on student engagement in the classroom.

The purpose of my research is to create a further understanding of student behavior and engagement in their classes. The research study will specifically address the potential influence of interactions between student and teacher on student behavior and engagement.

Participation will consist of completing a 36-question survey and a brief demographic questionnaire that will take about 20 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary and will remain confidential.

Your contribution is appreciated. If you are interested in participating, please click on the link below to complete the survey and questionnaire.

SurveyMonkey link

Thank you in advance.

Susan Bonnell

Appendix B: Student Recruitment Email

RE: Research Participation Opportunity ~ Students in
_____(class)

My name is Susan Bonnell and I am a writing my dissertation at Walden University. I am inviting you to participate in my research study on student engagement in the classroom.

The purpose of my research is to create a further understanding of student behavior and engagement in their classes. The research study will specifically address the potential influence of interactions between student and teacher on student behavior and engagement.

Participation will consist of completing a 35-question survey and a brief demographic questionnaire that will take about 20 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary and will remain confidential if you choose to participate.

Your feedback is appreciated. If you are interested in participating, please click on the link below to complete the survey and questionnaire.

SurveyMonkey link

Thank you in advance.

Susan Bonnell