

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

**The Relationship Between Teachers' Attachment Style and Self-Efficacy
to Their Perceived Role as Promoting Identity and Reflectivity Among
Students**

Galit Salamon

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's Degree
in the School of Education Bar-Ilan University**

Ramat-Gan, Israel

2017

Abstract

Many see the educational purpose of a teacher as aimed at being a partner in designing students' personality alongside teaching the subject material. In addition to setting educational goals, e.g. encouraging educational achievements, a teacher also assists students in a variety of aspects – emotional, social, moral as well as regarding aspects of identity (Schachter & Rich, 2004, 2011). Even though that the school's central role in encouraging and promoting identity-related processes among adolescents is well recognized in the research literature, the personality characteristics of those who are entrusted with this role, is hardly mentioned.

This study focuses on a few of the teacher's personality characteristics: anxiety and avoidance (according to attachment theory) and self-efficacy. These characteristics were examined in order to understand individual differences in preferring different pedagogical aims at the expense of others, in the teacher's educational pedagogical work. The theoretical framework of this study makes use of the Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1973) and Erikson's Theory of Identity Development (Erikson, 1968; Grotevant, 1987; Marcia, 1980). In addition, this study makes use of the Self Determination Theory (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991) and it also relies on recent studies that deal with self-efficacy (Bandura & Locke, 2003) in general, and particularly among teachers (Flum & Kaplan, 2006; Friedman & Kass, 2000).

The purpose of this study is to answer three main research questions (a) Does a teacher with a secure attachment see the encouragement of student identity-development and reflectivity to be a part of his role as teacher, more than a teacher who is insecurely attached? (b) Does a teacher with high self-efficacy see the encouragement of identity-development and reflectivity to be a central part of his role, more than a teacher with low self-efficacy? (c) Does a teacher with a secure attachment see himself as having high self-efficacy to encourage identity-related process and reflectivity, more than a teacher who is insecurely attached? In general, the

purpose of this study is to examine parts of a model which define the relationships between teacher's attachment style, teacher's self-efficacy and the teacher's own perception of his role.

An additional research purpose is to examine the hypothesis according to which there is a distinction between various pedagogical purposes that the teacher is aiming at during his work. This study focuses in characterization of the teacher's personality: attachment style (anxiety and avoidance) and personal self-efficacy of the teacher in a way that might promote or delay the teacher by pushing him or her to try and achieve goals of identity-development and reflectivity at the expense of trying to achieve academic goals or vice versa, trying to achieve academic goals at the expense of trying to achieve goals of identity-development and reflectivity. In addition, this study examines the relationships between the teacher's personality characteristics: attachment style and personal self-efficacy and his perception of his role (as promoter of academic goals and identity-related and reflectivity-related goals).

This study involved 157 teachers from the public education (37 men and 119 women) who answered self-report questionnaires which were aimed at examining each one of the study's variables. In order to examine the variables of the teacher's role perception and the teacher's personal self-efficacy, an on-line questionnaire was built while relaying on a pilot version which was built by Schachter (not published).

In order to examine the parts of the model used in this study according to which the teacher's perception intermediates between the teacher's attachment style and the teacher's self-efficacy, the relationships between the levels of attachment style and the levels of role's perceptions were examined. In addition, the relationships between the levels of self-efficacy and the levels of role's perceptions were examined. Last, the relationships between the levels of attachment style and the levels of self-efficacy were examined as well.

The findings of this study indicate that, according to the offered categorization, the goals of identity-development and reflectivity are indeed distinguishable from the goals of developing academic capabilities. Consistently with the study's hypotheses it was found that the higher the teacher's avoidance attachment, the lower the level of encouragement toward identity-development and reflectivity, and similarly the lower the teacher's tendency to embrace identity goals. In addition, it was found that a teacher with high level of self-efficacy regarding identity-development and reflectivity sees the encouragement of identity-development and reflectivity as more central parts of his role, more so than a teacher with a lower level of self-efficacy. Last, consistent with the hypothesis, it was found that the higher the teacher's avoidance attachment, the lower the encouragement of identity-development and reflectivity. Alongside that, in contrast with our original hypothesis, a significant correlation was not found between the anxiety index and the index of the teacher's self-efficacy regarding different goals of education. Furthermore, the contribution of attachments styles and the index of self-efficacy regarding identity-development and reflectivity to predicting was not found to be related to teacher seniority.

Out of all these findings it can be concluded that the teacher's personal characteristics, as they are reflected in the study's variables, were found as significant with regards to the avoidant style of attachment and not to the anxious style of attachment. I assume that the reason for that is the unique characteristics of the different attachments styles expressed by helping others. It seems that anxious attachment is found to be more related to personal distress than to affective involvement toward others and therefore it was not found to be related to identity-development. On the other hand, avoidant attachment was found to be more related to goals of identity-development and reflectivity. It seems that attachment avoidance is characterized by avoiding the needs of the other and the tendency to stay away from interpersonal

relationships, and therefore the avoidant teacher is, consistently, less capable of choosing goals of identity that involve interpersonal contents.

This study emphasizes the importance of personality characteristics of the teacher when he or she chooses to deal with various pedagogical goals. Therefore, it is important to carry out a deeper examination of the role of the attachment styles and the teacher's self-efficacy. Further, it needs to be taken into consideration that alongside the teacher's personality which is integral to his pedagogical work, there are additional factors that need to be examined such as the classroom climate, the curriculum, and the demands and expectations of the system from the teacher.