

UPDATE

UPDATE - 2002

- Extrinsic religious experience
- Intrinsic religious experience
- School attitude

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All About SDA Schools . . .

Valuegenesis research focuses on three specific areas of importance in the lives of children and youth in the church. The family setting, the church impact, and the schools' importance in growing a rich and dynamic faith experience.

In order for each venue to understand its role in the faith growth of its constituents, it is important to look carefully at the attitudes of students from grades 6 through 12 towards its importance and centrality in their growing faith. This update looks at the importance of schools in faith experience. The next two updates will center on the family and the church respectively. Now, let's look at schools and try to find out what makes a difference.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Experience

The *Valuegenesis²* project contains a rich scale that explores the "types" of religious experience students have. Two types are identified here. The Intrinsic scale seems to measure a taxonomy of three levels:

- Experience of religion
- One's religious world view
- The integration of faith in that world view

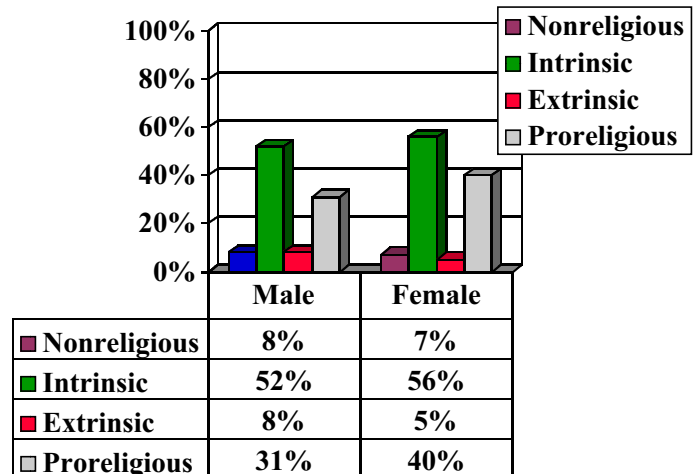
The extrinsic scale measures a different type of religious experience:

- A more egocentric perspective of religion
- Compromising perspectives of religion
- Sociocentric perspective of religion

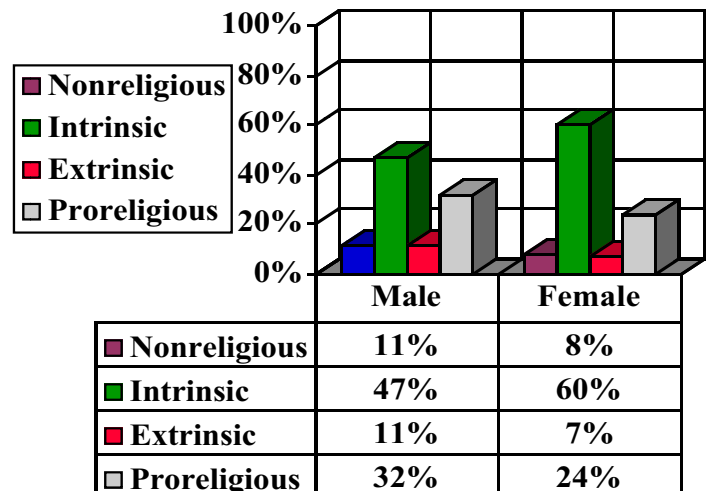
With this in mind, we can notice that the "intrinsic" persons lives their religion while the "extrinsic" ones use theirs. Extrinsic motivation for religious life is a turning to God without a turning away from self. And extrinsic religious experience is what gives religion a bad name! It is often seen as prejudiced, dogmatic, holding a fear of death, as having low self-esteem, and often having a poorer psychological functioning than intrinsic religious experience, which is more open, devotional, or "spiritual" in its approach to one's religious world view. In other words, we would like our students to be developing an intrinsic view of religion.

Let's look at the research and see just what we can learn about these two types of religious experience.

The chart below is based on 6th through 8th grade students in SDA schools. Non-SDA students have been removed from this sample. A minimum number of students were seen as non-religious and another 31% of boys and 40% of the girls were balanced between the two extremes. But notice that 52% of the boys and 56% of the girls hold intrinsic religious attitudes. Over half of the sample! And in contrast, less than 8% of them were extrinsic in their attitudes and world view.



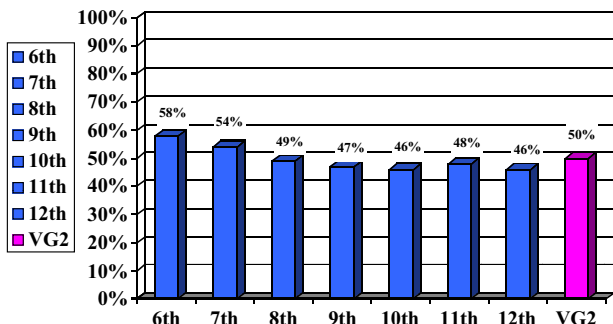
When we look at grades 9 through 12 the same pattern emerges. However, this time some 60% of girls are seen as intrinsic in their orientation and 47% of the boys who seem to slip from intrinsic religion as they grow older. Something is happening that is positive in schools and in their religious lives to make intrinsic religion a priority still.



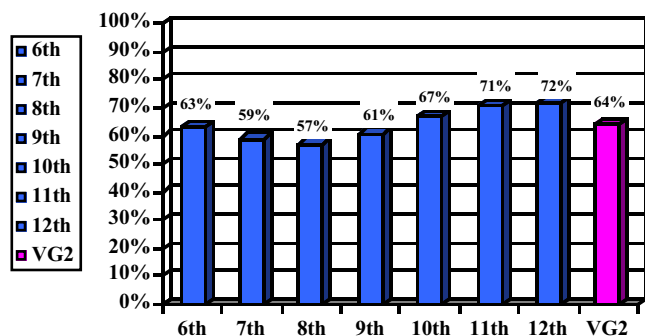
School Appreciation Insights

A number of attitudes about schools were surveyed with most interesting results. Here is a series of questions and responses by grades 6 through 12. Take a look at these and at the conclusion, let's draw some insights.

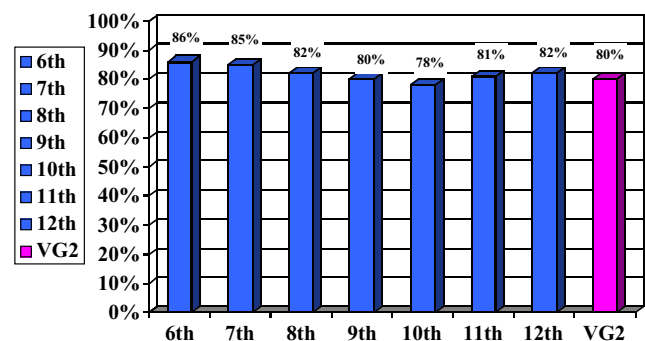
(Q. 165. Adventist school provide a better academic program than do public schools.)



(Q. 168. Adventist school should spend more time teaching about God's grace (top 2 of 5).)

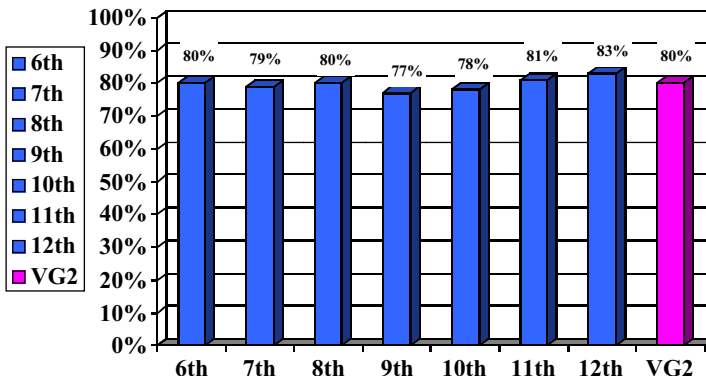


(Q. 207. The teaching is good ("strongly agree" "agree").)

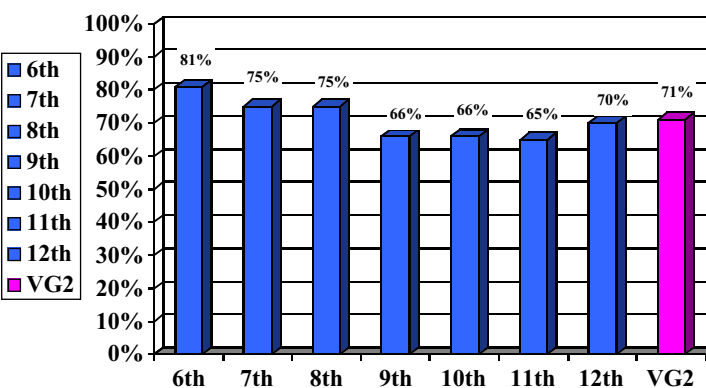


When teachers are interesting, when discipline is fair, when the teaching is considered good and when teachers both praise and listen to students, the better and more intrinsic the religious experience becomes. And conversely, the more negative these scores are, the more they impact against intrinsic religious experience. This shows the importance of building a positive climate in schools. We just can't go wrong when we help schools become positive in warmth and critical thinking.

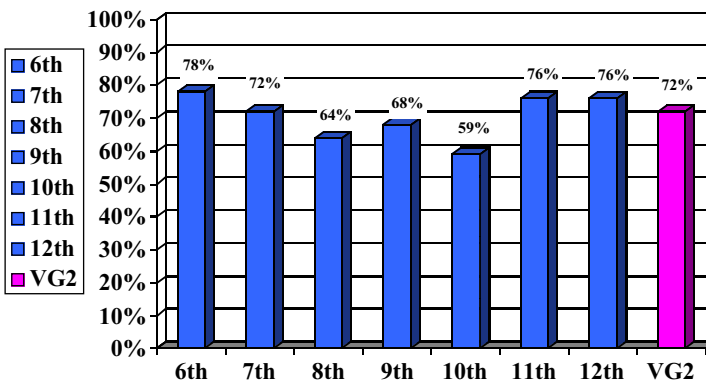
(Q. 208. Teachers are interested in their students ("Agree" "Strongly agree").)



(Q. 209. When students work hard on schoolwork, teachers praise their efforts ("Agree" "Strongly agree").)



(Q. 212. I like my school! ("Agree" "Strongly agree").)



What can we do?

Building a rich growing "intrinsic" faith seems impacted significantly by the type of climate you have in your school. Relationships with teachers and building a thriving, friendly school can assist in students having a positive religious world view. So don't neglect to continually help faculty and staff care deeply about the appearance of Christianity that they present as they go about their duties on campus.

For more information

- Email bgillesp@lasierra.edu for a PowerPoint™ program about building faith in schools.