

# UPDATE

**UPDATE - 2003**

- Families and Faith
- Family Style and Type
- Family Faith Building

*John Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry-La Sierra University and the North American Division Office of Education*

**Number 12— Valuegenesis<sup>2</sup> information you can use September, 2003**

## Families and Faith

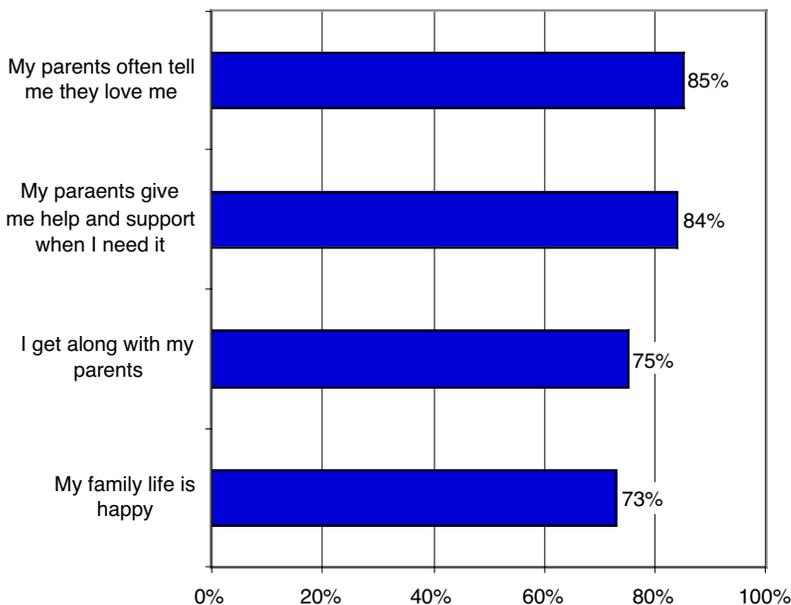
It is a universal truth that the family is *the* most important factor in religious training and early faith formation. When it comes to character development, the impact of the early trusting relationship of the child and his or her mother is, of course, primary.

Earlier research has shown that homes that are religiously united provide the best environment for the development of a mature value system.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Valuegenesis<sup>2</sup>* research we discovered that 92% of the mothers in our study were Seventh-day Adventists (94% in research for *Valuegenesis<sup>1</sup>* in 1990).<sup>\*</sup> And in addition, 77% (81%) of the fathers indicated they were members of the Adventist church. This is slightly down from our earlier study.

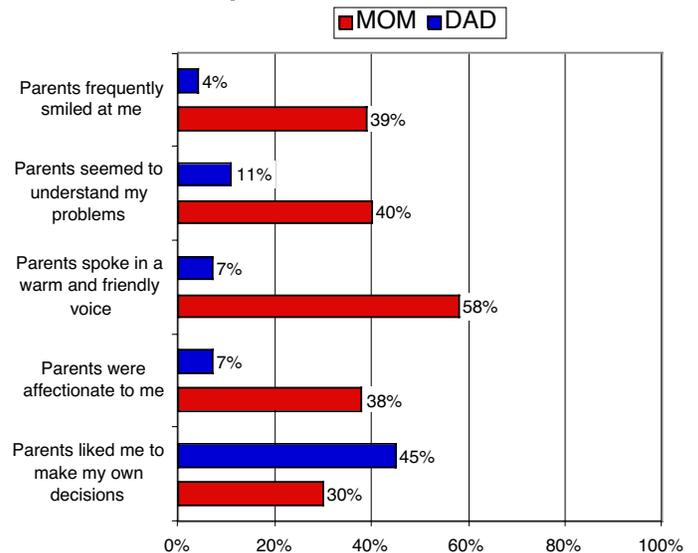
With this information in hand, we wanted to understand some other issues that are related to these: for example, 27% of the Adventist families in this research had been divorced. This being the case, some 81% of the students still came from two-parent homes, in comparison with the national data on divorce, which indicates that 50% of all marriages in the United States in the year 2000 end up in divorce, Adventist families are quite stable.

**Students' perceptions of their family life  
"Tend to agree" and "Definitely agree" totals**



And, in spite of this statistic, most of the families surveyed were seen by their children as loving. 30% "tended to agree" with this statement, while 50% "definitely believed" their home was a loving one. Below are some other responses to a number of questions about the family along with their children's perceptions.

**Students' perceptions of their family life  
"Very like this"**



## What is your family like?

We used a national scale that evaluated the types of family styles that youth experienced. Their answers were based on their perceptions of their own families in a number of important areas. Their answers provide a detailed picture of the ways that Christian families function. Some of the individual items are particularly revealing, as can be seen in the chart above.

We were surprised at the contrast between the perceptions of students of their fathers compared with those of their mothers. It seems that fathers have a more difficult time sending positive perceptions to their children. And in looking at these issues over time from the 6th grade through the 12th, there was little shifting in these perceptions. For example, the question shown in the graph above,

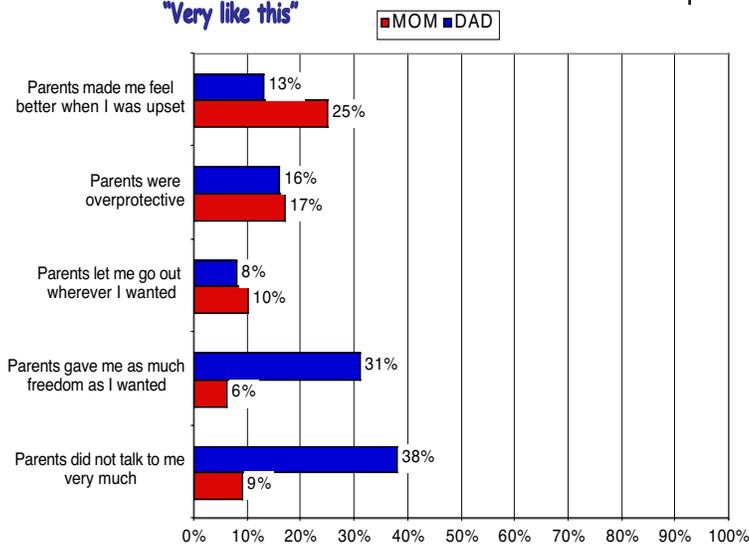
*\*Percentages in the 1990 Valuegenesis<sup>1</sup> completed in our 1990 study are always shown in parenthesis (\*).*

“My parents seemed to understand my problems,” when seen over time, only changed 2%, not enough change to even discuss.

There were a number of other interesting insights regarding perception of fathers and mothers in this scale too.

**Students' perceptions of their family life**

“Very like this”



Only 37% of the youth in our survey indicated that it was of “Little” or “No importance” at all that they choose friends that their parents would approve of.

**Statistical correlations of importance**

A number of significant correlations can be drawn regarding family life and religious faith. For example, when we look at the relationship between denominational loyalty and family climate, there is a .48 correlation. Those families that are warm, caring, loving, and disciplined rate higher here in helping students see their church as important. In addition, family climate is also positively correlated with the quality of religious education at .41 as well as the enforcement of Adventist lifestyle standards at .40 and personal piety at .54. These all contribute to a growing faith life and are related significantly with a loving, open, warm, and disciplined family environment.

And while conversations about faith are important in helping youth develop a value system, as seen in an earlier **UPDATE**, the climate or tone of the home is even more important. If children do not experience families as happy and fulfilling, they will not want those values

We asked if they “tended to agree,” or “definitely agree” with the following statements about their homes. Their answers are compared with those of the study done over ten years ago (*Valuegenesis*<sup>1</sup>). Notice the parallels in their answers.

- ⓐ My parents give me help and support when I need it 83%, (80%)

- ⓑ There is a lot of love in my family 81%, (77%)
- ⓒ My parents often tell me they love me 85%, (76%)
- ⓓ I get along well with my parents 75%, (73%)
- ⓔ My family life is happy 73%, (72%)
- ⓕ If I break one of the rules set by my parents, I usually get punished 72%, (62%)

The situation is quite good given what we usually hear about teens and their family relationships in today’s society. Around 80% of the youth had a positive, supportive family climate and about 70% could be said as having “high” family climate. That is a slight increase over the three-fourths seen last time we completed this research. That leaves a number of homes in trouble still, so we must work to build happy Christian homes that will set forth well-integrated, principled children. Work in this area will assist our schools to do a better job because they can build on a clear, positive head-start from the home-life of their students.

**But all is not perfect**

However, when we look at the parenting scale closely, we notice an interesting and troubling fact. With regards to parental monitoring of activities that parents should concern themselves about, such things as the amount of time youth go out with their friends on school nights, the time they spend watching TV or playing video games, or even as to monitoring the types of music they listen to, only 27% of the families reported on by their children would be considered to have “high” family monitoring. 38% were “moderate” and 35% had “low” monitoring going on in their homes, according to our research.

67% of the youth saw their mothers as overprotective while only 20% saw their fathers in that regard. 80% saw their mothers as caring, while only 20% felt that way about their fathers. We discuss these findings in detail in our forthcoming book, *Ten Years Later: A Study of Two Generations*, to be released in the coming months, but right now we can observe that fathers are having the most problems communicating a caring and loving climate in their homes.

Family climate—one that is loving and has constraint, affection with control, is the best type to build a rich and growing family life and encourage religious growth. We can never underestimate the power of a loving family in building both loyalty to the denomination and a close vertical faith life.

**Endnotes and New Book on Valuegenesis<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Roger Dudley with V. Bailey Gillespie, *Faith in the Balance* (Riverside, CA: La Sierra University Press, 1992), 188.

**PLACE YOUR ORDER NOW and READ ALL ABOUT IT**

The Book: *Ten Years Later: A Study of Two Generations* will be available this fall. If you want to reserve yours at a 15% discount now, email— [hcyfm@lasierra.edu](mailto:hcyfm@lasierra.edu)