

UPDATE

UPDATE - 2003

- Importance of Values
- Service and Prosocial attitudes
- Morality and Materialism

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

Number 9 — Valuegenesis² information you can use

March, 2003

It's all about values . . .

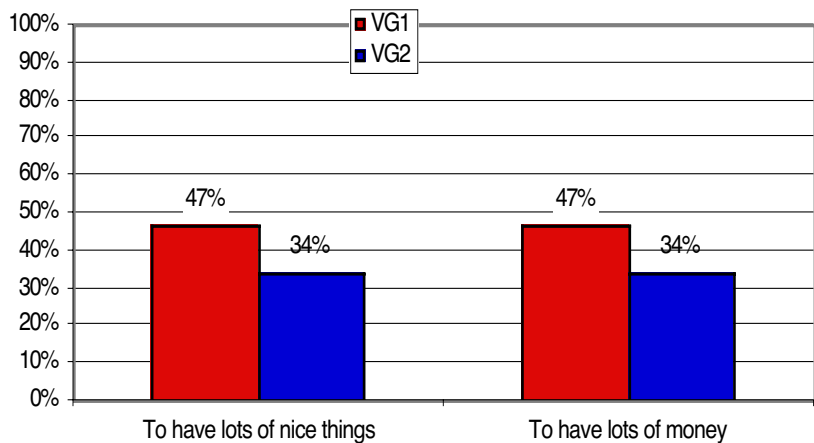
Valuegenesis research looks at a number of values that are central to the Christian life. The New Testament argues that compassionate caring is crucial for those that identify with the Kingdom of God. The church "was organized for service. . . ." Ellen White wrote, "and through the church will be made manifest . . . the final and full display of the love of God."¹ "Adventists believe that we are placed in this world to be a blessing to our fellow human beings."² If our Christian commitment does not include this valuable focus we probably have an incomplete response to the grace of our Lord. Homes, churches and schools in the denomination have a common purpose to share the love of God to those in need.

Psychologists call this experience an attitude of pro-social behavior. And having service, per se, as a value is an important indicator as to how effective one understands the gift of God's love in one's life. Our research asked students what goals were important to them. There were eight goals listed. When asked what their goals were they had the opportunity to respond as to how important they were. The possible answers included: "not at all important," "somewhat important," "quite important," and "extremely important." Four of these goals related to this

value, service and pro-social attitudes. Below are the results of those that said they were "quite" and "extremely important" to them. These percentages are high overall with the last one showing some significant improvement.

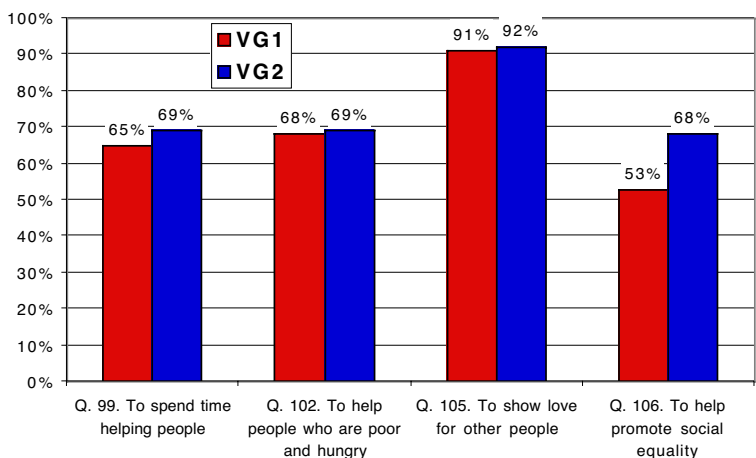
How about materialism?

On the opposite end of the continuum of values is the concept of materialism. All too often youth are seen as the ultimate consumers. Marketing experts target teens in their multi-million dollar advertising campaigns. And



all too often when you check out the student parking lot you see automobiles of better quality than those of their own faculty! But these are subjective evaluations. A number of items to measure this value were included in our research, all with the same response format as the values of service.

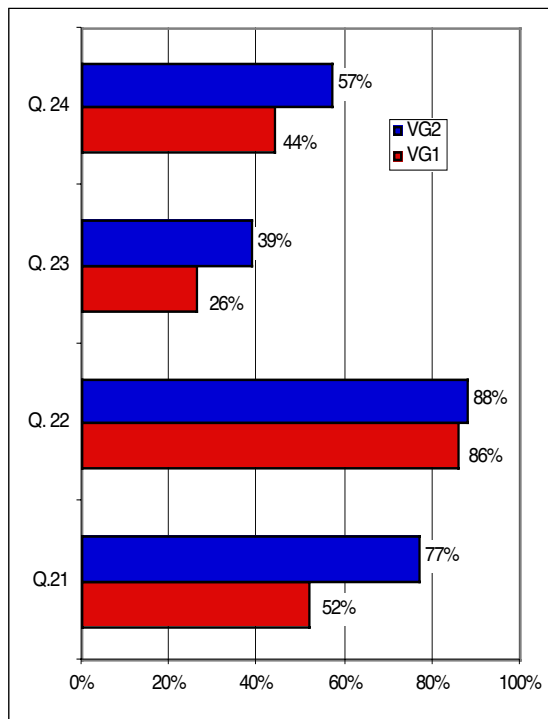
We are now looking through multiple regression analyses at the family, congregational, and school variables that reveal what impacts an attitude towards materialism. *Valuegenesis'* research included poor quality of school religion program, low peer religiousness, a poor quality of family worship, and low frequency of talking with friends about God. Watch for the more recent factors in this new research in our new book soon to be released called *Ten Years Later: A Study of Two Generations*



Are our youth altruistic?

A number of pieces of information come together to give us insight into the closely related attitude of altruism. Altruism is the selfless sharing of one's time, money, and effort for the benefit of others.³ In order to understand this concept we asked the youth of the church "How many volunteer hours do you spend on each of the following during a typical month? We asked them to give their "best" estimate and not to count time spent while in a paid job. The answers are revealing. Here are the responses contrasted between the two studies of *Valuegenesis¹* and *Valuegenesis²*. The responses below reflect the combined percentages of those who spent any time at all in altruistic activities.

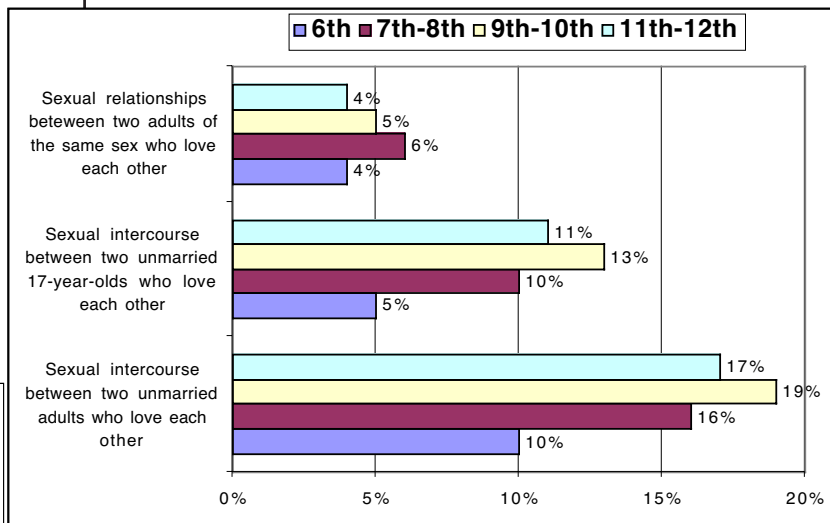
- Q. 24. Making your own town or city a better place to live
- Q. 23. Promoting social equality or world peace
- Q. 22. Helping friends or neighbors with problems they have
- Q. 21. Helping people who are poor, hungry, or unable to care for themselves



The largest proportion in each question above spent an hour or two per month. The percentages of those spending more than ten hours a month on the above activities were 6%, 4%, 17%, 6% respectively. In addition, time spent in altruistic activities tended to remain the same through according to age. 34% of sixth graders spent no time helping and 38% of the twelfth graders did not assist others. Ten years ago the twelfth grade statistic of non participation was at 53% so there has been significant improvement in the high school involvement over the past decade. This is encouraging news.

How moral are they?

On a related areas, but with a slightly different twist, the youth were asked about their morality. A number of practices were provided. However, this time in the research we did not probe related issues such as racial discrimination, attitudes towards AIDS or equality of women in the workforce. We did look at their responses regarding attitudes toward sexual practice outside of the marriage relationship. The graph below shares those that support the questions examined.



All in all, the majorities did condemn premarital sexual relationships. In addition, 11% of high school students and 12% of 6th through 8th grade student were "not sure" just what they believed on this issue. And when the question is broadened to include unmarried adults who love each other the "not sure" category grows to 14% for high school students and 16% for those in the junior high school age category. Totally, however some 47% definitely disagree with this statement while 22% tend to disagree with this concept. As the church and school continue to promote sexual purity and traditional family values, it will have to continue to put a priority on ways to transmit them, or they may continue to slip away in the next generation.

In further **UPDATES** we will explore the values of self-esteem and other related positive values. Remember, one of the chief aims of religion in one's life is to instill purpose and values. In the Bible those who were successful in their walk with God often showed characteristics of morality, commitment, altruism, and service in their walk with God. These values are important to promote.

For more information

¹Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles, 9*.
²Roger Dudley with V. Bailey Gillespie, *Faith in the Balance* (Riverside, CA: La Sierra University Press, 1992), 128.
³*Ibid.*, 133.