

# UPDATE

UPDATE - 2003

- Positive influences in the home, church, and school
- Faith maturity and ethnicity

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## 19 Family positive influences

**V**aluegenesis research has identified nineteen positive influences in our research that targets family and home life as it relates to intrinsic faith, faith maturity, denominational loyalty and commitment to God. These influences can be grouped into four categories: (1) positive parenting, (2) family climate, (3) climate, (4) constraint, and (5) spiritual parenting. Let's look first at positive parenting and see what we've discovered.

This first grouping of influences involves characteristics of parents that have a powerful influence in building mature faith of an intrinsic nature. They are listed below.

### Positive Parenting

- Mother comfortable with faith-talk
- Father comfortable with faith-talk
- Mother is highly religious
- Father is highly religious
- Regular mother and child communication
- Father shares faith-talk (together)
- Regular father and child communication

### Family Climate

- Loving, caring family (climate)
- Regular parent-child communication
- Parents help with homework

### Loving Constraint

- Parents set limits
- Parents oppose alcohol use
- Family enforces substance abuse standards
- Family enforces popular cultural standards
- Family enforces Adventist way of life

### Spiritual Parenting

- Parents punish wrong behavior
- Interesting and meaningful family worships
- Youth involved in family helping projects
- Frequent family worship

To gain an overall image, we oversimplified these nineteen positive family influences into "yes/no" categories and then looked to see how many of each of the nineteen influences students reported. 16% of the students reported "a lot" of these influences between 76% and 100% of the time. That corresponds to fifteen or more of the total of nineteen. In addition, 42% of the students reported "a lot" between 0% and 50%.

What follows is a chart that shares the amount of exposure to "a lot" of these experiences. Note that only 5% of the students in our study experienced 0-24% of these influences.

## Family Positive Influences

Total 0%-25%	5%
Total 26%-50%	37%
Total 51%-75%	42%
Total 76%-100%	16%

## 8 Positive Church Influences

**O**ur research identified an additional eight positive influences in the local church. They follow these themes: Congregational climate influences, local ministry influences, and congregational support influences. Here is what we found to be the most positive in the area of the local church.

### Congregational Climate

- Warm congregational climate
- Thinking congregational climate

### Local Ministry

- Programs are interesting
- Programs are thought-provoking
- Frequent inter-generational programming

### Congregational Support

- Teachers and adult leaders are supportive/caring
- Often experience caring peers
- Often experience caring adults.

Only 11% of the youth experienced "a lot" of these influences between 76% and 100% of the time.

## 8 Positive School Influences

**I**n addition, eight positive school influences were identified. They circle around the themes of quality teaching, Adventist values, and school climate influences. Schools that participate in these and make them a central concern have significant impact on the faith maturity, intrinsic faith development, and commitment to the Adventist church.

It is interesting to note that half of these issues identified in the *Valuegenesis* research for schools are just the things that make the school system so positive a spiritual influence. They indicate issues in their practice that cannot be duplicated in the public environment, yet have been demonstrated to make a difference in the spiritual growth of students. Let's first look at quality teaching: Teachers that are seen as competent, caring, and supportive provide the best possible

nurture to young people. Adventist schools are blessed with quality teachers, certified and educated. One of the evidences of the kind of support teachers provide is the fact that they don't "put down" students. This is an indication of respect, and while 49% of the students have some doubt about this, a clear 61% agree that teachers respect them.

Quality teaching provides the best environment to model the grace of God. What follows are the school influences regarding quality teaching.

**Quality Teaching**

- Good, competent teachers
- Caring, supportive teachers
- Teachers that don't put down students

Another influence is the regular contact in faith-tal, with teachers that students in Adventist education can experience. This is part of the Adventist mission, in a way, and since many baptisms are directly related to our schools, the role of teachers in commitment to Jesus cannot be overstressed.

**Adventist Values**

- Enforces Adventist Way of Life Standards
- Students talk to teachers about faith

The last category of positive influences in Adventist schools is that of school climate influences. Exposure to these influences is crucial if students are to grow toward God and with loyalty to the church.

**Climate Influences**

- Discipline is fair
- School spirit is high
- Students have a voice in school policy.

A total of 25% of the students experience "a lot" of influences while only 39% experience less than half.

## Ethnic Groups in Adventism

It would not be appropriate to ignore the unique make-up of the constituencies in our research. For example, there are a number of other ethnicities represented in the data sets. One percent of the sample respondents were Asian or Pacific Islanders. 28% represented the African American community, while 22% claimed Latino or Hispanic identification. And while 15% had multiple ethnic backgrounds, by far the largest of the groups represented were the Hispanic and African American communities.

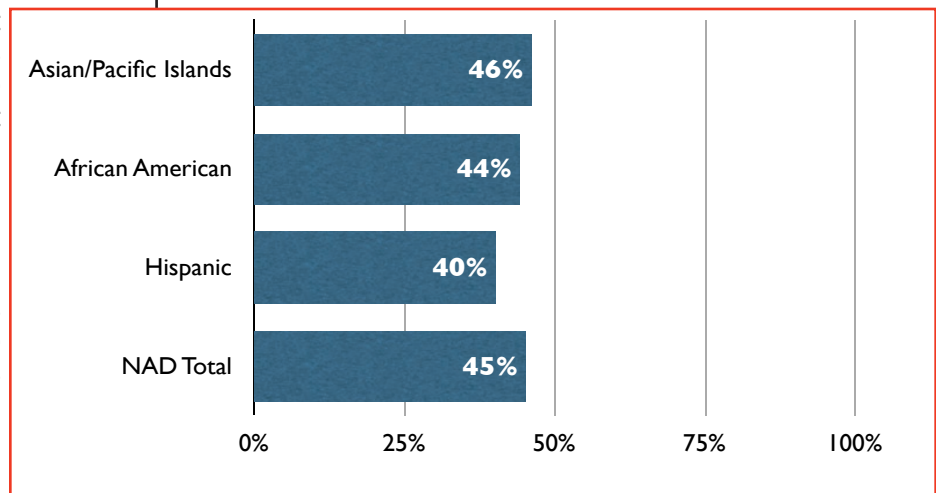
What do these communities contribute to our knowledge about how young people develop an intrinsic and mature faith and at the same time build denominational loyalty? It is safe to say that for the most part, Adventist young people here in the United States are a lot alike. Where they differ we can learn something helpful. Here is a summary of some of the important contributions to our information about young people in the church. We'll

look in the space we have left at three issues—faith maturity, intrinsic religion, and family climate.

**Faith Maturity.** Only the Hispanic averages are slightly below the North American Division percentages when it comes to maturity of faith. (See chart below.)

**Intrinsic Religion.** When it comes to intrinsic faith, again the percentages are helpful. 62% of the Hispanic students had intrinsic faith, 67% was the scaled score for the African American community of students, and 61% was the percentage for the Asian and Pacific Island young people. This is significantly higher than those from the more general public of the North American Division, who had an average total of 44%.

Faith Maturity and Ethnicity



**Family Climate.** Another area where there was virtually no difference between the North American Division mean scores and those of the various ethnic communities was that of family climate—one that is open, loving, and accepting. All fell within a small area around the mean, with 72% for the Hispanic population, 67% for African American young people, and 64% for the Asian and Pacific Islands group. The NAD average stood at 72%. Almost six to seven out of every ten of our youth represented in the study came from warm, loving homes in all ethnic categories. It's nice to see such positive insights into the families of the young people in our schools.

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