**Value-Genesis Surveys, South Pacific Division**

**A. BARRY GANE**

A. Barry Gane, Ph.D., has served the church on three continents over a period of 45 years. He has been a youth director at union and division levels, a university professor, chaplain, and pastor. Gane has earned two doctorates, both in the area of Youth Ministry and Leadership. He is married to Marilyn and they have two adult children, Daniel and Kymberley, and are blessed to have five grandchildren. He retired in 2015 as the head of the School of Ministry and Theology at Avondale College of Higher Education. Gane continues serving as an advisor to doctoral students and teaches in the areas of both Leadership and Youth Ministry.

Valuegenesis is the study of faith development and values formation in Seventh-day Adventist youth. The study was first conducted in the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (NAD). In 1989, the NAD commissioned a study, "Project Affirmation," to measure the effectiveness of the Seventh-day Adventist school system in developing faith and aiding in the formation of values among middle and high school aged children. A small group of researchers gathered with academics to design and conduct the study. They met in what was to become the John H. Hancock Center for Youth Ministry at La Sierra University to develop a survey instrument and build a team that would interpret and analyze the findings. They developed the instrument around that used and built by Peter L. Benson and his team at the Search Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It was at this time that the title, Valuegenesis, was coined. It is now used widely outside the Adventist Church in educational and youth ministry circles.

The youth leadership team and the education department in the South Pacific Division (SPD) met the same year, looked at the instruments and findings of the North American team, and developed a proposal for the South Pacific Division to undertake a similar study.

The South Pacific Division Valuegenesis project arose from a desire to understand more clearly the relationship between three major elements that serve Adventist young people. These were the Adventist home, the local church, and the Adventist school. The project was initiated by an action of the March 27, 1991, South Pacific Division executive committee in which the church ministries and education departments were commissioned to report on the development of faith, values, and commitment in Adventist youth in Australia and New Zealand.

The SPD research committee developed a 229-item version of the longer 458-item instrument used in the North American Division. It was tested for validity and reliability and gave the same results as the longer version. Two new scales were included in the SPD instrument: 1) Gordon Parker’s Parental Bonding instrument (25 items rated for both mother and father), and four items that contributed to a youth ministry scale.

**Coordinating Committees**

Four committees were established to oversee the work of gathering the data needed for the preparation of a series of reports. The Valuegenesis Management Committee, chaired by Dr. Gerald Clifford, was supported in its work by three other ad hoc committees: a research advisory committee chaired by Dr. Arnold Reye, a literature review committee chaired by Dr. Barry Hill, and a public relations committee chaired by Pastor Ray Coombe. The project coordinator, Dr. Owen Hughes, was responsible for the day to day planning and organization of the project.

Search Institute, which was responsible for the design, data analysis, and reports of the NAD Valuegenesis study agreed to serve as an additional research consultant for the South Pacific Division study.

**Research Questions**

The objectives of the SPD Valuegenesis study closely paralleled those of the NAD Valuegenesis study. Consultations
were held involving church ministries, youth, and education departments to ensure that the project would provide answers to significant questions. The Valuegenesis Management Committee monitored these discussions and endorsed the following questions as major objectives of the project:

- To what extent have our young people developed a mature faith and Christian commitment?
- Do our young people feel a sense of loyalty to their Church?
- What aspects of home life, the Church, and the Adventist school contribute most to the development of faith and loyalty among our young people?
- How well do our young people accept and respond to church standards?
- In what way can Adventist homes, churches, and schools more effectively meet the needs of young people?
- To what extent are Adventist young people involved with drinking, non-prescription drugs and other "at risk" behaviors?

**Research Procedures**

The planning of the project involved three major considerations: the experimental design, the research instrument, and the sample. A summary of the major issues in each of these areas follows.

**Experimental Design**

In addition to the presentation of simple frequency tables covering individual and demographic factors, the design of the project also allowed for the exploration of relationships between family, congregational, and school factors, and a number of significant outcomes—faith maturity, Christian commitment, views of God, Adventist orthodoxy, denominational loyalty, attitude to Adventist standards and various "at risk" behaviors.

**Study Findings**

An overview of the study findings was presented in the core report. The findings as they related to the impact of the family on the faith life of adolescents was written by Bradley Strahan. He found that of the four different parenting styles identified there was a strong correlation between the “Affectionate Independence style” of parenting and all the different measures for Christian commitment, denominational loyalty, intrinsic orientation to religion, and lifestyle measures. The only other report that was generated from this study related to youth ministry and was written by Barry Gane. He found that involvement in youth ministry was a strong predictor of higher levels of Christian commitment and lower levels of involvement in “at risk” behaviors. There was strong support for all aspects of youth ministry. However, the church reviewed its approaches to youth ministry at this time and some significant changes were implemented in pathfinder and senior youth ministry to further strengthen these valuable ministries. A number of academic journal articles were published over the following decade.

**Other Major Studies**

In 1997, Brad Strahan ran another Valuegenesis study using young adults as his sample and he was able to show the residual effects of the home, the church, and the school on the faith and values of Seventh-day Adventist young people. This study also included a number of questions on sexuality and abuse. The findings were taken seriously and the church instigated significant change in its ministry to youth and young adults.

**Valuegenesis II**

The South Pacific Division decided to undertake a new Valuegenesis study in 2011 as it was twenty years since the first study was completed. The instrument included the original scales from the first study, but it had been improved and now included a number of new items (235 items in total). In the second study, the school formed the basis for the sample rather than the church and hence included a number of non-Adventist children as a result. It did, however, mean that comparisons between the two groups was a little more difficult. Again, the results revealed the powerful impact that the home, the church, and school have in the lives of Seventh-day Adventist young people. Two major concerns surfaced at this time. In the first study over 80% of the church’s youth were baptized by the end of high school. However, by 2011 this was no longer the case with only 38% indicating that they were baptized by the end of high school. There was also a drop in the level of commitment to the church’s doctrines. This was balanced with a very much more positive view of their relationship to the church.

**South Pacific Island Valuegenesis**

During the Valuegenesis II study, it was also decided that the Church should look at what was happening in the lives of young people across the South Pacific island nations. This was the first real scientific study of island youth and
revealed some major differences between them and their counterparts from Australia and New Zealand. It opened the way for more in-depth study of this group. Forty-six percent of this group reported being baptized by the end of high school. They were very committed to the church and its doctrines, but one of the major concerns was that those who identified themselves as highly committed revealed that this made minimal difference to their behavior.

Conclusion

The Valuegenesis study has informed the way the church worships, cares for its young people in the home, the local church, and the school, and has been influential in policy and ministry development in the church and the school. It has contributed to further research and been the source for numerous articles. This study has facilitated a better understanding of church youth in the South Pacific Division and the issues that influence them.

SOURCES


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Strahan, Bradley J. “Teaching Youth Values.” South Pacific Record, November 27, 1993.

Strahan, Bradley J. Valuegenesis: Young Adult Study Core Report. Wahroonga, New South Wales: South Pacific Division Youth Ministries Committee, 1997.


“What do Youth Value?” South Pacific Record August 8, 1992.
“Young Adult Study Raises Questions.” South Pacific Record, May 2, 1998.

NOTES

1. A. Barry Gane, “Youth Ministry’s Impact,” Group, May/June, 2006, 84; Barry Gane and Jimmy Kajai, “The Relationship between Youth Ministry and At-risk Behaviour in Youth,” Journal of Youth Ministry 13, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 5-19. While attending the Association of Youth Ministry Educators meetings in the United States the author became aware of how widely the Valuegenesis study was known and he was asked to present papers on the findings on three separate occasions.

2. Owen L. Hughes, Valuegenesis Study 1, Core Report: A Study of Faith Development and Value Formation in Seventh-day Adventist Adolescents and Youth Aged 12-18 Years (Wahroonga, New South Wales: South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, 1993).

3. Ibid.

4. An overview of the experimental design is presented in Table 1.1 chapter 1, of Hughes, Valuegenesis study 1.

5. Ibid.


