

ValueGenesis IV Journal

Announcement & Overview

Chang-ho Ji & Sylvia Clarke

The ValueGenesis 4 (V4) Research Project is set to launch this October after being delayed by the COVID pandemic. It is a collaborative project of the North American Division's (NAD) Office of Education, and two La Sierra University (LSU) entities, the School of Education's Office of Research and the John Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministries. The project is a continuation of past studies (V1, V2, and V3) while adding many new areas of investigation.

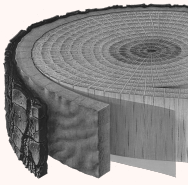
Some may ask, "Why do ValueGenesis again?". First, looking at the current state of Adventist youth in relation to their faith, values, lifestyle, perspectives, and commitment can tell us how we are doing in terms of inculcating positive factors in their lives. By comparing the findings of this study with what was discovered 10, 20, and 30 years ago, we can see if we are doing better or worse than before. In addition, such a comparison might reveal patterns or trends that could indicate what might take place in the future.

Once such trends have been studied, we may be able to explore why they happened and look for solutions if factors have deteriorated over time. The results can show past and perhaps predict the future relationship across Adventist School, Church, and Family, thus contributing to NAD and Union policy discussion and development. These discoveries will also provide subject matter for dialogue between educators and families, ministers, and church leaders.

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Brief History of ValueGenesis 1-3



A brief look at the history of ValueGenesis shows that the first three studies (V1-V3) were jointly conducted by the NAD Office of Education and the John Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry at La Sierra University (LSU). Professor V. Bailey Gillespie acted as the driving force for the first three studies and was the principal investigator (PI) for V2 and V3. Dr. Chang-ho Ji joined the V2 and V3 studies as a researcher responsible for academic and scientific studies.

Key members of the 1990 ValueGenesis (V1) study included Roger Dudley (PI) from Andrews University, Bailey Gillespie and Stuart Tyner at La Sierra University (LSU), and three from Search Institute: Charles T. Smith, Peter L. Benson, and Michael Donahue. For the 2000 study (V2), Bailey Gillespie (LSU) became the principal investigator, Michael J. Donahue (Azusa Pacific University) headed data management and was also the chief statistician, and Charles T. Smith (Search Institute) again worked with the team. Two new members joined this time: LSU educator Ed Boyatt and South Pacific Division's Barry Gane (Andrews University). The third ValueGenesis (V3) study took place in 2010 with three key members: Bailey Gillespie (PI, LSU), Michael J. Donahue (data management; chief statistician), and Chang-ho Ji (LSU, education; academic research).

The comprehensive V1 report, written by R. L. Dudley and V. B. Gillespie, came out in 1992.

It is titled *ValueGenesis: Faith in the Balance* and was published in Riverside, CA, by La Sierra University Press. The V2 report was published in 2004. Titled *ValueGenesis, Ten Years Later: A Study of Two Generations*, it had four authors: V. B. Gillespie, M. J. Donahue, E. Boyatt, and B. Gane with the Hancock Center at LSU in Riverside, CA, as publisher. Unfortunately, no V3 Report appeared because of the deteriorating health of Bailey Gillespie and Michael Donahue that began shortly after the data collection and input. Bailey passed away in 2018.

In the meantime, Ji published multiple research papers from the V2 and V3 data. These articles looked at youth religiosity, school climate, reflective education, adolescent delinquency, altruism, denominational loyalty, and youth ministry and were published in several journals, such as *Review of Religious Research*, *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, and *Psychological Reports*. In addition, through La Sierra's School of Education and under Ji's guidance, several doctoral students completed dissertations based on ValueGenesis data. For instance, Josue Anguiano-Vega (2018) researched the relationship between student-teacher attachment and denominational loyalty among Adventist youth. He tapped the ValueGenesis 3 data for his research. Tevita Tameifuna (2008), on the other hand, used data from ValueGenesis 2 to study the influence of youth pastors and programs on youth satisfaction with the church.

ValueGenesis 4

Another ten years passed, but the COVID pandemic made it unwise or impossible to carry out another ValueGenesis Research study (V4) until now. Planned as an October 2021 project, it will happen because of the collaborative effort of the NAD Office of Education, LSU's Office of Research in the School of Education, and LSU's John Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry.

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Project Director and Chief Statistician Chang-ho Ji, Ph.D., Dean/Professor of LSU's School of Education, is coordinating the V4 project under the auspices of the NAD Office of Education. He is joined by Josue Anguiano-Vega, EdD, of the School of Education, and Friedbert Ninow, Ph.D., Dean of the School of Divinity. Timothy Gillespie, DMin, also part of the team, represents the John Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry. Sylvia Clarke, Patrina Jamieson, and possibly several doctoral students will assist in communication, data collection and processing, and other project logistics.

Approval for the V4 project was given by the NAD in May of 2019 after which the research team met in June of 2019 to brainstorm about and plan the project. In October of that year, the team began reviewing the previous questionnaires (V1-V3) and held preliminary discussions on new items not included in those first three questionnaires.

Subsequently, from November 2019 to May of 2020, research team leaders visited Union Conferences to discuss V4 and seek support and suggestions from educators and education leaders. Many excellent ideas and suggestions resulted from this effort. Those consulted expressed particularly high interest in knowing the perspective of youth on topics such as LGBTQ, fixed/growth mindset, suicidal ideation, vaping, e-cigarettes, spirituality, sleep/health habits, equity and diversity, and intent to attend SDA colleges.

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Continuity & New Directions

As could be expected, ValueGenesis has evolved over the past three decades, with each survey differing from the previous one. Obsolete questions were removed while ones reflecting new and current issues were added. Yet, the principal purpose of ValueGenesis was never forgotten: to study Adventist youth religiosity and the influence of family, church, and school on their faith formation and lifestyle.

The V4 survey is comprised of 387 questions, fewer than any of the previous surveys that had more than 400 each. Approximately 200 of these questions appeared in each of the V1-V3 surveys because they pertain to the central focus of the study: Faith Maturity, Religious Orientation, and Devotion. In more detail, they asked about Perspectives on Salvation, Doctrinal Orthodoxy, Evangelism, Religious Faith Formation, Church Climate, Denominational Loyalty, Lifestyle (Attitude, Frequency, Family Enforcement), Substance Abuse, Mental Health, Sexuality, Family Climate, Family Worship and Climate, School Climate, and Altruism.

All of these core questions have been incorporated in V4 where they account for about 54% of its survey. Accordingly, V4 results will help us determine what remains the same and what has changed about youth faith, religiosity, doctrinal beliefs, mental health, lifestyle, family, and perspective on the church school. In V4, the scope of the mental health section has been expanded by the addition of questions about anxiety, suicidal ideation, sleep problems, and eating disorders.

Table 1. Comparison of V1-V4 Questionnaire Item Numbers

ValueGenesis 1 (1990)	465
ValueGenesis 2 (2000)	413
ValueGenesis 3 (2010)	425
ValueGenesis 4 (2021)	387

New directions are represented by questions that concern trust in God, spiritual orientation and expression, and Adventist identity. Additional new questions tap students' views on LGBTQ, equity and diversity, internet use and addiction, bullying, school satisfaction, and desire to work for the church. Other added questions pursue knowledge of positive psychological traits such as well-being, gratitude, resilience, self-efficacy, optimism, growth mindset, compassion, worldview, life goals, and work ethics.

Rather than merely add new areas to the V4 survey, the team worked to reduce its length while expanding its scope, enhancing its validity, reliability, and practical application. These goals were accomplished by streamlining the project's conceptual framework, conducting rigorous psychometrical analyses, and testing the survey questions. While we were unable to incorporate all suggestions and requests from educators and Union leaders, the vast majority of their recommendations were included. Another change in V4 will be the keeping and use of data and input from non-Adventist students to understand their perspectives and teach and serve them well.

Timetable

In order to maintain methodological consistency with previous surveys, V4 will adopt paper surveys because of the length of the questionnaire. However, web (online) surveys will also be available and accessible for schools that show a preference for online participation due to various technical or logistical reasons. In general, web surveys are advantageous in terms of speed, flexibility, and precision. The choice would largely hinge on the local school's internet and IT facility and capacity.

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The questionnaire and online link will be mailed or emailed to the school administrators late in September with the instructions for administering the survey. We anticipate and request the survey be given during the first or second week of October 2021. Paper survey must be sent back immediately after its completion using the enclosed return envelope.

The project team hopes to present the first preliminary report of the V4 results in a NAD fall meeting. This presentation will be followed by regular newsletters, reports, presentations, and publications, including a full report in three to four years. With gratitude, we acknowledge the help and support of those in the North American Division, Union Conference, and Local Conference Education Departments. We thank each person who listened and offered suggestions and ideas for this project. Together with God's Spirit, we can learn how to become a greater influence for God in the lives of our youth.

VALUEGENESIS DATA COLLECTION

V4 Newsletter #2 • December 2021

As a preliminary report, this newsletter describes the method, procedure, and sample attributes of the schools participating so far in the ValueGenesis 4 (V4) project. More results will come in later newsletters. Data collection for this fourth ValueGenesis research project started early in October, 2021, and continues until mid-January, 2022, because of requests for a time extension to accommodate local causes and tight schedules. Wherever principals agreed to participate, all 6th through 12th graders were invited to complete the survey, and this provided the cluster sampling for the study.

SURVEY PROCEDURE

To begin, we sent all SDA school principals in the North American Division (NAD) a short web survey asking their preference between paper or web surveys for their students. The 444 schools that responded represented 61% of those contacted. Most of them, 362 or 82%, chose web-based surveys. The remaining ones chose paper surveys or found it hard to choose.

Accordingly, in late September paper questionnaires were mailed to schools choosing that method and to those that marked the hard-to-decide option. All the other schools, including non-responders, received direct links to web-based survey questionnaires. QR codes were provided as well containing a direct link to the survey. Students could scan the QR codes to access the survey using their smartphone or tablet.

Between September 15 and 25, we (e)mailed a cover letter along with an endorsement letter from Dr. Arne Nielsen, V P for Education in the NAD to all school principals. The cover letter gave instructions about getting parental permission for student participation and originally asked that the surveys be completed between October 11 and November 11, 2021. This completion date was later extended to January 20, 2022.

Directions called for the surveys to be completed on the one day chosen by school administrators. With a maximum of two breaks, students were to complete the surveys on the same day as started and were not allowed to access questionnaires from home, take them home, or consult with anyone—peers, teachers, or parents—about the questions or their answers. When completed, web surveys were sent when students clicked the submit box at the end of the survey. Principals collected the paper surveys, put them in one box or envelope, and mailed them with the prepaid shipping label provided in the original package.

Between October 11 and November 15, 2021, principals were reminded five times by email request to participate in the V4 survey. Concerns from principals and parents came to light during this time about questions on LGBTQ, suicidal ideation, sexual relation, and substance abuse, especially as asked of the younger students. To encourage more participation, two adjustments were made in late October: (a) removal of or allowance to skip eight questions on LGBTQ and (b) classification of 20 additional questions on suicidal ideation, sexual relation, and substance abuse as optional, based on each school's perceptions of appropriateness.

RESPONSE RATE

Of the 24,055 NAD 6th-12th graders enrolled in a total of 732 schools in 58 local conferences, 23 schools had no 6th-12th graders, 28 reported only one, and error messages came from 29 schools due to factors such as incorrect or corrupted email addresses or slow transition to new school administration. In the end, 653 schools were valid choices for the V4 project, accounting for 89% of NAD schools.

As of November 30, 2021, 240 schools had completed the survey, providing 8,626 sixth through twelfth grader samples. These figures represent approximately 37% of the valid schools and 36% of the students enrolled in 6th-12th grades in the schools, an acceptable response rate percentage when compared to other areas of study. While slightly smaller than two of the previous three ValueGenesis survey response rates, it compares favorably with them.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS

To understand what factors link with participation or non-participation in the survey, the principal investigator performed a logistic regression. NAD database gave school size (number of teachers), organizational level (PK to 8th, 10th, or 12th grade, or 9th-12th), and number of enrolled 6th-12th graders.

Results showed schools in Canada had a higher participation rate than those in other regions (Northeast, Midwest, South, West). Response to the method choice survey indicated the school was more likely than non-responding schools to participate in the Valuegenesis survey. Method chosen also influenced participation. We discovered that principals who opted for a paper-based mode were 1.44 times more likely to participate in the survey compared to those who ignored the method-preference survey while those with web-survey preference were 1.33 times higher.

School size also appeared as an influential factor. The chance for a school with 4 or more teachers to complete the survey were higher than those with 1 or 2-3 teachers. When compared to schools with 4 or more teachers, the probability of these smaller schools to participate decreased by 57% for the 1 teacher schools and 51% for those with 2-3 teachers. Two other factors, number of students enrolled and school organization level, showed no statistical significance.

A look at the attributes of the schools that completed the survey reveals that, of the 240 participant schools, 65% had 4 or more teachers, a percentage greater than the 46% found in the NAD. For organization level, PK-8 schools represented 53% of participating schools. All five regions of NAD schools were well represented with the southern and western regions providing 28% and 31% of participating schools.

Despite PK-8 schools making up a large percentage of those participating, they are underrepresented based on their number in the NAD as are the 1-3 teacher schools. This is not unique to the V4 project as it appeared in the past three studies as well. Therefore, caution may be in order when applying data and analysis results to 6th-12th graders in smaller K-8 schools.

So far, the sample size of 8,626 students from 240 schools provides a statistically sufficient representation of the overall NAD 6th-12th grader population. When data collection ends in January, 2022, data analysis will start, and results will be reported in future newsletters.

Sylvia Clarke & Chang-ho Ji