CULTURE OF AMERICAN FAMILIES

A NATIONAL SURVEY

Carl Desportes Bowman

INSTITUTE for ADVANCED STUDIES in CULTURE
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The *Culture of American Families Project* is a three-year investigation into the family cultures that are impacting the next generation of American adults. Designed and conducted by the University of Virginia’s Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture and funded by the John Templeton Foundation, this project adapts the tools of contemporary social science to an investigation that is broadly interpretive and contextual. Our goal is to distinguish the cultural frameworks and diverse moral narratives that both inform and are informed by American family life. Specifically, this involves telling the complex story of parents’ habits, dispositions, hopes, fears, assumptions, and expectations for their children.

The data for this project was collected in two stages:

1. A web-based survey of a nationally representative sample of 3,000 parents of school-aged children. This one-hour survey, fielded by Knowledge Networks, examines a broad range of parental priorities, aspirations, challenges, and practices, as well as a variety of other cultural and socio-demographic indicators. Data for the survey, and an accompanying non-response follow-up survey, were collected from September 2011 through January 2012.

2. Follow-up, in-person interviews were conducted with 101 of the survey respondents. These 90-minute, semi-structured interviews complement the survey with open-ended questions designed to explore how respondents articulate their visions of the good parent and the good child. Interview questions explore the kinds of people that parents want their children to become and attempt to elicit the explicit and implicit strategies parents employ in their habits and practices of scheduling, disciplining, motivating, and communicating with their children.

Principal findings from the survey and interviews are being released in two separate reports—*Culture of American Families: A National Survey* and *Culture of American Families: Interview Report*—along with *Culture of American Families: Executive Report* that includes thoughts for practitioners working with American families. For more information, or to access other reports, please visit the project website: iasc-culture.org/caf.

**Research Team**
Carl Desportes Bowman, PhD  
*Project Director*
James Davison Hunter, PhD  
*Project Director*
Jeffrey S. Dill, PhD  
*Director of Interviews*
Ashley Rogers Berner, DPhil  
*Director of Public Engagement*
Joseph E. Davis, PhD  
*Project Consultant*
Tony Tian-Ren Lin, PhD  
*Research Fellow*
Megan Juelfs-Swanson, MA  
*Research Assistant*
Nothing sparks more hand-wringing and controversy than the future of our nation’s children. Educators and developmental psychologists build careers upon it. Faith communities and their followers pray about it. Politicians make political capital of it. And American parents exhaust every last flicker of their daily flame trying to kindle a brighter tomorrow for the children under their constant care. Their children represent hope, a window upon the future, in a way that nothing else does.

Efforts to understand children—what makes them tick, what nurtures habits of hard work, what contributes to financial success and independence, what promotes happiness, emotional well-being and warm relationships, and what contributes to moral character—are ubiquitous. Indeed, the problem of “the child” and what works in the child’s best interest is the stuff of which dissertations, faith tracts, government reports, and psychological assessments are made. It is not surprising that a search in the books section on Amazon.com for “child” or “children” yields 2,363,000 hits. Although the quantity of material is impressive, the quality is mixed. And the outcome of all of the work, all too often, is confusion.

Consider this contrast.

In the mid-1990s, Democratic First Lady Hillary Clinton wrote a book on childhood formation entitled *It Takes a Village*, shorthand for “it takes a village to raise a child.” Her point was not that parents don’t matter; quite the contrary, they were seen as the most important influences upon children. Her point was that no family operates in a vacuum—that parents need support from neighbors, communities, and public institutions in part because not all children have parents who can, or will, act as their champions. So the book stressed the responsibility of faith communities, law enforcement officials, schools, preschools, service opportunities, employers, and the media to cultivate an institutional and moral climate that supports parenting in America.

A decade later, Republican Senator Rick Santorum answered with a book entitled *It Takes a Family: Conservatism and the Common Good*. Convinced that welfare state policies of the type endorsed by Clinton undermined, rather than helped, the situation of America’s families, Santorum issued a call to restrain the “Bigs” (big government and bureaucracy) and the “village elders” (liberal elites). The focus, he said, needed to shift back from the metaphorical “village”—from institutions beyond the family—to the family itself. The very best thing for children, he argued, was
A strong family consisting of a man and a woman who set standards and demands for their children while offering a unique mixture of unconditional love, lifelong commitment, and support. In Santorum’s view, the focus of liberals upon the “village” had backfired, elevating individuals and individual preferences above committed relationships, thereby jeopardizing the future of America’s children.

Contrasting arguments such as these leave those who work on behalf of children in a quandary. To whom should they listen? Which of the two million odd books on Amazon is the place to begin?

One strategy is to focus upon the last several decades of research from developmental psychology. There is certainly much there to absorb. New findings in the area of psychogenetics, the physiological development of the brain, and the impact of such factors upon children’s social and emotional development, to name a few, have been particularly fruitful lines of research. We can now understand “adult” judgment and responsible autonomy as not just the fruit of proper socialization or moral education, but as partially rooted in developments in brain physiology during the late teens and early twenties. All of this research, while valuable, frames childhood development in terms of an integrating self, a semi-autonomous agent that adaptively and creatively responds to its internal and external environments. This framing of the child has taught us much, but the focus upon the self also has some curious byproducts.

The one that matters most to us in this study is the displacement of the family as a central concern. It is not that developmental psychology is disinterested in the family—nothing could be further from the truth; it is just that the family is seen through a foggy window when the child’s autonomous self takes center stage. Consider the fact that the word “individual” is invoked 23 times in the Wikipedia article on Child Development; “cognitive” appears 18 times; “genetic,” 15 times; “experience,” 13 times; and “plasticity,” 10 times. Most closely associated with “child” are concepts such as human, mental emotional, role, experience, social, plasticity, ability, milestone, change, learn, and language. But even though the Wikipedia topic is “child development,” and much of that development occurs within families, the word “family” appears only three times, one being a reference to family “genetic factors” and another to a demographic classification of “middle-class families.” In short, there is little in the article to suggest that the family is at all pivotal to the entire “child development” process the article purports to describe.

It is our purpose to address this omission by shifting the family to center stage. It is our contention that understanding more about the family—and family culture, in particular—is a necessary corrective to the prevailing images of the child offered by educational and developmental psychology, a corrective that highlights the moral ecology within which children are formed. Since all culture, in our view, has a moral element (even scientific culture that “values” value-neutrality), it is helpful to think of the family, whatever its form, as the first and most important element of the larger moral ecology within which America’s future generations are molded. What follows is a report of our initial findings.
The Received Wisdom

For many years, public discourse surrounding the American family has depicted it as an institution in crisis. Hardly anyone, according to sociologist Robert Wuthnow, thinks the family is doing well. If we were to compile all of the family’s problems into a list, it might read like this:

Should the high divorce rate and precarious foundations of marriage head the list? Is the number of single-parent families of special concern? How about births to teenage mothers, absent fathers, and the so-called fragile families that result? Should questions about parenting, day care, time spent with children and the transmission of values from one generation to the next be included? What about dating, sexual behavior, preparation for marriage, and expectations about marriage among the nation’s youth? Where do we consider domestic, violence, spousal abuse, and child abuse? Or the alcohol and drug-related problems that tear families apart? Do we include the special questions that arise in consideration of same-sex unions...? Should emphasis be given to the particular problems of low-income families and to the needs of those with mental or physical disabilities...? Does the list extend to the millions of new and recent immigrant families that struggle with language barriers, discrimination, and separation from the extended families they left behind...? Do we consider the colonization of homes and family space by television and advertising?24

Clearly, the challenges facing early twenty-first century American families are overwhelming. In response, an entire “cultural industry” has emerged to diagnose and solve the family’s ills. Among the prominent diagnoses are the following:

Anxious Parents. Historian Peter Stearns characterizes the twentieth century as the age of ascendency of the “vulnerable child.” This was a view of the child that emphasized fragility and the need for special care and handling. Responsibility for handling such delicate packages fell squarely upon parents. Yet the advice of mid-twentieth century experts like Benjamin Spock, Stearns notes, only served to inflame parental anxieties, rather than ease them. As awareness of children’s vulnerability spread, no arena of daily life escaped parental hand-wringing. Problems of all types in children came to be traced back to parental mistakes or omissions.

The child who was easily bored, the child who had problems making friends, the child who seemed burdened by school...Everything and anything could be laid at the parents’ door. A child who seemed retarded was really the result of “the [inadequate] amount of stimulation he’s received from those around him.”...Given the range of possible deficiencies, it was hard to feel reassured....A society that was using 90 percent of the world’s Ritalin supply by the 1990s was clearly obsessed with children’s problems in some distinctive ways...New sources of anxiety, the openness to expert advice, and a culture long a bit edgy where children were concerned added up to an unusual package.6

Prior to the twentieth century, Stearns points out, notions of the “sturdy child” had prevailed. But once social change had accelerated to the point where...
parents understood that their children's world would be quite different than their own, parents became more preoccupied with, and more focused on, their children's future, producing not just different parental anxieties than before, but greater ones too.

Helicopters, Tigers, and Parents Out of Control. This theme of anxiety and parental responses to changing conditions has spawned countless books and articles on parenting strategies and parents gone wrong. Phrases like “helicopter parents” and “tiger moms” have become commonplace as commentators seek ways to describe the new problems of parenting. Even though neglect of children continues to be a problem, increasingly its opposite—extreme parenting—is receiving critical scrutiny. One controversial model of extreme parenting, Amy Chua’s Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother, contrasts Asian models of tough, intensive mothering against Western permissiveness and (over-)indulgence. Above all, the tiger mother emphasizes performance, reasoning that this is the best preparation for a competitive society in which excellence will be rewarded. Children of tiger mothers, advocates insist, will be happier in the long run because their professional accomplishments will form a tangible basis for positive self-regard. Critics counter that focusing first upon self-esteem and building confidence in children will pave the way for later accomplishments and that a philosophy of parenting that demands discipline and accomplishment borders on emotional abuse, creating its own set of problems.

Even so, models of over-parenting that place happiness, security, and self-esteem squarely at the center have received their own raft of criticism. Such parents, commonly dubbed “helicopter parents,” are often caricatured as caring more about emotional closeness with their children—being their children’s friends—than with “parenting” in the traditional sense of offering direction and setting limits. Helicopter parents awaken their college-aged children with cell phone calls, argue with their children’s professors about grades, spend their children’s teenage years carting them from one activity to another, heap praise upon children for even the most modest of accomplishments, and are provoked by anyone who would offer a word of criticism about their precious child. While the term “helicopter parenting” is typically reserved for parents who embrace these tendencies to the extreme, the basic pattern of over-indulgence, emotional cushioning, and intense support are the very tendencies in Western parenting that some observers argue have now spawned generations of entitled Americans who expect maximum acclaim for minimum effort and accomplishment. It is a world where, in Garrison Keillor’s unforgettable phrase, “all the children are above average.”

So contemporary parents have learned that both the neglect of children and extreme parenting are potentially harmful, which returns us to the theme of anxiety. No matter what strategy parents adopt, they must question how much is too much, when is too long, and what is appropriate when in a child’s development. The markers of good parenting are indistinct, the risks are unclear, and the outcomes of “wrong approaches” are difficult to ascertain. Indeed, Margaret Nelson suggests that anxious parents in uncertain times have embraced a strategy of “parenting out of control”:

Professional middle-class parents, who adopt parenting out of control, worry a lot about the consequences of their own actions: they worry about the pressure their children face in school and on the athletic field; they worry that there is not time for their children simply to “be” children; they worry about material and psychological “overindulgence”; and they worry that the hovering they do might have problematic consequences. As postmodern parents, they are committed to a therapeutic approach to daily life—to improving their children and to improving themselves. Not surprisingly, they are particularly concerned about their performance as parents.

Nelson contrasts parenting out of control—characterized by intimacy, hovering (hyper-vigilance), elastic constraint, covert surveillance, endless discussion and negotiation, boundless praise, belief in children’s boundless potential, and delayed launching into an
adult world of independence—with an older style ("parenting with limits") based upon direction and discipline. The “out of control” approach, rooted in a blend of parental anxiety and nostalgia, has potentially negative consequences for both the child raised in such an environment and the marriages of the parents who create it.

All Manner of Ills and Solutions. Other family scholars and commentators offer a variety of antidotes to what is perceived to be a pervasive trend towards over-parenting. These run the gamut from French family models ("bringing up bébé") to let-them-fail-and-deal-with-it models.

The plethora of diagnoses of family issues is surpassed only by the proliferation of expert-authored solutions. Consider these recent book titles:

- The Epidemic: The Rot of American Culture, Absentee and Permissive Parenting, and the Resulting Plague of Joyless, Selfish Children
- The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future
- Posterity Lost: Progress, Ideology, and the Decline of the American Family
- Home Invasion: Protecting Your Family in a Culture That’s Gone Stark Raving Mad
- Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other
- Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers
- Perfect Madness: Motherhood in an Age of Anxiety
- The Diseasing of America’s Children: Exposing the ADHD Fiasco and Empowering Parents to Take Back Control
- So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Kids
- And last but not least,

Good Parenting through Your Divorce: The Essential Guidebook to Helping Your Children Adjust and Thrive—Based on the Leading National Program

With titles like these in American public discourse, is it any wonder that common wisdom imagines the family in a state of crisis?

Another Take

But “crisis” rhetoric has its limits. Assumptions of crisis can undercut analysis, moving interested parties towards remedies even before the situation itself is thoroughly explored.

For this reason, rather than speak of crisis, we have searched for metaphors that might better depict the quandary in which families find themselves. One possibility is the fog— the fog of family diversity that makes it difficult to generalize; the fog of change that recognizes “family” as a moving target; and the fog of feeling, in which each observer has such an intensely personal family history that dispassionate interpretation becomes difficult. And if fogs of diversity, change, and personal history increase the difficulty of interpreting “family” from the outside, a fog of uncertainty increases the difficulty of being family from the inside.

For today’s mothers and fathers, there is no clear map that charts the path for nurturing the next generation of adults. Parents want their children to flourish, but there is no shared understanding of what flourishing means. Fogs of moral uncertainty and diversity ensure that parenting often occurs with little self-awareness of purpose, and even less, of the impact of particular habits upon children.

The Culture of American Families Survey reminds us that while some families struggle and others thrive, most do both. Through it all, families are resilient, making every effort to raise good children in situations where they are not quite sure what “good” means.
pathways through the fog are dimly lit. Indeed, being “family” in America today is like searching for one’s way out of a wild cave: you crawl repeatedly with a flashlight down unfamiliar passages while someone from behind calls out through the dark, “Does it go?” Many times it does not.

In the pages that follow, we will peer through the fog of nuanced and contradictory parental responses to the Culture of American Families Survey, attempting to distill clear patterns that have practical value not only for professionals, but also for the parents who struggle to get through each day. Deciphering the explicit and implicit cultures that parents impart to children is the purpose of our investigation.
Parental Worries and Uncertainties

Less than a quarter of today’s parents think this is a great time to be bringing children into the world; twice as many reject the idea. Most also say it is tougher to raise children today than 50 years ago.¹⁰ A note of nostalgia echoes through these and other responses to our survey. Half of American parents believe that “in general, Americans lived more moral and ethical lives 50 years ago” than they do today; this is twice the number who disagrees with that assessment. Raising children today, parents believe, is simply more complicated than it used to be.

This assessment is accompanied by a generally gloomy assessment of the family’s trajectory in American society. Fewer than 1 parent in 10 (8 percent) thinks the quality of American family life has improved since

FIGURE 1 — Perceptions of the Long-Term Trend in American Family Life.

“Compared to when I was growing up, American family life is...”
they were growing up; 8 times as many (64 percent) think it has declined.

This perception is part of a larger narrative of decline. Parents who think the family has declined also see decline in our nation’s educational opportunities, decline in the quality of American schools, decline in the safety of American communities, decline in the quality of the popular media, and decline in the strength of the American economy. Most of all, the perception of family decline is tied to a perception of moral and ethical decline; 80 percent11 of those who see a “strong decline” in the family also perceive a “strong decline” in the nation’s moral and ethical standards. They believe that the “honesty and integrity of the average American” has waned. And they also embrace a broader narrative that our communities are less safe, our work ethic has slipped, and American religious and spiritual life has ebbed.

Even though the perception of family decline is widely shared, it is more pronounced among some groups than others. White parents, for example, see greater decline than black parents. And ironically, parents who live together but have never married see less decline than those who are married and have never divorced. (Apparently, decline has more to do with the decline of other families than one’s own.) Also perceptions of strong decline are highest among the very religious and among Republicans.

Parents may think primarily of other families when they think of decline, but this does not imply that all is well with their own families. On the contrary, parents often wonder whether they are doing a good job at their own parenting. In fact, 55 percent express this concern, compared to only a third of parents (34 percent) who say they don’t wonder about their parental effectiveness.
In the face of uncertainty, parents pour time and energy into their children. Nine out of 10 parents (91 percent) say they invest much effort in shaping the moral character of their children. More than 8 of 10 (83 percent) say they invest much effort in protecting their children from negative social influences. And more than 7 out of 10 (72 percent) say they invest much effort in providing opportunities that will give their children a competitive advantage down the road. In short, much effort is expended in many directions as parents go about their tasks of parenting.

Even so, parents sense that they should be doing more, that their investment in their children should be greater. For example, 6 of every 10 parents say they should be spending more time than they do with their children, twice the number who say their investment of time is enough. Suspicions such as this tend to be diffused broadly across social locations rather than being concentrated in a single social class or geographical region.

One of the major uncertainties of American parenting pertains to dimly perceived outside threats. Conforming to Stearns’s portrayal of anxious parents, our survey finds that a large majority of American parents—4 of every 5—believe that “children are very vulnerable and must be protected.” (Less than 15 percent disagree.) What exactly children are being protected from is unclear, but parents share a sense that the world, at least insofar as children are concerned, is a threatening place. In fact, 83 percent of parents claim that “I invest much effort in protecting my children from negative social influences.” Religious faith, of course, has something to do with it; religious parents have a keener sense that their children must be sheltered. But the idea that children require protection extends well beyond political and social conservatives who find the larger culture threatening. In fact, parents who self-identify as Democrats are as likely as Republicans to say they invest much effort in protecting their children.

### Technological Infusion

Some of this sense of threat clearly attaches to media and technology. Parents are twice as likely to agree as to disagree that “my children see many things in the media that they should not see.”

Even so, only a minority of parents (40 percent) say that “trying to control teenagers’ access to technology is a losing battle.” This is clearly a case of distance making the task look simpler, for the parents of teenagers are much more likely than parents of younger children to conclude that controlling technology access is impossible. Similarly, the comment that “my children are constantly connected electronically with their friends” is much more common among parents of teenagers.

#### Children’s Technology Use

The observation that technology plays a large role in the daily lives of twenty-first century children is commonplace. Even so, its infiltration of teen life is striking. According to our survey, most American teens—7 out of 10—are texting at least once a day, and nearly as many (64 percent) are texting multiple times daily. Four out of five teens have a Twitter, Facebook, or other social networking account where they “follow” and “friend” people whom their parents do not know, much less “friend.” Two-thirds of teens connect to online social networks at least several times a week. If we add to these the many other types of information and contact that teenagers can access instantaneously on the web, it is clear that their lives are infused with information and relationships that are not only beyond their parents’ control, but in most cases, beyond their imaginations.12

It is easy to forget what a quick transformation, historically speaking, this has been. It was only 35 years ago that college essays were still typed on typewriters. A few years later, academics and journalists began to purchase personal computers, using them primarily as glorified typewriters and calculators with permanent memories. Email and the internet, cell phones and tablets, were the stuff of science fiction.

In contrast, for today’s schoolchildren, being connected is so commonplace that being disconnected is difficult to imagine. The natural thing, as they increasingly understand it, is to have access to parents and friends at any time, to publish and consume the minutiae of daily life at social networking sites, and to see photographs of anything and everything as it happens.

The Culture of American Families Project data suggest that 17 of every 20 teenagers (84 percent) carry
Less than 1 of every 10 teenagers (7 percent) is “disconnected” electronically from their peers, meaning that they have neither a cell phone nor a social networking presence. In other words, electronic connection is something that, far from sorting American teenagers into the technological “haves” versus “have-nots,” has instead united them within a common teenage experience. What is more, they can share the experience without ever leaving the comfort of their own bedrooms.

How do parents respond to this infiltration of their family space? Half say their children’s internet usage is tightly restricted, three times the number who say they don’t restrict internet access. The remaining third of American parents say their children’s usage is restricted, but not heavily.

Whatever restrictions are applied to technology seem to reflect a tacit agreement between parents and children about what constitutes “reasonable restriction.” After all, only a small minority of parents (20 percent) report moderate or higher levels of disagreement with their children about internet usage. Fully three-quarters of parents, on the other hand, report little to no disagreement in this area.

So most parents say they impose moderate limits, but not to the point where it generates conflict with their children. When all is said and done, keeping things picked up around the house, even a decade into the twenty-first century, generates much more parent-child conflict than does technology usage.

Perhaps this is due to the emergence of a fairly strong cultural consensus regarding age-appropriate access to technology.
technology. Parents of early elementary school children say their children have little daily exposure to the internet, the typical pattern being “no time at all” for children younger than eight. But by the age of 9, children’s internet activity begins accelerating, and by the age of 12, most children are “moderately active”; the typical 12 year old spends 20 minutes to an hour per day on the internet.

By their sixteenth birthday, parental restrictions have greatly relaxed and most children spend one to two hours a day on the web. By 18 years of age, the remaining vestiges of parental limitation, in most families, have been withdrawn.

Surprisingly, for both younger children and older teenagers, the level of internet restriction seems barely connected to parents’ moral assessment of its content. It is during the in-between years, particularly the ages of 11 to 13, during which parents’ perception of a moral threat is closely tied to the level of restriction. During these late childhood-early teenage years, many children (40 percent) still use the internet less than 20 minutes a day, but nearly as many (30 percent) spend an hour or more on the internet. The parental consensus about access that exists regarding younger children and older teenagers breaks down for this in-between age group.

Parents’ Use and Attitudes. These patterns of technology use and parental restriction, of course, all play out against a backdrop in which children pay particular attention to their parents’ internet habits and attitudes.

So how do parents view the new technology? The majority (59 percent) say the expansion of
internet-based social networking like Facebook and Twitter has been good for society. An even larger percentage—about two-thirds—say that greater use of cell phones and texting has been a positive development. While this leaves 41 percent of parents who think the expansion of internet-based social networking is mostly negative, and 34 percent who say the same about cell phones, most of these parents classify the new technologies as only “mostly bad,” not “very bad” for society.

This likely relates to the fact that the vast majority of parents think the internet can help them as an information source. Only 12 percent of parents say they would “definitely not” consult the internet if they needed advice about a child’s moral or ethical development. Adding the group that is unlikely to consult the internet still yields a minority—only 34 percent all together—who think the internet would have little to offer in the way of advice. The remaining two-thirds would be at least “somewhat likely” to turn to the internet for advice about a child’s moral development, a number greater than the 59 percent of parents who would turn to scripture or religious teaching for the same.

Beyond its utility as an information source and “advice column,” parents use the internet for the same purposes as their children. Almost all respondents to our survey (96 percent) say they spend at least a little personal time on the internet daily—browsing the web, reading email, etc. In fact, nearly half of them spend an hour or more a day at such activities. Additionally, 7 of every 10 parents use Facebook or some other social networking site, although only a third do so on a daily basis.
These figures may be elevated somewhat by the fact that the *Culture of American Families Survey* was an internet-based survey, but the exaggeration of internet usage wouldn’t be great. The *Pew Internet and American Life Project* reports that 87 percent of Americans between the ages of 30 and 49 (a cohort that accounts for three-quarters of our *Culture of American Families Project* respondents) use the internet. This is lower than our 96 percent figure, but not by much.

The general portrait of “connected parents” who first connect their own children during their mid-to-late elementary years seems clear. Parents disagree over the extent of internet controls appropriate for “pre-teens,” but they converge again when they remove most controls by the time their children turn 16. Reading a bit between the lines, the data suggest that parents like to think of themselves as exercising sufficient caution regarding children’s internet exposure, yet in reality their controls are fairly relaxed—not strict enough, anyway, to spark much disagreement with their children.

Exercising greater control could be quite problematic. Gone are the days when parents could simply “ground” a teenager by taking away the car keys and denying phone privileges. An equivalent grounding today might involve “invading” a child’s room to remove a computer and a television, taking away a cell phone, and then maintaining sufficient vigilance to ensure that the child remains unplugged. With all of these connections at a child’s constant disposal, it is no wonder that parents suspect their children are vulnerable to things “out there” that might harm them. It is also no wonder that most say parenting today, compared with 50 years ago, is not an easy task.

Diverse Family Forms

Information technology and the new social media are only the most obvious of changes confronting parents. The last half century has also witnessed myriad changes in family structure and circumstance. Children now marry later and achieve financial autonomy later than before. Families are smaller. Rarely are neighbors old family friends. Teenagers routinely have sex prior to marriage, often moving through a series of sexually active relationships before finally settling upon a marriage partner. These relationships often involve living together. In some cases, living together becomes permanent without resulting in marriage. Divorce rates remain high, so that many children are raised within eclectic arrangements that little resemble the stable patterns of their great-grandparents.

We know of one situation, for example, where a couple with two children divorced and both soon remarried partners who also had two children. Within the newly constituted family arrangement were four sets of parents and three sets of two children, all of whom moved back and forth between two families. Some of the six children were biological siblings who had grown up together; some were step-siblings; and some came to think of themselves as “step-step” siblings, because they shared two step-siblings in common. John and Isaac, the step-step brothers, thought of themselves as brothers, related like brothers, and being the same age, often stayed at the same house. This sometimes meant that John’s biological father, Andrew, would hear about an event in John’s life from the step-father of John’s step-step brother, who was also the ex-husband of Andrew’s new wife. This family-group dynamic was improvised on a daily basis. All of the family members—parents and children—lacked models, precedents, and maps (even implicit ones) to guide them through the turns and shadows of what had become the family thicket.

Family novelties aside, our survey suggests that three-quarters of American parents of school-aged children (73 percent) are currently married, 12 percent are divorced or separated, 8 percent are unmarried but living together, and about 7 percent have never married and are raising children alone. If we consider these numbers not through the parental lens, but asking instead where our children are, things look a little different. Our best estimates based upon the *Culture of American Families Survey* are that 75 percent of American children reside in a “married household” situation, even though it is not always with their own biological parents; another 10 percent live with a single divorced or separated parent; 9 percent live with parents who are unmarried but living together; and about 5 percent live with a single, never married parent.

Just over a quarter of parents (26 percent) have divorced at some point in their life, and another 2.5 percent are currently separated from spouses. If we
add to this those who have never married but are single (7 percent) or living with a partner (4 percent), we find that about 4 of every 10 parents of school-aged children, nearly half, have what used to be considered an “unconventional” family arrangement. (Their family falls outside the “traditional” notion of a married couple, in their first marriage, raising their own biological children.)

The remaining 60 percent—the majority of parents of school-aged children—are married and remain in their first marriage, but the data do not suggest that the vast majority of parents (nor the vast majority of children) live within such a family arrangement.

Our survey indicates that a quarter of American parents have only one child at home. The rest live in multi-child households with 44 percent of parents having 2 children at home and another 20 percent having 3 children. About 10 percent of parents report having 4 or more children at home. When drawn from the child’s perspective, this profile appears different: our estimate is that about 11 percent of all children live in a household without siblings, about 40 percent live with one sibling, 27 percent live with two, and 21 percent—about 1 in 5 children—live in a household with 3 or more siblings (beyond themselves).

Diverse Support Networks

Making the best of the challenge of parenting raises questions about the level of social support that exists around the family. In the past, family life never took place in a social vacuum. Parents were surrounded by a network of social ties comprising extended family,
friends, and neighbors, not to mention a range of social institutions. Yet a large percentage of American parents now say they manage independently.

Few American parents complain of having “no real support network,” yet more than half (54 percent) say their childcare is “fairly independent, with a little support when necessary” from family and friends. The other 46 percent say they are fairly or very well supported in their parenting.

Partners. The strongest support typically comes from within the family itself. In fact, 6 of every 10 married parents (59 percent) give their spouse the highest possible rating on a 1 to 7 scale of parenting support. And parents who are unmarried but living together rate their partners almost as highly, with 55 percent rating their partner’s support as a 7.

Yet reports of strong support hinge to a great degree on something as simple—and complex—as the sex of the person being asked. Over three-quarters of “partnered” males19 (77 percent) give their mates a top rating for support, while the percentage of partnered females doing the same falls off dramatically (41 percent). It is tempting to explain this gender support-gap away by pointing out that mothers, on average, spend fewer hours working outside the home, leaving more time available for childcare. Yet, while such gender differences in workforce participation do exist, they do not explain the gender gap in parenting support. Women are less inclined to rate their partners’ support highly even when they work longer hours outside the home than their men. In fact, when we statistically equalize their relative time working outside the home, the support gap between men and women narrows slightly, but even then, 72 percent of partnered men
give their mates a top rating for support, while only 47 percent of partnered women—still a minority—do the same.20

**Family and Friends.** Beyond their partners, parents seek parenting support primarily from other members of the family, especially from their own parents and, when available, from an older child. Seven out of 10 parents (69 percent) say they receive moderate support from at least some extended family member. Additionally, parents sometimes turn to their other children or to members of their friendship network for childcare support, but these contributions are generally less substantial than those of their children’s grandparents and siblings.

**Faith Communities.** At first blush, faith communities appear to be only marginally involved in childcare support: two-thirds of American parents rate members of their faith community as providing little or no active support. Yet when analysis is limited to those who regularly attend religious services,21 then support from the faith community ranks similarly to that provided by children’s grandparents or older siblings.

Beyond family, friends, and faith communities, *Culture of American Families Project* respondents dismiss other potential sources of support as broadly inconsequential.

**Nannies and Babysitters.** For example, even though children’s antics with babysitters and nannies are a common theme in the popular media, parents describe such childcare providers as having little active role in their children’s lives. Only 1 parent in 20 describes the support provided by babysitters and nannies as “moderate” or higher. Social services and government agencies play a similarly minimal role.

**After-School Programs.** Even after-school programs are relied upon by only a small percentage of parents; 7 out of 10 say they provide little to no support. Even so, almost a quarter of American parents say that after-school programs offer moderate (or greater) support. And almost 40 percent of parents with family incomes of less than $25,000 a year say the same.

In a way, support from after-school programs is like support from faith communities: both are niche phenomena that affect only certain types of American families.

**Neighbors.** “Love thy neighbor” may be a time-honored, Judeo-Christian moral injunction, but “support thy neighbor” plays little active role in the character of American families. Six out of 10 parents (59 percent) say their neighbors offer no active support at all in their daily childcare routines, and more than three-quarters of all parents rate their neighbors support as less than moderate. This connects to the fact that neighbors, in many cases, are strangers, contributing to parents’ sense that the world out there is a threatening place (as Jeffrey Dill points out in our companion *Culture of American Families: Interview Report*). And while our survey does find that eight percent of parents rate their neighbors’ support as more than moderate, even so, immediate family, extended family, close friends, and faith community (for those who have one) typically play a much larger active support role than do neighbors.

**In Sum.** All told, about a fifth of American parents (19 percent) receive high levels of support from many sources, while another fifth receives little support from anyone, even a partner. Between these two extremes lie the majority of American parents—a quarter of whom are fairly self-contained, receiving strong support but primarily from within the immediate household; another quarter of whom receive significant support from their extended family in addition to their partner; and a smaller group—at about 1 in 10 parents—in which extended family support compensates for the absence of a partner.

Even though non-kin support ranks lower than support from family members, 7 out of 10 parents (68 percent) say they receive at least moderate support from some source beyond their kinship circle. For religious parents, that source is typically their faith community. In fact, the rate of non-kin support for non-religious parents drops off dramatically (from 68 percent to 51 percent receiving moderate non-kin support).
As we have seen, support varies according to the social context. The typical pattern of support for parents with high family incomes is thin, often consisting of two partners raising their children with little help from anyone beyond the nuclear household. Families with more modest income levels—between $50,000 and $100,000 annually—typically rely upon broader networks, often including extended family, friends, or faith communities. Lower-income parents, meanwhile, are those most likely to have weak support or to rely upon extended family members to compensate for missing partners.

White parents in our study more commonly fit the pattern just described for wealthier families, while blacks more commonly fit the pattern described for poorer Americans. Yet blacks are also more likely than whites to rely upon a broad base of support instead of juggling childcare between two partners alone. Hispanics also tend to rely upon not only their partners, but also an extended network of family support.

As much as experts might claim that it takes a village to raise a child, “family first” appears to be the dominant standard for raising American children in the early twenty-first century. Many may parent autonomously by choice, preferring not to have others “meddling” in their daily routines and rules. But they are still saddled with the burdens of transportation, monitoring school performance, moral development, and all of the little things very much on their own. Even if parenting independently is by design, it contributes to a sense that “my children need more from me than I am able to provide.” As a matter of fact, parents who operate very independently are about twice as likely (1.8 times) to feel this way as those who are well supported by others in their parenting.

Even though parents without outside support constitute only a small minority, it is important to note that one American parent of every six says they have “no real support network.” It is also important to point out the relation between support networks and personal well-being. Over three-quarters (77 percent) of those who say their parenting experience has been unhappy parent independently, compared to about half (53 percent) of those whose parenting experience has been a happy one. Parenting alone by no means guarantees parenting misery, but it is a more precarious structure that increases the risk of frustration, other things being equal.

Diverse Schools

In spite of what has been termed “an explosion” of charter schools, magnet schools, alternative schools (such as Waldorf and Montessori) and, in particular, homeschooling, the Culture of American Families Survey suggests that over three-quarters of America’s schoolchildren—77 percent—continue to attend America’s neighborhood public schools. Another 9 percent attend public charter or magnet schools. Taken together, this means that on any given school day, 17 of every 20 American school children attend publicly financed schools.

The next largest group—about seven percent of all children—attend private religious schools. Smaller numbers, about four percent and three percent, respectively, are homeschooled or attend non-religious private schools. With so many children attending public schools, American public schooling continues to provide a common developmental experience for children whose experiences beyond school—socioeconomically, ethnically, religiously, and morally—are quite diverse.

In fact, 68 percent of American parents report that none of their children has ever attended a school other than their neighborhood public school. But only half of these 68 percent (34 percent of all parents) say they would leave their children in the local public school if money were not a factor and they could send their children wherever they wanted.

Even so, most American parents express a positive attitude toward the public schools. When asked whether, all things considered, they think public schools have a positive or negative impact upon our nation’s children, over half (55 percent) say the impact
is generally positive, 21 percent say it is neutral, and less than a quarter (24 percent) say the impact is generally negative.

**Diverse Moral Structures**

But a new diversity of family structures, networks, and patterns of school attendance are only the most obvious part of the story. Changing normative and moral structures are much harder to decipher.

And being difficult to decipher, parents are unlikely to possess clear guidelines for the new situations in which they find themselves. So many different understandings of the “good”—so many views of what constitutes acceptable behavior—are bandied about that the old cultural maps no longer clearly apply. When parents try to invoke them, children raise questions. Parents may tell children that the moral pathway on a practical moral question is one-way only, but children observe others around them moving in all directions.

These are some examples of the current diversity of family cultures.

- The plurality of today’s parents says that “sex before marriage is okay if a couple loves each other” (46 percent agree, compared to 38 percent who disagree).
- The plurality of parents also believes that “most religions are equally good paths to the same destination” (41 percent agree, compared to 35 percent who disagree).

**FIGURE 8 — Type of Schooling of America’s Children.**
• Most parents (62 percent) reject the notion that “the mother’s role in raising children is more important than the father’s.” Only 24 percent of parents agree with the statement.

• Six of every 10 parents of school-aged children (59 percent) say that at some point they “lived together” with a romantic partner without being married.

• Most parents (62 percent) believe that the trend toward more people living together without getting married is bad for our society. Even among parents who say they have lived in such an arrangement, half say the trend toward more people living together is bad for our society.

• A majority of mothers of school-aged children (60 percent) work 15 or more hours per week outside the home. Half of them (49 percent) work 30 or more hours per week. Only a third (35 percent) are solely stay-at-home mothers.26 And only half (53 percent) of stay-at-home mothers identify occupationally as “homemakers.”

• Half of American parents (52 percent) rarely, if ever, attend religious services.27 On the other hand, 43 percent attend at least twice a month.

• Only half of American parents say their children sit down to a meal with a parent on a daily basis. Among those who do, most have no daily ritual of saying a prayer or blessing with meals. Only one parent in five says their home-life preserves a daily ritual of having a blessing that accompanies a family meal.

• Forty-three percent of parents reject the idea of same-sex marriage; the other 57 percent are either undecided (20 percent) or supportive (37 percent). Approval of same-sex marriage appears to have become the prevailing opinion among parents younger than 30.

• Most parents (52 percent) believe that “methods of birth control should be available to teenagers even if their parents disapprove.” A third (34 percent), however, disagree, with most of them disagreeing “completely.”

• Only about a quarter of today’s parents (24 percent) fit the conservative ideal of being in their first marriage, not having lived together prior to marriage, and having been raised by parents who did not divorce. The other 75 percent are either children of divorce, parents who have experienced a divorce, parents who are single, or parents who at some point lived with a romantic partner outside of marriage.

As discrepant as they are, these findings all share one thing in common. They highlight the variegated and shifting moral character of twenty-first century family life.

It is not that life within every family is dramatically different than it was for previous generations; there are threads of continuity as well as change. Neither is it that parents have disinvested or become neglectful of their children; nothing could be further from the truth. But the nature of home-life and childrearing has changed for all American families, even the most traditional, in at least this sense: everyone shares the experience of watching other families enact other ways of being family, dramatically “other” in many cases.

As such, even families that explicitly reject new technologies and the popular media; even families that insulate their children from external threats by homeschooling, small town life, and other forms of buffering; even families that successfully establish patterns of childhood obedience, respect for authority, regular household chores, traditional gender roles, and patterns of speech that are reminiscent of an earlier era (real or imagined)—even all of these families navigate a world where their neighbors “do family” differently, where the community presents mixed messages, and where external realities threaten to topple the habits that each family works to instill.

During the 1980s, the language of “family values,” “morality,” “character,” and “virtue” was co-opted in
public discourse by one side of the American culture war. The scholarly community, however, has long understood that morality can take many forms. Anthropology, in particular, helps us to see that all of culture, and all cultures, are in some sense moral orders. This, in a nutshell, is because culture has an evaluative component, elevating certain beliefs, behaviors, and relationships as better (i.e., more virtuous) than others. Those who espouse values of tolerance and diversity are the same as everyone else in this regard.

Family cultures are no different. Even things as basic as what is given at Christmas, what is watched on television, and what is commonly talked about within the family circle attest to the implicit valuing of certain things and the devaluing of others. In this sense, family cultures, like any culture, have a moral component.

The situation that parents find themselves in today is one in which certain families value the moral understanding that sex before marriage, under certain circumstances, can be good; that homosexual couples should have the same rights as others; that definitions of right and wrong can change to fit the context; that tolerance is a cardinal virtue; and that all religions (or none perhaps) are equally good paths to the same destination. Some parents genuinely cherish these family values and attempt to pass them on to their children.

Others consider them an abomination. Instead, they value the moral understanding that men and women are best suited for different tasks; that preschool children will suffer if their mothers work; that human nature is basically sinful; that God will punish those who violate his commands; and that individuals should help to ensure that others lead more “moral” lives. Some parents genuinely cherish these family values and try to instill them in their children.

Others consider these an abomination. And so the story continues.

When one then adds to this moral diversity the differences in family structure, racial and ethnic composition, social class and occupation, urban versus rural social locations, and many other family differences, only a smattering of which we touch upon in this report, it is then that one begins to understand the cultural foreignness, the sense of being in a strange land, that many American parents experience when they look out their front door. It is then that the common perception that the world beyond the home is threatening begins to make sense.

With so much at stake, parents are anxious indeed. But their anxiety about their parenting rarely crosses the line to self-condemnation, self-criticism, or questioning of their own parental efficacy. Only 9 percent of parents—less than 1 in 10—confesses that they have “little clue what it takes to be a really good parent.” Only 21 percent say they “often feel inadequate as a parent.” Only a quarter of American parents (24 percent) believe they will have “little influence” over their children once they enter high school. And only 3 parents out of 10 parents (31 percent) say “my children need more from me than I am able to provide.”

So these may be hard times in which to parent, and the world beyond the family may be perceived as in both moral and economic decline, but the quality of my parenting with my own vulnerable children, steering them through this strange world of risks and potential dangers, remains commendable—perhaps even more commendable than the parenting of my ancestors because things were just, well, easier in those days.

It is to this sanguine self-assessment of one’s own family and children that we will now turn.
The Gilded Nest

Given the chorus of cries from all quarters about family crisis, families in decline, the pernicious effects of technology, and the increasingly tenuous nature of contemporary family arrangements, there was really only one thing we did not expect to unearth in our investigation: that parents actually think their families are doing well. Yet there is much in our data to commend this portrayal.

Harmony at Home

Consider, for example, that a consensus exists among American parents that they “love spending time” with their children (96 percent) and that their parenting experience has been a happy one (94 percent). Vastly exceeding simple majorities, these numbers suggest that “happiness” is a nearly universal feature of American parenting. What is more, over four-fifths of parents (83 percent) say their children treat them with “a great deal of respect”—only 1 parent in 10 disagrees.

And the parental kinship with children extends well beyond biology. More than 90 percent, for example, say their children share their understandings of right and wrong, while two-thirds say their children share their views of faith and religion (only 9 percent disagree with this statement). What begins, then, as a bestowing of genetic and biological traits apparently develops over time into a moral and ideological kinship. But this moral alignment between parents and children does not develop on its own. Instead, 9 of every 10 American parents say they “invest much effort in shaping” the moral character of their children, and 96 percent say “strong moral character” is very important, if not essential, to their children’s future.

Parents’ understandings of character vary, to be sure, but three-quarters of parents (74 percent) concur that honesty and truthfulness is an essential cornerstone for their children, and even those who don’t consider it ‘essential’ say it is one of their “very important” aspirations for their children. Additionally, parents are persuaded that such qualities are not nurtured by permissive parenting. Our survey finds, and we will explore more fully in chapter three, that given the choice between the labels “strict” and “permissive” to describe their parenting, American parents are more than twice as likely to say “strict” as “permissive.”

The Power of Positive Parenting

What kinds of strategies do parents employ to nurture the moral character that they value so highly? They overwhelmingly prefer positive approaches to punitive ones. “Modeling good behavior and setting a good example” and “praising children for what they do right” are their preferred disciplinary strategies. While they may scoff at the idea of permissiveness, parents clearly prefer approaches that are positive and affirming.

Given their embrace of positive parenting and their descriptions of moral and religious accord with their children, it is no wonder that parents report low levels of parent-child conflict. The Character of American
Families Survey posed the question, “On a 0 to 10 scale with 0 being ‘no disagreement’ and 10 being ‘extreme disagreement,’ how would you describe the overall level of parent-child disagreement that exists in your family?” The distribution of response was the following:

Parents are nearly 8 times more likely to describe their level of disagreement with their children as “low” than “high”—52 percent say they have low levels of conflict, 42 percent say they have moderate levels of conflict, and only 7 percent say they experience high levels of conflict.²⁹

**Practically Perfect in Every Way**

So American parents—speaking about their own families—paint a rosier picture than do experts who observe American families from a distance. Parents generally see turmoil and decline in “American families,” but not in their own.

For example, based upon parents’ assessments of their own children, only 1 of every 20 American school children consumes alcohol; 19 out of 20 never do. Limiting the analysis to teenagers, parents still report that only 1 in 10 ever drink. And limiting it to children 16 and older, the number who occasionally imbibe still reaches only 17 percent, which is less than 1 in 5. Yet based upon student self-reports, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 72 percent of all high school students have tried alcohol and 42 percent have done so in the last 30 days.³⁰

But that is just the beginning of good behavior. Parental reports on their own children also suggest...
that 76 percent of older children, ages 12–18, have “definitely not” experienced sexual intercourse, and another 14 percent “probably” have not, which leaves only about 10 percent of older children who parents think might be sexually active. It is no wonder that birth control for teenagers remains controversial nationally when so many parents are convinced that their own children do not need it.

Similarly, parental reports suggest that rumors of a childhood obesity epidemic are grossly exaggerated. More than 7 in 10 American parents (71 percent) report that *none* of their children are overweight at all. In fact, parental assessments suggest that less than 13 percent of America’s children are “somewhat overweight,” and that only about 3 percent are “greatly overweight.” The National Center for Health Statistics, in contrast, estimates that more than a third of American children and adolescents are overweight or obese, with 17 percent of them being obese.31

We might infer from the glowing parental reports that parents are completely out of touch with what really transpires in their children’s lives. But if they are, it is certainly not from lack of contact. Virtually all American parents (95 percent) say they spend an hour or more on a typical school day interacting with their children, and 7 out of 10 say they spend 2 or more hours a day not just in the presence of, but interacting with, their children. Nine out of ten parents say they take a yearly vacation with their children, and two-thirds (67 percent) say they invest a week or more in the endeavor.

“All the Children Are Above Average”

If scholarly and popular discussions of teenager crisis and childhood obesity seem to describe a different nation than do parental perceptions, the same cannot be said for depictions of grade inflation in America’s

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**FIGURE 10 — Parental Report of Their Children’s Grades.**
In fact, Garrison Keillor's imaginary Lake Wobegon, where “all of the children are above average,” may be closer to Middletown, USA, than many Americans suspect.

According to parents, a third of America's schoolchildren are “A students” on an A to F scale. Close behind them is another 49 percent of schoolchildren who are either A/B or B students. If we resurrect old understandings of “C” as average, and include B/C students among those who are above C, then fully 93 percent of America’s schoolchildren are “above average” in academic performance, which falls short of Lake Wobegon, but not by much.

One take on this grade distribution is that the widely heralded trend toward grade inflation in America’s schools is understated.

More likely, children’s academic performance is exaggerated in the minds of their parents. Parents understood the Culture of American Families Survey to be anonymous, so it is likely that any of their embellishments are more closely tied to their idealized views of their own children—their “pleasing of themselves,” so to speak, by identifying themselves with pleasing children—than to any social desirability bias oriented toward anonymous survey researchers.

But academic performance is only one component of school life. Beyond that, parental reports indicate that 93 percent of America's children have never been suspended. What is more, in any given year, two-thirds of America's children receive an award or certificate for outstanding performance in school, sports, music, or the arts.

Perhaps these levels of accomplishment are due in part to close parental monitoring and support. After all, 62 percent of parents indicate that they monitor their children's homework almost always, and another 23 percent indicate they do so regularly. Only 15 percent of parents say they rarely or never check their children's homework.

With high grades, plentiful awards, and strong parental support, it is no wonder that 80 percent of America's children are reported to hold either “mostly” or “very” positive attitudes toward school.

And parents have similar feelings: 88 percent say the values they try to instill in their children are at least moderately supported by their children’s schools. Moreover, this affirmation extends beyond their children's schools to public schools in general; parents are more than twice as likely to say public schooling has “a positive impact upon our nation's children” as to say it impacts them negatively.

**Timelessly and Intimately Tethered**

So while “the family” may be in decline, parents see their own children in glowing terms.

Given this gilding of the nest, it is no wonder then that 7 out of 10 American parents (72 percent) say, “I hope to be best friends with my children when they are grown.” This hope for enduring intimacy helps to explain parental willingness in recent decades to welcome twenty-somethings back into the nest when they struggle to make it on their own. Two-thirds of American parents (67 percent) say they would “willingly support a 25-year-old child financially if they really needed it”; only 17 percent indicate clearly that they would not. Beyond monetary support, our survey reveals that two-thirds of parents (65 percent) would “encourage a 25-year-old child to move back home if they had difficulty affording housing”; again, only 17 percent reject this idea.

What do we make of this portrait of heavily invested American parents whose children are fortunate enough not to struggle with the same problems that other parents’ children struggle with?

Some might argue that parents are deluded; they are so emotionally involved with their children that they have lost the capacity for reasonable perception.

Others might infer that these parents’ children are being dishonest, either blatantly so or simply selective enough in what they disclose that their parents are left with mistaken impressions. One could even speculate that children’s motives for doing so, in addition to shielding themselves from their parents’ disapproval, might be to protect their parents from the pain of disappointment in the first place. This is certainly a reasonable conjecture in a family culture in which parents overwhelmingly consider themselves “close”
to their children and express the long-term hope to remain “best friends.”

Still others might reason that over-invested parents derive so much of their personal identity from parenting that they cannot admit to themselves that their children may be merely average or below average in some respect. Indeed, the boundaries may have blurred to the point that an admission of a child’s deficiency, or that a child is to blame for some negative incident, is an admission of the parents’ own deficiency or blame. By the same token, children, as extensions of the parents, must succeed (or be perceived to have succeeded) because it means that the parents have succeeded as parents. Their children, in a word, are a mirror unto themselves. These ideas are at least worth considering in light of our data.

In recent decades, observers have claimed that a “new familism”—characterized by an exalting of the family as a resource for its members’ emotional and psychological well-being—has spread across America. Such a familism would correspond with a broader cultural shift in which parents desire to be positive and uplifting in their methods without being permissive, “friends” with their children without sacrificing surveillance, and warm while expecting accomplishment. As Jeffrey Dill points out in our companion Culture of American Families: Interview Report, parents want their children to conform to their wishes, even to obey, but now it is called “thinking for yourself,” which feels better than “obedience” all the way around.34

**FIGURE 11 — Views of Financially Supporting an Adult Child.**

“I would willing support a 25-year-old child financially if they really needed it.”
On a 1 to 7 scale with 1 representing “very close” and 7 representing “very distant,” we asked American parents, “How would you generally describe your relationship to your children?” Did they place themselves just on the “close” side of moderate, wanting to depict their relationships as fairly close to their children? No. Nearly half (46 percent) placed themselves squarely at 1; they couldn’t be any closer to their children. Most of the rest (35 percent) gave themselves a 2. Only 3 percent, less than 1 of every 20 parents, placed themselves on the “distant” side of the scale.

In the face of this family closeness, the parental view that family life in America has declined—64 percent say it has declined since they were growing up—is puzzling. This is especially the case given the fact that 62 percent say they are closer to their own children than their parents were to them, and only 1 American parent in 10 describes greater emotional distance from their children than they experienced as children with their own parents.

But parent-child emotional connection does not remove the everyday reality of rooms to pick up, homework assignments to complete, teeth to brush, and sibling squabbles to resolve. Parents still must guide, protect, encourage, correct, and help to form their children into young adults they can be proud of and who can be proud of themselves. As children grow, decisions must be made about what to permit when, and children must be carted to all manner of sports and activities. In short, there is much more to daily parenting than the sanguine scenario outlined in the last chapter.

So what parental strategies and self-understandings accompany this parent-child closeness?

They Say They Are “Strict”

American parents frown on permissiveness. By their own self-descriptions, they tend to be strict with their kids. On a 7-point scale with 1 being “very strict,” 7 “very permissive,” and 4 “moderate,” 45 percent of American parents rate their parenting approach as strict (1–3) and 36 percent say they are moderate (4), while only 19 percent describe their approach as “permissive” (5–7).

Differences between the sexes in self-reported “strictness” are minimal.

Women, however, are somewhat more likely to describe their partners as strict than are men. Self-reported strictness is only weakly related, if at all, to family income, with higher-income parents in our sample being more likely to say they are strict. Blacks too are a bit more likely than other racial and ethnic groups to claim they are very strict, but religious evangelicalism is even more closely tied to strictness.

Religious “nones”—those who have no religious attachment—admit to being more permissive than other parents.

Some “permissive” parents may believe that strictness comes with the cost of driving children away emotionally—that discipline creates rifts between parents and children. Yet if parents’ own claims about relationships with their children are to be believed, those who are the strictest have closer relationships, if anything, with their children. That said, when the vast majority of American parents describe these relationships as “very close,” evidence for whose relationships are closer is less than compelling.
Yet It’s a Benign Strictness

The word “strict” can have a vast array of practical meanings, so it is instructive to consider how parents actually encourage good behavior and correct misbehavior in their daily parenting.

The most interesting trend in this regard is that in spite of their self-described “strictness,” parents have an overwhelming preference for positive over punitive responses to their children. Their favorite methods for shaping behavior are “praising children for what they do right” (86 percent) and “modeling good behavior and setting a good example” (86 percent).

Beyond praise and positive modeling, parents also say that “instructing children in appropriate moral and ethical behavior” (77 percent) and “discussing behaviors at length to help children understand why something is good or bad” (61 percent) are important. In fact, even the preferred punitive approaches are little more than gentle forms of withholding, such as withdrawing television, internet, and cell phone privileges; grounding children from activities with friends; and time-outs or sending children to their rooms.

Tougher measures—scolding and yelling and the like—are generally rated as less important.

In fact, spanking is one of the least endorsed responses of all. Fewer than 1 in 5 American parents says spanking is an important technique for molding good behavior. Only 1 of every 5 parents (22 percent) say they have spanked more than rarely, and even fewer (19 percent) say they consider spanking to be “part of the standard tool kit of parenting, to be used whenever a parent thinks it is helpful.”
FIGURE 13 — Preferred Strategies for Influencing Children’s Behavior.35

- Praising children
- Modeling good behavior
- Instructing in appropriate behavior
- Discussing behavior at length
- Withholding TV, internet, or phones
- Grounding from friends
- Time-outs or sending to room
- Scolding or speaking in strong voice
- Withholding allowances/purchases
- Assigning additional chores
- Threat of spanking
- Denying opportunities for clubs/sports
- Spanking
- Being emotionally distant

Percent

1–Not Important  2  3  4–Moderately Important  5  6  7–Extremely Important
Can we conclude then that parents have moved beyond corporal punishment as a way of disciplining their children? The answer is a resounding “no.” In fact, 4 of every 5 parents (80 percent) admit to having spanked a child at some point. And a majority (58 percent) say they have spanked their children more than a couple of times, although most still describe it as rare. Just under a quarter of all parents (22 percent) say they have spanked a fair bit. And, since spanking is widely frowned upon, we suspect that the percentage of parents who actually spanks is higher than the percentage who confess to doing so.

The consensus seems not to be that spanking is morally “wrong,” but that parents should do it only rarely, when their children’s behavior is extreme and other forms of discipline are not working. Only a small minority (19 percent) say it remains part of a parent’s “standard tool kit of parenting,” to be used whenever they think it helpful. So, while spanking remains in the behavioral repertoire for the majority of American parents, the old philosophy of “spare the rod, spoil the child” has largely been abandoned.

Parents today are faced with a continuous stream of public information about effective parenting. Much has been written in psychological and educational circles about “parenting styles,” the consensus being that an authoritative style—blending high expectations and demands with high responsiveness (warmth, nurturance, and feedback)—is best developmentally for children. This style is typically associated with much parent-child discussion, intended to help children “see” that what parents believe is best is in fact best for them. The goal is that children will come to behave appropriately out of their own volition rather than requiring external coercion to ensure compliance.

As we have seen, American parents seem to have an abiding sense that setting limits is good and that “strictness” is preferable to “permissiveness.” Observers of their interactions (such as other parents) might not describe what they witness as “strict,” yet parents generally see themselves as conforming to a strict-yet-balanced ideal.

When Is It First Appropriate?

An interesting way to unravel practical expectations within the home is to ask parents, “For each of the following activities, please tell us the age at which you think it first becomes appropriate for a child.” Items were then sorted by the mean response of parents in the study.

Figure 14 graphically depicts parental understandings of when various behaviors should first occur in a child’s development.

What we discovered is that few independent privileges are accorded to children under the age of 12, especially in the arenas of sociability, sexuality, and technology use. As a matter of fact, the only autonomous discretion accorded to children younger than 12 is to decide for themselves what to wear to school, and even then, most parents say children shouldn’t be able to “decide for themselves” until their later elementary years.

At about age 13, however, an important sociability threshold is crossed: children are given a cell phone. Parents may intend this rite of passage as a way of keeping in touch with middle-school children who are becoming more involved in activities and staying late after school. And, while we don’t have data on children’s perceptions, experience teaches us that children understand cell phone ownership in other terms—a device for texting friends, social interfacing, and not being “left out” at a time when popularity and status, for many, is everything.

Once they’ve crossed the cell-phone threshold, children quickly move toward full-blown, information-age networking; most parents think children can have Facebook or Twitter accounts by the time they are 16. And 16 is also the beginning age for “hanging out” with friends without adult supervision. In short, within about three years, children are permitted to move from a life of “no communication technology” to one in which they are full-fledged, texting-posting-chatting social creatures, with parents gradually giving up on surveillance by the time children reach 16 or 17.
Developmentally, social and technological access to peers is ceded to children first, with the expectation that technological autonomy (lack of surveillance) and sexual involvement will come several years later. The typical parent, for example, says that it is appropriate for a child to experience their “first kiss” at about the age of 16, which is approximately the same age when parents stop trying to control teenagers’ use of technology.

Then within a couple of years, teenagers are allowed to watch R-rated films and to attend parties without adult supervision. It is interesting that only two years separate parents’ normative acceptance of a “first kiss” and their willingness to let children attend parties with no adults present. Perhaps parents’ willingness for the latter—as well as their withdrawal of surveillance regarding social networking and internet usage—is connected to their perception that their own children, sexually speaking, at least, are still children.

If parents were to be described as delusionally optimistic (or perhaps naive) about only a single subject, their children’s sexuality would likely be it. Parental reporting in the survey suggests that only 5 percent
of American children ages 12 through 18 have “definitely” had sexual intercourse and that another 5 percent have “probably” done so. Meanwhile, 76 percent have “definitely not” had sexual intercourse while another 14 percent have “probably not.”

Combined with the data on children’s grades, we are left with a parental vision of sexually celibate, academically successful teenagers. (This probably stems from asking parents about their own children instead of someone else’s.)

Arenas of Conflict

Parents value “closeness,” to be sure, and there is a fair degree of consensus about when things are permissible developmentally. Yet even with the all closeness and consensus, there are disagreements.

When asked specifically about levels of disagreement in 16 potential trouble areas, parents typically report conflicts at a level of 0 or 1 on a 0 to 10 scale. Isolating each parent’s single area of greatest conflict, of course, reveals more disagreement, but even then we find that half of all parents (51 percent) report high conflict with children in none of the 16 areas; the other half report at least one area of high disagreement.

The most common areas of disagreement involve disputes over children’s messiness, picking up after themselves, fulfilling daily chores or obligations, and sibling disagreements. Lower levels of conflict were reported over food and diet, television viewing, bedtimes, purchases, and completing school assignments.

Interestingly, parents report very few disagreements with children over technology and moral issues, including disrespectful behavior toward adults. In short, when parents and children argue, which is not all that much, they do so over the ordinary routines of daily life rather than larger issues.

On Normality, Diagnosis, and Medication

Yet, while levels of overt conflict may be low, our survey suggests that parental uncertainty is not. In fact, parents worry not only about the accidents and predators that might dramatically alter the course of their children’s lives, they even wonder whether their kids are “normal.”

Nearly half of American parents (46 percent), for example, say that “it is important to me that my child be viewed as normal and not stand out as being different from others,” compared to 35 percent who disagree. On another question, over half say it is at least a small concern that their children not be seen as odd or abnormal. In most cases, these are not strong worries, but low-grade ones. Even so, 3 parents of every 10 insist the worry that their child not be considered abnormal is more than just a small concern.

Worries about what outsiders might think may be windows into the worries that parents themselves experience as they watch and relate to their children. More than 4 in 10 (41 percent), for example, say that one of their children has struggled with excessive difficulties of focus, attention, and distractibility. A quarter say one of their children has struggled with depression or excessive anxiety. And nearly 3 in 10 (29 percent) say that at least one of their children is overweight. Combining these worries, we find that a majority of American parents (60 percent) have a child whom they suspect may manifest some “abnormality.” And, even omitting children’s weight from the list of concerns, nearly half (48 percent) of parents have a child with some focus or anxiety issue, or at least they suspect this might be the case.

At what point, however, do parents move beyond unspoken worries to seek the diagnosis of a doctor or psychologist? Our survey suggests that this step beyond “worry” to expert diagnosis occurs only about half the time.

Only a quarter of American parents (24 percent) say that one of their children has actually been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (A.D.D. or A.D.H.D.) or with clinical depression or anxiety. Only 1 out of 5 parents has a child who has taken medication for one
FIGURE 15 — Level of Disagreement in Specific Areas.36

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High Disagreement</th>
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<td>Chores &amp; home</td>
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<td>Swearing &amp; language</td>
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<td>Limits in romance</td>
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<td>Faith &amp; religion</td>
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Percent

No Disagreement
Mild Disagreement
Moderate Disagreement
High Disagreement
of these problems. But this rate is suppressed in part by the fact that younger children are less likely to have been referred for diagnosis or medication.

When analysis is restricted to parents whose youngest child is a teenager, 30 percent of parents say one of their children has been clinically diagnosed with issues of focus or depression, and over a quarter (26 percent) say one of their children has received medication for these issues. Although these findings pertain to the percentage of parents reporting such occurrences among their children, and not the percentage of American children, the numbers still attest to issues that a substantial number of American families are wrestling with.

Clearly when problems occur at home, a substantial number of parents begin to worry that “all is not well”—or that something is abnormal—with their children. And then they worry too about whether they should even think in such terms. Over a quarter (27 percent), for instance, say that even if a school teacher or guidance counselor recommended that a medication could improve their child’s school performance, and a doctor agreed, they still wouldn’t consider it. And 4 parents in 10 (41 percent) disagree that “medications to improve focus are a good thing if they boost a child’s school performance.” Moreover, almost two-thirds of parents (63 percent) believe that many children “are now medicated for problems that are better treated in other ways,” and nearly 4 out of 5 parents (78 percent) think “medications should generally be the last resort for solving a child’s problems.”

Yet parents wonder. On several of our agree–disagree questions regarding medication, a quarter to a third of the parents equivocate, selecting “undecided” as their response. Parents are most inclined to accept medication solutions when school performance is thrown into the balance. And while American parents overwhelmingly embrace the idea that medication should be a last resort, a substantial number of parents find themselves turning to such last resorts. Even when they stop short of medicating, many parents wonder whether their children might have a problem worthy of such consideration.
Hopes, Sources, and Moral Contradictions

Concerning Character

In discourse regarding human development, childhood education, and human flourishing, no topic is more time-honored, treasured, and at times trivialized than that of “character.”

Amidst lengthy discussions about how character is best instilled—whether some forms of character (such as performative character) conflict with other forms (such as moral character) and whether character can be effectively packaged and programmed in institutional settings—three simple things stand out: 1) Americans agree that character matters, 2) they believe that it is good, and yet 3) they can’t easily articulate what it is. Like community, family values, wisdom, and integrity, character is easier to endorse than to describe.

Some scholars go so far as to suggest that American culture is witnessing the death of character—at least of stable, externally grounded conceptions of character that can’t be reduced to simple formulas such as “be nice to others, so they won’t feel bad.”

What is more, well-intentioned efforts to build character are broadly understood to be thwarted from the outset by countervailing currents in American culture. Consider these recent assessments from a New York Times blog’s discussion of character:

Perseverance, honesty, kindness are all necessary traits to live a successful life. However, that’s not what we have seen in this country for the past 30 years or so. The grades have been more important than what’s been absorbed. Making money has been valued more than how it’s been made, leading to short sighted behavior on the part of many corporations and politicians. Working hard has been devalued even more. It doesn’t seem to matter how hard one works in America: unless one is born rich one misses out on the advantages of a good education, a good start in life, and the ability to stay above water.

If you apply…character metrics to the larger U.S. society, there seems to be a problem…1) The get-rich-quick mentality: This is the win-the-lottery, gamble-on-stocks and retire-at-40 dream. You make a big killing and spend the rest of your life sitting on the beach sipping margaritas, with no need to work or do anything. What kind of character does this imply?…2) The social-networking mentality: This is the notion that who you know is far more important than what you do or who you are. Wealth and a stable future come from associating with the right people, the ones who already have lots of wealth, and by pleasing them, you’ll get a place on the gravy train…3) The take-a-sucker-for-a-ride mentality: This was seen in the subprime meltdown, in which bankers and mortgage brokers colluded with ratings agencies to sell subprime loans to gullible prospective homeowners…The world we live in is not some ideal Disneyland, and if you tell children that it is, if you hide the realities of corruption from them, if you teach them to mindlessly respect authority figures (who may in reality be highly corrupt or dishonest), you are doing them a great disservice.

American parents may not explicitly communicate to children that “who you know is more important than what you do” or that it is fine to “take a sucker for
a ride.” Yet much has been made in recent years of the pressures placed upon children by ambitious parents—parents who fervently seek to ensure that one day their children will be financially independent and professionally successful, parents who not only see the competitiveness of American society, but understand that the competition can be aggressive, even cutthroat, in nature.

When it comes to character, parents want their children to be generous without “giving away the store,” kind without being foolish, agreeable (even humble) without being a doormat, trusting without being naive or gullible. In a word, character must be cultivated, but contained. Parents have a nagging sense that, taken to the extreme, character will undermine their children’s future success and happiness. This is some of what we found in existing literature.

One of the ways that the *Culture of American Families Survey* approached the topic of character was to inquire about parents’ aspirations for their children’s future. We did so by asking, “We all have hopes about the kind of adults we would like our children to become. Thinking about your own hopes for your children, how important is each of the following?” Parents rated 28 qualities on a scale from “not important at all” to “absolutely essential.” The qualities ranged from “thin, not overweight” and “powerful and influential” to “forgiving of others when wronged” and “loving.” The ordering of qualities was randomized for each respondent to ensure that aggregate ratings would not be influenced by the positions of items in the list.

Several qualities traditionally associated in American culture with “character” were included: loving, creative, hard-working, honest and truthful, reliable and dependable, forgiving of others when wronged, and generous with others. Additionally, the phrase, “persons of strong moral character” was itself included.

Parents responded by rating these, in order, as the 10 qualities they would most like to see in their children as adults:

1. Honest and truthful
2. Persons of strong moral character
3. Loving
4. Reliable and dependable
5. Hard-working
6. Interested in preserving close ties with parents and family
7. Financially independent
8. Highly educated
9. Generous with others
10. Smart/intelligent

In contrast, the 10 least desirable qualities were these, with the lowest rated quality at the bottom of the list:

19. Patriotic
20. Concerned about recycling and the environment
21. Persons who value practical skills over book learning
22. Interested in the arts, literature, and history
23. Thin, not overweight
24. Popular and well-liked
25. Powerful and influential
26. Good athletes
27. Share your outlook on government and politics
28. Famous or well-known

Even though “character” may be as difficult to define as to nurture in a world filled with mixed moral messages, the high value that America’s parents continue to attach to qualities traditionally associated with “character” remains clear. Contrary to media images of “tiger moms” and “helicopter parents” grasping for effective strategies to ensure children’s success, our survey suggests that the deepest hopes of American parents for their children’s future is simple, almost quaint. They want their children to develop into loving, morally upright, reliable, and hard-working adults who preserve close ties to their families.

In a word, they want children to become adults of character. Against this backdrop, fame, athletics, power and influence, popularity, knowledge, even patriotism and religious faith wither as parental aspirations. Differently stated, the things that reflect one’s social standing vis-à-vis friends, associates, or a larger audience pale in comparison to the internal, enduring qualities that parents still believe to be the marks of a good person—honesty being at the top of the list. The complete list of aspirations ranked from most important to least important is presented in Figure 17.
FIGURE 17 — Parental Aspirations for the Kind of Adults Their Children Will Become.
To summarize, the *Culture of American Families Survey* indicates that American parents agree, at least superficially, about the importance of “character.” They also agree that fame, athletics, popularity, and power matter little in the larger scheme of their children’s lives. What is more, they agree that producing ideological clones—adults who share their own political views—is not the point of parenting.

Beyond that, however, lie areas of disagreement, the most notable being the way parents ground their hopes for their children’s future. A majority of parents hope their children will become persons of strong religious faith, but a substantial minority, nearly a quarter, see the cultivation of religious faith as having little importance at all. Of all the aspirations that parents considered, the hope that children would develop a strong faith drew a more polarized response than any other.

**The Asymmetries of Faith**

Responses to another question in the survey help us to unpack this faith disjuncture. Parents were asked to rank the importance of each of these statements as personal goals for their parenting:

- I seek to raise children whose lives will reflect God's will and purpose.
- I seek to raise children who will make positive contributions to their communities and to the world around them.
- I seek to provide every material advantage and educational opportunity so my children will have the best chance of achieving their goals in life.
- I seek to offer the kind of love and affection that will nurture happiness, positive feelings about themselves, and warm relationships with others.
- I seek to raise children who are true to their family roots and pass on the cultural traditions of their heritage.

Given our findings about parental aspirations (in the previous section), it is not surprising that “passing on the family heritage” and “providing every material advantage” were rarely rated as first priorities; only 8 percent and 13 percent of parents did so, respectively. Raising children who will make “positive contributions to their communities” was similarly rejected; only nine percent called it their top priority.

That leaves 70 percent of American parents—7 of every 10—who were evenly split between two top priorities: “raising children whose lives will reflect God's will and purpose” and “offering the kind of love and affection that will nurture happiness, positive feelings about themselves, and warm relationships with others.”

It is tempting to jump to the conclusion that these two responses represent the same faith polarization mentioned a moment ago. That is, that parents who aspire to raise “persons of strong religious faith” make it their top priority to raise “children whose lives will reflect God's will and purpose,” while parents whose aspirations for their children's religious faith are low cite “nurturing happiness, positive feelings about themselves, and warm relationships” as their top priority. Stated differently, that highly religious parents anchor their parenting in external realities (God) while nonreligious parents anchor theirs in subjective pursuits (their children's self-esteem and emotional well-being). Or framing it temporally, that some parents focus upon their children's eternal welfare, while others focus upon their welfare in the here and now.

But, while there is some truth to these statements, it is not that simple. Were it so, the 70 percent of parents who split evenly between external (religious) and subjective top priorities could be as easily contrasted in terms of what they reject—half cares little about their children's feelings or identities, while the other half cares little about their children's religious faith. Yet if this is true at all, it is only half true.

Consider, for instance, that 4 of every 5 parents who name “raising children to reflect God's will and purpose”
as their top priority also name “offering the kind of love and affection that will nurture happiness” as their second or third parenting priority. Clearly, the two objectives are seen as entirely compatible. Just because parents put God first doesn’t mean they downplay their children’s feelings and identities. It simply means they see subjective well-being, as important as it is, as grounded in something larger, something they consider more basic.

Is the same true for the “feeling-firsters”? Do they make religious faith or “doing God’s will” a secondary priority, supplanted only by their primary goal of raising warm and happy children? The answer is no. Only a third of those whose top priority is “warmth and affection” name “raising children to reflect God’s will and purpose” as their second or third priority. More commonly, they reject this faith purpose altogether. Forty-four percent of them, in fact, make it last among the five priorities they ranked. Evidently, naming psychological or subjective well-being as the top parenting priority in many cases signals not just a demotion of faith purposes in parenting, but a dismissal of faith from parenting altogether, at least as traditionally focused upon God.

So an asymmetry of parenting priorities exists. The top priorities—about equally common in early twenty-first century America—reflect either religious or subjective moral narratives. Yet a strong disjunction between the two operates only in one direction. “God’s will and purpose” as a primary narrative is often closely tied to psychological well-being as a secondary one. Yet the reverse is not true; psychological well-being—warmth and happiness—as a primary parenting purpose often is unaccompanied by a faith purpose, at least one framed in terms of God’s will.
In short, traditional faith convictions, where they persist in late-modern America, often remain paramount in parenting, at least in the way parents talk about their priorities. But once that position of prominence, that compelling presence, slips, notions of “God’s will” are often demoted to an afterthought.

**Moral Character Reconsidered**

This helps to clarify why there is such a strong American consensus that “moral character” is the *sine qua non* of parenting.

The top aspirations in our survey—raising children who have strong moral character, who are honest, truthful, and loving, who relate to others in a reliable and dependable fashion, who work hard and become financially independent, and who sustain close ties with their families at the end of the day—are ubiquitous because they are the points at which different moral sources converge. Indeed, 9 of every 10 parents say they “invest much effort in shaping the moral character” of their children. It is really only when the question of aspirations is turned to the moral sources themselves that parents dramatically diverge, with many saying that “becoming a person of strong faith” is essential and others discounting or rejecting it altogether.

Whether God, the actualized self, or the good society anchor a parent’s aspirations, they can still converge in a shared normative space. In each case, children’s love, kindness, honesty, and hard work are aspirations...
that matter—if not because they are good for one's feelings and identity, then because they improve relationships in one's community; if not for that reason, then because they glorify God. These aspirations can emanate from secular, therapeutic, and communitarian worldviews just as they do from religious ones—which helps us understand why, at least rhetorically, they are so universally affirmed.

Indeed, the power of an amorphous concept such as “moral character” for parents is that it evokes “the good” that they want to see in their children, but does so in a fluid way, one that can be colored-in according to the specifics of the moral order in which it is anchored. But those moral orders are not so coherent in the first place, as we shall shortly see.

Incoherent Moral Foundations

The role of faith—and of different faith orientation—in the culture of American families is a complicated one.

Nearly half of American parents (47 percent) name “raising children whose lives will reflect God’s will and purpose” as one of their top two priorities. Yet one can question whether this genuinely reflects a deep faith commitment or whether it is something that parents feel obligated to say. Our data suggest that the former is true; their faith commitment is indeed a serious one. The 47 percent who put God at the center of parenting40 manifest their faith in many ways:

• Nearly 9 out of 10 (89 percent) “know God really exists” and “have no doubts about it.”

• Nearly as many say they have a “personal relationship with God” (87 percent) and believe that God is directly involved in the everyday events of their life (88 percent).

• Four-fifths (79 percent) say religion is very important, if not the most important thing in their lives.

• More than 8 out of 10 (84 percent) say they pray (outside of religious services) at least several times a week.

• Two-thirds (68 percent) attend religious services at least 2 or 3 times a month.

• Two-thirds (67 percent) also believe that those who violate God’s rules will be punished.

• And importantly, nearly that many (63 percent) say they speak about matters of faith with their children at least several times a week.

So faith-based parenting, as reflected in patterns of communication with children, does appear to be solidly tied to the personal faith commitments and religious participation of parents.

Yet this same 47 percent of overtly religious parents sends a mixed moral message:

• A majority of them—6 out of 10—say “the greatest moral virtue is to be honest about your feelings and desires.”

• The same number (60 percent) endorses the relativistic statement that “everything is beautiful—it’s all a matter of how you look at it.”

• Only one-third of these parents disavow the notion that “all views of what is good are equally valid.”

• Half of them (49 percent) agree that “our values are something that each of us must decide for ourselves without being influenced by others.”

• A third of them (32 percent) even contend that “there are few moral absolutes—what is right or wrong usually varies from situation to situation,” while another 24 percent equivocate by saying they don’t know whether this statement is true.

Given these expressions of moral openness and tolerance, it is not surprising that many of these parents (all of whom, recall, expressed a faith priority in parenting) cite non-religious sources when asked to name “the most believable authority in matters of truth.”

Even though the majority (57 percent) say they would turn to scripture, prayer, meditation, or the wisdom of religious leaders to discern “truth,” that leaves 43 percent who say their truth is grounded in something else—what personal experience teaches them (17 percent), what “feels right” to them personally (10 percent), or what has been handed down from parents or other authorities (9 percent). And over a third
of these “faith-priority” parents say they would turn to non-religious sources if they needed help in discerning a morally appropriate course of action.

The mixed moral messages are perplexing.

According to our survey, half of American parents (48 percent) agree with the religiously orthodox statement that “those who violate God’s rules will be punished.” Yet when this 48 percent is presented with the contemporary view that “divorce is preferable to maintaining an unhappy marriage,” more agree (44 percent) than disagree (36 percent). What is more, even though orthodox Christianity has traditionally rejected sex outside of marriage, only a slim majority (57 percent) of those who believe in divine punishment reject the idea that “sex before marriage is okay, if a couple loves each other.”

More puzzling is the fact that 3 of every 10 parents who are “biblical literalists” say “most religions are equally good paths to the same destination.” And only half of biblical literalists say the most believable authority in matters of truth is scripture, while fully a quarter say, “what your own experience teaches you” or “whatever feels right to you personally” are better sources. In these and other ways, parents reflect a mix of moral narratives, expressing beliefs and opinions that are equivocal and in tension, if not clearly contradictory in content.

This moral complexity would not really be news if it were limited to secular parents whose moral underpinnings are more fluid and open in the first place. (In that case, a “free-range morality” might at least be depicted as signaling the very openness that they...
stand for.) But when similar moral fluidity characterizes parents whose stated purpose is to raise children whose lives will reflect something external—“God’s will and purpose”—we must conclude that “God’s will and purpose,” at least in the minds of some, does not differ from the secular impression that “all views of good are equally valid,” that morality bends from situation to situation.

When the moral messages of even highly religious parents are this contradictory and vague, perhaps they have their own children in mind when they say that “values are something that each must decide for themselves.”
Four Family Cultures

Previous research has classified parenting and families into various typological schemes. Many are class-based, contrasting the parenting of professionals (e.g., “concerted cultivation”) with those of the working class. Others distinguish “red” from “blue” families, engaged from disengaged parents, or the different family patterns of various racial and ethnic groups.

Particularly popular are various iterations of Diana Baumrind’s “parenting styles” typology. This framework posits that childhood development hinges to a great extent upon two things: 1) the level of parental involvement with children, and 2) the demands or expectations that parents place upon children. Depending upon their location on these criteria, parents are said to be authoritarian, authoritative, permissive (indulgent), or uninvolved in their parenting style.

Others draw upon the parenting styles framework without duplicating it exactly. A decade ago, for example, a nationally representative study of parents of school-aged children divided American parents into the “Overwhelmed” (17 percent), “Softies” (17 percent), “Parents in Chief” (18 percent), and “Best Buddies” (8 percent). These types displayed different gradations of command, frustration, permissiveness, and emotional connection, as the names of their categories suggest. As is typical with “parenting style” typologies, emotional attachment and authority remained central concerns.

Extensions of these two concerns erupt routinely into debates over various parenting excesses: the over-attachment of “helicopter parents,” the rampant expectations of “tiger moms,” and the absence (or denial) of “ostrich parents.” Google searches for these and related terms like “pussycat mom,” “soft parent,” or “hard parent” yield thousands if not tens of thousands of hits. The excesses are then translated into pathologies, which spawn self-help books like Momaholic: Confessions of a Helicopter Parent and Free-Range Kids: How to Raise Safe, Self-Reliant Children (Without Going Nuts with Worry).

The shared limitation of these books and approaches is that the complex process of parenting and childhood development, at the end of the day, is reduced to technique. The right technique, or the right balance of techniques, becomes the holy grail of “successful” parenting. Implicit in this view is the meta-assumption that parents can be trained toward greater attachment and toward levels of expectation (or demands) that will yield desired outcomes.

What is often lacking is any recognition that parents are molded by particular histories, that they live out of different cultural understandings, and that their own awareness of the moral assumptions embedded in their daily routines may be quite limited. It is those deep-seated, often implicit assumptions—expressed in things as simple as the way parents talk with children, the accounts and explanations they offer, what they reward, and how free time is spent—that comprise the lived-lessons that children internalize without even knowing it. Beyond that there are family rituals and extra-family involvements that testify to the same. And families have narratives of purpose—teleologies—that situate their daily patterns in time, explaining how the family arrived at its current state and where it is headed tomorrow.

With this in mind, our project conceives of the family as the center of the larger moral ecology within which children (and their parents) reside. From the moment children are born, understandings of “the good” are
taught explicitly there. But they are also imparted implicitly, reverberating through the mundane, often unspoken practices of family life.

As such, our own effort to identify “family types” extends beyond questions of parental attachment and authority to include many of the cultural factors we have already mentioned, most notably, discrepant understandings of “the good,” its sources, and the differential aspirations that parents hold for their children. A statistical technique known as \( k \)-means cluster analysis served as the basis for the following typology.45

The Faithful—20 Percent of American Parents

An Overview

The defining feature of the Faithful parents is that “morality,” with all that the word entails (good, evil, appropriate ordering of human relationships, and the like), is understood to be received from a divine, external source. This understanding is the lens that shapes not only their perceptions of current realities and the past, but their hopes for the future, both practically and theologically.

The moral intuition and imagination of the Faithful parents is inherently conservative. If a behavioral norm or expectation was understood to be God-given a century ago, the Faithful are predisposed to receive it as such today.

Some of their most basic truths are understood to be family truths, especially the reservation of sex and child-bearing for the God-ordained institution of marriage between a man and a woman. These foundational understandings—that truth is received from above, that it is therefore timeless, and that families are not only blessings, but enclaves for the reproduction and multiplication of God’s timeless truths—mold the cultural practices and understandings of these committed conservatives.

Even though they are horrified by what appears to them to be sweeping and appalling social decay, the Faithful sustain a steadfast confidence that with deliberate reflection and prayerful guidance, their own children can be inoculated from the seductive dangers of the world around them, instead imbibing and perpetuating alternative truths that have been nurtured, day by day, in their homes and faith fellowships.

The Specifics

Background Profile: Two-thirds of the Faithful are white (non-Hispanic), 16 percent are Hispanic, and 11 percent are black. They are of fairly average education, with slightly more having completed a 4-year college degree (36 percent) than among other parents (32 percent). They are most heavily concentrated in the South and least heavily in New England and on the Pacific coast. Republicans outnumber Democrats by a 4-to-1 margin (51 percent compared to 13 percent), and 61 percent say they plan to vote for the Republican candidate in the 2012 presidential election, compared to only 12 percent who say they support the re-election of President Obama.

Family Life: Eighty-eight percent of the Faithful are married, and three-quarters (74 percent) remain in their first marriage. Nearly all of the parents in this group (96 percent) say that the trend toward “more people living together without getting married” has been bad for American society, even though 37 percent confess to having lived with a romantic partner outside of marriage. Their family sizes are larger than average—a quarter have four or more children—and their attitude toward public schools (and secular “experts” in general, for that matter) is more negative than for other groups.
The culture of the Faithful is the last bastion of pre-1960s sexual morality. On a 7-point scale running from “completely disagree” to “completely agree,” two-thirds of the Faithful (68 percent) take the most extreme stance, completely disagreeing that “sex before marriage is okay if a couple loves each other.” It is not surprising then that 7 of every 10 among the Faithful (69 percent) believe that methods of birth control should not be made available to teenagers without their parents’ approval; they are nearly 3 times as likely as other parents to express this view. Three-quarters of the Faithful completely disagree that homosexual couples should have the right to marry. Even so, few (19 percent) are worried or fearful that their own children might develop a homosexual orientation, and the vast majority (80 percent) think there is no possibility that their children have ever had sexual intercourse. In a nutshell, while society is seen to suffer various forms of decline, the Faithful are confident that their own families will remain faithful to their God-given sexual morality—so confident, in fact, that they unanimously agree that “my children share my understandings of right and wrong.”

The Faithful can also sometimes defy outsiders’ perceptions of old-fashioned. It is true that mothers among the Faithful are less likely than other mothers to work for pay outside the home and more likely to embrace the occupational label of “homemaker,” especially when their children are young. But gender roles among the Faithful are far from the cut-and-dried “mom should stay at home” while “dad brings home the bacon” variety. Only a minority (43 percent), for instance, agree that “a preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works,” and
only 8 percent—less than 1 in 10—“completely agree.” And even though the Faithful are much more likely than other parents to “completely agree” that a woman should put her husband and children ahead of her career, they are equally distinctive in their insistence that a man should do the same. In a word, the Faithful embrace a variant of gender equality that allows for gender-based role distinctions. Yet even in the presence of such distinctions, the Faithful insist that men and women should be equally focused upon the family. As a matter of fact, they are less likely than other parents to agree that “the mother’s role in raising children is more important than the father’s.” Many of them (42 percent), in fact, completely disagree with this diminished vision of fatherhood.

Like most American parents, the Faithful want their families to be warm and emotionally supportive places for both themselves and their children. Laughter and love and happiness matter to the Faithful, but they aren’t the primary underpinning of morality, and they certainly do not trump what is perceived to be God’s will. For example, when divorce is pitted against marital unhappiness, marital unhappiness wins out—60 percent of the Faithful disagree that divorce is preferable to maintaining an unhappy marriage, compared to only 16 percent of other parents. And the therapeutic view that “the best response in most situations is whatever keeps people from feeling uncomfortable or upset” is rejected by 83 percent of the Faithful, compared to 48 percent of other parents. Similarly, the Faithful are nearly unanimous (91 percent) in rejecting the moral premise that “as long as we don’t hurt others, we should all just live however we want.” When faced with a situation that is morally unclear, the Faithful overwhelmingly say they would decide what to do based upon what God or scripture tells them is right (88 percent), rather than upon “what is best for everyone involved” (9 percent) or what would “make you happy” (2 percent). Happiness (and the feeling factor in general) matters to the Faithful as it does to others, of course, but it weighs less heavily upon the Faithful than their commitment to moral clarity.

Faith: Half (49 percent) of the Faithful say their religion is “the most important thing in their life” and most of the rest (46 percent) rate their religion as “very important.” Nearly all them know without a doubt that God really exists (97 percent) and have a personal relationship with Him (97 percent). More than 4 out of 5 (82 percent) attend religious services on a weekly basis. And three-quarters of the Faithful describe their religious beliefs as “conservative,” the same number that identify themselves as “born again.”

Rejecting the more relativistic faith stance of many American parents, four-fifths of the Faithful (81 percent) reject the notion that “most religions are equally good paths to the same destination,” and only 10 percent say “there are few moral absolutes—what is right or wrong usually varies from situation to situation” (compared to a majority of other parents). Given these positions, it is not surprising that they are the only group among our family cultures to reject the idea that “we should be more tolerant of people who adopt alternate lifestyles”; only a quarter (27 percent) of the Faithful embrace this view (compared to 62 percent of other parents). These understandings all fit within a broader ontological framework in which human nature is seen as “basically sinful” (78 percent agreement) and the moral responsibility of each individual includes helping others to “lead more moral lives” (69 percent agreement). Other parents tend to reject both of these understandings (with only 43 percent and 36 percent agreement, respectively).

Faith and Children: Beyond matters of belief, daily interactions between the Faithful and their children are strongly informed by their religious framework. Not only do the Faithful pray (80 percent pray daily), but nearly two-thirds (64 percent) say they pray or have devotions with their children at least several times a week. Most (67 percent) practice a daily ritual of prayer with family meals; only 20 percent of other American parents do the same. The Faithful are also unusual in their habit of talking with their children about faith; nearly four-fifths of them (79 percent) say they do this at least several times a week compared to 30 percent of other parents. All of this is consistent
with their understanding that “raising children to reflect God’s will and purpose” is the most important goal of their own parenting. Three-quarters of the Faithful say this is more important than their children’s eventual happiness and positive feelings about themselves, whether their children one day make positive contributions to their communities, or whether their children become successful in their careers.

These things might strike some contemporary parents as quaint, even old-fashioned, but being old-fashioned is not a problem for the Faithful. They see spanking, for example, as a more important parenting tool than other parents,49 they are more inclined to assign daily chores, and they understand the role of parents as director of children’s development more than caretaker of their discovery gardens. Their sense of efficacy and control in the face of a seductive material world are impressive. Fully two-thirds reject the idea that “trying to control teenagers’ access to technology is a losing battle,” compared to 41 percent of other parents.

Community: While families, like politicians, may debate whether “it takes a village” to raise a child, all families live and breathe within broader networks of family, friends, organizations, and institutions. The Faithful, in particular, surround themselves with those who support their moral outlook and faith understandings. In situations where other parents turn to experts, clinicians, or counselors, the Faithful turn to pastors or spiritual counselors. A number of questions in our survey suggest that they are suspicious of social science (and scientific knowledge) in general. This suspicion often extends to experts trained in those disciplines—social workers, psychologists,

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**FIGURE 22 — Performance of Family Religious Practices by Family Cultures.**

![Graph showing performance of family religious practices by family cultures](image)
and educators—until, that is, the Faithful receive some signal of where the experts are coming from, of their faith commitments. When they have serious concerns about a child’s moral or ethical development, the Faithful say they turn first to their spouse, and then to scripture, religious teachings, pastors, or religious counselors. After that they turn to extended family or friends. Only later do they turn to teachers, school administrators, therapists, psychologists, or counselors. More than 4 out of 5 (83 percent) say the values they teach their children are greatly supported by their children’s experience with the faith community. In short, the structure of their hierarchy of trust is different than for many other parents. And the Faithful feel better supported in general by their web of relations than do many others. The fact that their faith community is woven tightly into that support fabric certainly has something to do with it.

**The World:** One of the reasons that the Faithful surround themselves with coreligionists is that the larger world is perceived to be in decline. About half of the Faithful see a “strong decline” since their own childhood in American moral and ethical standards (49 percent); in the quality of TV, movies, and entertainment (52 percent); and in the dating and sexual practices of teenagers (57 percent). In fact, a sizeable minority of the Faithful (42 percent) say that public schools have a generally negative impact upon the nation’s children (compared to only 19 percent of other parents). Even among the Faithful who still send their children to local public schools, nearly two-thirds (63 percent) say they would not do so if they had a choice, with religiously affiliated private schools and homeschooling being the preferred alternatives.

**Engaged Progressives—21 Percent of American Parents**

**An Overview**

Diametrically opposed in many ways to the Faithful are Engaged Progressives. For them, much that was once thought “eternal” has become contingent and thus open to assessment by expressly human criteria. Through that lens, time-honored injunctions can appear arbitrary, hollow, or partial to particular group interests at the expense of others. Stripped of their divine significance, traditional standards can be recast as unhealthy and unnecessary constraint. In fact, Engaged Progressives can even be filled with “righteous” indignation against what they perceive to be the deceptions of those who, from their perspective, have abandoned the ship of critical reason.

So it is not that the Engaged Progressives have abandoned morality; it is just that their moral universe has a different polarity. Engaged understandings of the “good” are both more fluid and more lightly carried than those of the Faithful. At the center of Engaged Progressives’ moral universe stands the virtue of personal freedom; with freedom comes choice, and by implication, responsibility for the consequences of one’s choices. Within such a moral framework, parents must prepare children to be responsible choosers, weighing alternatives, thinking carefully through courses of action in advance.

In their ideal, the playing field of life must be relatively even and open. Justice, therefore, defined as the universal application of fair rules, is a central concern of Engaged Progressives. Even so, it is understood that some have advantages, that there will be winners and losers, and that some will lead and others will follow in the race to achieve individual fulfillment and success.

Engaged Progressives, however, remind their children not to directly harm others. In fact, this is the closest they come to an absolute moral injunction. In their world, this “golden rule” and its moral extension—to do good for others—are in many ways sufficient to define a person as good or bad. Yet the values of honesty, openness, empathy, and rational explanation are understood to soften the social spaces in which the golden rule is applied. It is difficult to avoid harm if
one has no empathetic understanding of the object (or subject in this case) that might be harm’s recipient.

Having sidelined God as morality’s author, Engaged Progressives are left with the burden of constructing moral accounts, of justifying to others why they choose this over that, of explaining why their lives are ordered in particular ways. Such self-examination, at best, is difficult; at worst, it might unmask one’s “deeper” commitments as shallow; what is vaguely understood as serving others might be exposed as self-service. Even when choices are obviously self-serving, Engaged Progressives are uncomfortable with the prospect of that as their ultimate goal.

The Specifics

**Background Profile:** Seven of every 10 Engaged Progressive parents (71 percent) are white (non-Hispanic), 17 percent are Hispanic, and very few (only 2 percent) are black. They are more highly educated than other parents—nearly half (46 percent) have completed a 4-year degree compared to 31 percent of other parents. In fact, 20 percent of Engaged parents have completed postgraduate degrees, a rate double that of other parents. Few, relatively speaking, live in the 15 southern states. Half live either in the Northeast (including New England and the Mid-Atlantic states) or on the Pacific coast. Democrats outnumber Republicans by almost a 4-to-1 margin (44 percent to 12 percent), and 53 percent say they plan to vote for President Obama in the 2012 presidential election compared to 18 percent who say they will support his Republican opponent.

**Family Life:** Eighty percent of Engaged Progressive parents are married, and nearly two-thirds (63 percent) remain in their first marriage. An even greater number (68 percent) say they once lived with a romantic partner without being married, and most don’t regret it. In fact, 67 percent say that the trend toward more people living together without getting married has been a good thing for our society. For them, it has simply become a new stage in a relational progression; those among the Engaged who “lived together” (89 percent) generally considered it a step towards a possible marriage. While the divorce rate of Engaged Progressives parents does exceed that of the Faithful (27 percent compared to 21 percent), the Engaged have not experienced more divorces than other parents nationwide. They generally display less variation in family size than other parents, having settled upon a two-child ideal for family life. (Sixty-four percent say 2 children is best compared to 41 percent of the Faithful.)

**Faith and Morality:** In stark contrast to the Faithful, Engaged Progressive parents are the least religious of any in our study. In fact, none of them say religion is “the most important thing in my life,” and only 13 percent say religion is even “very important.” Instead, about two-thirds say religion is “not too important” (27 percent) or “not at all important” (36 percent). This reflects the fact that 3 out of 4 among the Engaged (74 percent) either have doubts about God’s existence or reject the notion altogether. Few (only 10 percent) are avowed atheists; more are agnostic (17 percent) or say they believe in a “higher power of some kind” (20 percent); and even more say they “have doubts, but feel they do believe in God” (28 percent). Given the equivocal nature of their belief system, it is not surprising that over half of the Engaged (57 percent) never attend religious services and less than 1 in 5 (19 percent) attend more than several times a year. The overwhelming majority (93 percent) say that their religious beliefs are moderate or liberal, that they haven’t been born again (91 percent), and that they reject the notion of a personal relationship with God (71 percent either say that they don’t have one or they don’t know whether they do).

While some among the Faithful might recoil at this portrait, charging Engaged Progressives with believing in little and standing for less, the truth is that Engaged Progressives embrace a moral order with its own logic and moral criteria. One thing that is high on their ethical agenda, for example, is the ideal of personal liberty. Over half (55 percent) believe that “as long as we don’t hurt others, we should all just live however we want.” And Engaged Progressive parents are even more supportive of a moral code advocating *tolerance of others* than they are of one advocating *freedom for self.* More than four-fifths (83 percent) agree
that “we should be more tolerant of people who adopt alternate lifestyles.” This is closely tied to the fact that two-thirds (64 percent) of these parents believe “there are few moral absolutes—what is right or wrong usually varies from situation to situation.”

So it is not that Engaged Progressives draw no conclusions about right versus wrong; it is just that their process for separating the two is less explicit and more fluid than that of the Faithful. But it could hardly be otherwise when their “most believable authority in matters of truth” is so malleable. Rather than turning to external (religious) sources in matters of truth (as do four-fifths of the Faithful), 6 of every 10 Engaged Progressives (59 percent) turn either to their own personal experience or to what “feels right” to them personally. Such moral criteria are fluid enough that Engaged Progressives feel an obligation to extend moral latitude to others, recognizing that the experiences and feelings of one person are not those of another. Yet the fact that they ground truth in clearly subjective sources does not translate into a preoccupation with the self when faced with moral dilemmas. Instead, a large majority of Engaged Progressives (71 percent) say they would do “what would be best for everyone involved” if they were unsure what was right or wrong in a situation. Faced with such a dilemma, only 10 percent say they would do what would make them happy personally or improve their individual situation. Whether they actually live according to these criteria is hard to say, but their articulated moral ideal is more communitarian than self-serving or hedonistic.

As further evidence of this communitarian ideal, Engaged Progressives are cautious about embracing
plainly relativistic and purely therapeutic moral priorities. While 6 out of 10, for example, agree that “the greatest moral virtue is to be honest about your feelings and desires,” half of those who do (29 percent of all Engaged Progressives) say they only “slightly agree,” rejecting the stronger “mostly agree” and “completely agree” endorsements. The same pattern holds for the individualistic notion that “our values are something that each of us must decide without being influenced by others.” And when asked about the statement that “everything is beautiful—it’s all a matter of how you look at it,” almost 7 out of 10 (69 percent) agree, but again, many of these (29 percent) only “slightly agree.” An even greater number of Engaged Progressives express skepticism about the assertion that “all views of what is good are equally valid.” And they reject outright the notion that “the best response in most situations is whatever keeps people from feeling uncomfortable or upset.” (Nearly two-thirds [64 percent] disagree compared to only 18 percent who agree.) In short, Engaged Progressives express a large measure of skepticism about strong moral positions period. This is true whether they are grounded in faith convictions or in more individualistic moral frameworks.

Children: How does such a moral order color family life and parent-child interactions in particular? Obviously, Engaged Progressives infrequently accompany their children to church, pray with them, or talk with them about God. For instance, 58 percent say they never have a prayer or blessing with family meals and another 24 percent say it happens only rarely. Popular stereotypes suggest that their lives may be too busy for sitting down with children at all, but our data reveal that they eat together with children about as often as the Faithful. Engaged Progressives don’t invoke the word “strict,” however, as often to describe their parenting approach with children, yet they are more inclined to call themselves “strict” than “permissive.” Generally speaking, though, they prefer the term “moderate.” Their hesitancy to employ punishments such as grounding, withholding television or internet privileges, scolding, or even the threat of a spanking confirm that there is substance behind their self-understanding as moderates in the realm of strictness.

Engaged Progressives overwhelmingly describe their relationships with their children as being “very close.” In fact, they are 11 times more likely to say they are close to their children than strict with them. In many ways, their relationships with children are described similarly to those of the Faithful. In both cases, two-thirds of parents see themselves as closer to their own children than their parents were with them. And in both cases, parents tend to see themselves as less strict than their parents were.

But there are contrasts too. One-third of Engaged Progressives say that spanking children is wrong and should never be done, and over half say they have never spanked their children (28 percent) or done so only once or twice (29 percent). Fewer than 1 in 5 (17 percent) say spanking plays any meaningful role in their parenting. Their moral opposition to spanking clearly sets them apart from other parents and they also have fewer quarrels over their children’s choice of friends and more of a sense (than the Faithful, at least) that efforts to control teenagers’ access to technology are futile. This distinction also plays out in their children’s involvement with movies, videos, and popular music. Half of Engaged Progressives say their children are more than just moderately involved with such elements of popular culture, compared to just 30 percent of the Faithful.

Engaged Progressive parents also have a different perspective than the Faithful on what is appropriate when. Take R-rated movies: Engaged Progressives typically say it is acceptable for children to watch them by about age 16, while the Faithful think children should wait until age 18 when they can legally watch them in a theater. And a quarter of Engaged Progressive parents will let their children attend parties without adult supervision by age 16 while the Faithful make them wait until they are legally “adults.” Engaged Progressive parents also let their children surf the web without any parental monitoring and hang out at the mall earlier. But the greatest difference in perceptions of what is developmentally appropriate has to do with romantic relationships. Engaged Progressives think it is appropriate for children to experience their first kiss at the age of 14 or 15, while the Faithful think children should wait until 16 or later. The same difference holds for information about sex. Engaged Progressives think children should receive information about birth control by the time they are 14, while the Faithful think they should wait until 16 or older.
Figure 24 — Mean Age at Which it Is Deemed “First Appropriate” by Family Cultures.63

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Engaged Progressives</th>
<th>The Faithful</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receive information about birth control</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>3.1 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience “first kiss”</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>2.4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surf the web without parental monitoring</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>1.9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch R-rated movies</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>3.1 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend a party with no adult supervision</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>1.4 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The World: But there is less of a reason for Engaged Progressives to be cautious about the world “out there” because their perceptions of it are more optimistic than those of the Faithful. Where the Faithful see strong decline, Engaged Progressives see only moderate decline, if not a world where things are holding steady. Their perceptions of American moral and ethical standards; the quality of TV, movies, and entertainment; and dating and the sexual practices of teenagers, in particular, are more benign than the perceptions of the Faithful. In each case, approximately half of the Faithful see a “strong decline” compared to less than 20 percent of Engaged Progressives.64 Public schools too are perceived quite differently. More children of Engaged Progressives attend local public schools in the first place. And even if they were given the option (and money) to send children wherever they wanted, two-thirds of Engaged Progressives would keep their children right where they are—in the local public school (compared with only 37 percent of the Faithful). And why not, when 75 percent of Engaged Progressives see public schools as having a generally positive impact upon our nation’s children (compared to 38 percent of the Faithful)?

In fact, the only part of the world “out there” that Engaged Progressives appear to be highly suspicious of is religion. While only 18 percent say they would be unlikely to seek advice for their children’s moral development from therapists, psychologists, or counselors; and 25 percent say the same about information sources on the internet; 7 out of 10 (69 percent) say they would be unlikely to seek advice from a pastor or religious counselor. Even more (80 percent) say they would steer clear of scripture and religious teachings as a guide to moral development. And why should they turn to sources that might have a radically different view of human nature? Less than a third of Engaged Progressives, after all, embrace the traditional Christian tenet that “human nature is basically sinful.”65 Moreover, 3 out of 4 (76 percent) believe divorce is preferable to maintaining an unhappy marriage, the same number that reject the idea that abortion is murder. And only 1 of every 10 Engaged Progressives rejects the idea of gay marriage. With this set of moral priorities, the only type of diversity that Engaged Progressives might tacitly oppose within their children’s friendship network would be a born-again Christian.

It would be unfair for Faithful parents to conclude by those previous statement that Engaged Progressives have lost respect for family values or for their children’s moral character. If the self-reports of Engaged Progressive parents mean anything, this is far from true. On the contrary, they are nearly unanimous (93 percent) in saying that they invest much effort in shaping the moral character of their children. And
their highest aspirations, like those of the Faithful, are that their children will become adults who are honest and truthful, who have strong moral character, and who treat others in a loving fashion. We call Engaged Progressives “engaged” because they are heavily invested in their parenting and work hard at it. The general portrait of them that emerges from the data is of parents who are fully committed to their children, who are less the authority figure and less punitive than parents among the Faithful, and who are generally more optimistic about both the culture that surrounds them and their children’s prospects in it. Their rejection of religion, the role of the faith community in supporting the family, and moral absolutism of any form are distinguishing features.

Some of the differences between family cultures are subtle. Mothers who still have preschool-aged children at home, for example, are about as likely to remain at home caring for them among Engaged Progressives as among the Faithful (58 percent compared to 65 percent). The difference between those mothers resides not in whether they stay at home, but how they think of themselves while doing so. The Faithful are more likely to consider themselves “homemakers” while Engaged Progressives still cite their vocational role as their occupation even though they are taking a hiatus.

The Detached—19 Percent of American Parents

An Overview

Between the clearly conservative commitments of the Faithful and the plainly progressive ones of Engaged Progressives lies a world of less moral certainty. Moral commitment persists, to be sure, but parents among the Detached are pulled in many directions simultaneously and often respond by slipping to the sidelines. Let the Faithful and Engaged Progressives battle for the moral high ground; life to the Detached seems complex enough that the primary freedom they seek is the freedom of retreat. Their parenting strategy is to let kids be kids and let the cards fall where they may. They are skeptical about the old certainties of the Faithful, but just as skeptical about the designs and self-assurance of Engaged Progressives.

It is not that the Detached embrace moral relativism to the same extent as moral progressives—they do not—but they lack the vision, vitality, certainty, and self-confidence required to embrace any agenda, even a relativistic one. In this sense, they are more morally overwhelmed and unresolved than committed relativists. Theirs is a universe of low parental efficacy, where political, religious, and social programs are confounding, peer influence looms large, and people just try to get by. Given a choice between this plan or that strategy, their choice is to remain undecided, to stand aside, to watch what others do.

Economically, they have fewer resources than either the Faithful or Engaged Progressives; educationally, they have lower aspirations and fewer options; politically, they are independents, if anything at all. In every arena—whether parental aspirations, moral commitments, faith connections, or political preferences—they are consistently unlikely to “vote.” Their families and children are as important to them as families are to other parents, but they view the paths to parental success as less pre-ordained than the Faithful and as more fickle—more a role of the dice—than Engaged Progressives.

They may quietly hope that one of their children will get lucky, becoming a celebrity, a sports star, or someone of significance, but trying to orchestrate such an outcome seems futile. There is too much to lose from the investment, too great a risk of failure, and too daunting a prospect of being played for a fool. If Engaged Progressives subscribe to the motto, “nothing ventured, nothing gained,” the Detached are more likely to quietly muse, “nothing ventured, nothing lost.” Laissez faire parenting, for them, is a natural response to a generalized lack of certainty and a weak sense of parental efficacy.
The Specifics

Background Profile: Two-thirds of Detached parents (65 percent) are white (non-Hispanic), 17 percent are Hispanic, and 1 of every 10 is black. On the whole, they are less educated than the Faithful and especially Engaged Progressives, with less than a quarter (23 percent) having completed a 4-year degree and nearly half (46 percent) not having attended college at all. One quarter of them have annual household incomes below $25,000, compared to 11 percent of Engaged Progressives and 13 percent of the Faithful. Of all our family cultures, the Detached have the fewest parents employed in professional and managerial occupations (33 percent). Nearly half (46 percent) are distributed across a variety of service, sales, construction and maintenance, laboring, and transport occupations.

The Detached are fairly proportionately distributed across American geographic regions, with slightly elevated percentages in the West-North Central and Mountain regions and slightly lower numbers on the Pacific coast. Democrats (28 percent) and Republicans (26 percent) are evenly represented among them, but politically they are most noted for the fact that 27 percent spurn political identification altogether, even the “Independent” designation. A third of Detached parents (34 percent) say they will vote for the Republican challenger in 2012, compared to 21 percent who say they will support President Obama, but what is most notable politically is the fact that nearly half (45 percent) indicate they will vote for someone else or not at all.

Family Life: Two-thirds (67 percent) of Detached parents are currently married, and slightly more than half (54 percent) remain in their first marriage. Like Engaged Progressives, about two-thirds (63 percent) say they once lived with a romantic partner without being married, but unlike Engaged Progressives, most of the Detached (59 percent) think this trend is bad for society. Nearly 3 of every 10 among the Detached (29 percent) have divorced at some point. Currently, 14 percent are divorced or separated, another 13 percent are currently living with a partner, and another 5 percent are single parents. About 1 in 4 (27 percent) indicate that they receive at least moderate help in parenting from a parent of their children who lives at a different residence. Detached parents are twice as likely as the Faithful to have only one child.

One of the most distinctive things about the Detached is that throughout our survey, they tend to check the response that says “neutral” or similar responses that suggest a certain indifference or hesitancy to commit. Yet there is enough movement and variation in their responses that we interpret this as reflecting something about their approach to life, not just to surveys. They are generally reticent; when they disagree or agree with a statement, they do so “slightly.” Their responses to our questioning also reflect a lack of personal efficacy. Simply put, they appear to be parents who shrug their shoulders at many things, not being confident enough, clear enough, or committed enough in their response to take a strong position. They are more phlegmatic than passionate, at least in the way they respond to inquiries such as ours.

We see this first and foremost in the way the Detached talk about their families. Less than 4 in 10 (38 percent), for example, say they are “very happy” in their marriages, compared to over half of other parents (52 percent). And less than one-third of the Detached (29 percent) say they are “very happy” with their parenting experience overall, compared to half of all other parents. And they spend less time with their children: nearly half (43 percent) say they spend less than 2 hours interacting with children on a typical school day, compared to 27 percent of other parents. They are twice as likely as Faithful and Engaged Progressive parents to keep the television on during family meals (and watch more TV generally than other parents). They are less optimistic about the opportunities for their children’s generation than other parents.

Morality and School Life: When it comes to the values and character traits that the Detached want their children to display as adults, no trait—not even honesty—is rated as “absolutely essential.” (About one-third of the Detached [35 percent] consider honesty to be “absolutely essential,” compared to 83 percent of other parents.) Similarly, the importance of generosity with others is discounted: 6 percent of the Detached say generosity is absolutely essential, compared to 21 percent of Engaged Progressives and 43 percent of the Faithful. And the Detached downplay “volunteering time to help others” in much the same way. Yet when it comes to being practical, the Detached are twice as likely as the Faithful and Engaged Progressives to consider “valuing practical skills over book learning” as very important for their children.
Knowledge about their country and the world, on the other hand, doesn’t matter much. Only one-third of the Detached say it is “very important” for their children to become knowledgeable, compared to a solid majority of other parents (60 percent). The Detached are also less insistent that their children attend college, which isn’t surprising given their children’s lower academic performance in school. (Consider that children of the Detached are about as likely to be “A” students as “less than B” students, while children of Engaged Progressives are three times more likely to be the former than the latter.)

The older teenagers of Detached parents are more likely to get into fights at school, and metaphorically at least, their parents are fighting too—if not fighting for parental influence, at least feeling ambivalent about the school’s role in their children’s lives. They are practical enough to realize an education is necessary, yet they wonder whether the values and perspectives embraced by professional educators connect in any way with their own. When asked how much the values they teach their children are reinforced by their children’s schools, only one-third of Detached parents (34 percent) say “a great deal,” compared to just over half of other American parents (52 percent). But maybe that is because the Detached offer little moral instruction in the first place. Less than 4 of every 10 (38 percent) say that instructing their children in “appropriate moral behavior” plays an extremely important role in their parenting. The vast majority of other parents (86 percent), by contrast, say that it does.

The World: So Detached parents feel at a distance from what is happening in their children’s schools. High
school, in particular, can become a world in which the tug of peer influence, from one direction, and professional educators, from another, seems strong enough that Detached parents find their island of parental influence eroding from all sides. In contrast to two-thirds of the Faithful and half of Engaged Progressives who believe they retain great parental influence after their children enter high school, only 29 percent of Detached parents do.75 And the Detached are the only family culture that doesn’t reject the statement, “parents today are in a losing battle with all of the other influences out there.” More than most parents, they disagree with the idea that “this is a great time to be bringing children into the world.”76 Their story, in a word, is one of influence lost.

Other things too seem foreign to Detached parents. They are more inclined than other parents to say that greater ethnic diversity has been bad for our society. Nearly 4 out of 5 (78 percent) say they know half or fewer of the parents of their children’s close friends. And unlike friends of previous generations who could be sent home when parents chose, these friends linger, becoming invisible “strangers in the house,” electronically tethered for better or worse to the children. Our data suggest too that this is more true for the Detached than for Engaged Progressives and the Faithful; only 37 percent of the Detached believe they actually have the power to control a teenager’s access to technology, while nearly twice as many of the Faithful (66 percent) think that they can.77 In this sense, the faith of the Faithful extends beyond religion: they share a sense of parental efficacy with Engaged Progressives that the Detached clearly lack.
**Faith:** Conversely, the lack of confidence that the Detached display in their parenting also creeps into other areas. Consider that while 6 of every 10 Detached parents (59 percent) say they have no doubts about God’s existence and another 22 percent say they believe in spite of occasional doubts, when we ask them to elaborate, the devil is in the details. For instance, 7 out of 10 (70 percent) attend religious services once a month or less, and half say they pray once a week or less. As would be expected, these personal patterns are repeated in Detached parents’ interactions with their children. For instance, 70 percent have prayer or devotions with their children once a month or less, and about two-thirds (64 percent) rarely if ever speak with their children about matters of faith.78 Over half (54 percent) say their children rarely, if ever, attend church. Only one-third consider it very important that their children become persons of strong religious faith. Perhaps most telling is the assessment of Detached parents of the importance of their own faith: only a third (34 percent) rate it as very important, compared to 56 percent of all other parents and 95 percent of the Faithful.

**American Dreamers—27 Percent of American Parents**

**An Overview**

Like the Detached, American Dreamers occupy a middle ground between the religious convictions of the Faithful and the “enlightened” convictions of Engaged Progressives. And, while they are more religiously involved than the Detached, they are also more affirming of a live-and-let-live morality. Many American Dreamers—about half—are black (22 percent) or Hispanic (26 percent). Socioeconomically, they fare little better than the primarily white Detached. About 1 in 4 live below the poverty line and about half (52 percent) have household incomes below $50,000. In the same way, most (75 percent) have less than a college degree and just 8 percent have some kind of graduate degree. Despite such disadvantages, their aspirations for their children’s futures couldn’t be more distinct from the Detached. This is why we call them “American Dreamers”: where their children are concerned, they hope for much and invest even more, pouring themselves fully into their families’ futures.

In the case of the American Dreamers, however, “family” looks a little different. Structurally, it often departs from the nuclear family model. Single parenthood is common, but so are thick webs of connection within extended families. Whatever the form of family, American Dreamers understand that parents are the agents who make and enforce family rules, even though they also expect that children will test them. And when they do, American Dreamers are as quick to spank or scold as they are to praise or reward good behavior.

In short, American Dreamers are engaged parents, have some sense that “a mother knows,” that “kids will be kids,” and have high hopes for what their children will eventually become in the realm of character and otherwise. Compared to the Detached, the optimism and engagement of American Dreamers are clearly progressive in the sense that American Dreamers not only look upon the future with optimism, but they are also hopeful that their efforts will reap relational and material dividends for their families.

**The Specifics**

**Background Profile:** Of all our family cultures, American Dreamers is the only one to have a majority representation of minorities. One quarter (26 percent) of American Dreamer parents are Hispanic, 22 percent are black, and 7 percent claim some other minority designation. Only 46 percent are white. Their levels of education and income are very similar to those of the Detached. Nearly half of American Dreamers (44 percent) have received no formal education beyond high school, while only one quarter have 4-year college degrees. Just over half (52 percent) have family incomes below $50,000 a year, while only 15 percent have family incomes above $100,000 (compared to
American Dreamers are distributed much like the Faithful, with large concentrations in the South (44 percent, compared to 33 percent of other parents) and few living in the Western states (17 percent, compared to 27 percent of other parents).

Politically, they are less partisan than Engaged Progressives or the Faithful, but they do lean more toward the political stance of the former than the latter. Thirty-six percent claim to be Democrats and 26 percent to be Republican, while 38 percent say they are Independent or express no party identification at all. It follows that American Dreamer parents are nearly twice as likely as the Detached to say they will support President Obama in 2012, with 37 percent saying they will vote for him, compared to 21 percent of the Detached. Yet even though a “blue” political tilt typifies this family culture, the tilt is closely connected to its racial and ethnic composition. Consider, for instance, that whites among American Dreamers are much less supportive of President Obama (13 percent) than blacks (92 percent). We must not, therefore, think of culture as free floating or disconnected from the social and economic circumstances in which it occurs. At the same time, we should not write it off as a mere reflection or artifact of those same circumstances.

Family Structures: Like their racial and ethnic composition, American Dreamers’ family structures differ from those of other parents. Less than two-thirds (64 percent) are currently married, compared to 76 percent of other parents. This relatively low proportion...
of married couples is similar only to the Detached, but what it means to be “unmarried” in the two cases differs. For American Dreamers, being unmarried means being divorced or separated (for 39 percent), being someone who has never married and parents alone (for 34 percent), or living with a partner (for 22 percent). Among the Detached, on the other hand, being unmarried more commonly means living together with a partner (41 percent), but less often denotes a solitary parent who has never married (16 percent). Unmarried parents are disproportionately women, so the ratio of women to men among American Dreamers is higher than for other parents in our study. All of these patterns are connected to the heavy concentration of ethnic minorities among American Dreamers, as is the reality that there are more unmarried women (29 percent of all American Dreamers) than in any other family culture. In fact, over half of the black parents among American Dreamers (53 percent) are unmarried women.

*Family Life:* Like all family cultures except the Faithful, most American Dreamers (66 percent) have lived with a romantic partner outside of marriage, and like the Detached, they say this trend is bad for society. Even though over half (55 percent) are still married to their first spouse, the proportion is lower than for Engaged Progressives and the Faithful. At some point in their lives, over a quarter of American Dreamers (27 percent) have divorced. In short, their family patterns are variegated with more departures from the nuclear family archetype than among other family cultures.

As a consequence, the number of American Dreamers who say they have “no real support network” is somewhat higher than for other family cultures—nearly 1
A Nationale Survey

in 5 (19 percent). Yet it would be misleading to conclude that this represents the prevailing pattern. Rather, most American Dreamers claim to be “fairly well” (20 percent) or “very well” (26 percent) supported by a network of family and friends. It is true that because of the number of unmarried, more American Dreamers (19 percent) receive “no support at all” from a spouse than among other parents (11 percent), but they make up for it in other ways. They are more likely, for example, to receive support from extended family members and from other sources in the community than are Engaged Progressives. Indeed, their pattern of parenting is less autonomous in general, for a variety of cultural and socioeconomic reasons.

Children: Educationally and economically, American Dreamers find themselves in similar circumstances to the Detached. So why not combine the two? Because, while their economic situation may be similar, their cultural response to that situation differs dramatically. Take their expressed level of investment in their children. American Dreamers are twice as likely as the Detached (61 percent compared to 28 percent) to express clearly that they invest heavily in providing opportunities to give their children a competitive advantage down the road. Similarly, 85 percent express clearly that they invest heavily in shaping their children's moral character, compared to just 49 percent of the Detached. And American Dreamers, who seem particularly worried that predators, drugs, and other risks might threaten their children's future, also express clearly that they invest heavily in protecting their children from negative social influences; 7 of every 10 (68 percent) say they do so, compared to just a third (33 percent) of the Detached. Yet even with this heavy level of investment, American Dreamer
parents are inclined to think they should be doing more.

Basic Hope and Optimism: Beyond what it says about their daily activities, the investment of American Dreamers in their children is a reflection of something deeper, something at the core of their cultural makeup. They live and breathe a faith and hope that things will be better. They are nearly twice as likely to say their children's generation will have greater opportunities than their own, than to say they will have fewer. Compared to other parents, they are more likely to say that “public schools these days have a positive impact upon our nation's children.” And their optimism is contagious, at least within their families: nearly half (48 percent) say their children have “very positive” attitudes toward school, and most of the rest (37 percent) say their children's attitudes are “mostly positive.” Their faith in the power of education is unrivaled. Virtually all American Dreamer parents (92 percent) say it is very important, if not essential, that their children become highly educated, compared to 71 percent of other parents. Similarly, 92 percent say being “smart” or “intelligent” is very important, compared to 75 percent of other parents.

Faith: Their religious faith, however, is another matter. By traditional standards of religiosity, they are more religious than the Detached, and much more religious than Engaged Progressives. Yet the picture is mixed. Four out of 5 (81 percent) express complete certainty that God exists, and roughly two-thirds (63 percent) say religion is very important in their lives. Even so, unlike the Faithful, few American Dreamers (16 percent) say religion is “the most important thing in my life.” This parallels their thinking about their parenting purposes.
Nearly two-thirds cite “raising children whose lives will reflect God’s will and purpose” as one of their primary goals, yet roughly a third (36 percent) call it their top priority. Just as many (35 percent) say their top priority is offering “the kind of love and affection that will nurture happiness, positive feelings about themselves, and warm relationships with others.”

Therapeutic Morality: This signals the therapeutic sensibility that is common among American Dreamers. Three-quarters (74 percent), for example, say that “the greatest moral virtue is to be honest about your feelings and desires”; fewer than 1 in 10 (9 percent) reject this moral tenet. Nearly 9 of every 10 (86 percent) list becoming “loving” as an “absolutely essential” quality for their children, compared to just half (50 percent) of other parents. Half of American Dreamers say that “what their personal experience teaches them” or what “feels right to them personally” is the most believable authority in matters of truth, compared to just a third who point to scripture, prayer, or the counsel of religious leaders. Most say that “sharing information and emotions freely with children” describes their parenting approach better than “preserving clear parent/child boundaries.” And why? In the end, they are more likely than any other family culture to say, “I hope to be best friends with my children when they are grown.” Four out of 5 American Dreamers (82 percent) agree with this statement, compared to 69 percent of other parents.

Even so, American Dreamers express a greater willingness than other parents to use discipline to correct their children’s misbehavior. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent), for instance, say that imposing “time-outs” and sending children to their rooms are very important corrective tools (compared to 42 percent of other parents). And over half (57 percent) say that scolding or speaking in a strong voice is an important corrective (compared to 35 percent of other parents). American Dreamers, though, are not big spankers. Just under a quarter say that spanking is relied upon as a very important way to correct misbehavior; they generally reserve it for rare situations when “nothing else seems to work.” In fact, a gap exists between the way American Dreamers classify “spanking” and the way they classify the “threat of spanking.” Spanking itself is strongly endorsed by only a quarter of American Dreamers, yet the threat of spanking is rated as very important by twice that many (50 percent). This gap suggests that when push comes to shove, many American Dreamers are “softies,” wanting to remain on good terms with their children even as they seek to point them in the right direction.
Responsiveness to, and expectations for, children has been at the heart of “parenting styles” research for the past two decades. As analytic tools, these two formative notions sensitize parents, educators, and others entrusted with child formation to important parent-child dynamics within the family. These dynamics of responsiveness and expectation have been found to predict, among other things: children’s academic success, self-esteem, behavior problems, levels of depression, and social competence. Since all Americans have a stake in these outcomes, it is little wonder that so much interest and effort has been poured into variations of the parenting styles typology depicted in Figure 31.

Even though each of these four parenting styles is considered to fall within the range of normal parenting, it is commonly considered that only one of...
them—authoritative parenting—produces the most desirable outcomes in children. In the words of Nancy Darling, “authoritative upbringing is associated with both instrumental and social competence and lower levels of problem behavior in both boys and girls at all developmental stages.” This is because authoritative parenting blends the two forces, high involvement and high expectations, that most believe must be balanced for children to thrive in American culture.

The Culture of American Families Survey suggests that American parents seem to get this. They may be unfamiliar with the “authoritative parent” type, but the normative desirability of the kind of parenting it represents permeates their culture. In their everyday language, they espouse a combination of “strictness” (high expectations) and “closeness” (high involvement) as keys to their parental identities. Indeed, if we momentarily think of self-described strictness and closeness as proxies for the sophisticated measures of developmental psychologists, our survey finds that 69 percent of parents think of themselves as authoritative; 27 percent as permissive; 2 percent as uninvolved; and just 1 percent as authoritarian. Even though casual self-description is in no way adequate to the task of measuring parenting style; it does reflect the prominence of the close, but strict (involved, but demanding) parenting ideal in American family culture.

With such a consensus about the importance of close connection and high demands, which are the heart of the parenting styles typology, why have we introduced the more amorphous notion of “family cultures”? What does a new four-way breakdown add?

First, it reminds us that parenting consists of more than the ways that parents relate directly to their children. The way parents relate to each other is also part of parenting, as is the way they think and speak about faith, politics, and civic participation. Parents’ stories of the past and hopes for the future are part of parenting, as are their family rituals and moral guideposts. And their own confidence and sense of being an effective agent in their children’s lives are also part of parenting. To make this point, we could even offer a dimensional diagram like Figure 31 to summarize important differences between the Faithful, Engaged Progressives, the Detached, and American Dreamers. But we do so with caution. For one thing, we make no claim that these two dimensions—the source of moral authority and the sense of parental agency (efficacy)—are the single, most important factors to consider when examining family cultures. They are important, to be sure, but additional axes might emerge from the analysis of other data. Another reason to be cautious is that cultural dynamics are fluid, and diagrams such as Figure 32 tend to freeze them. In the final analysis, the placement of family cultures on theoretical (or empirical) axes is less important than the potential insight gained by considering dimensions of family variation that take us beyond parental expectations and involvement with children.

To underscore the importance of broadening the analysis, let us imagine for a moment that the correct “parenting style”—consistent, authoritative parenting—was sufficient to produce a generation of children who were academically and vocationally successful, socially competent, and filled with high self-esteem. Even if this were the case, many questions would remain. Would these successful adults be loving and kind to one another? Would they sacrifice their own material success to help others in their community? Would they be humble and forgiving as well as productive and successful? Would they take responsibility for their own shortcomings rather than blaming others? Each of us can think of vocationally successful adults with high self-esteem who fall short in these areas. Unfortunately, the correlates of “parenting style” are often limited to measures of personal success and well-being rather than realms of moral character that one hopes for in friends and neighbors.

But the moral realm is precisely what we have endeavored to highlight in the Culture of American Families Project. Our survey’s extension into the fuzzier realms of hope, aspiration, and moral narratives reminds us that families with very similar parenting styles—authoritative evangelicals and authoritative progressives, for example—can speak completely different moral languages and have vastly divergent orientations toward the culture beyond their family havens. Their family cultures require that professionals speak and work with them differently if the professionals are to connect with them at all.

Conversely, this study reveals that “red families” and “blue families,” families that some would
automatically classify at opposite ends of every spectrum, actually have a lot in common. Many share patterns of intensive parenting—concerted cultivation, in Annette Lareau’s terminology. But beyond that, they also share common aspirations that their children will become loving, honest and responsible adults of high moral character. We would do well to remind ourselves of these commonalities even as we acknowledge the different ideological worlds that they inhabit.

Finally, the concept of “family cultures” remind us that families who share similar socioeconomic disadvantages do not always respond similarly. Some parents respond to economic adversity by losing confidence in their own ability to change anything, including their children. Their low sense of personal efficacy is reflected in a live-and-let-live attitude, in which they enjoy the small pleasures of the moment rather than planning for the long term. Some indeed believe that their chances of lifting themselves up by the bootstraps are lower than their chances of winning the lottery, and they live accordingly. Others in a similar economic circumstance, however, maintain a reserve of hope for their children’s future, if not their own. These high hopes lead them to invest resolutely in their children, and especially in their children’s education, with an eye toward the emotional and material dividends that such investments might one day pay. At least they can hope as much.

We do not intend for “family culture” to provide a new set of “explanatory variables” that will predict outcomes for coming generations of American adults. But we do believe that the *Culture of American Families Project* offers interpretive variables that will sensitize readers to aspects of family life that have been previously overlooked, aspects that are important in their own right.
One such aspect is a recognition of the resilience and optimism of American parents. In the midst of all the talk of family crisis—of neglectful parents, of overzealous parenting, of children suffering from all manner of problems and dysfunctions—we have found that American parents worry, but they do not despair about their families. When they despair, it is generally about the state of things elsewhere rather than under their own roofs.

Even though the challenges faced by today’s parents are daunting, and few maps remain to point the way, it is encouraging that at the end of the day, parents still love to parent, and still love spending time with their children. It is encouraging too that the stalwart qualities traditionally associated with “moral character”—being loving, honest, responsible, and the like—continue to resonate with America’s parents. Finally, it is encouraging that parents continue to find “support when necessary” from others beyond their family circle. Parents may be unrealistically positive in their assessments of their children, yet there is something heartwarming in our finding that hope is a core feature of the culture of American families.
APPENDIX A
Survey Methodology

The Sample

The *Culture of American Families Survey* is a nationally representative, web-based survey of American parents of school-aged children. The survey was designed by the University of Virginia’s Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture and administered by Knowledge Networks, utilizing a sample of parents with at least one child aged 5–18 living in the household, drawn from their KnowledgePanel™. The probability-based KnowledgePanel is recruited by Knowledge Networks using a multi-stage process beginning with a comprehensive, addressed-based sampling frame supplied by the United States Postal Service. To ensure even representation of American households from all socioeconomic levels, Knowledge Networks supplies a laptop and internet connection for households without internet access. Our sample was selected from the larger KnowledgePanel using a probability proportional to size technique that has been honed and patented by Knowledge Networks.90

The target sample size of 3,000 respondents was exceeded by 17 cases, but a thorough cleaning and analysis of response-set behavior identified 113 cases as problematic. These were dropped from the sample prior to weighting, leaving a sample of 2,904 cases. The design effect for the survey was 2.2486, the completion rate for the screener (screening parents of children 5-18 years old) was 64.2 percent, and the qualification rate was 88.6 percent. All reported percents are weighted percents, and all significance tests that served as the basis for emphasizing differences between groups were computed using Stata’s survey data analysis routines, which take design effects into account in the estimation of standard errors and probabilities. Estimates of the number of parents nationwide who would give a specific response to any of our survey items can be computed by dividing the percentage reported for the item in Appendix B by 100, and then multiplying the resulting proportion by 60,572,436. To estimate the number of parents nationwide who would report having an overweight child, for example, multiply the .28 (reported in question 59) by 60,572,436, yielding an estimate of 16,960,282 parents who would report at least one overweight child.

To further explore any nonresponse biases that might exist in the data, a nonresponse follow-up survey was conducted with a targeted sample of 600 parents, of which 436 parents responded. The purpose was to explore differences in patterns of response to *Culture of American Families Survey* questions between our 2,904 respondents and those who did not complete the survey. The 436 nonrespondents fell into one of these categories: 1) those who did not join the KnowledgePanel when initially recruited; 2) those who stated an intention to join, but did not provide demographic or socio-economic data required to join the KnowledgePanel; 3) those who joined the KnowledgePanel but later quit; and 4) those within the KnowledgePanel who were invited to complete the *Culture of American Families Survey*, but did not do so. The follow-up study revealed that the 2,904 participants in our study were more likely to be working 20 hours a week or less and less likely to work full-time. Given the subject matter of the survey and its length, this is not surprising.

The Survey

The web-based survey (including the non-response follow-up) was conducted from September 30, 2011 through January 18, 2012. The median completion
time was just over an hour. Topics included aspirations for children, discipline strategies, family practices, children’s activities, and parental views on morality and politics. See Appendix B for the complete questionnaire with percentage distributions. The survey was developed by a team at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, submitted for critique to others beyond the team, and piloted with a small sample by Knowledge Networks before it was fielded with the larger sample. Respondents were given a post-paid incentive of $10 for completing the survey. All questionnaires were completed in English, and Knowledge Networks ensured basic English proficiency for all respondents. Because of this language requirement, Hispanic respondents are representative of English-speaking Hispanics only, and other linguistic minorities and recent immigrants are underrepresented in our sample.

Weighting

Post-hoc weighting was employed to adjust sample distributions on key demographic variables to match the KnowledgePanel. Key variables considered in the weighting were race, gender, age, education, and place of residence. See Table A.1 for demographic and weighting comparisons. Males with lower levels of education were the most heavily weighted group, and college-educated females received the lowest weights (indicating that the latter were over-represented in the raw data). All analyses, however, were performed using post-hoc weights supplied by Knowledge Networks to compensate for any nonresponse bias in raw percentage estimates.

Family Cultures

The four family cultures, discussed in chapter five were generated using a \(k\)-means cluster analysis. Initial cluster analyses were performed using AdviseStat, a new statistical program authored by Leland Wilkinson, which incorporates a nonparametric measure to estimate the “goodness” of particular clustering solutions. AdviseStat also employs statistical estimation procedures to decide on the most plausible number of clusters for the problem in question. In our case, the variables input into the clustering problem resulted in a four-cluster solution. Once the four-cluster solution was arrived at, further refining of the clusters was done using SYSTAT statistical software. Since the goal was to broadly discriminate between groups of parents who participate in different family cultures, a broad spectrum of culture measures was employed, including: measures of religiosity, distinct moral narratives (relativistic versus universal, etc.), hopes and aspirations for children, disciplinary strategies, and parents’ perceptions of their own personal control and efficacy in parenting. No demographic variables (such as race/ethnicity, education, region, gender, or income) were included in the \(k\)-means analysis, which means that any demographic differences obtained between our family culture clusters—such as the ethnic/racial difference between American Dreamers and the Detached—result entirely from the divergence of those demographic groups on the specifically culture measures that served as the basis for discriminating the family-culture clusters.
Table A.1 — *Culture of American Families Survey* Demographics

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<td>35–44 years</td>
<td>1129</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 and older</td>
<td>1120</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, never married</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living together</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2159</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/Separated</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One child</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two children</td>
<td>1164</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or more children</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school or less</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college/tech.</td>
<td>1115</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four-year degree or more</td>
<td>1273</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $25,000</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000–$49,999</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000–$74,999</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000–$99,999</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 or more</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region of Residence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>948</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Party</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>815</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent/No preference</td>
<td>1044</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious Preference</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Protestant</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainline Protestant</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing in particular</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2904^3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: All numbers are weighted percentages of response unless otherwise indicated.

S1. Do you have any children ages 5 to 18 who live in your household at least part of the time?
100 Yes

1. Taking all things together, how happy are things in your life these days?
   31 Very happy
   58 Rather happy
   11 Not very happy
   0 Not at all happy

2. Taking all things together, how happy has your parenting experience been to this point?
   46 Very happy
   48 Rather happy
   5 Not very happy
   0 Not at all happy

3. Counting all of your children, how many children do you have in each of these categories?
   97 Have biological children
   5 Have adopted children
   15 Have step-children
   4 Have other children
   Mean number of children: 2.72
   Median number of children: 2

4. Of these children, how many currently live in your household at least part of the time?
   Mean number of children: 2.21
   Median number of children: 2

5. Some parents feel like they go it alone in raising their children, while others feel well supported by a larger network of family and friends. Which of the following statements best describes your parenting situation?
   17 Very independent—no real support network
   37 Fairly independent, with a little support when necessary
   21 Fairly well supported by a network of friends and/or family
   25 Very well supported by a network of friends and/or family
6. In your daily routine of parenting, how much active child-care support do you typically receive from each of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Level</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Support at All</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your spouse or partner</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or more of the children’s grandparents</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One of your older children</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or more of the children’s aunts/uncles</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your friendship network</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of your religious or faith community</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After-school programs</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another parent of your children (who does not live at your residence)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbors</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Services or government support agencies</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. For each of your children who lives at home at least part time, indicate the following:

**Technology:**

- **41** Carries a cell phone
- **35** Has a social network account
- **53** Has neither cell phone nor social network account

**Type of School Currently Attending:**

- **15** Not enrolled in school
- **60** Local neighborhood school
- **7** Public charter or magnet school
- **6** Private, religious
- **6** University or college
- **3** Homeschool
- **4** Other type of school

**Gender:**

- **47** Female
- **53** Male

**Age:**

- **14** 0–4 Years
- **30** 5–9 Years
- **18** 10–12 Years
- **19** 13–15 Years
- **14** 16–18 Years
- **6** 19 Years or older

**Bedroom:**

- **63** Private bedroom
- **37** Shared bedroom
10. On a 1 to 7 scale with 1 indicating “Negative” and 7 indicating “Positive,” how would you complete this sentence:

*All things considered, public schools these days have a ____________ impact upon our nation’s children.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Recently Completed:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 Kindergarten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 1st–3rd Grades</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 4th–5th Grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 6th–8th Grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 9th–12th Grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 College and beyond</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical Academic Performance:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33 A Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 A/B Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 B Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 B/C Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 C Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 C/D Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 D Student and below</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. How many of the children you have listed divide their time between your home and another family residence?
   - 79 None
   - 11 One
   - 9 Two or more

9. Altogether, how many of your school-aged children ever attended a school other than the public school that serves your neighborhood?
   - 68 None
   - 17 One
   - 11 Two
   - 5 Three or more

11. [For those who entered “None” in Q9] If money were not a factor and you could send your children to any school you wanted, which type of school would you probably choose?
   - 50 The public school they attend currently
   - 5 A public school in a different neighborhood
   - 7 Charter school
   - 21 Religiously affiliated private school
   - 11 Non-religiously affiliated private school
   - 4 Homeschool
   - 3 Other school
12. [For those who entered more than “None” in Q9] Which of the following were the two most important reasons for choosing something other than your local public school? [pick two]

- 35 Stronger academic program
- 28 Better all around fit for the child/children
- 28 A more religious environment
- 24 Smaller classes
- 24 A safer environment
- 21 Better instruction
- 12 Stricter disciplinary environment
- 10 Better support for my child’s special needs
- 9 A focus upon alternative values or ways of understanding life and the world
- 4 Better art, music, or drama program
- 2 Better access to sports and athletics
- 2 Better access to technology and computers
- 1 Child was expelled from the public school

13. Being realistic, on a typical school day, about how much time do you spend interacting with your children?

- 0 None
- 1 Less than a half hour
- 4 A half hour to just under an hour
- 8 About an hour
- 16 More than 1 but less than 2 hours
- 33 2–3 hours
- 37 More than 3 hours

14. How often do children in your family typically sit down together with one or more parents for a meal?

- 1 Never
- 3 Rarely—less than once a month
- 3 Once or twice a month
- 10 About weekly
- 32 Several times a week
- 51 Daily

15. [If Q14 is “About weekly” or greater] How often do you have a prayer or blessing with family meals?

- 30 Never
- 20 Rarely—less than once a month
- 5 Once or twice a month
- 6 About weekly
- 10 Several times a week
- 29 Daily

16. [If Q14 is “About weekly” or greater] How often do family members use electronics (such as computers, cell phones [including text messaging], Game Boys, and e-readers) during family meals?

- 54 Never
- 18 Rarely—less than once a month
- 4 Once or twice a month
- 4 About weekly
- 6 Several times a week
- 13 Daily

17. [If Q14 is “About weekly” or greater] How often is the television on and visible during family meals?

- 23 Never
- 17 Rarely—less than once a month
- 9 Once or twice a month
- 12 About weekly
- 17 Several times a week
- 22 Daily
18. Families today come in all flavors. For each pair of opposites below, choose the number that best describes your own family. Choosing 1 or 7 indicates that one of the two statements perfectly describes your family, and choosing 4 indicates that your family is right in the middle between the two statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>All meals as a family are home cooked.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All meals as a family are heated from frozen or prepared foods.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>All meals as a family are in restaurants.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All meals as a family are at home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Children’s homework is always monitored by parents.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children’s homework is never monitored by parents.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Children’s bedtimes are set by parents.</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children make their own decisions about bedtime.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Children have no friends within walking distance.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children have many friends within walking distance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Children spend no time in front of the TV.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children spend a lot of their time in front of the TV.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Children’s internet access is not restricted.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children’s internet access is tightly restricted.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Children use cell phones frequently.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children never use cell phones.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Children earn the money to buy things.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children are given money to buy things.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Children have a lot of free time.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children’s time is highly scheduled.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Children see their parents as friends.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children see their parents as authority figures.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Family decisions involve much parent-child negotiations.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
19. All things considered, do you think the opportunities for your children’s generation will be greater, fewer, or about the same as the opportunities your generation has had in life?

47  Their opportunities will be greater.

34  Their opportunities will be fewer.

20  Their opportunities will be about the same as for my generation.

20. The way we were raised often influences our parenting. Which statement best expresses the way your own upbringing influences your parenting?

12  The way I was raised is mostly a negative model that I reject in favor of better approaches.

35  The way I was raised is mostly a positive model that I try to repeat with my own children.

6   The way I was raised is mostly irrelevant; I seldom think about the way I was raised.

47  The way I was raised was an equal mix of good and bad; I repeat some things and reject others with my own children.
21. We all have hopes about the kind of adults we would like our children to become. Thinking about your own hopes for your children, how important is it that each of your children be each of the following as adults?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Important At All</th>
<th>Not Very Important</th>
<th>Fairly Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Absolutely Essential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honest and truthful</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons of strong moral character</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable and dependable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard-working</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in preserving close ties with parents and family</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial independent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly educated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generous with others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart/Intelligent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable sharing their feelings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiving of others when wronged</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable about their country and the world</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived as worthy of respect—someone who will not be “dissed” or ignored</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons who exercise and are physically fit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons who volunteer time to help others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons of strong religious faith</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriotic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned about recycling and protecting the environment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons who value practical skills over book learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in the arts, literature, and history</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thin, not overweight</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular and well-liked</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerful and influential</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good athletes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons who share your own outlook on government and politics</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famous or well-known</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On a scale of 1 to 7, please describe your interactions with your children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. How would you describe your parenting approach with your own children?</td>
<td>Very Strict</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Very Permissive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. [If Married or Partnered] How would you describe your Spouse's/Partner's typical parenting approach with your children?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Strict</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Very Permissive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. How would you generally describe your relationship to your children?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Close</th>
<th>Very Distant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25. [If Married or Partnered] How would you generally describe your Spouse's/Partner's relationship to your children?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Close</th>
<th>Very Distant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. During the entire course of your parenting, how often have you used physical discipline, such as spanking or slapping a child, if ever?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Only once or twice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Rarely, but more than once or twice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>A fair bit—when other things didn’t work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pretty often—it was a standard form of punishment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very often</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27. Which statement comes closest to your thinking about spanking as a form of discipline?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>17</th>
<th>64</th>
<th>19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>It is wrong and should never be used.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>It should be used only rarely, when behavior is extreme or when nothing else seems to work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>It is part of the standard “tool kit” of parenting, to be used whenever a parent thinks it is helpful.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28. On a 0 to 10 scale, with 0 being “no disagreement” and 10 being “extreme disagreement,” how would you describe the overall level of parent-child disagreement that exists in your family?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Disagreement</th>
<th>Moderate Disagreement</th>
<th>Extreme Disagreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall Level of Parent-Child Disagreement in Your Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>5</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>27</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
29. Now, using a similar 0 to 10 scale, describe the level of parent-child disagreement that typically exists in each of the following areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>No Disagreement</th>
<th>Moderate Disagreement</th>
<th>Extreme Disagreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Messiness—Keeping things clean, picked up, and in their place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 8 13 9 8 20 6 11 8 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chores &amp; home responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 14 15 12 8 15 6 6 5 2 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling arguments &amp; conflicts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 9 11 8 7 18 5 7 5 2 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; diet—what or how much is eaten</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 15 17 12 6 15 4 4 2 1 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV viewing—either the amount or content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 17 19 10 6 15 4 4 2 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed times &amp; sleep issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 20 15 9 5 12 4 4 3 1 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money &amp; purchases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 15 15 10 8 14 4 3 2 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework &amp; school performance issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 17 18 8 5 12 3 3 2 1 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disrespectful behavior toward adults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 17 14 7 4 8 3 5 3 2 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet usage—either the amount or content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 17 13 9 5 11 3 2 2 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishonesty—lying or deception</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 22 15 6 4 7 3 3 3 1 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of friends or activities with friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 21 13 7 4 8 3 2 1 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell phones &amp; texting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 15 11 7 4 8 2 2 2 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swearing &amp; inappropriate language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 16 8 4 3 6 1 2 1 1 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing appropriate limits with boyfriends or girlfriends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63 11 7 5 2 6 1 1 2 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues of faith or religious participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63 13 9 3 3 5 1 1 1 0 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
30. In a typical year, how much time, if any, do you spend together with your children on a family vacation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 5 days</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About one week</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1 and 2 weeks</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 2 weeks to a month</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than a month</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of these statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Completely Disagree</th>
<th>Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Mostly Agree</th>
<th>Completely Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is easier to raise children today than it was 50 years ago.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My children’s friends seem to have more influence over them than I do.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children are very vulnerable and must be protected.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often wonder whether I am doing a good job as a parent.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who have finished their education should establish their own residence and become financially independent.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My children treat me with a great deal of respect.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My children see many things in the media that they should not see.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My children need more from me than I am able to provide.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I invest much effort in providing opportunities that will give my children a competitive advantage down the road.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have little clue what it takes to be a really good parent.</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents today are in a losing battle with all the other influences out there.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is a great time to be bringing children into the world.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I invest much effort in shaping the moral character of my children.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
31 continued. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Completely Disagree</th>
<th>Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Mostly Agree</th>
<th>Completely Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is important that my children get into a top-tier college with a strong national reputation.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I invest much effort in protecting my children from negative social influences.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a parent, you have little control over how your children will actually turn out.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often feel inadequate as a parent.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hope to be best friends with my children when they are grown.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I should invest more time and energy in my children.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My children share my views of faith and religion.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My children share my understandings of right and wrong.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32. On a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 being “most important” and 5 “least important,” please rank the following five statements according to how important each is as a personal goal of your own parenting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I seek to offer the kind of love and affection that will nurture happiness, positive feelings about themselves, and warm relationships with others.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I seek to raise children whose lives will reflect God’s will and purpose.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I seek to provide every material advantage and educational opportunity so my children will have the best chance of achieving their goals in life.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I seek to raise children who will make positive contributions to their communities and the world around them.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I seek to raise children who are true to their family roots and pass on the cultural traditions of their heritage.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
33. These are some more thoughts that people sometimes have about children and family life. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Completely Disagree</th>
<th>Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Mostly Agree</th>
<th>Completely Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kids pretty much raise themselves these days.</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of birth control should be available to teenagers even if their parents disapprove.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once children enter high school, parents have little influence over them.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I love spending time with my children.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My children seem consumed with the desire to buy new things.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying the “right brand” is very important to my children.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My children are constantly connected electronically with their friends.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying to control teenagers’ access to technology is a losing battle.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be disappointed if one of my children did not go to college.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would willing support a 25-year-old child financially if they really needed it.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would encourage a 25-year-old child to move back home if they had difficulty affording housing.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lives of children today are too scheduled and structured.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I sometimes feel more like my children’s best friend than their parent.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
34. Recognizing that each child is different, how active are your children generally in each of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Not At All Active</th>
<th>Very Active</th>
<th>Moderately Active</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Very</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church/synagogue/mosque</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiously oriented youth groups or clubs</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-religious youth groups or clubs</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports and athletics</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The arts, such as music, dance, and theatre</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The internet—Facebook, email, etc.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies, videos, and popular music</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell phones and texting</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35. How much do you feel the values you try to teach your children are reinforced by each of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Not At All Supported</th>
<th>Supported A Great Deal</th>
<th>Moderately Supported</th>
<th>Supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your children’s exposure to church/synagogue/mosque</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiously oriented youth groups or clubs</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-religious youth groups or clubs</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports and athletic involvements</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in the arts, such as music, dance, and theatre</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbors and the community in which you live</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your children’s use of the internet</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The movies, videos, and popular music that they watch</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your children’s school(s)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
36. Thinking very broadly about your parenting, past and future, how important do you think each of the following will have been in the long run as a way of encouraging good behavior and correcting misbehavior?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not At All Important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praising children for what they do right</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling good behavior and setting a good example</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructing children in appropriate moral and ethical behavior</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing behavior at length to help children understand why something is good or bad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withholding television, internet, or cell phone privileges</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounding children from activities with friends</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Time-outs” or sending children to their rooms</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scolding or speaking to children in a strong voice</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withholding children’s allowances or purchases</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigning additional chores that children must do as punishment</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not spanking itself, but your children’s worry that a spanking might occur if they cross a certain line</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denying opportunities to join a club or play a sport</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanking</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being emotionally distant cool and distant to your children for a while</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
37. Thinking beyond your own family, what would you say is the ideal or optimum number of children to have in a family today?
   2 Zero
   4 One
   55 Two
   25 Three
   13 Four or more

38. Have you (or your partner) ever displayed a vehicle bumper sticker displaying pride about a child’s school, grades, or other accomplishments?
   69 No
   31 Yes

39. How often do you (or your partner) typically post photos (or videos) of your children on the internet?
   35 Never
   30 Less than once a month
   14 About once a month
   14 Several times a month
   4 About once a week
   4 More than once a week

40. People approach parenting in different ways. For each of the following contrasts, please select the number that best reflects your own approach to parenting.

   To me, parenting means…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entirely</th>
<th>Equally</th>
<th>Entirely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating with children</td>
<td>Directing children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being consistent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building self-esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding and directing children’s development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing information and emotions freely with children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preserving clear parent-child boundaries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming well informed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following your instincts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
41. We all have nagging fears for our children, the things we hope will never happen. For each of the following, please select the answer that represents how deep the fear is in your daily life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fear</th>
<th>Not A Concern At All</th>
<th>Only A Small Concern</th>
<th>A Worry, But Not A Fear</th>
<th>A Real Fear</th>
<th>One Of My Deepest Fears</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be kidnapped or preyed upon sexually by an adult</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be injured in a serious accident</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an addition to drugs or alcohol</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack ambition to succeed</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want things to be handed to them rather than working hard</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not be financially successful in life</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be emotionally unstable</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become estranged and have little relationship with you as an adult</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become a dishonest adult</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lose their religious faith</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move from relationship to relationship</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be seen by others as odd or abnormal</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a homosexual orientation</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not really excel in anything—just be average</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become so successful professionally that they will look down upon you</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
42. For each of the following activities, please tell us the age at which you think it *first becomes appropriate* for a child. If you think it is not appropriate at any age, please choose that option.37

*At what age do you think it is first appropriate to:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>25th Percentile</th>
<th>50th Percentile</th>
<th>75th Percentile</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Not Appropriate At Any Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decide for themselves what to wear to school</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.24</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have their own cell phone</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.32</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a Facebook or Twitter account</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.80</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive information about birth control alternatives</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.91</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide for themselves whether to attend religious services</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15.33</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hang out at the mall without adult supervision</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.54</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience their “first kiss”</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.70</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surf the web without parental monitoring or supervision</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16.19</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See an R-rated movie or video</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16.79</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend a party with no adult supervision</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.86</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get a body piercing or tattoo</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18.92</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a beer or glass of wine at home with the family</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19.67</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drink alcohol with friends at a party</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20.73</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
43. If you had a serious concern about your child’s moral or ethical development and you were unsure what to do about it, how likely would you be to turn to each of these sources for advice?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Advice</th>
<th>Definitely Not</th>
<th>Unlikely</th>
<th>Somewhat Likely</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
<th>Definitely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your spouse or partner</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your own parents, siblings, or other family members</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your personal friends or confidants</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A medical doctor</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your children’s school teachers, counselors, or administrations</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A therapist, psychologist, or counselor</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A pastor or religious counselor</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture or religious teachings</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information sources on the internet</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books and magazine</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice columnists or media personalities (like Oprah)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44. Which best describes [Randomly Selected Child]’s attitude toward school?

1. Very negative—has real issues with school that undermine success.
2. Mostly negative—struggles to comply with basic expectations.
5. Disinterested, but does what is necessary to get by.
12. Ambivalent—a mix of feelings toward school.
41. Mostly positive—fairly motivated most of the time.
39. Very positive—highly motivated to succeed.

45. How many of the parents of your [Randomly Selected Child]’s close friends have you spoken with enough to feel that you know them well?

21. None
33. Less than half
16. About half
13. More than half
18. Almost all of them

46. How often does your [Randomly Selected Child] typically attend religious services?

23. Never
22. Rarely—less than once a month
14. Once or twice a month
31. About weekly
10. Several times a week
1. Daily

47. Would you generally describe your [Randomly Selected Child] as being apathetic or seriously engaged with matters of personal faith?

8. Very apathetic
11. Mostly apathetic
46. Neither apathetic nor engaged
28. Mostly engaged
8. Very engaged
48. Please give your *best estimate* of how often [Randomly Selected Child] does each of the following, on average, during the school year? Please answer each item in the list anyway even if the item seems a poor fit for [Randomly Selected Child]’s age group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Less Than Once A Week</th>
<th>About Once A Week</th>
<th>Several Times A Week</th>
<th>About Once A Day</th>
<th>Multiple Times A Day</th>
<th>No Idea At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practices a musical instrument</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps out around the house</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks on a cell phone with a friend</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sends a text message to a friend</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks on a cell phone with a parent</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checks their Twitter or Facebook account</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streams video from the web</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works for pay at a job outside the home</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participates in a team practice or game in an organized sport</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets together with friends with no adult supervision</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participates in a faith-based group (other than religious services)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attends <em>any</em> organized club meeting, such as Scouting or an after-school club</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads a book or magazine article that was not required by school</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets in a physical fight with someone</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pays attention to the daily news on television or the internet</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks you to purchase something because “all his/her friends have one”</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks after a younger sibling in the parents’ absence</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complains of being treated more strictly than friends</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinks alcohol (such as beer or wine)</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
49. In a typical day, how much time would you estimate that [Randomly Selected Child] spends on the internet—doing email, browsing the internet, Facebook, streaming videos, shopping, etc.?
   27 None
   21 Less than twenty minutes
   25 Twenty minutes to an hour
   20 1–2 hours
   5 3–4 hours
   1 More than four hours

50. Altogether, how many times has [Randomly Selected Child] been suspended from school?
   93 Never
   4 Only once
   3 2 or more times

51. During the past year, did [Randomly Selected Child] receive an award or certificate for outstanding performance in school, sports, music, or the arts?
   34 No
   66 Yes

52. [If [Randomly Selected Child] is 12 years or older] Do you think [Randomly Selected Child] has ever had sexual intercourse?
   76 No, definitely not
   14 Probably not
   5 Probably
   5 Yes, definitely

53. Now, thinking again about all your children, how many of your children have struggled with excessive difficulties of focus, attention, and distractibility?
   59 None
   29 One
   10 Two
   3 Three or more

54. And how many have actually been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (A.D.D.), or Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (A.D.H.D.)?
   81 None
   16 One
   2 Two
   1 Three or more

55. How many have taken medication at some point to treat A.D.D. or A.D.H.D.?
   84 None
   14 One
   2 Two
   1 Three or more

56. In your own opinion, how many of your children have struggled with depression or excessive anxiety?
   76 None
   18 One
   5 Two
   1 Three or more

57. And how many have actually been diagnosed with depression or an anxiety disorder?
   91 None
   8 One
   1 Two
   0 Three or more

58. How many have taken medication at some point to treat depression or an anxiety disorder?
   91 None
   7 One
   1 Two
   0 Three or more
59. In your opinion, how many of your children, if any, are at least somewhat overweight?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Three or more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

60. [If Q59 not “None”] And how many, if any, would you say are greatly overweight?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Three or more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

61. If you were told by a school teacher or guidance counselor that a medication could improve one of your children's focus and performance at school, and a doctor agreed, how likely would you be to do that?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Not likely at all—I wouldn't consider it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Not very likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Somewhat likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Very likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Almost certain to try it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

62. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of these statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Completely Disagree</th>
<th>Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Mostly Agree</th>
<th>Completely Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medications to improve focus are a good thing if they boost a child's school performance.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to me that my child be viewed as “normal” and not stand out as being different from others.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many children are now medicated for problems that are better treated in other ways.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting mental health treatment for my child would make me feel like a failure as a parent.</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a good thing that drugs have been developed to deal with children's emotional anxieties.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medications should generally be the last resort for solving a child's problem.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
63. Now some questions about you…First, how important is religion in your life?
   14 Not at all important
   12 Not too important
   22 Somewhat important
   34 Very important
   17 The most important thing in my life

64. What is your present religion, if any?
   26 Catholic
   1 Episcopalian
   4 Lutheran
   4 Methodist
   2 Presbyterian
   16 Baptist
   6 Non-denominational Christian
   4 Pentecostal/Charismatic
   1 Adventist/Seventh-Day
   5 Other Christian
   5 Just “Christian”
   2 Latter-Day Saints
   2 Jehovah Witness
   1 Unitarian-Universalist
   1 Jew
   0.4 Muslim
   1 Hindu
   1 Buddhist
   1 Other Religion Specified
   2 Other
   15 Nothing in Particular

65. What religious group or tradition were you raised in, if any?

   Distribution available upon request.

66. [If Married or Partnered] Would you describe yourself as more religious, less religious, or as having about the same level of religious interest as your Spouse/Partner?
   9 Much less religious than my spouse/partner
   13 Somewhat less religious than my spouse/partner
   52 About the same level of religious interest
   18 Somewhat more religious than my spouse/partner
   8 Much more religious than my spouse/partner

67. Which word best describes your religious beliefs or orientation?
   10 Very Conservative
   24 Conservative
   42 Moderate
   14 Liberal
   10 Very Liberal

68. Which statement comes closest to expressing what you believe about God?
   67 I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it.
   17 While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God.
   7 I don’t believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a higher power of some kind.
   6 I don’t know whether there is a God and I don’t believe there is any way to find out.
   3 I don’t believe in God.
69. People speak about their religious beliefs in a variety of ways. Would you say that you have a “personal relationship” with God?
   - 65 Yes
   - 19 No
   - 16 Don't know

70. Would you say that you have been “born again” or have had a “born-again” experience?
   - 36 Yes
   - 55 No
   - 9 Don't know

71. Would you describe yourself as an “evangelical” Christian?
   - 23 Yes
   - 56 No
   - 21 Don't know

72. Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you typically attend religious services?
   - 28 Never
   - 23 Several times a year
   - 5 About once a month
   - 9 2 or 3 times a month
   - 25 Once a week
   - 10 Several times a week
   - 1 Daily

73. Outside of religious services, how often do you pray?
   - 14 Never
   - 14 Once a month or less
   - 7 2 or 3 times a month
   - 4 Once a week
   - 17 Several times a week
   - 26 Daily
   - 18 Several times a day

74. How often do you speak about matters of faith with your children?
   - 14 Never
   - 24 Once a month or less
   - 13 2 or 3 times a month
   - 10 Once a week
   - 19 Several times a week
   - 15 Daily
   - 6 Several times a day

75. How often do you have devotions, prayer, or meditation of some form with your children?
   - 40 Never
   - 18 Once a month or less
   - 6 2 or 3 times a month
   - 6 Once a week
   - 12 Several times a week
   - 16 Daily
   - 3 Several times a day

76. Which of these statements comes closest to describing your belief about the Christian Bible?
   - 27 The Bible is the inspired Word of God, not mistaken in its statements and teachings, and is to be taken literally, word for word.
   - 30 The Bible is the inspired Word of God, not mistaken in its teachings, but is not always to be taken literally, word for word.
   - 16 The Bible becomes the Word of God for a person who reads it in faith.
   - 16 The Bible is an ancient book of legends, history and moral precepts recorded by men.
   - 12 None of these.

77. Which statement best expresses your belief about Jesus?
   - 13 We can't know for sure whether Jesus really existed.
   - 6 Jesus was an extraordinary teacher, nothing more.
   - 5 Jesus is not divine, but he helped to reveal God to humanity.
   - 22 Jesus is divine, but he is not exactly God.
   - 55 Jesus is fully divine and fully God.
78. Please consider the following statements and tell us how much you agree or disagree with each one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Completely Disagree</th>
<th>Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Mostly Agree</th>
<th>Completely Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human nature is basically sinful.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God is directly involved in the everyday events of my life.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We would all be better off if we could live by the same basic moral guidelines.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is my responsibility to help others lead more moral lives.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mother’s role in raising children is more important than the father’s.</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The greatest moral virtue is to be honest about your feelings and desires.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who violate God’s rules will be punished.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything is beautiful—it’s all a matter of how you look at it.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All views of what is good are equally valid.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The best response in most situations is whatever keeps people from feeling uncomfortable or upset.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As long as we don’t hurt others, we should all just live however we want.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When bad things happen to good people, it is still part of God’s plan.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most religions are equally good paths to the same destination.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex before marriage is okay, if the couple loves each other.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual couples—that is couples of the same sex—should have the right to marry.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People are hard-wired to be straight or gay, and there is little they can do to change it.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A woman should put her husband and children ahead of her career.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A man should put his wife and children ahead of his career.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
78 continued. Please consider the following statements and tell us how much you agree or disagree with each one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Completely Disagree</th>
<th>Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Mostly Agree</th>
<th>Completely Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In general, Americans lived more moral and ethical lives 50 years ago.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our values are something that each of us must decide without being influenced by others.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We should be more tolerant of people who adopt alternate lifestyles.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce is preferable to maintaining an unhappy marriage.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are few moral absolutes—what is right or wrong usually varies from situation to situation.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

79. Which of these statements best describes your feelings about abortion?

44 Abortion is just as bad as killing a person who has already been born; it is murder.
9 Abortion is murder, but it is not as bad as killing someone who has already been born.
30 Abortion is not murder, but it does involve the taking of human life.
17 Abortion is not murder, it is a surgical procedure for removing human tissue.

80. What, in your opinion, is the most believable authority in matters of truth?

29 What your own personal experience teaches you
28 The teachings of scripture, for example, the Bible, the Torah
15 Whatever feels right to you personally
10 What has been handed down from your parents and other authorities
7 What science teaches us
5 What is revealed to you in prayer or meditation
1 What religious leaders say
1 What you learn from television, newspapers and books
3 Other [Specify]

81. If you personally were unsure of what was right or wrong in a particular situation, which of the following would be most important in deciding what to do?

42 Doing what would be best for everyone involved
37 Doing what you think God or the scripture tells you is right
9 Following the advice of an expert or someone you respect
7 Doing what would make you happy
5 Doing what would improve your situation or get you ahead
Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or as connected to some other political party?\textsuperscript{298}

- **27** Republican
- **31** Democrat
- **19** Independent
- **1** Other party
- **22** No party

In general, do you think of yourself as...

- **2** Extremely Liberal
- **12** Liberal
- **10** Slightly Liberal
- **38** Moderate, middle of the road
- **12** Slightly Conservative
- **21** Conservative
- **4** Extremely Conservative

Are you currently registered to vote?

- **76** Yes, I am registered to vote at my present address.
- **5** Yes, I am registered to vote at a different address.
- **17** No, I am not registered to vote.
- **2** Not sure.

Which candidate did you vote for in the 2008 presidential election?

- **53** Barack Obama
- **44** John McCain
- **3** Another candidate

82. Who do you think you will vote for, if anyone, in next year’s presidential election?

- **23** I probably won’t vote
- **31** Barack Obama
- **34** The Republican candidate
- **11** Someone from neither the Democratic nor the Republican party

83. Now I’d like to ask about some changes that have occurred in our nation in recent decades. Please tell me whether you feel each change was very bad, mostly bad, mostly good, or very good for our society:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Very Bad</th>
<th>Mostly Bad</th>
<th>Mostly Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater cultural and ethnic diversity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More single women having children without a partner to help raise them</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The expansion of internet-based social networking like Facebook and Twitter</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater use of cell phones and texting as a means of communication</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More people living together without getting married</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rise of “Tea Party” influence in American politics</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barack Obama’s election to the presidency in 2008</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The recent national health care reform law</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal recognition (in some states) of gay marriage</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
84. Compared to when you were growing up, would you say there has been decline or improvement in each of the following areas?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Strong Decline</th>
<th>Moderate Decline</th>
<th>Holding Steady</th>
<th>Moderate Improvement</th>
<th>Strong Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American family life</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The quality of the public schools</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The quality of TV, movies, and entertainment</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American moral and ethical standards</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The safety of our communities</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The strength of our national economy</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The quality of our national leaders</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American religious and spiritual life</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The honesty and integrity of the average American</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The American work ethic</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational opportunities for children</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating and sexual practices of teenagers</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

85. How safe would you say it is for an adult to walk alone at night in your neighborhood?

- **6** Very unsafe
- **15** Pretty unsafe
- **48** Pretty safe
- **31** Very safe
## Demographics

### Gender
- **56** Female
- **44** Male

### How old are you?
- **26** 18–34 years
- **57** 35–49 years
- **17** 50 years and older

### Race/Ethnicity
- **59** White, non-Hispanic
- **13** Black, non-Hispanic
- **20** Hispanic
- **7** Other, non-Hispanic
- **1** 2+ Races

### Region of Residence
- **19** Northeast
- **21** South
- **36** Midwest
- **24** West

### Housing Type
- **76** A one-family house detached from any other house
- **6** A one-family house attached to one or more houses
- **13** A building with 2 or more apartments
- **5** A mobile home

### Ownership Status of Living Quarters
- **69** Owned or being bought by you or someone in your household
- **29** Rented for cash
- **2** Occupied without payment of cash rent

86. How many of the members of your household are adults who help regularly in child-care responsibilities?
- **11** None
- **20** One
- **63** Two
- **6** Three or more

### Marital Status
- **7** Single, never married
- **8** Living together
- **72** Married
- **12** Divorced/Separated
- **1** Widowed

87. [If Married] How many years have you been married to your current spouse?
- **10** 0–5 years
- **21** 6–10 years
- **26** 11–15 years
- **22** 16–20 years
- **14** 21–25 years
- **6** 26 years or more

88. [If Married] Taking all things together, how happy has your marriage been for you?
- **49** Very happy
- **42** Rather happy
- **8** Not very happy
- **1** Not at all happy
89. Some people think of marriage as two separate people who make a life together. Others think of marriage as a couple and find it very hard to describe one person without the other. Which best describes your view of marriage? If neither applies, do not check any of the options.

   I think of marriage as two separate people who make a life together.
   44 No
   56 Yes

   I think of marriage as a couple and find it hard to describe one person without referencing the other.
   60 No
   40 Yes

90. Did you ever live together with a romantic partner without being married?
   41 No
   59 Yes

91. [If Q90 is “Yes”] Did you think of living together as a step towards a possible marriage?
   15 No
   85 Yes

92. Beyond your immediate and extended family, how many close adult friends would you say that you have?
   4 None
   34 1-3 close friends
   18 4-5 close friends
   28 6-10 close friends
   16 11 or more close friends

93. How often do you get together socially with any of these close, adult friends for visiting, dinner, going out, or another social event?
   10 Never
   37 Less than once a month
   24 About once a month
   17 2-3 times a month
   9 About once a week
   4 Several times a week or more

94. How many of your children who live at home are twenty-one or older?
   93 None
   7 One or more

95. Please indicate the level of formal education for each person below (for students, indicate current level).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yourself</th>
<th>You Spouse/Partner</th>
<th>Your Mother</th>
<th>Your Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eighth grade or less</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some high school, but did not graduate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade or technical school beyond high school</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, but not a four-year degree</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate, a four-year degree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some graduate school, but not a degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s or similar professional degree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate or similar advanced degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
96. What is your main occupation?
   - 12 Service occupations
   - 6 Production, transport, & material moving
   - 5 Natural resources, construction, & maintenance
   - 14 Sales & office occupations
   - 21 Management, general business and legal
   - 11 Management, technical and health
   - 8 Management, community and education
   - 13 Homemaker/Child raising
   - 1 Student
   - 2 Unemployed
   - 0 Retired
   - 1 Disabled
   - 1 Military
   - 3 Refused

97. In a typical week, about how many hours altogether do you work for pay? (Just give your best estimate)
   - 23 None
   - 17 1–32 hour
   - 43 33–45 hours
   - 17 46 hours or more

98. And in a typical week, about how many hours do you spend at child-care related tasks such as helping children with homework, getting them ready for bed or school, taking them to scheduled activities?
   - 5 None
   - 26 1–5 hour
   - 21 6–10 hours
   - 12 11–15 hours
   - 12 16–20 hours
   - 10 21–30 hours
   - 14 31 hours or more

99. Beyond child care, in a typical week, about how many hours do you work at other home-related chores, such as cleaning, cooking, repairing, yard work, etc.?
   - 2 None
   - 28 1–5 hour
   - 28 6–10 hours
   - 12 11–15 hours
   - 12 16–20 hours
   - 17 21 hours or more

100. Would you estimate that you spend more or less time doing home-related chores than your spouse/partner?
   - 48 More
   - 27 Less
   - 25 About the same

101. In a typical week, about how many hours do you spend doing any type of volunteer work?
   - 61 None
   - 20 1–2 hours
   - 12 3–5 hours
   - 7 6 hours or more

102. In a typical day, how much time would you estimate that you spend watching television or videos?
   - 3 None
   - 8 Less than twenty minutes
   - 19 Twenty minutes to an hour
   - 48 1–2 hours
   - 17 3–4 hours
   - 5 More than 4 hours
103. In a typical day, how much personal (non-work related) time would you estimate that you spend on the internet—doing email, browsing the internet, Facebook, streaming videos, shopping, etc.?
   4 None
   15 Less than twenty minutes
   34 Twenty minutes to an hour
   36 1–2 hours
   8 3–4 hours
   3 More than 4 hours

104. How often do you personally use Facebook or another social networking site?
   29 Never
   21 Less than once a week
   17 Several times a week
   21 Daily
   12 Multiple times a day

106. Where is your permanent residence now?
   7 On a farm or in open country
   22 In a small town
   21 A small city (under 50,000) or its suburbs
   28 A medium city (50,000 to 250,000) or its suburbs
   23 A big city (over 250,000) or its suburbs

107. How long have you lived in the general community where you now reside?
   4 Less than 1 year
   21 1–4 years
   24 5–9 years
   29 10–20 years
   23 20 years or more

108. How many times, if any, have you married?
   11 Never
   71 Once
   15 Twice
   3 Three or more

109. [If Q108 is more than “Never”] How old were you when you first married?
   22 20 years or younger
   41 21–25 years old
   24 26–30 years old
   13 31 years or older

110. How many times, if any, have you divorced?
   74 Never
   21 Once
   5 Twice or more

111. [If Q110 is more than “Never”] How old were you when you first divorced?
   9 21 years or younger
   16 22–24 years
   26 25–28 years
   18 29–32 years
   18 33–39 years
   13 40 years or older

112. Are you divorced (or separated) from the other parent of any of your school-aged children?
   80 No
   20 Yes

113. [If Q112 is “Yes”] All things considered, how well would you say your children have adapted to the situation where their parents are no longer together?
   44 Very well
   39 Pretty well
   11 Neither well nor poorly
   5 Pretty poorly
   1 Very poorly
114. Were your parents born in the United States?
   17 No, neither
   4 Yes, mother only
   2 Yes, father only
   77 Yes, both were

115. In what country were you born?
   86 United States
   14 Another country

116. What was the first language that you learned as a child?
   84 English
   11 Spanish
   5 Other, specified

117. Was most of your childhood lived in the United States?
   92 Yes
   8 No

118. In what type of place did you generally live during the first fifteen years of your life?
   9 Mostly on a farm or in open country
   26 Mostly in a small town
   17 Mostly in a small city (under 50,000) or its suburbs
   24 Mostly in a medium city (50,000 to 250,000) or its suburbs
   24 Mostly in a big city (over 250,000) or its suburbs

119. Thinking about your own schooling in Kindergarten through 12th grade, how many years did you spend in each of the following types of schools?
   Mean of years in public school: 10.94 years
   Mean of years in a private, non-religiously affiliated school: 0.44 years
   Mean of years in a private, religiously affiliated school: 2.11 years
   Mean of years homeschooled: 0.11 years
   Mean of other schools: 0.05 years

120. Taking all things together, how happy was your family life for most of your childhood?
   31 Very happy
   51 Rather happy
   15 Not very happy
   3 Not at all happy

121. Did your parents divorce?
   33 Yes
   67 No

122. [If Q121 is “Yes”] How old were you when your parents were divorced?
   15 2 years or younger
   19 3–5 years old
   22 6–10 years old
   21 11–15 years old
   12 16–20 years old
   10 21 years or older
On a scale from 1 to 7, how would you describe your relationship with your parents in your childhood.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>123. How would you describe the parenting approach of your parents when you were growing up?</td>
<td>Very Strict</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Very Permissive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

124. How would you describe your relationship with your father when you were growing up?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Close</th>
<th>Very Distant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

125. How would you describe your relationship with your mother when you were growing up?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Close</th>
<th>Very Distant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

126. [If Married or Partnered] What is your Spouse’s/Partner’s current employment status?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working full-time for pay</th>
<th>Working part-time for pay</th>
<th>Working as a homemaker</th>
<th>Not working—looking for work</th>
<th>Not working—retired</th>
<th>Not working—disabled</th>
<th>Not working—other</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

127. [If Married or Partnered] In a typical week, about how many hours altogether does Spouse/Partner work for pay?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>None</th>
<th>1-32 hour</th>
<th>33-45 hours</th>
<th>46 hours or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

128. On a scale from 0 to 10 with a 0 meaning “very poor” and 10 meaning “excellent,” how would you describe your own personal health?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please tell us the answers to the following questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>25th Percentile</th>
<th>50th Percentile</th>
<th>75th Percentile</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How tall are you without shoes?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>5 ft. 8 in.</td>
<td>5 ft. 10 in.</td>
<td>6 ft. 0 in.</td>
<td>5 ft. 10 in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>5 ft. 3 in.</td>
<td>5 ft. 4 in.</td>
<td>5 ft. 6 in.</td>
<td>5 ft. 4 in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you weigh without shoes?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>170 lbs.</td>
<td>196 lbs.</td>
<td>220 lbs.</td>
<td>201 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>135 lbs.</td>
<td>160 lbs.</td>
<td>187 lbs.</td>
<td>168 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Mass Index(^9)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consent

Thank you very much for completing this important survey.

Knowledge Networks and the University of Virginia would like to invite a small number of respondents to participate in in-home interviews. Participants who are selected will be paid $50 for a 90-minute interview. A professional interviewer will come to your home at the time that is convenient for you to ask you questions about your family life and raising your children. Participation is voluntary and your interview will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you. Would you like to be considered for participating in an in-home interview?

\[42 \text{ Yes} \]
\[58 \text{ No} \]

[DISPLAY, If respondent agrees to interview]

THANK YOU for your cooperation! If you are selected to participate in an in-home interview, a Knowledge Networks representative will be contacting you soon to schedule the exact day and time of interview that is convenient for you.
Endnotes

3 Or one of its variants—individual, individuals, individual’s.
5 Wuthnow 73.
10 More precisely, 68 percent disagree with the statement that “it is easier to raise children today than 50 years ago.”
11 79.3 percent.
12 It is worth recalling here that these figures are based entirely upon what parents observe and report. One can only imagine what the rates of use actually are.
13 Regardless of whether the numeric base is a randomly selected child of every parent surveyed, or all of the children of parents whose oldest child is 19 and whose youngest is 13, the percent of American teenagers having neither a cell phone nor a social networking presence is estimated at 7 percent.
14 “Little to no disagreement” means that they rated their level of disagreement with children as 3 or lower on a scale where 0 indicates “no disagreement,” 5 indicates “moderate disagreement,” and 10 indicates “extreme disagreement.”
15 Whether they believe the internet supports or undermines their values.
16 “Not Restricted” here indicates 1–2 on a 7-point scale from 1, “Internet is not restricted,” to 7, “Internet is tightly restricted.” “Somewhat Restricted” is 3–5 and “Tightly Restricted” is 6–7.
18 Comparison data from the 2010 U.S. Census indicates that 64 percent of households with children under age 18 are married couples, 16 percent are divorced or separated, 5 percent are unmarried but living together, and 14 percent have never married and are raising children alone. Our survey depicts a higher percentage of married parents, but our sample—parents of school-aged children, ages 5 to 18—differs from the base for Census Bureau percentages, which is households (not individual parents) with children under 18 (rather than 5–18).
19 “Partnered” is defined here as parents living with their partners, whether married or not.
20 After selecting for only those respondents who are married or living together, the contingency table for “partner support” by gender was standardized by a control variable (measuring whether the respondent worked more than their partner) using Rosenberg’s test factor standardization method. See Morris Rosenberg, “Test Factor Standardization as a Method of Interpretation,” in *Social Forces* (1962), 53–61. SYSTAT statistical software was used to perform Rosenberg’s standardization. When Stata’s ordinal logit and spost procedures are used to generate a similar estimate of gender differences in the percent of partners rated as offering “top support” after controlling for the number of hours that partners work outside the home, the reduction of the gender difference in the presence of the control is even smaller, dropping from a 38 percent gap between the sexes in the percent who give their partners excellent support ratings to a 35 percent gap.
21 At least a couple times a month.
22 To access *Culture of American Families: Interview Report* by Jeffrey S. Dill, visit the project website: <iasc-culture.org/caf>.
23 $100,000 or more.
24 Readers should note that even such small percentages, considered nationally, amount to many children.
25 Twenty-one percent of the 68 percent would switch their children into a religiously affiliated private school, 11 percent into a non-religious private school, 7 percent into a charter school, 5 percent to a public school into another neighborhood, and just 4 percent say they would home school as an alternative.
26 “Stay-at-home moms” are here defined as any mother who works fewer than five hours a week for pay outside of the home.
27 Attend only “several times a year” or not at all.
28 “Low Disagreement” is defined as 0–3 on a scale where 0 indicates “no disagreement,” 5 indicates “moderate disagreement,” and 10 indicates “extreme disagreement.” “Moderate Disagreement” is 4–6 and “High Disagreement” is 7–10.
29 Parents rated their levels of conflict on a 0–10 scale. For purposes of this narrative, I have defined “low” as 0–3, “moderate” as 4–6, and “high” as 7–10.


“Almost always” here indicates 1–2 on a 7-point scale from 1 (homework is always monitored) to 7 (homework is never monitored). “Regularly” is used to describe responses of 3–4, and 5–7 are interpreted to mean “rarely or never.”

To access Culture of American Families: Interview Report by Jeffrey S. Dill, visit the project website: <iasc-culture.org/caf>.

See question 39 in Appendix B for the complete question and percentage distribution.

“No Disagreement” is defined as 0 on a scale where 0 indicates “no disagreement,” 5 indicates “moderate disagreement,” and 10 indicates “extreme disagreement.” “Mild Disagreement” is defined as 1–3, “Moderate Disagreement” is 4–6 and “High Disagreement” is 7–10.


From comment #7 in response to Tough.

By making it one of their top two parenting priorities.

Parents who say that the Bible is “the inspired Word of God, not mistaken in its statements and teachings, and is to be taken literally, word for word.”


Steve Farkas, Jean Johnson, and Ann Duffett, A Lot Easier Said Than Done: Parents Talk about Raising Children in Today’s America (New York: Public Agenda, 2002).

For more information on the k-means cluster analysis, see Appendix A.

Ninety-six percent agreement.

Thirty-nine percent completely agree that a woman should put her husband and family first, while thirty-six percent completely agree that a man should put his wife and children ahead of his career.

In fact, three-quarters (76 percent) of the Faithful say they have spanked their children “more than once or twice,” compared to 53 percent of other parents. And 34 percent of the Faithful say they have spanked their children at least “a fair bit — when other things didn’t work,” compared to 20 percent of other parents.

The same figures for other American parents are 19 percent, 22 percent, and 25 percent, respectively.

In this discussion, “Engaged” will sometimes be used as shorthand for “Engaged Progressives.”

Only 20 percent, compared to 35 percent of all parents.

These are the percentages who have ever divorced, not the percentages currently divorced. There is a seven percent chance that the difference could result from random sampling variation according to the design-based F test (p=.0741). The mean generalized design effect is 2.0337.

Weighted percentage of 0.06 percent, which rounds to 0 percent. In the unweighted data, only 1 out of 717 Engaged Progressive parents said their religion was the most important thing in their life.

Compared to just four percent of the Faithful who embrace this view.

Science also looms large for them as a source of truth.

There is 57 percent total agreement, yet nearly half of these (25 percent) only “slightly agree.”

Only 39 percent agree and most of these (24 percent) only “slightly agree.”

More than half (52 percent) of Engaged Progressives say they do so daily, and another 33 percent do so several times a week.

In response to the question, “Thinking very broadly about your parenting, past and future, how important do you think each of the following will have been in the long run as a way of encouraging good behavior and correcting misbehavior?,” 83 percent of Engaged Progressives rated “spanking” as a 1 or 2 on a 1–7 scale, ranging from “not important at all” to “extremely important.”

They are three times more likely than other parents to say spanking should never be used as a form of discipline.
The statements are based upon the trimean, a Tukey recommended measure of central tendency.

It was difficult to know what to do with the response “not appropriate at any age” when computing means. In some places we used trimeans to address the issue. In this table, the means are calculated with the category “not appropriate at any age” recoded to 25 years. By 25 years old, it is reasonable to expect that children are responsible for their own choices.

Fifty-two percent of the Faithful compared to 18 percent of Engaged Progressives see a strong decline in American moral and ethical standards; 49 percent compared to 17 percent for the quality of TV, movies, and entertainment; and 57 percent compared to 17 percent in the dating and sexual practices of teenagers.

Compared to 78 percent of the Faithful.

The ratio of those with college degrees to those with no college at all is 3:2 among Engaged Progressives, compared to 1:2 among the Detached.

Forty-nine percent of Engaged Progressives, by contrast, work in professional and managerial occupations while 35 percent are distributed across these other occupations.

The difference is only marginally significant. Design-based p-values for Wald, Pearson, and Likelihood Ratio tests of independence range from .065 for the Wald log-linear test to .172 for the Likelihood Ratio test.

20.2 percent compared to 10.7 percent.

Thirty percent of the Detached parents compared to 16 percent of the Faithful and the Engaged Progressives (aggregate percent).

“Regular Monitoring” is defined here as 1–2 on a 7-point scale from 1, “Homework is always monitored by parents,” to 7 “Homework is never monitored by parents.”

Twenty-seven percent of the Detached “mostly” or “completely” agree that “I would be disappointed if one of my children did not go to college,” compared to 40 percent of other parents.

“A great deal” is here defined as a 6 or 7 on a 1–7 scale, ranging from “not at all supported” (1) to “supported a great deal” (7).

Original Question: “Thinking very broadly about your parenting, past and present, how important do you think instructing children in appropriate moral and ethical behavior will have been in the long run as a way of encouraging good behavior and correcting misbehavior?”

It is measured on a 7-point scale from 1, “not important at all,” to 7, “extremely important.” For this chart, “Extremely Important” is 6–7.

These percentages are actually the combined percentages for parents who “mostly” or “completely” disagree with the idea that they retain little influence after their children enter high school.

The Detached reject this statement by a 3.3/1 margin (percent who disagree divided by those who agree), compared to a 1.8/1 margin for all other parents.

These are the percentages of parents who disagree that “trying to control teenagers’ access to technology is a losing battle.”

That is, they report speaking with them about matters of faith 2–3 times a month or less.

It is worth highlighting that, in this regard, demographic traits such as race, ethnicity, education, income, region, urbanism, and political party were in no way involved in the identification of our four family cultures in the first place. They were derived entirely from cultural variables; the fact that ethnic groups differentially embrace those distinct cultural patterns is something we learned only afterward.

These are percentages of unmarried American Dreamers who fall into each category.

The ratio is about 3:2 for American Dreamers, while it is about 1:1 for other parents.

“Clearly express” here means that they “completely” or “mostly” agreed with the statement.

Sixty-five percent, compared to 52 percent of other parents.

Sixty-four percent of American Dreamers list this purpose among their top three (out of five).

“Very important” in this discussion signifies they were rated as more than “moderately important,” which was the midpoint on a 1–7 scale of importance.

The same gap does not exist for the Faithful, whose responses to spanking and the threat thereof are much closer. And the other groups—the Engaged Progressives and the Detached—are not keen on either.


The median duration was 64 minutes, which was similar to the 20% one-sided trimmed mean of 63 minutes.

AdviseStat is created by Advise Analytics. https://adviseanalytics.com/.
2904 is the total n for analyses after data cleaning resulted in the elimination of a small number of cases. The n for selected variables in this table represents the number of respondents who fall into each category and do not necessarily total 2904.

The percentages in Question 7 are an aggregate of all the children listed by the parents of school-aged children in this survey.

Sampling frame for this survey was parents of school-aged children, or children 5–18 years old. Any children outside of this range are included because their parents have at least one child between 5–18 years old.

“Partnered” indicates people who report currently living with a partner but are not married.

For Question 42, the means are calculated after removing the category “not appropriate at any age.” Therefore, these means are only calculated based on people who do think these activities are appropriate for children or young adults age 24 years or younger. For a handful of questions—Watch an R-Rated movie or video, Get a body piercing or tattoo, Have a beer or glass of wine at home with the family, and Drink alcohol with friends at a party—the mean age would be higher if “not appropriate at any age” was included.

The following questions were pulled from the Knowledge Networks set of standard questions and were not actually part of the Culture of American Families Survey:

• Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or as connected to some other political party?
• In general, do you think of yourself as…
• Are you currently registered to vote?
• Which candidate did you vote for in the 2008 Presidential election?
• Gender
• How old are you?
• Race/Ethnicity
• Region of Residence
• Housing Type
• Ownership Status of Living Quarters
• Marital Status

RESEARCH TEAM

Carl Desportes Bowman, PhD, Director of Survey Research, Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, University of Virginia.

James Davison Hunter, PhD, Executive Director, Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, and LaBrosse-Levinson Distinguished Professor of Religion, Culture, and Social Theory, University of Virginia.

Jeffrey S. Dill, PhD, Co-Director of the Agora Institute and Research Assistant Professor of Social Thought, Eastern University.

Ashley Rogers Berner, DPhil, Co-Director of the Moral Foundations of Education Project, Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, University of Virginia.

Joseph E. Davis, PhD, Director of Research, Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, and Research Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Virginia.

Tony Tian-Ren Lin, PhD, Research Fellow, Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, University of Virginia.

Megan Juelfs-Swanson, MA, Associate Fellow, Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, and Research Assistant, Culture of American Families Project, University of Virginia.

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