



Teens' Enjoyment of Moms...and Dads

by Reginald W. Bibby

Ties between teens and their parents on the upswing

Positive relations today the highest in three decades

A major new national survey has found that young people today are experiencing better ties with their mothers and fathers than any teen cohort in the past thirty years.

The survey of some 5,500 Canadian teenagers carried out by sociologist Reginald Bibby of the University of Lethbridge has found that close to 80% say they are receiving high levels of *enjoyment from their mothers* – up from around 70% in 1992 and 2000 and similar to what teens reported in the early 1980s. In the case of *dads*, the enjoyment level has also jumped about ten percentage points to a current level of some 75%.

That enjoyment of parents is correlated with a number of important characteristics, including the influence of moms and dads, as well as the extent to which teens feel they can turn to parents when they are facing serious problems. Some 89% of teens maintain that their *mothers* have a *high level of influence* on their lives, while 82% say the same thing about their *dads* – in both cases up about ten percentage points since the 1980s. The level for friends is 86%.

What's more, the evidence points to an *improved level of understanding* between young people and their parents. In 1992, 58% of teens said they were troubled about not being understood by their parents; today the figure has fallen to 39%.

And even the weekly-plus *arguments* are down – from 52% a decade ago to 42% now.

Why are parents and teenagers getting along better? One basic reason seems to stand out: moms and dads are doing a much better job of finding a balance between careers and family life. Between 1960 and 2000, the percentage of mothers employed outside the home jumped from about 30% to 60%. It was a major social change that put new and unanticipated pressures on Boomer parents and teens alike.

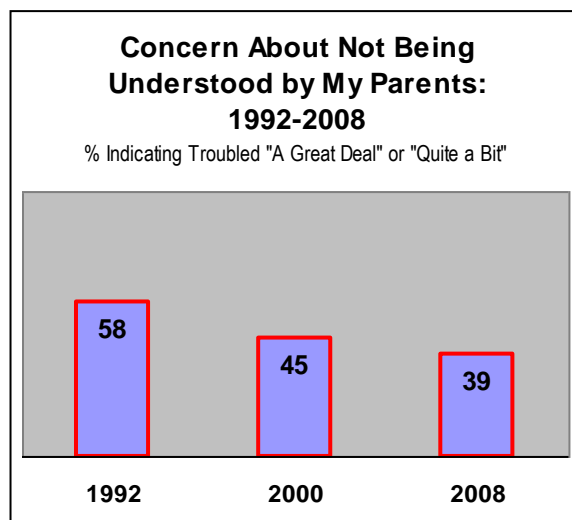
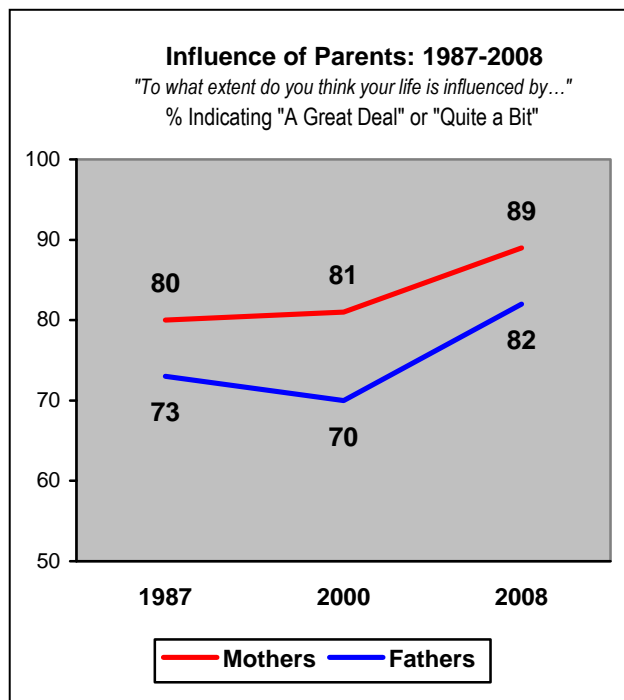
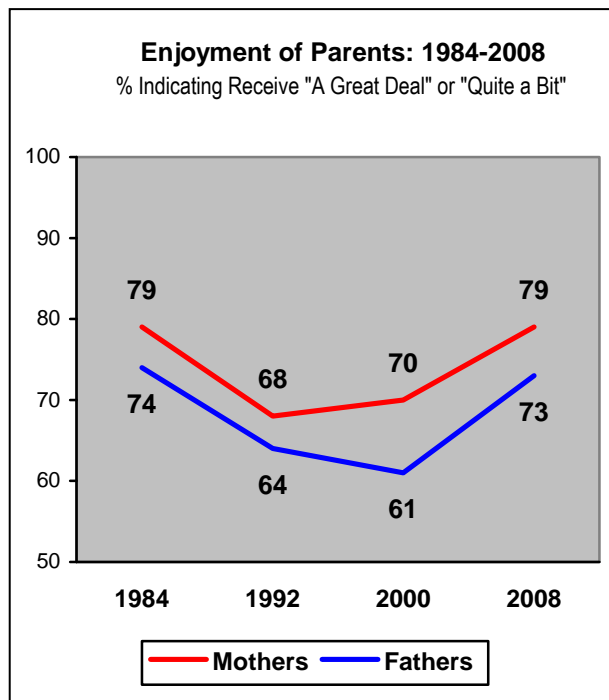
The good news is that, as they shared in this transformation, those same teenagers learned a lot about what they wanted – and didn't want – from their own careers and family lives.

So it is that, today, as younger Boomer and post-Boomer moms and dads, they seem determined to do a better job than their parents did of balancing the attention they are giving to their careers and the attention they are giving to their kids.

And the improved balancing act is having positive results. Bibby's overall findings, just released in his new book, *The Emerging Millennials*, point to Canada's current crop of teenagers looking better than their parents and grandparents looked when they were the same age. The vast majority are endorsing values such as honesty and concern for others, are sexually responsible, are doing less drugs and engaging in less violence. They also are far more accepting of diversity, and are highly optimistic about their futures.

The positive picture seems to be starting with the mothers and fathers of today's young people outdoing their own Boomer parents in focusing on their teenage daughters and sons. Everyone is benefiting from these intergenerational, career-family adjustments.

Ties between Canadian teens and their parents today are far from perfect. But it's clear that, for all the hand-wringing and publicity given to problems, things are actually moving forward in homes across the country.



Source: Reginald W. Bibby, *Project Canada Survey Series*.

Reginald Bibby holds the Board of Governors Research Chair in Sociology at the University of Lethbridge. He has been monitoring Canadian social trends since the mid-1970s, making his findings available through a large number of media and personal appearances and eleven best-selling books. His most recent book is *The Emerging Millennials: How Canada's Newest Generation is Responding to Change and Choice*. Details on Bibby and his work can be found at "reginaldbibby.com".

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