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A Father's Influence

Research normally studies the effects of what not having a mother does to children and the importance of keeping them together. A new study has come out that shows the surprising impact of how not having a father has far reaching consequences on

young boys. It shows how a lack of a father adversely influences the children's development. According to a new study by researchers from the London School of Economics, boys who did not grow up with a dad in the picture were more likely to reach puberty later, but on the flipside they would have their own children earlier. The data was collected from the UK National Child Development Study. They looked at the correlation between the presence of fathers and the time their sons' voice broke. The results showed that if the father was absent during adolescence, then their voice broke later, they were less likely to be married by age 23, and more likely to have children of their own. "These findings suggest that father absence exerts an influence on male reproductive decisions, even after controlling for other indicators of early life adversity," the authors wrote. A leader of the Fathers and Families Research Program at the University of Newcastle, Dr. Richard Fletcher, after looking at the study, said "The state's responsibility might be seen as directing more resources to the separated mother instead of supporting families to stay together. But this research suggests there might be a benefit to keeping the father involved that we shouldn't lose sight of." This is strong evidence of the importance that men play in the lives of their sons and not to be taken lightly.



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RAP & HIP-HOP: Bring on the alcohol

Good Morning America recently reported that for every hour a teen listens to music, they will hear three references to brand-name alcohol. **That breaks down to 34 references per day.** This was

revealed in a study done by the University of Pittsburgh and Dartmouth University. The study revealed that many popular hip-hop stars have contracts with popular liquor brands. Meaning that they receive payment for mentioning their brand in their songs. The liquor companies and artist are quick to point out that they do not advocate underage drinking. They are simply rapping about their lifestyle and it just so happens liquor plays a big role in it. However, this study shows that because music is so popular among high school students, the relationship between these two industries could encourage young people to begin alcohol use early and to continue to drink throughout their teenage years. Especially considering that most of the references made to alcohol are done in a way that makes it seem very appealing. Wealth, sex, luxury objects and partying are all popular themes that are generally associated with alcohol use. Mark Crispin Miller, a professor of media, culture and communications at New York University said "To be perfectly honest, at this point, it's not possible to solve the problem through some stroke of policy or regulation," said Miller. "There's really not much to do except point it out and get parents and kids themselves and some musicians to notice and do something about it."



HEAVY METAL: LISTENERS ARE AT BIGGER RISK OF DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE

Many teenagers listen to a variety of music hoping to produce positive results like; blocking out unwanted background noise, putting you in a good mood or giving them extra energy when exercising. However, a recent study conducted by Dr. Katrina McFerran, showed that teens who are at risk of depression may be listening to music hoping to produce a negative result. This proved to be true particularly when it came to heavy metal music.

Her study was conducted over the course of 5 years and she found that heavy metal music led to mental illness in some teens aged between 13 and 18. They also looked at other genres of music during this time such as rap, rock and pop, but they did not have the same result as heavy metal. She said **that many teens turn to heavy metal because they found it to be an escape from reality** and liked that the music reflected the pain they were feeling making them feel not alone. This study concluded that this is not the case with all teens who listen to heavy metal. However, it is a risk. Parents should know that Heavy Metal is not near as popular as some other genres of music. Not all teens are into it, however, you should be aware of the popular heavy metal artists and know the increased risk associated with constant exposure to this genre.

(ALMOST) EVERYONE IS DOING IT.

A recent article published in the September/October issue of Relevant magazine examined the overwhelming number of young adults who claim to be Christians but still engage in activity that they consider to be morally wrong. This article pointed to research that found 80 percent of young (18-29) unmarried Christians have had sex. And of those 80 percent, 42 percent are in a current sexual relationship. What I found most interesting about these statistics was the fact that most of these young adults, 3/4 said they believed that sex outside of marriage is morally wrong. Many of these young adults were teens who grew up constantly hearing the church say “wait until your married to have sex.” In fact, many of them made pledges and received rings that symbolized their commitment to God and to their parents to abstain from sex until marriage. So, these teens indicated that they wanted to wait and they believe that God wants them to wait. The question that many people are discussing is ***“why is it so hard to wait?”***

80 percent of young (18-29), unmarried Christians have had sex.

64 percent have had sex within the last year.

42 percent are in a current sexual relationship.

76 percent of young evangelicals believe sex outside of marriage is morally wrong.

30 percent have experienced a pregnancy.

More than 1 million abortions happen in the US each year.

65 percent of the women obtaining abortions identify themselves as either Protestant or Catholic (37 percent Protestant and 28 percent Catholic.)

Relevant Magazine explored this question in their article. One of the main conclusions was that this generation of young adults has been raised in a sex saturated environment. They have seen how the entertainment industry markets sex, and endorses the “do what feels good” mentality. This coupled with the prevalence of pornography and the widespread misunderstanding of sex has caused people to chase after love and acceptance in unhealthy physical relationships. They also concluded that in today's society chastity is not the norm, even amongst Christians. In fact, if somebody is going to practice sexual integrity, not only will it be a difficult road it will also be the road less traveled. As parents have this discussion with their teens, I think it is important to point this fact out and help prepare their teens for this.

SEX: REDEFINED

In this article, Relevant interviewed Carissa Woodwyk, author and licensed counselor. She said, “I believe most couples understand the meaning of ‘not having sex,’ but it doesn't seem that many of them have a personal understanding of why it's important or how that will ultimately impact them personally or in other relationships in their marriage.” She suggested that Christians should talk openly and honestly about sex and God's intention and design and purpose for sex. She said “the ‘do whatever feels good’ philosophy places all the emphasis on the needs of the individuals-tarnishing the true and Biblical vision of sex... For a woman, it often becomes about the man: I

need to please him; I need to make him happy; I need to satisfy his sexual appetite... For a man, it often becomes about himself. He feels empowered, strong, invigorated, worthwhile and alive. Sex makes him feel like a man... But sex is supposed to be about both individuals. And God. It's a picture of sex, that the Church is uniquely capable of helping people see.”

The full article is available online at relevantmagazine.com. It's worth the read.

Kid's Culture

MEDIA AND CHILDREN

The world of children and media is ever changing. Considering 20 years ago there weren't many options when it came to how a kid was going to access media. But today, 20 years after the birth of the World Wide Web, 13 years after the launch of Google Search, eight years after the start of the first social networking site, six years after the first YouTube video, four years after the introduction of the first touch-screen smartphone, three years after the opening of the first "app" store, and a little over a year after the first iPad sale — the media world that children are growing up in is changing at lightning speed. Nine-month-olds spend nearly an hour a day watching television or DVDs, 5-year-olds are begging to play with their parents' iPhones, and 7-year-olds are sitting down in front of a computer several times a week to play games, do homework, or check out how their avatars are doing in their favorite virtual worlds.

A Recent study was conducted by common sense media to see just how much time kids 0-8 years old are spending with media. The study also attempted to see what kind of media they were accessing and how much of a role it plays in their day to day lives. Researchers concluded that in order to promote healthy child development, it is vital for parents to have an accurate understanding of the role media is playing in their children's life. Here were some of their findings:

MOBILE MEDIA

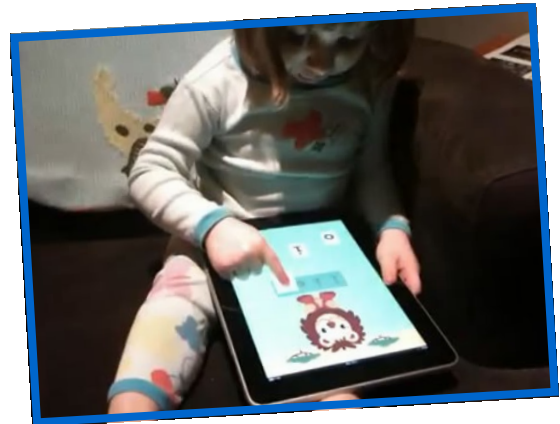
52% of all children have access to one of the newer mobile devices at home: either a smartphone (41%), a video iPod (21%), or an iPad or other tablet device (5%)

10% of 0 to 1 year olds have used mobile media

39% of 2 to 4 year olds have used mobile media

52% of 5 to 8 year olds have used mobile media

This study also found that children from low income families (less than \$30,000 per year) were significantly less likely to be exposed to smart phones and other digital media like iPads.



COMPUTER USE

53% of all 2 to 4 year olds have used a computer,

12% use a computer every day, 24% at least once a week

90 % of all 5 to 8 year olds have used a computer, 22% of 5 to 8 year olds use a computer at least once a day and 46 % at least once a week

AVERAGE AGE OF FIRST COMPUTER USE 3 1/2 years old.

CONSOLE VIDEO GAMES

44% of 2 to 4 year olds have played video games

81% of 5 to 8 year olds have played video games, 17% play at least once a day,

36% play at least once a week

AVERAGE AGE OF FIRST VIDEO GAME USE 4 years old.

TV

In a typical day, 47% of babies and toddlers, ages 0 through 1 watch TV or DVDs, and those who do watch spend an average of nearly two hours (1:54) doing so. This is an average of :53 among all children in this age group, compared to an average of :23 a day reading or being read to.

This study also found that other media may be increasing in popularity, but TV continues to dominate the majority of children's media use.



Parent Discussion questions:

- 1.) How important would you say your fathers influence is in your life?
- 2.) Do you think certain songs make you want to try things that you wouldn't normally try?
- 3.) When rappers talk about alcohol do they talk about it as a good or bad thing?
- 4.) Do you think listening to a certain kind of music can make you feel a certain way?
- 5.) At what point do you think a song crosses a line and you shouldn't listen to it anymore?