

Framing Fathers

How MTV's *16 & Pregnant* Depicts
Parental Involvement

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Research Question

- How are fathers portrayed in MTV's *16 & Pregnant?*



Thesis

- This study shows how recently emerging shows such as *16 & Pregnant* fail to educate viewers on the father's experience, impacting how current and future fathers in society value parenting.



Literature Review

- ◎ Portrayal of Adolescent Males in Television 1970-1990
 - › Walsh & Ward (2008)
 - › Sternglanz and Serbin (1974)
 - › Peirce (1989)
 - › Signorielli (1997)
 - › Barner (1999)

Literature Review

- ◎ How fathers are portrayed as men in television sitcoms
 - > Kelly (2009)
 - > Pehlke II, Hennon, Radina, Kuvalanka (2009)
 - > Cantor (1990)
 - > Scharrer (2001)
 - > Signorielli (1989)
 - > Frazer and Frazer (1993)

Literature Review

- ◎ How fathers are portrayed with their children in television sitcoms
 - › Pehlke II, Hennon, Radina, Kuvalanka (2009)
- ◎ Young fathers
 - › Robinson (1988)
- ◎ Young fathers excluded until recently
 - › Klein (2005)

Theory

- ◎ Other-directed theory
 - › Riesman (1950)

- ◎ Identifying with television characters
 - › Signorielli (1989)



Methodology

- ◉ Content Analysis
- ◉ Seven Episodes
 - > Two from Season 1, five from Season 2
 - > Two episodes include “absent fathers”
- ◉ Demographics
- ◉ Pre-baby
 - > Who they were with
 - > Baby-related, not baby-related
 - > At school, at work, doing homework

Methodology

◎ Post-baby

> Physical presence and activities

- Who they were with
- With or without baby
- Activities done with baby, without baby

◎ Conversations

Strengths & Weaknesses

- Strengths

- > Limited number of reality shows
- > Never been studied before

- Weakness

- > Small sample size



Findings: Physical Presence in the Episode Pre-Baby

Presence	Frequency	Percentage
Mother without father	242	48.5 %
Both mother and father together	206	41.3%
Father without mother	51	10.2%
Total (N=499)	499	100%

Findings: Physical Presence in the Episode Post-Baby

Presence	Frequency	Percentage
Mother with child	159	37.4 %
Mother without child	83	19.5%
Parents together, with child Same/similar activities	63	14.8%
Father with child	35	8.2%
Parents together, without child Same/similar activities	33	7.8%
Father without child	27	6.4%
Parents together, with child Different activities	22	5.2%
Parents together, without child Different activities	3	0.7%
Total (N=425)	425	100%

Findings: Activities Done When “With” Baby

Activity	Mother	Father	Together	Total
Playing with, holding, or rocking the baby	114 (59.7%)	33 (17.3%)	44 (23.0%)	191 (59.7%)
Feeding, burping the baby	36 (78.3%)	6 (13.0%)	4 (8.7%)	46 (14.4%)
At school or work; doing homework	17 (77.3%)	5 (22.7%)	0 (0.0%)	22 (6.9%)
Changing the baby's diaper	15 (71.4%)	3 (14.3%)	3 (14.3%)	21 (6.6%)
Other	7 (46.7%)	8 (53.3%)	0 (0.0%)	15 (4.7%)
Getting up at night for the baby	9 (81.8%)	2 (18.2%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (3.4%)
Chores	5 (55.6%)	3 (33.3%)	1 (11.1%)	9 (2.8%)
Bathing the baby	3 (60.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (40.0%)	5 (1.6%)
Total (N=320)	206 (64.4 %)	60 (18.8 %)	54 (16.9 %)	320 (100%)

Findings: Conversations

Conversation	He instigated	She instigated	Total
Mother/Father Relationship	9 (45.0%)	11 (55.0%)	20 (24.7%)
The baby him/herself	7 (43.8%)	9 (56.3%)	16 (19.8%)
Father's Involvement/Interest	1 (6.7%)	14 (93.3%)	15 (18.5%)
Employment/Finances	9 (90.0%)	1 (10.0%)	10 (12.3%)
Other	1 (14.3%)	6 (85.7%)	7 (8.6%)
School Attendance, Homework	3 (60.0%)	2 (40.0%)	5 (6.2%)
Maternal/Paternal Grandparent Relationship	2 (40.0%)	3 (60.0%)	5 (6.2%)
Mother's Involvement/Interest	2 (66.7%)	1 (33.3%)	3 (3.7%)
Total (N=81)	34 (42.0%)	47 (58.0%)	81 (100%)

Discussion

- ◉ Majority of viewers are female
- ◉ Reflecting a social problem rather than promoting change
- ◉ Encourages other-directed attitudes
- ◉ The exception and the norm
- ◉ Change the way in which the information is presented

Questions?

