

# Transforming the Culture of Death into a Culture of Life

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# Challenges to a robust culture of life

- ▶ Threats to the family as the cornerstone of society
- ▶ Dignity of the elderly
- ▶ The unborn and a child-friendly society
- ▶ An authentically human approach to sexuality
- ▶ Challenges and opportunities in today's youth

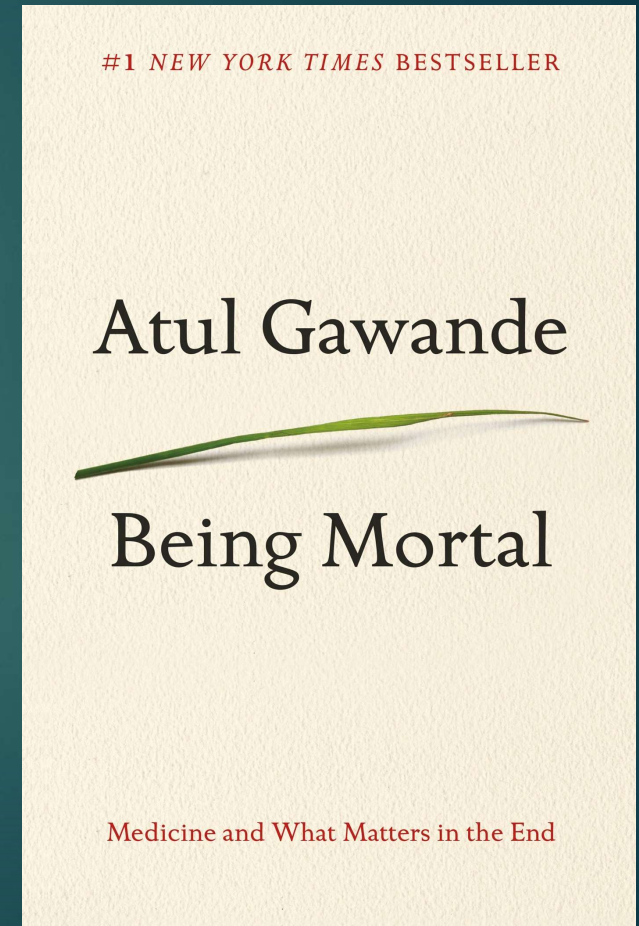
# The Family

- ▶ St. John Paul II: “The wellbeing of society and its good are intimately tied to the good of the family.” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 3 (1981))
- ▶ We always need to be looking at a person within the context of a family.
  - ▶ The authentic good of any individual person is tied to the good of their family.
  - ▶ Medicine, civil society, and even pastoral care can tend to work on an individualistic level.
- ▶ Thwarting of the Synod on the Family of 2015



# The Family (cont.)

- ▶ How many have read this book?
- ▶ Summary
- ▶ “The family is dead.”
- ▶ So how do we rebuild it?
  - ▶ Growing appreciation of the value of all human life.



# Our love for the elderly

- ▶ Started with the question: What can medicine do to support and promote the family?
- ▶ Caring for the elderly in ways that recognize their membership in a family
  - ▶ And that encourages their family members to take responsibility for their elders.
  - ▶ Gawande cites evidence that what makes elderly people most happy is being able to be independent.
  - ▶ Evidence of our upside-down cultural values.
  - ▶ Not just a problem of the young, but of the elderly
  - ▶ Deeply ingrained in American society over multiple generations

# The elderly (cont.)

- ▶ Difference between “quality of life” and “dignity”
  - ▶ Quality of life says: focus on the things that they want to be able to do for themselves
  - ▶ Dignity says: Help their families to recognize their dignity and value their ongoing contributions to the life of their family
- ▶ Hardly a new problem



# The elderly (cont.)

- ▶ Now-a-days, people fighting over inheritances and control.



# Welcoming new life

- ▶ As we all know, abortion and contraception continue to thwart the establishment of a culture of life in the United States and beyond.
- ▶ Even in families who do not use these practices, a materialistic mindset can take over.
- ▶ Even in the Church, a presumption of smaller families has set in
  - ▶ Immigrant families are a wonderful and welcome antidote to this.
- ▶ Become advocates of families in your communities and in your parishes.
  - ▶ Constantly be asking: "Does this encourage people to be open to life."



# Welcoming new life (cont.)

- ▶ Examples:
  - ▶ Required parent volunteer hours
  - ▶ Parish and school activities on Sundays
  - ▶ Catechesis and other programs that split up parents and children
  - ▶ Onerous per-child fees for parish and school programs
  - ▶ Moms support network
  - ▶ Is my practice accessible to people with numerous children?
    - ▶ Talk to parents of big families about ways to help them!
  - ▶ Help promote children as a blessing rather than a burden.
    - ▶ Create a culture in which it is not acceptable to speak negatively about other people's children. This is really discouraging.

# Welcoming new life (cont.)

- ▶ Examples (cont.):
  - ▶ Fight for family-friendly policies in the workplace, such as generous maternity and paternity leave.
  - ▶ Change the vocabulary about child bearing.
    - ▶ Don't ask questions like, "Are you done?" or "How many are you going to have?"
  - ▶ Get passionate about income inequality. This is probably the most important pro-life issue that is consistently neglected by the pro-life community.
  - ▶ Start the conversation about family friendly practices in your workplace, in your profession, and in your parishes. Others are looking to you for leadership!

# Welcoming new life (cont.)

- ▶ It will not be enough to convince women “out there” not to use contraception or not to abort.
  - ▶ It starts with changing our own hearts and the institutions of which we are a part to be consistently family-friendly, robustly pro-life.



# Threat to the family: Technology

- ▶ Not just a threat to the family, a threat to humanity
- ▶ The very humanity of our young people is being robbed by the omnipresence of technology.
- ▶ Forefront of philosophy is the humanization of technology.
  - ▶ People are asking, “When does technology develop personal status?”
- ▶ Provoking a mental health crisis

# Threat to the family: Technology (cont.)

- ▶ Who has read this book?
- ▶ <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/has-the-smartphone-destroyed-a-generation/534198/>
- ▶ Monitoring the Future from the University of Michigan

Jean M. Twenge, PhD  
author of *Generation Me*

iGen



Why Today's  
Super-Connected  
Kids Are Growing Up  
Less Rebellious, More  
Tolerant, Less Happy—  
and Completely  
Unprepared for  
Adulthood\*

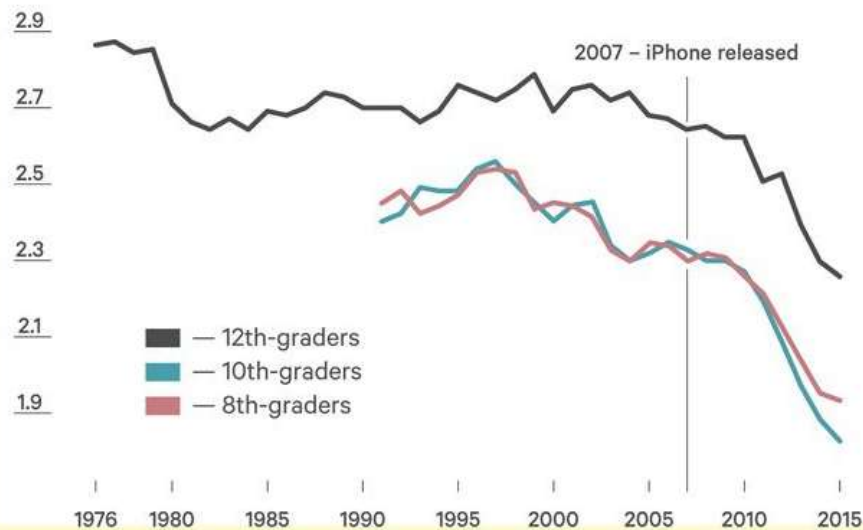
\*and What That Means for the Rest of Us

# Threat to the family: Technology (cont.)

1

## Not Hanging Out With Friends

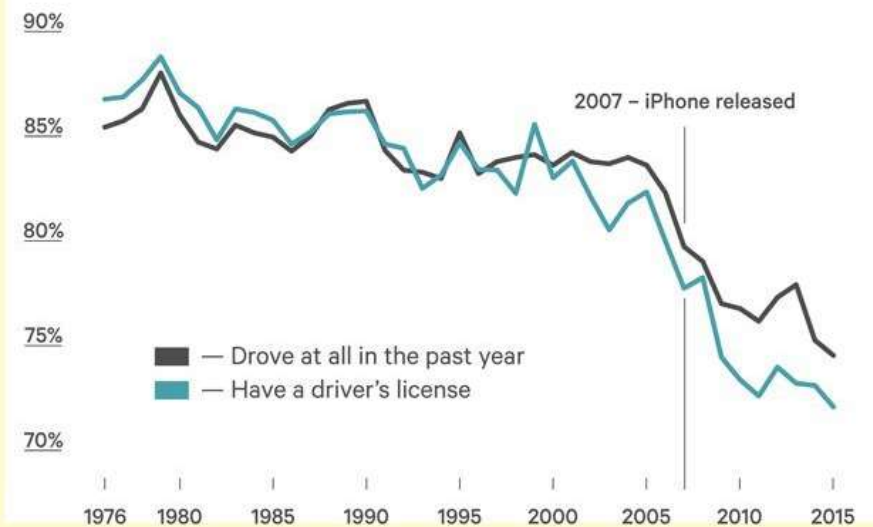
Times per week teenagers go out without their parents



2

## In No Rush to Drive

Percentage of 12th-graders who drive



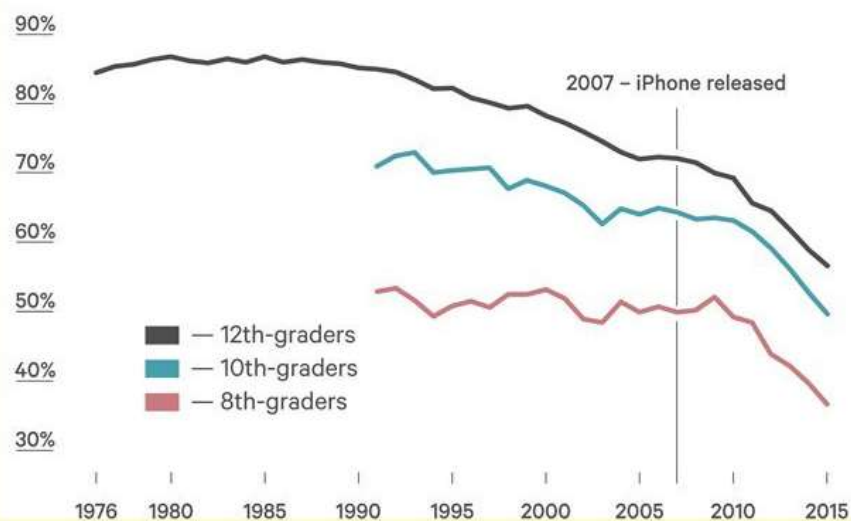


# Threat to the family: Technology (cont.)

3

## Less Dating ...

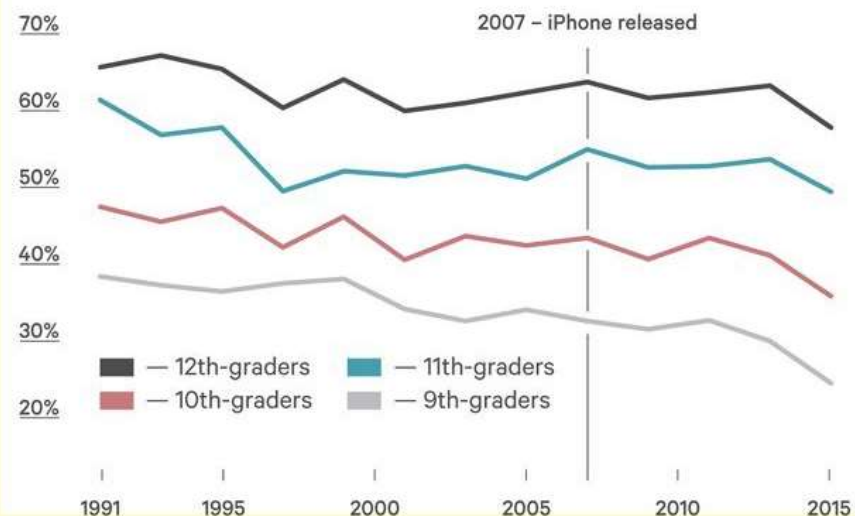
Percentage of teenagers who ever go out on dates



4

## ... And Less Sex

Percentage of high-school students who have ever had sex

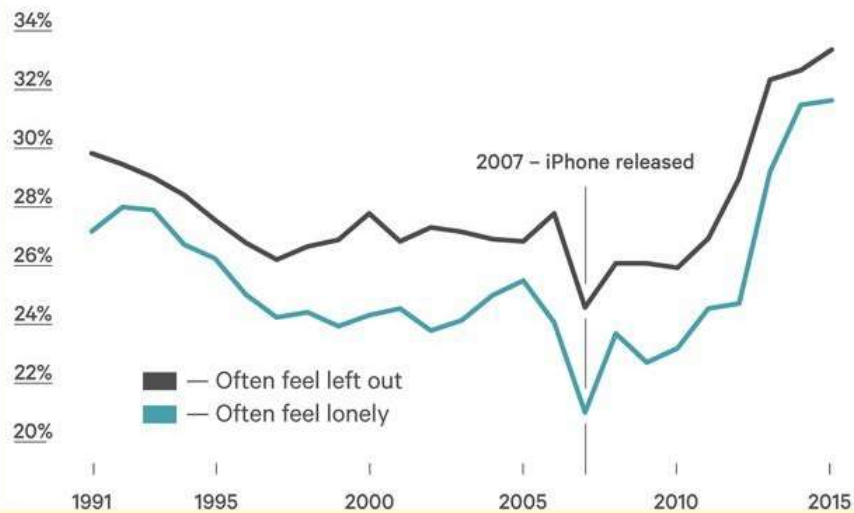


# Threat to the family: Technology (cont.)

5

## More Likely to Feel Lonely

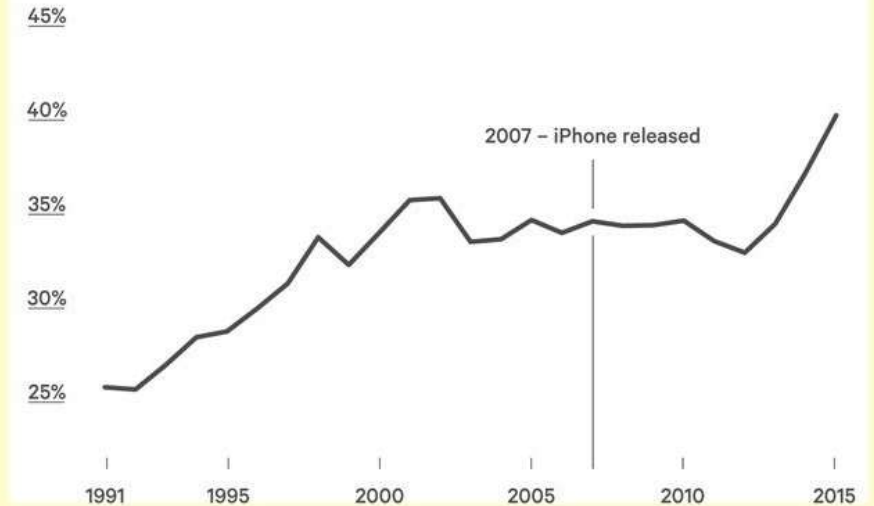
Percentage of 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-graders who agree or mostly agree with the statement "I often feel left out of things" or "A lot of times I feel lonely"



6

## Less Likely to Get Enough Sleep

Percentage of 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-graders who get less than seven hours of sleep most nights

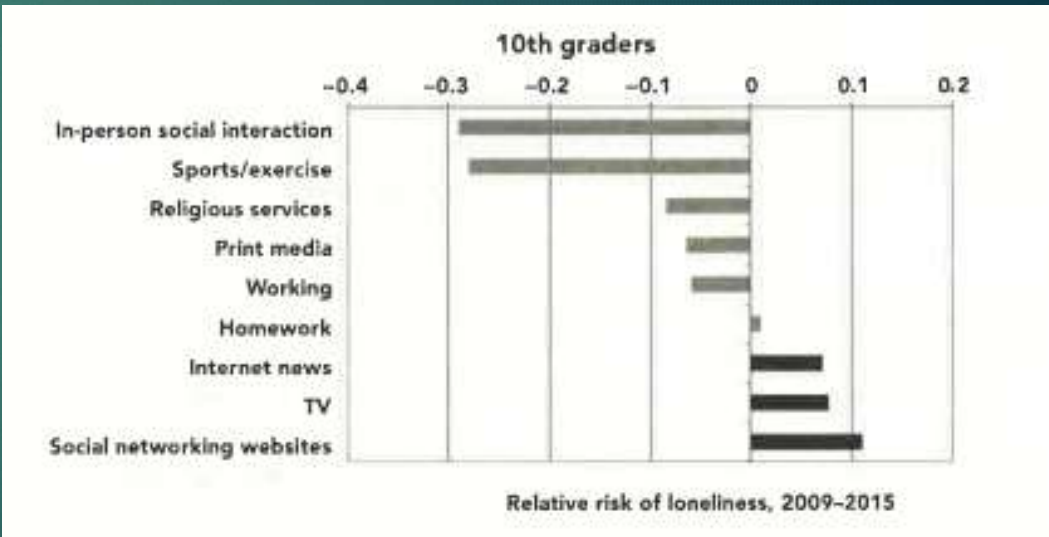
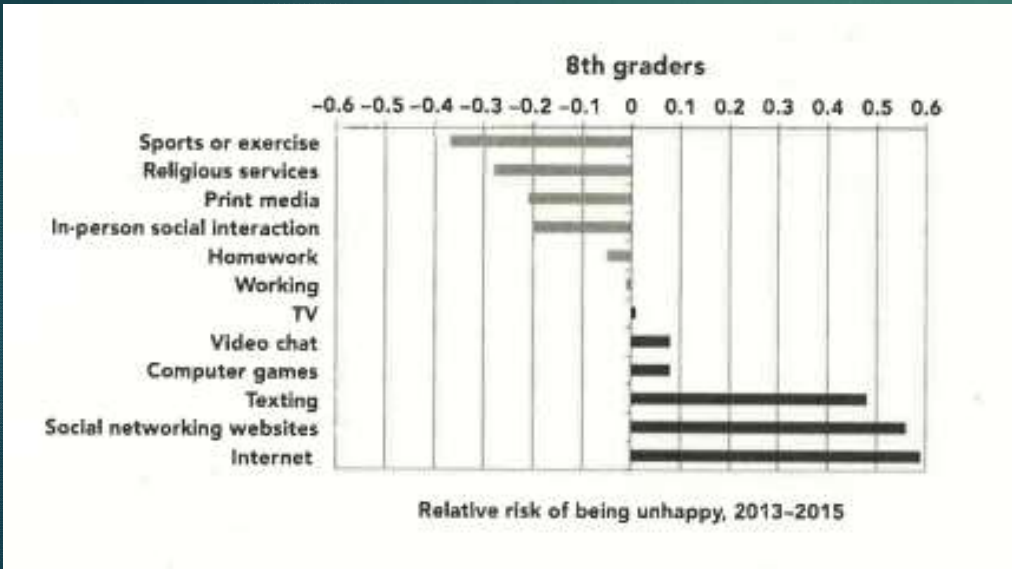


# Threat to the family: Technology (cont.)

- ▶ But wait, is this really a mental health crisis?
- ▶ What if this is just a different generation that behaves differently?
- ▶ They could be pursuing the same basic interests, just in different ways.
- ▶ Let's take a look at some more graphs:



# Threat to the family: Technology (cont.)



## Slide 18

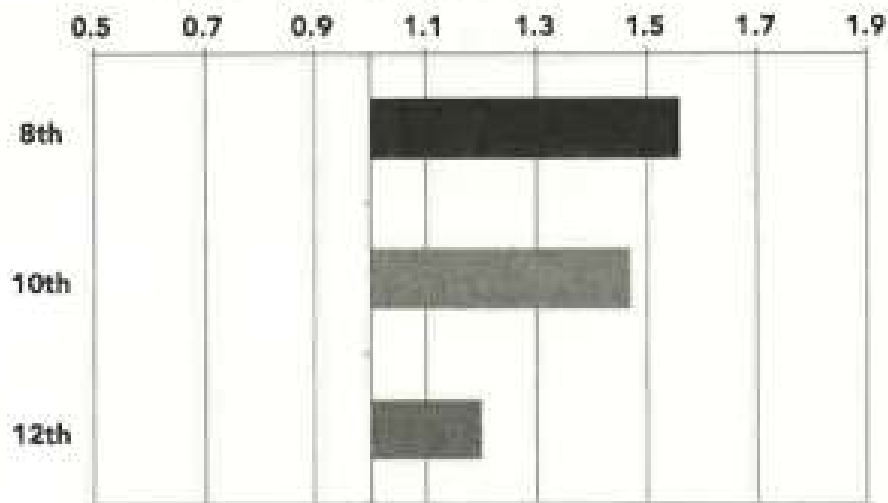
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**A1**

Admin, 10/13/2017

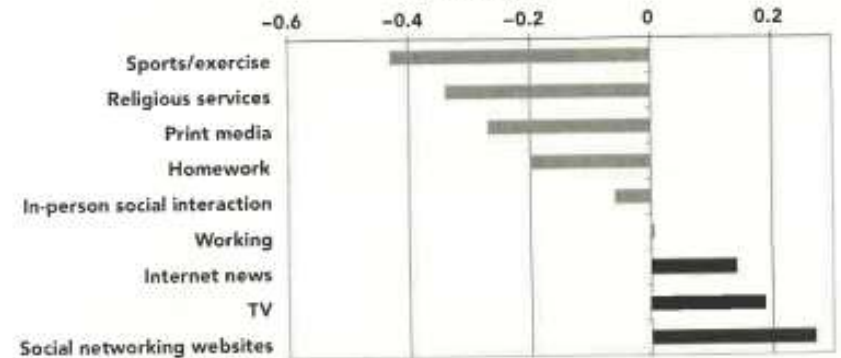
# Threat to the family: Technology (cont.)

Social networking sites 10+ hours a week



Odds of being unhappy (with demographic controls), 2013–2015

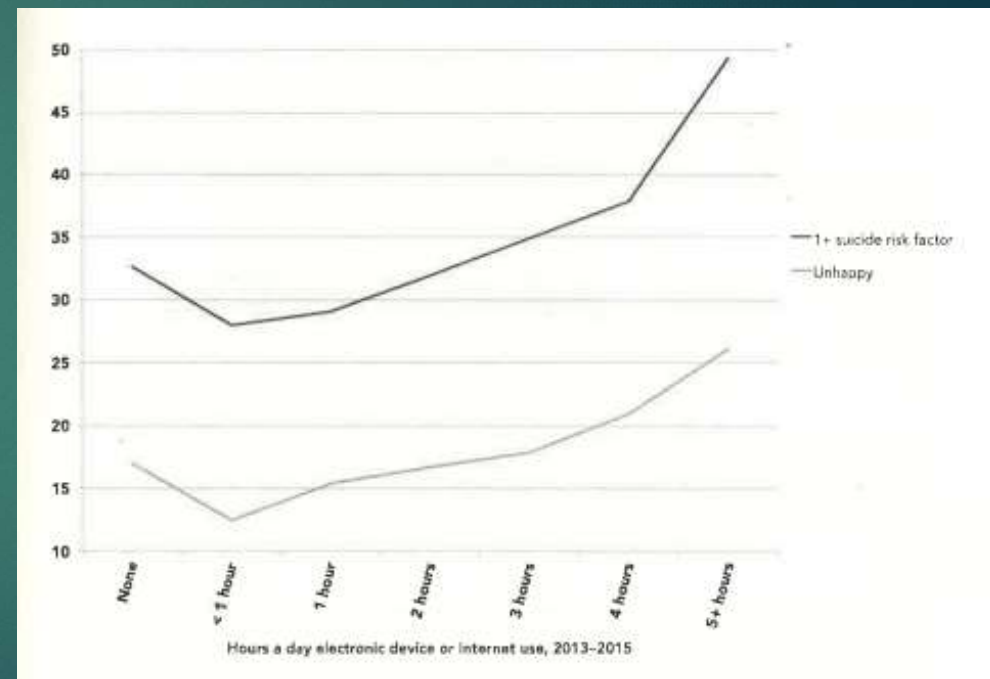
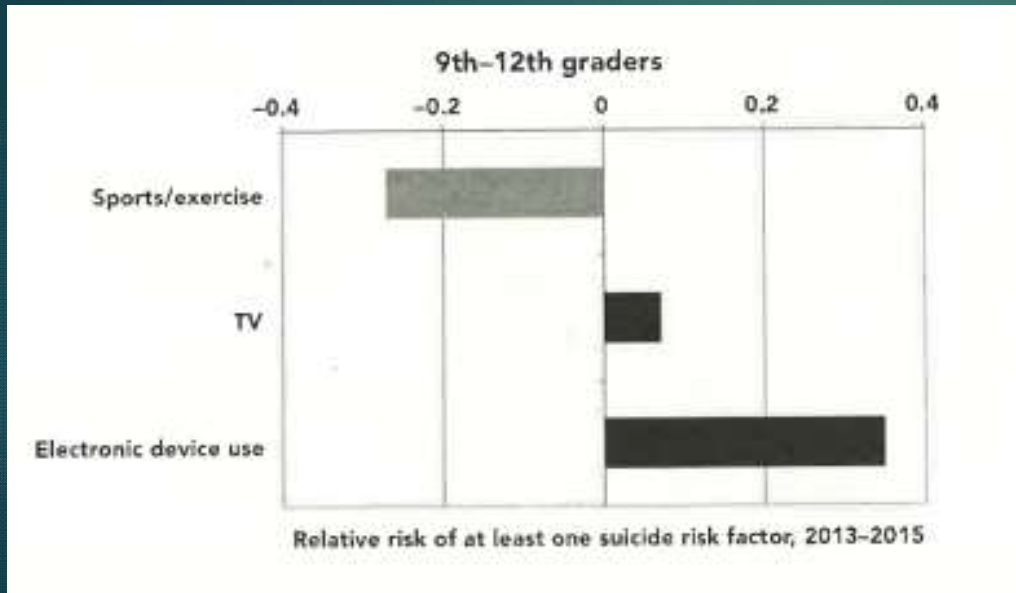
8th graders



Relative risk of high depressive symptoms, 2009–2015

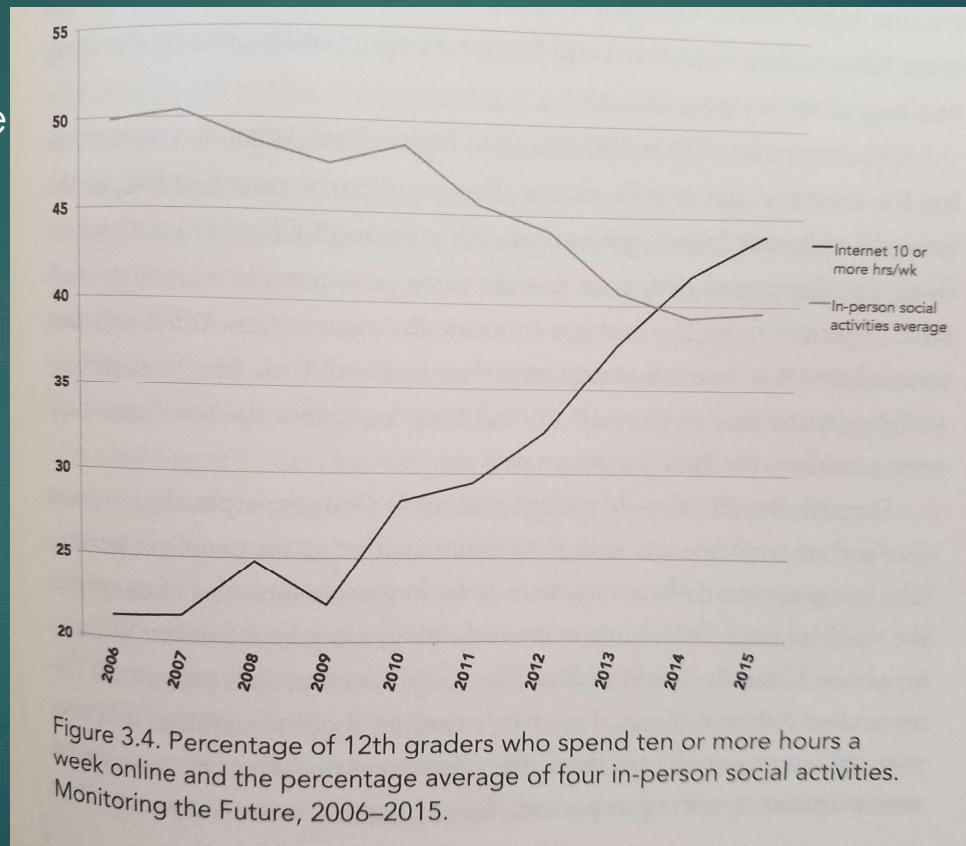


# Threat to the family: Technology (cont.)



# Threat to the family: Technology (cont.)

- Wait a minute media?



# Threat to the family: Technology (cont.)

- ▶ What can you do as a medical professional?
- ▶ Talk to parents about what this is doing to their children.
- ▶ Not just for pediatricians. These teens will very soon be adults.
  - ▶ And then, which is really scary, the generation raised by smartphones will be raising children themselves.
- ▶ Danger of cyber-bullying
- ▶ Related: Fear of Missing Out



# Renewed, human approach to sexuality

- ▶ Technology is one of the biggest threats to the recovery of an authentically human approach to sexuality.
- ▶ Twenge's research shows that iGen teens identify sex as being devoid of emotional content.
  - ▶ Where do you think they got that idea?
- ▶ Increased exposure to technology encourages the prevalence of pornography.
  - ▶ Vicious cycle: Young people have depressed mood because of social media. → More likely to view pornography → More likely to have depressed mood.
- ▶ Teens and young adults consider not recycling to be more immoral than viewing pornography.

# Renewed, human approach to sexuality (cont.)

- ▶ On the contrary, pornography does not depict sex as an act of love.
- ▶ Pornography frequently depicts acts of sexual violence.
  - ▶ What will this do to rates of sexual abuse?
  - ▶ Constitutes a serious threat particularly to women in high schools, on college campuses, and beyond.
- ▶ Pornography creates a context in which the Church's teaching about the relationship between sex and committed, marital love makes no sense.
- ▶ Average age of first exposure is around 11 years old. Lower for boys, higher for girls.

# Renewed, human approach to sexuality (cont.)

- ▶ Culture of silence
- ▶ Understandable stigma
  - ▶ But the stigma is not working.
  - ▶ It is not reducing the incidence of viewing this material.
- ▶ Not just a men's issue.
- ▶ Encourage parents to have honest and loving conversations with their children
- ▶ Emphasize to parents their role in protecting their children.
- ▶ Not just a religious issue!
  - ▶ Younger first exposure in men associated with greater desire to have power over women – sexism. (APA)



# iGen: New opportunities

- ▶ Twenge's research shows how iGen teens and young adults are spending more and more time at home, growing up slowly.
- ▶ This means that parents have more opportunities than ever to influence their children.
- ▶ Not just sheltering, but inoculating
  - ▶ Serious conversations
  - ▶ Which means they need to teach them how to talk to others
- ▶ Increasingly being formed by social media
  - ▶ Great adherence to new progressive orthodoxies about sexuality and the meaning of life.

# Prayer and fasting

- ▶ “This devotion, so great and so confident, to the august Queen of Heaven, has never shone forth with such brilliancy as when the militant Church of God has seemed to be endangered by the violence of heresy spread abroad, or by an intolerable moral corruption, or by the attacks of powerful enemies. Ancient and modern history and the more sacred annals of the Church bear witness to public and private supplications addressed to the Mother of God, to the help she has granted in return, and to the peace and tranquility which she had obtained from God. Hence her illustrious titles of helper, consoler, mighty in war, victorious, and peace-giver. And amongst these is specially to be commemorated that familiar title derived from the Rosary by which the signal benefits she has gained for the whole of Christendom have been solemnly perpetuated.” (Leo XIII, *Supremi Apostolatus Officio*, 3 – 1883)

# Conclusion

- ▶ There are real threats to propagation of a culture of life in the United States.
- ▶ However, there are ways that we can start working from the ground up to re-establish this culture.
- ▶ Most particularly, by strengthening the family.
  - ▶ By removing barriers to being open to life
  - ▶ By encouraging respect for the elderly
  - ▶ By assisting parents in raising their children, rather than letting them be raised by technology