

Nom de Prom

The term “prom” comes from the word promenade. A promenade was a formal public walk marking the “coming out” of a young woman into Victorian upper class society, that is to say, her parents were presenting her as available for courtship to appropriate suitors. Dancing was not part of the event because it was deemed appropriate only for married people.

By the late 1800s the upper class in the United States hosted debutante balls as the way to introduce their daughters into the courting society. Here, dancing was included—as part of the formation of young ladies and gentlemen in proper social graces.

As the middle class in America grew larger and wealthier, parents who envied the poise of the upper class debutantes wished the same for their own daughters. Proms were created as less expensive, less elaborate events and were hosted in the local high school. Young men and women met in their “Sunday best” to share dinner and celebrate graduation from high school into adulthood. It was an event the parents and teachers planned (and attended) with courtship in mind.

Dating had not yet been invented.



La Promenade: Renoir

Prom Bomb

Prom is the source of much anxiety for both parents and teens, including any Christian ones with good heads on their shoulders. It’s an evening that could be fun, dangerous, lame, sinful, or “magic.” The one thing it *will* be: [expensive](#).

The flowers, tuxedo, dress, dinner, dance and photos alone are quite

pricey. Add a limo rental and (unfortunately common) a hotel room, and the evening can easily have a price tag of \$800.

There is a lot of pressure to attend this event and many expectations are attached to it. The most common of these are drunkenness and sexual experimentation. Many attendees plan to drink, before and after the prom, and some during—provided they are able to smuggle in the necessary beverages.

Similar assumptions exist on the sexual front: leading up to my junior prom, I can remember rumors circulating about the after party orgy. Such rumors may or may not lead to the reality, but even the rumours are unhelpful.



The Prom: Hollywood

Most dancing at a prom will not consist of the foxtrot, waltz or polka. Instead, “freak dancing” (a rhythmic pelvic grinding on one’s partner/partners) will likely feature

prominently. One may certainly dance an entire evening without “freaking,” but it will take real finesse to avoid it during many of the songs and with certain partners.

Whether or not the majority of youth participate in these prom extracurricular activities, it is worth realizing that the air is heavy with anticipation that they will. At a prom, the expectation is for all to take some step toward depravity.

What are parents to do?

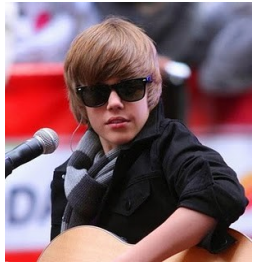
I don’t have an easy answer, or a universally applicable one. However, like most such tricky issues, talking it through well in advance (say a year or two before the pressure is on) can make a big difference. In my case, my parents allowed me to go, but we developed a plan that helped me navigate the evening well. My curfew was clear, and I escorted someone who was in our Christian youth group. We went in a group with other Kairos members, and the after-party we attended was hosted by parents of the youth group. We stayed out of trouble and had a lot of fun. The only part of the evening I didn’t enjoy was the dance itself—not enough polka.

~ James Munk
Kairos Mission Director
in North America



**The Prom:
Last Weekend**

STILL A TWITTER



Justin Bieber has "owned" Twitter as the main tweet topic for months, so Twitter decided to move him out of its top ten list by adjusting its trends algorithm. The formula

change made the singer fall off the charts completely – a move that fans of the 16-year-old didn't like.

Two days later, his fans had tweaked his name, calling him Twieber or Jieber to get around the new algorithm change. Now he's in *two* top spots on Twitter's lists.

ARE YOU LOOKING AHEAD?

A common parenting mistake isn't so much the failure to handle a current, tricky situation. It is failing to prepare children for the challenges the parents already know their children will face, well before they face them. Prepare your 13 year-old for what he or she will be facing at 16.

INTERESTING...

OMLG: a texting term being used by Chinese youth in place of "Oh My God" or "OMG" as an exclamation of surprise. OMLG stands for Oh My Lady Gaga.

YouTube passed 1 billion hits per day last October. In May, YouTube's fifth birthday, it passed 2 billion. It was bought for \$1.65 billion in November 2006. It has yet to make a profit.

Write to us at: kairos.editor@gmail.com

Past newsletters are available [here](#).

Marketing the All-American Girl

At a conference for marketers in 2005, Virgin Records hosted a seminar on how to successfully market to children aged two to twelve. It was given by Britney Spears' manager and entitled: "Grabbing Kids' Attention in a Competitive Marketplace: Creating the Next Pop Icon." What is the secret formula?



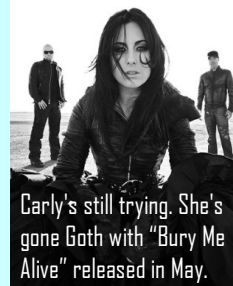
A nice, cute, 16-yr-old

In 1998 when the record company first met Britney they portrayed her as an All-American girl. The reason? She'd grab the attention of kids and gain the approval of mothers, the wallet-holders. If moms saw a singer/celebrity as wholesome and healthy, then sales of music, tickets and merchandise would skyrocket.

But what female teenage pop star wants to remain forever cute, young and nice? She wants to become sexy, edgy and rebellious, even if mom and dad don't like it. Like her audience, she tests what she has learned from mom and dad. And, for most pop stars, like most modern teens, if mom approves, then it can't be cool.

The Next All American Girl?

At one point it was supposed to be Carly Hennessy. Universal Records spent \$2.2 million from 1999 to 2001 marketing her as a pop singer. To recoup their investment they needed sales of 600,000 copies of her debut album. It sold 378. It's not easy to pick a winner. 95% of albums fail.



Carly's still trying. She's gone Goth with "Bury Me Alive" released in May.

Her fans don't remain children forever, either. They get older. Now the pop star must decide whether to stay a kiddie's pop star or not. If not she will need to continually forge ahead of her maturing fans. Staying the same, in the teenage world eventually will mean being tagged: "so yesterday."

It's not hard for the agent to promote the pop star's inclination to become sexy, edgy and rebellious. "You are cutting edge. You have your fans to think about. You are the future." What pop star looks at that and says no? What mom is going to pull the plug on a ten million dollar a year baby?



When the pop star goes over the edge, her girls come with her. Fans' moms get frustrated. *People* magazine frets over things moving too quickly but what can anyone do? They all supported the rising star, not knowing a modern pop star's success almost always means she will eventually gall them repeatedly.

Disney has the highest "success" rate in picking big winners with Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears, Lindsay Lohan, Hillary Duff, Ashley Tisdale, Vanessa Hudgens and now Miley Cyrus. Demi Lovato and Selena Gomez are on the bubble. Disney hasn't yet chosen a new 13-year-old to promote to stardom.