

America Breeding Culture of Rejection, Index Warns

American children are battling rejection as families are increasingly falling apart. A disturbing 55 percent of American children come from broken homes and 55 percent of American teenagers' parents have rejected each other, either through divorce, separation, or choosing not to marry. So says the Index of Belonging and Rejection.

Produced by Pat Fagan, Ph.D., of the Marriage and Religion Research Institute, a project of Family Research Council, the Index defines an intact family as a biological mother and father remaining legally married to each other since before or around the time of their child's birth.

As Fagan sees it, American society is dysfunctional, characterized by a faulty understanding of the male-female relationship. The solution, he says, is a compass correction, learning again how to belong to each other when we have begotten children together.

"If we fail in this, as a nation we will continue to 'define deviancy down,' in the inimitable phrase of Daniel Patrick Moynihan," Fagan says. "The merging again of the realities of father and mother with those of husband and wife will strengthen our children and lead to immeasurable benefits for children, adults and society. These include financial, educational, legislative, legal and judicial gains."

According to the Index's analysis of the 2008 American Community Survey, significant variations in the capacity to belong occur across regions and within different ethnic groups. For example:

- *62 percent of Asian-American teenagers live with both*

married parents.

- *54 percent of white youth, a slight majority, live with both parents.*
- *41 percent of teenagers from multiracial family backgrounds live in intact families.*
- *40 percent of Hispanic teenagers nationwide live with both parents.*
- *24 percent of American Indian and Alaskan Native adolescents— fewer than one in four— have lived with both married parents throughout childhood.*
- *17 percent of African-American youth — fewer than one in five — live with both married parents.*

Beyond racial differences, the Index varies across regional and socioeconomic lines. Forty-one percent of adolescents living in the South grow up belonging to an intact family. What's more, large urban counties whose populations are less educated, less affluent and contain high concentrations of minority groups tend to have lower proportions of two-parent families.

“Individual children, communities and the nation as a whole suffer the consequences of the culture of rejection in American homes,” Fagan says. “Children in broken homes are more likely to be poor or welfare-dependent. They enjoy less academic achievement and less social development, have more accidents and injuries, and have worse mental health and more behavioral problems. These children also have worse

relationships with their parents and are more likely to reject their own spouses later.”

Fagan goes on to say that the culture of rejection burdens communities with higher levels of poverty, unemployment, welfare dependency, domestic abuse, child neglect, delinquency, crime and crime victimization, drug abuse, academic failure and school dropout, and unmarried teen pregnancy and childbearing.

“The United States experiences increased costs in education, health care, mental health and the administration of justice,” he concludes. “Our future as a country depends on the strength of our families. Such strength is waning, which should give every American pause for concern and motivation for action.”