

Trend Alert:

TWERKING

By Walt Mueller

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When pop stars Robin Thicke and Miley Cyrus took the stage together at MTV's 2013 *Video Music Awards*, their envelope-stretching performance ignited a firestorm of feedback and critique. One word heard over and over again from newscasters, bloggers and commentators on the performance was *twerk*. While *twerk* and *twerking* are not exactly new to the youth culture lexicon, their sudden burst into the cultural mainstream have left many scratching their heads in confusion. *Twerk* and *twerking* are not only an emerging dance-floor behavior, but they shine a light on deeper issues related to youth culture and the emerging generations.



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Even the folks who decide on what words get into the esteemed *Oxford Dictionary* included *twerk* in their August 2013 list of new words. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines the verb as "dancing to popular music in a sexually provocative manner involving thrusting hip movements and a low, squatting stance." If you happened to catch Thicke and Cyrus on the *Video Music Awards*, you've seen the "video picture" that *Oxford* could easily place next to the entry for *twerk*. Even the online "Urban Dictionary" made *twerk* their May 3, 2013 "urban word of the day," with the entry featuring this definition: "the rhythmic gyrating of the lower fleshy extremities in a lascivious manner with the intent to elicit sexual arousal or laughter in one's intended audience." Of course, the "Urban Dictionary" includes dozens of other definitions posted by users, one of which accurately describes the dance as "having sex with the air." While no one is really sure about the origins of the word, it seems that it's a combination of "working it," "twisting," and "jerking."

Reality is that the nothing-left-to-the-imagination dance move was around long before the night of August 25th, 2013. Spend a little time on YouTube and you'll see and hear *twerk* references going back twenty years. DJ Jubilee's 1993 song "Do The Jubilee All" included the line inviting the ladies to shake their rear ends, "Twerk baby, twerk baby, twerk, twerk, twerk." Rapper Cheeky Blakk released the song "Twerk Something!" in 1995. Two years later, DJ Jubilee was back at it with the lyrical line "Twerk it!" in his song "Get Ready, Ready." By 2000 the Ying Yang Twins were singing "Whistle While You Twurk." In 2006 Beyonce sang "dip it, pop it, twerk it, stop it" in her song "Check On It." More recently, a variety

of performers have worked “twerk” and “twerking” into their music, including Waka Flocka Flame and Drake, when they sing “bounce that ass, shake that ass like the Twerk Team” in their song “Round of Applause.” Miley Cyrus got in on the act with a *twerking* tutorial video that went viral, and then again in the video for her song “We Can’t Stop.”

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then it should come as no surprise that *twerking* will spread like wildfire through youth culture in much the way dance crazes like The Lambada and The Macarena did in years’ past. In fact, more than 30 students at Scripps Ranch High School in San Diego were suspended last spring after filming a *twerking* video with school video equipment and then posting the video online. And, just a few days after the VMAs, a Google search of the term “twerking video” returned well over a million results, many of them videos made and posted by kids. You can expect that school districts and school dance chaperones will be scrambling to address the *twerking* that’s sure to sweep through school dances as the academic year progresses.



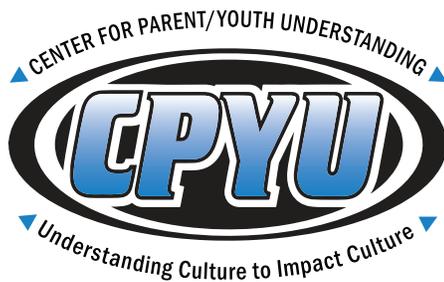
While the *twerk*-craze gives many parents one more thing that they *don’t* want to have to talk about with their kids, we encourage you to seize the opportunity to use the dance as a teachable moment. Yes, talk about it with your kids. With so

many of their media heroes and role models setting the standards through their powerful example, parents must exercise their God-given right and responsibility to nurture their children into God’s will and way. Talk about the need to exercise Godly, biblical

discernment when it comes to music and media choices. Teach them a biblical sexual ethic and standards of decency. Let them know that sex is a wonderful gift from God. . . not a bad thing. . . but a good thing to be indulged in by one man and one woman within the context of the covenantal commitment of marriage. Help them to understand what it means to no longer be conformed to the world, but to live with a renewed and transformed mind (Romans 12). Challenge them to make the difficult choices, even if that means standing apart from the crowd.

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For more information on today’s youth culture, visit the website of the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding at www.cpyu.org.

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