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Clare Daniel

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**REPRODUCING PREVENTION: TEEN PREGNANCY AND INTIMATE  
CITIZENSHIP IN THE POST-WELFARE ERA**

by

**CLARE DANIEL**

B.A. GERMAN STUDIES AND ENGLISH, MACALESTER COLLEGE, 2004  
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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
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## **DEDICATION**

To the memory of my mother, Therese Aileene Daniel (December 21, 1945 - October 11, 2013).

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation examines the politics of teen pregnancy prevention in the 1990s and early 2000s within public policy, popular culture, and local and national nonprofit advocacy. Widely viewed as a distressing social problem, teenage reproduction has provoked decades of prevention and regulation that pervade across public and private sectors. Teen pregnancy has been associated with, if not fully blamed for, a host of other so-called social problems throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and the beginning of the twenty-first century. As scholars such as Kristen Luker and Lisa Arai have labored to illustrate, causal connections between adolescent reproduction and the social ills it is said to precipitate and exacerbate are tentative at best. As such, the ubiquity of demonizing portrayals of teen pregnancy and parenthood as dangerous and irresponsible demands evaluation for what it can reveal about the values that govern mainstream society.

Heavily racialized imagery of teen pregnancy was crucial to the passage of neoliberal welfare reform in 1996. Using historical, visual, and discursive analysis, I argue that contemporary privatized teen pregnancy prevention forms a key counterpart to neoliberal welfare retrenchment. I show that representations of and approaches to teen

pregnancy as a social problem have shifted starkly in the post-welfare era toward a newly multicultural framework. Pioneered by some of the foremost architects of 1990s welfare reform legislation, this new discourse is purveyed through a privatized regime of coordinated social media and television that presents the management of teen sexuality as central to social wellbeing. As such, the post-welfare teen pregnancy prevention regime undergirds and extends the political and economic project of neoliberalism in three important and interrelated ways: (1) by promoting the intertwining neoliberal cultural logics of intimate citizenship, multiculturalism, and market rationality, (2) by obscuring the continued existence and lack of efficacy of punitive welfare reform policy, and (3) by helping to instantiate a paradigm of public wellbeing that sidesteps state-arbitrated wealth redistribution altogether.



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## INTRODUCTION: REPRODUCING PREVENTION

On May 21, 2013, a *Huffington Post* blogger praised billboard campaigns in Milwaukee and Chicago featuring boys with pregnant bellies and teen pregnancy prevention slogans.<sup>1</sup> One Chicago ad pictures a shirtless African American teenage boy with a bulging belly and the words “Unexpected? Most Teenage Pregnancies Are. Avoid unintended pregnancies and STIs. Use Condoms. Or Wait.”<sup>2</sup> A 2012 Milwaukee ad shows a pregnant, long-haired, white boy with the words “It should be no less disturbing when it’s a girl.”<sup>3</sup> The blogger, psychologist, and “parenting expert” Barbara Greenberg,<sup>4</sup> writes that these ads, geared toward helping boys realize that “teenage pregnancy is their responsibility too,” are part of an effort to “step out of the box to educate and warn teens” who are all-too-prone to getting bored when adults try to communicate with them.<sup>5</sup> Based in the understanding that teenage pregnancy is fundamentally a problem about teenagers’ uninformed responses to their naturally volatile state, these campaigns are examples of a recent surge in teen pregnancy prevention that aims to capture teenagers’ attention by finding evermore shocking and provocative ways to portray adolescent reproduction as universally unnatural, freakish, and personally dire.<sup>6</sup>

The ads rely on the notion that pregnant boys are deeply “disturbing” in their upheaval of gender and sex norms, suggesting not only that pregnancy is also a boy’s responsibility, but that it fundamentally upends that boy’s status as properly male and masculine. In keeping with a longstanding set of fears within dominant U.S. culture around the existence and management of child sexuality and its role in the production of proper citizens, these ads convey to their viewers that boys who impregnate girls block their own paths toward healthy, natural manhood. They suggest that the visibly and

physically disruptive effects teen pregnancy has on girls' lives have been dangerously normalized at the same time that the deep and invisible damage it does to American manhood goes completely overlooked. As the Albuquerque-based Media Literacy Project points out, these ads also perpetuate “a culture of ignorance, prejudice, and violence around transgender people” by suggesting that the pregnant bodies of transgender boys and men are “disturbing.”<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the ads provide no information about differential access to healthcare, education, and bodily security based on race, class, gender, and sexuality, which conditions the reproductive lives of teens.

These campaigns are part of a broader change in the public image of teen pregnancy as a social problem and national and local strategies for addressing it since the dismantling of the US welfare state in 1996. They—along with teen mom-centered television shows, sex-ed video games, celebrity-infused public service announcements, and more—mobilize the vocabulary and technologies of popular culture and marketing toward a project of social reform that forwards adolescent sex and reproduction as the key to individual and national wellbeing. These strategies emerge out of and help consolidate a remaking of notions of citizenship, social welfare, and race in the contemporary United States that is both publicly and privately funded and enforced. As I will show, teen pregnancy prevention, in its post-welfare iterations, provides a crucial vehicle for the construction and promotion of neoliberal multiculturalism, the values and ethics of intimate citizenship, and the state's material disinvestment in the maintenance of a minimum standard of living and equality. This dissertation thus makes important interventions into scholarship on welfare reform, the construction of teen pregnancy as a social problem, the cultural politics of neoliberalism.

## **“Teen Pregnancy:” A Neoliberal Social Problem**

Despite the overwhelming consensus around its problematic nature today, teen pregnancy has only recently become a locus of social reform in the United States. Although concerns about unwed motherhood intersected with fears about the effects of “teen culture,” premarital sex, and juvenile delinquency throughout the 1950s and 1960s,<sup>8</sup> it was not until an increased emphasis on education for young women and the rising age of marriage began to restructure the role of adolescent girls that age became a central focus, leading to the naming of a new social problem.<sup>9</sup> Other changes occurring throughout the 1960s and 1970s, such as more inclusive welfare eligibility requirements,<sup>10</sup> the legalization of abortion and liberalization of birth control policy,<sup>11</sup> and a longer route to self-sufficiency,<sup>12</sup> contributed to increased concern about the timing of childbirth. In the context of these broad social transformations, large-scale panic surrounding “teen pregnancy” emerged in the U.S. in the mid 1970s,<sup>13</sup> and soon solidified “children having children” as an issue of national urgency.<sup>14</sup> Adolescent procreative sex was framed as deeply troubling the division between child and adult, apparently thrusting children into premature adulthood, dependency on government assistance rather than parental support, and fueling the discourses of sexual and cultural pathology already central to the racialization of poor people of color.

Teen parenthood has been associated with, if not fully blamed for, a host of other heavily racialized so-called social problems throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and the beginning of the twenty-first century, including poverty, inner-city crime, juvenile delinquency, drug use, poor maternal and child health outcomes, and high school drop-out rates. As many scholars, such as Kristin Luker, Lisa Arai, and others, have labored to

illustrate, causal connections between adolescent reproduction and the social ills it is said to precipitate and exacerbate are tentative at best.<sup>15</sup> Rather than producing such problems, these scholars argue, teenage reproduction is actually an index of social inequalities resulting from structural factors, such as the labor market, educational policy, and the social welfare system. Building on this work, this dissertation fundamentally asks why teen pregnancy continues to be such a salient social issue, rallying both liberal and conservative politicians, nonprofit advocates, and the popular culture industry, despite ample evidence that it is not at the root of the nation's problems.

In order to understand how teen pregnancy has become such an important target of public and private concern, it is useful to position its emergence as a social problem within the ascendance of the cultural, political, and economic project of neoliberalism. A worldview and governing logic coming to prominence in the U.S. and Great Britain in the late 1970s and continuing to the contemporary moment, neoliberalism can be broadly defined as promoting economic and political landscapes that favor private, corporate interests that are attached to self-owning entrepreneurial individuals at the expense of public expenditure and infrastructure for broad-based social welfare and equality.<sup>16</sup> Neoliberal cultural discourses that guide and support such policies forward individual over collective responsibility and uphold intimate behaviors rather than public acts as the defining realm of citizenship.<sup>17</sup> As many scholars of welfare reform, such as Gwendolyn Mink, Jamie Peck, and Anna Marie Smith, point out, neoliberal social and economic philosophy views the wellbeing of disadvantaged populations as the responsibility of those individuals and families who have produced their own misfortune by falling into unhealthy patterns and mismanaging their lives.<sup>18</sup> Part of a larger ethos of scaling back

government spending and elevating “free market” principles, proponents of welfare reform held that social inequalities were best solved through the infusion of personal responsibility, rather than material resources, into impoverished communities, as these communities purportedly suffered from individual and familial problems, rather than structural societal ones. As I discuss in chapter 1, teen pregnancy and parenthood—epitomizing the pathological nature of poor people and representing the misguided values and poor choices that substantive government support could produce—were central rhetorical figures in the bipartisan neoliberal project of “end[ing] welfare as we know it.”<sup>19</sup>

When the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) passed in the summer of 1996, it ended the 60 year-old entitlements-based US welfare state and replaced it with a workfare regime in which public relief was made contingent upon pre-approved work-related activities. As Jamie Peck argues, the PRWORA instituted “new codes of conduct for those on the edges of the labor market.”<sup>20</sup> Dismantling the federal welfare bureaucracy, the law funds varying state workfare programs through block grants, while guiding them heavily with neoliberal market rationality. The federal government’s use of monetary incentives and disincentives operates on states and recipients alike to elicit numerical outcomes and normative behavior. Gwendolyn Mink explains the effects of this new federalism in these terms: “A state *must* do certain things in exchange for its block grant. It also must *not* do certain things even if local majorities want to. A state cannot offer assistance on more generous or more equitable terms than are stipulated in the PRA.”<sup>21</sup> Some of the guidelines with which states must comply include strict lifetime limits on assistance, aggressive work



requirements, and the profuse application of sanctions to penalize noncompliant recipients. Other regulatory initiatives that states can opt to implement and which tend to enhance their numerical outcomes and increase their chances of improved funding include some of the child support enforcement measures as well as the punitive “family cap” rule.<sup>22</sup> Widely recognized by scholars of welfare as a policy that increases the material instability and bodily vulnerability of the poorest and most marginalized members of society, the PRWORA helps to produce, manage, and maintain a highly flexible, deeply low-wage labor force made up of a population effectively deemed disposable through demonizing, pathologizing cultural and political discourses. It works in coordination with other policies passed that same year, such as immigration reform, adoption reform, and the Defense of Marriage Act, to carry out the neoliberal agenda of withdrawing state support from the poor while enforcing the norms of the white, middleclass, heterosexual, consumeristic, nuclear family.<sup>23</sup>

This approach to poverty and welfare rests upon a notion of citizenship defined by the personal, private, and familial. As scholars of neoliberal citizenship, such as Lisa Duggan, Lauren Berlant, and Aiwaha Ong argue, a new form of ideal citizenship emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century, solidifying in the 1970s and 1980s, in which proper civic behavior is envisioned through individual responsibility, entrepreneurship, and heteronormative domesticity.<sup>24</sup> According to Lauren Berlant, this privatized, intimate citizenship is infused with racial, gender, class, and sexual norms that are emblemized throughout the 1980s and 1990s by the figures of a young white girl and the fetus.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the ideal citizen becomes an innocent, vulnerable, trusting subject of state protection, rather than an active, informed participant in policy-making and state action.

As such, ideal adult citizens are infantilized while children remain a monolithic category of innocence and corruptibility endangered by threatening adults, and public action is viewed as either menacing or idiotic.

The category of adolescence, marking the transition between child and adult, as well as nascent and full citizen, requires examination for its role in neoliberal discourses of intimate citizenship. In his seminal study of the modern family form in bourgeois European society during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, Philippe Airés traces a transformation in understandings of childhood.<sup>26</sup> He shows how the modern division between child and adult, nonexistent in the *ancien régime*, formed gradually as part of a middle class ethic resulting from the emergence of education reform, the importance of privacy, and the development of fields like child psychology and health and hygiene. As Lawrence Stone explains, children in sixteenth-century England were treated with relative indifference and formality as a result of high infant mortality rates and common practices such as sending young people to wet nurses and boarding schools in the upper classes or into domestic servitude for the middle and lower classes.<sup>27</sup> Whereas young people were previously viewed as small adults, they began in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to be imbued with a “special nature”<sup>28</sup> and the modern family became centered around the nurturing and protecting of innocent, adored, corruptible children. The concept of adolescence, resulting from the notion of “long childhood” in which older young people were to be schooled in discipline and morality, solidified in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, including at first only boys of the middle and wealthy classes and gradually extending to girls and the poor.<sup>29</sup> These older children came to embody an

important transitional period in the production of adult citizens in that they continue to possess a “special nature,” by definition, but are in training as adults.

Historically, this separation between children and adults has informed a great deal of social policy and exclusion in the U.S. Scholars such as Molly Ladd-Taylor and Sonya Michel have illustrated the ways that transformations in notions of childhood occurring in the United States generated social reform and state policy regulating motherhood.<sup>30</sup> Concern for the well-being of children fueled campaigns for the development of institutionalized childcare programs beginning at the turn of the eighteenth century, Mother’s Pensions in the Progressive Era, and Aid to Dependent Children in 1935. The movements that occasioned these reforms drew upon notions of proper childhood and motherhood that excluded and regulated families based on race, class, gender and sexuality. In the post-World War II era, anxieties about the effects of unwed motherhood on children and society fueled research in the social sciences that psychologized and pathologized single mothers and their families.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, with the development for the first time of “teenagers” as a target market for consumption of goods and popular culture,<sup>32</sup> fears swelled about the effects of television, film, and youth culture on the proper development (sexual and otherwise) of adolescents.<sup>33</sup> These concerns led to new racially differentiated approaches to unwed motherhood,<sup>34</sup> as well as new attempts at censoring and manipulating the mass media in order to curb adolescent sex and delinquency and cultivate desired familial forms and citizenship conduct.<sup>35</sup>

The problem of teen pregnancy in its various constructions has long registered concerns with the perils of child sexuality. The desexualization inherent in the modern category of “children,” as queer theorists and others point out, serves to prop up

heteronormativity, fuel sex panics, and sustain sexuality-based persecution.<sup>36</sup> As James Kincaid argues, the figure of the “child” is imbued with innocence and purity, and as such actually calls forth its opposite—corruption and eroticism—thus always referencing a forbidden desire that must be shunned and Othered.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Kerry H. Robinson argues that children inhabit a form of “difficult citizenship,” characterized by extreme regulation and exclusion from rights, in which their apparent innocence in opposition to sexuality results in widespread efforts to “deny their relevance and access to sexual citizenship.”<sup>38</sup> Kincaid’s and Robinson’s analyses of childhood help to explain how teen parents, whose sexuality as children is apparent, have become one of the most widely scrutinized and demonized groups of young people. They, like the youth Sue Ruddick discusses in her work on globalization and constructions of childhood, who are classified as “juvenile delinquents” and increasingly tried as adults, become exceptional through their deviant actions—attributed adult responsibility without the rights and privileges that adulthood supplies.<sup>39</sup>

At once mobilizing fears about children’s too-early sex and corruption, foregrounding adolescence as the volatile transition into adult citizenship, and providing a salient, personal explanation for racialized poverty and social disorder, the “problem” of teen pregnancy during welfare reform both rested on and helped to impose intimate, rather than public, forms of citizenship. In addition to the increased instability and vulnerability of impoverished mothers’ lives that results from the PRWORA, making them less able to find the time and resources to participate in public political debate, the widespread denigration of their choices and behavior during welfare reform debate contributed to the devaluing of their participation in public discourse.<sup>40</sup> By extension,

impoverished pregnant and parenting teens have been triply excluded from public forms of citizenship. They contend with the stigma of welfare, based in a logic of poor choices and irresponsibility; the material results of a policy that restricts their time and resources for democratic participation; and the assumption that, due to their age, they are qualified neither for parenthood nor the self-governing that full citizenship rights and democratic participation requires.

While US citizenship has been predicated on specific personal and sexual behaviors since its inception,<sup>41</sup> pregnant and parenting teens provide a powerful representation of the neoliberal logic of intimate citizenship in which personal choices and behaviors come to eclipse all other expressions of citizenship. Pregnant and parenting teens figure the demise of nascent citizens via premature sex and reproduction. They exist as always already ruined for proper citizenship, never initiated into it as a result of their failure to behave as innocent, asexual children protected by the nation (unless perhaps they can be redeemed by proper private citizens, through adoption or privatized education). The politics of teen pregnancy in the 1980s and 1990s was thus an invaluable tool for the promotion of neoliberal discourses and policies that rested upon and cultivated notions of intimate citizenship. Ostensibly race- and class-neutral narratives about cycles of teen pregnancy within crime-stricken, inner-city, communities of poverty worked within welfare reform debate to help enforce and manage deepening social stratification while discursively and materially undermining agendas for racial, gender, and class equality.<sup>42</sup> If neoliberalism is at least in part, as David Harvey argues, a project for the “restoration and consolidation of class power,” then the construction of the problem of teen pregnancy within welfare reform debate was a particularly effective

mechanism of neoliberal social and economic policy.<sup>43</sup>

According to its express purpose of decreasing poverty by promoting work, decreasing dependence on public assistance, decreasing out-of-wedlock and teen pregnancy, and promoting marriage, welfare reform has plainly failed. While poverty rates have fluctuated some since 1996, and the number of families living in “extreme poverty” has increased substantially,<sup>44</sup> the only outcome in terms of poverty, pregnancy, and marriage that can likely be attributed to the PRWORA is the much larger percentage of poor families who are not receiving welfare under the new law.<sup>45</sup> Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)—the program created by the PRWORA, which replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)—can easily be said to have worsened the situation of poor families in the United States. Sandra K. Danziger concludes her 2010 study of the effects of welfare reform with this summary of current research on the topic:

The research consensus is that in the decade following the 1996 welfare reform, employment and earnings of single mothers increased, poverty changed relatively little, and the number of families with neither wage income nor cash welfare increased. Exclusive reliance on informal sources of income is unlikely to alleviate poverty and hardship (see also Blank & Kovak 2009). High levels of family income distress and vulnerability compromise child well-being, and exposure to such risks differs by race and ethnicity. Welfare agencies that restrict entry, push welfare exits, and offer only a work-first message exacerbate rather than help the situation of poor families.<sup>46</sup>

While the policy was implemented during a period of economic prosperity that lent itself to the project of churning people on and off the welfare rolls and into available flexible, low-wage jobs, the economic downturn beginning in 2007 has revealed the true shortcomings of TANF as a poverty alleviator. As many experts have argued, most states, in large part as a result of federal regulations, designed TANF programs that cannot

effectively adjust to the rising unemployment and poverty rates that have resulted from the Great Recession.<sup>47</sup> Although welfare reform has, since its creation, fully abandoned those with the deepest disadvantage—resulting from compounded physical, mental, educational, and familial barriers to employment—it is now instituting a broader and more visible “disconnected” subset of the population.<sup>48</sup>

Likewise, TANF’s track record on teen pregnancy and parenthood is also poor. Special provisions for teen parents on TANF include specific housing and school requirements meant to discipline parenting teens, prevent subsequent births, and discourage teen pregnancy at large.<sup>49</sup> According to a 2002 survey done by the Center for Law and Social Policy, teen parents are oversanctioned and underserved by most TANF programs.<sup>50</sup> Although teen pregnancy rates have decreased overall since welfare reform, this trend cannot be attributed to TANF. A 2004 study by Lingxin Hao and Andrew J. Cherlin shows that welfare reform had not decreased teenage fertility rates or high school dropout rates during the years following its passage. Rather, they suggest, TANF programs may slightly increase the likelihood of adolescent pregnancy and high school dropout for teenagers in households receiving TANF.<sup>51</sup> In conjunction with TANF, the PRWORA and TANF reauthorization bills include funding for abstinence-only education and comprehensive sex education, as well as a requirement that states spend their own TANF Maintenance-of Effort funds on projects that can include prevention and reduction of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.<sup>52</sup> Many studies of the effects of welfare reform programs on teen pregnancy show little to no direct effect on the rates, which were falling already for years before 1996.<sup>53</sup>

In this context, with research showing that teen pregnancy is not a causal factor in

poverty and that welfare reform has failed and continues to fail in achieving its stated goals, it would seem that a serious reevaluation of workfare and teen pregnancy prevention is in order. However, such has not occurred. In fact, TANF has been reauthorized numerous times with only minor revisions since its passage, while teen pregnancy has become an even more popular cause for public and private concern and resources. This dissertation asks why this is the case and how neoliberal welfare reform and the politics of teen pregnancy prevention continue to be mutually reinforcing projects.

I argue that, in the post-welfare context, the public image of teen pregnancy has been reformulated to extend the project of neoliberalism, further displacing and erasing national discussions around structural inequalities and publicly ensured collective wellbeing. I show how “teen pregnancy” has been all but cleansed of its formerly heavily race- and class-based association within contemporary national legislative, popular culture, and advocacy discourses to make way for the emergence of a multicultural politics of teen pregnancy within the logic of intimate citizenship. While the purportedly pathological culture of poverty perpetuated by perverse welfare incentives was once held as the breeding ground for a dysfunctional, self-perpetuating cycle of teen pregnancy and fatherlessness that led to juvenile sex, drug-use, crime, high school drop-out, and national social and economic decline, in the post-welfare era teen pregnancy is first and foremost presented as an issue of sexual irresponsibility that can turn any normal teenager into a social disgrace, underachiever, and failed citizen—inverting the acquisitive self-owning individual at the center of a properly neoliberal society.



In illustrating the production of a multicultural politics of teen pregnancy, I draw upon scholarly discussions of neoliberal multiculturalism.<sup>54</sup> In particular, I apply Jodi Melamed's formulation of it in her book *Represent and Destroy*. Charting the production of neoliberal multiculturalism as an "official state antiracism" of the 2000s, Melamed argues that it serves as a form of rationalization for the continuance of racial capitalism.<sup>55</sup> She suggests that discourses of neoliberal multiculturalism reference a residual form of race within an assumed post-racial global society governed by inherently multicultural markets. She writes, "Neoliberal policy has engendered new racial subjects while creating and distinguishing between newly privileged and stigmatized collectivities, yet multiculturalism has coded the wealth, mobility, and political power of neoliberalism's beneficiaries as the just desserts of multicultural global citizens while representing those neoliberalism has dispossessed as handicapped by their own monoculturalism or historical-cultural deficiencies."<sup>56</sup> This new racialization of privileged subjects as multicultural and stigmatized subjects as monocultural rationalizes the hyperexploitation of conventionally racialized groups through neoliberal technologies of capitalism.

Post-welfare teen pregnancy prevention, as I argue specifically in chapter 2, valorizes certain forms of consumerism, privatization, sex, and family as valid, enlightened, and universally accessible, while racializing adolescent pregnancy and parenthood as pathological, backward, and cyclical. In so doing, its multicultural politics not only rationalizes inequality, as Melamed and others argue, but frequently denies its existence altogether. Teen pregnancy prevention efforts portray the negative consequences of inappropriate sex and reproduction almost entirely in personal and emotional terms, forwarding proper sexual, consumer, and entrepreneurial behavior as

the mechanisms of success and happiness. As Melamed suggests, “Neoliberal multiculturalism is the apotheosis of liberal-antiracist discourses, which have valorized specific economic arrangements.”<sup>57</sup> Within it, racial difference, such as that represented in *16 and Pregnant* or the National Campaign’s teen pregnancy prevention browser games, signals the apparent antiracist nature of effectively navigated markets, the effective navigation of which is enabled by good moral behavior and precluded by too-early pregnancy.

In this way, teen pregnancy prevention in the post-welfare era participates in and promotes new forms of racialization that construct neoliberal capitalism as the ultimate inclusionary force, while eliding the racialized, exploitable labor force that remains crucial to capital accumulation and that was secured by welfare reform (which was made possible through a previous pathologization and racialization of teen pregnancy). As I show through an analysis of coordinated teen pregnancy prevention efforts within federal policy, popular culture, national advocacy, and local initiatives, this new multicultural politics of teen pregnancy normalizes the notion that social wellbeing is ensured through the privatized cultivation of proper adolescent sexuality and consumption rather than publicly funded and distributed material supports for underprivileged sectors of the population. This dissertation thus illustrates the importance of adolescent sexuality and reproduction to the discourses and policy structures that enforce and forward a neoliberal redefinition of the rights, responsibilities, and privileges of U.S. citizenship, and that uphold the processes of deepening social inequality under racial capitalism.

## **Pregnancy Prevention in the Public Private Realm and the Privatized Public**

Contemporary neoliberal discourse hinges upon specific definitions of “public” and “private” that mystify and obscure the complex relationships between these two co-constitutive realms. Espousers of neoliberalism view the government and its public works purely as tools for the protection and cultivation of private enterprise. While the public/private divide is a constitutive aspect of liberalism, this neoliberal view of the role of the public sector differs from Progressive Era and New Deal liberalisms by emphasizing the primacy of entrepreneurial individuals, markets, and market logic, rather than upholding the importance of sustaining a baseline level of public wellbeing through state laws, programs, and services in order to facilitate broad participation in regulated markets.<sup>58</sup> This emphasis on “markets” versus “government” denies the reality that capitalist economic formations have from their onset necessitated and engendered political social organization in order to exist and persist.<sup>59</sup> While global, federal, state, and local governments more or less determine the economic policy, physical infrastructure, human rights legislation, labor laws, etc. that condition citizens’ and corporations’ existence and activities, contemporary neoliberal discourse portrays the inefficient, wasteful, cumbersome “government” through a specific subset of public works—those aspects that enable the wellbeing of the underprivileged by both redistributing wealth and resources through taxation and welfare, and regulating industries for the protection of humans and the nonhuman surroundings that sustain them. Ignored in this discourse are the various aspects of historical and current public policies and structures that instantiate and support class privilege, systemic racism, and other

forms social inequality, accomplished in the name of deregulation and supporting private enterprise.<sup>60</sup>

In this way, the discursive division between public and private that guides liberal and neoliberal political and economic thought misrepresents the coconstitutive and deeply intertwined relationship between “public” and “private” entities and pursuits. Neoliberal “privatization” refers to the specific trend of transferring previously public responsibilities over to private enterprises to manage and execute. This process often occurs through the creation of government contracts to private industries or through the complete or partial termination of a government program or service, leaving concerned citizens and private organizations to address the consequent void without any government support. Arguably, the application of the principles, technologies, and strategies of private markets to publicly funded and implemented projects, which often involves the funneling of public funds into and through private channels, is also a form of privatization.<sup>61</sup> These processes are carried out in the name of allowing the efficiency and equilibrating capacities of market forces or market logic to prevail, lessen the burden of taxation on successful entrepreneurial citizens, and cultivate responsibility and initiative in those plagued by a bureaucratic mentality or general laziness. Bob Jessop writes that “while the Keynesian welfare forms of intervention may have been rolled back, privatization, deregulation and liberalization have also been seen to require new or enhanced forms of regulation, reregulation and competition policy.”<sup>62</sup> Neoliberal retrenchment and privatization of welfare has not necessarily decreased public monetary expenditure or the government’s role in market regulation.<sup>63</sup> Its primary accomplishment,

as is apparent in the example of teen pregnancy prevention, has been to redirect the flows, beneficiaries, and targets of public funds and policies.<sup>64</sup>

Although teen pregnancy prevention has never fully been a “public” project, its pre-welfare-reform status as an issue primarily about poverty, welfare, and reproductive health made it a concern managed through public policy relating to health, welfare, and education. While this continues to be true, the most visible and prominent post-welfare aspects of teen pregnancy prevention are governed by the logic of neoliberal privatization. As I discuss in depth in the following chapters, this privatized teen pregnancy prevention comes out of the politics of welfare reform, utilizes public and private funds, engages nonprofit and for-profit entities, and relies upon market rationality. In order to thoroughly examine the post-welfare politics of teen pregnancy, my project must straddle sites of analysis located within two intertwined zones: privatized public action—federal and state legislation, political debate, and social programs—and the very public private sphere—popular television and film, internet-based advocacy, and local nonprofit work.

The neoliberal emphasis on privatization and market rationality both designates popular culture and privatized media technologies as crucial mechanisms of social reform and identifies teenagers as primary targets of such strategies due to their apparent interests in trends and proclivities toward new media. Moreover, within a multicultural logic of intimate citizenship, it is precisely teenagers’ purportedly natural capacity for wanton consumption and risk-taking behavior that both defines their rightful expression of citizenship and is threatened by pathological sexuality resulting in too-early pregnancy and parenting.<sup>65</sup> The post-welfare politics of teen pregnancy holds that rather than public

material support for health and education, teens must first and foremost cultivate their concern with consuming and conforming. As I illustrate in chapters 2 and 3, their wellbeing apparently lies in their ability to purchase the latest trendy goods and participate in the requisite extracurriculars as practice for their future as “normal” adult citizens and parents. Sex, pregnancy, and parenthood during adolescence, according to dominant prevention discourse, foreclose those opportunities because babies drain disposable income and leisure time, reorder teen priorities, and limit the ultimate entrepreneurial and consumptive potential of the individual (despite the ample consumption that often accompanies parenthood). In this formulation, public wellbeing is not determined in terms of access to nutrition, healthcare, shelter, and other basic needs, but is understood as a measurement of an individual’s ability to participate in equilibrating markets that naturally set the standards of normality, health, and happiness. In this way, teen sexuality forms a most fitting target for the intertwining neoliberal goals of intimate citizenship, privatization, and welfare retrenchment.

### **Methods and Chapter Outline**

In the following chapters, I use historical methods, discursive analysis, and visual analysis to unpack the shifting politics of teen pregnancy prevention across multiple realms of society. Utilizing scholarly histories of teen pregnancy, motherhood and social policy, and the welfare state, I do a comparative analysis of the pre- and post-welfare reform politics of teen pregnancy. Throughout this analysis, I utilize the Foucauldian definition of “discourse,” viewing it as a system that includes language as well as conduct, which creates a construct, in this case teen pregnancy, and produces its meaning.<sup>66</sup> In keeping with this formulation, I am attentive to the terms and

understandings that are foreclosed in a particular text or set of texts, as well as those that are present and dominant. I also assume that dominant constructions of teen pregnancy and teen parents, as exhibited by public policy and mass media, are sites of power and struggle that can be challenged, resisted, and altered through contestation. This is helpful in identifying the continuities and ruptures between past and current notions of teenage pregnancy and parenthood, as well as the contours of the racial, class, gender and sexual politics that inform treatment of the issue. Likewise, visual aspects of texts such as television shows, films, websites, and print media play an important role in the meanings created by those texts. The particulars of formal composition, including framing, perspective, color, and the pairing of image and text provide crucial information in the critical examination of visual media. The ways in which race and ethnicity are visually represented are of specific importance to an analysis of racialization and multiculturalism. My use of visual analysis throughout the dissertation reflects an understanding of the technologies of visual media as a central aspect of teen pregnancy prevention discourse, and of the visual as a powerful tool for the production of public discourse.

Using these methods, I trace the interlocking arenas—public policy, popular culture, national advocacy, and local nonprofit work—in which meaning is created, strategies are determined, and action is carried out in relation to teen pregnancy. I assume a complex relationship among these arenas in general, and remain particularly concerned with the newly constructed linkages that are consequences of neoliberal privatization. Public policy is produced within a field of discourse whose terms and conditions of possibility are influenced by past policy and other public conversations and

representations. Popular culture produces mass-mediated discourses that affect and are affected by public policy and advocacy.<sup>67</sup> In the case of teen pregnancy, the ways in which popular culture texts and social media technologies are harnessed to local and national advocacy work, which are also funded through policy measures, is of specific importance to understanding how contemporary teen pregnancy prevention tactics reflect the tenets of neoliberalism and represent a new horizon of neoliberal social reform. Likewise, the disjunctures between national advocacy organizations like the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and the popular texts it promotes, such as MTV's *16 and Pregnant*, reveal important excesses and pitfalls of these neoliberal strategies. As certain forms of grassroots activism around rights for pregnant and parenting teens gain increasing ground in the battle over representations of and approaches to teen pregnancy, they both challenge and converge with the multicultural politics of intimate citizenship propagated through prevention regimes.

In chapter 1, "Making the Political Personal: Teenage Pregnancy and Political Discourse," I analyze federal public policy, legislative debate, and political news, juxtaposing past political discourse, such as the welfare reform law of 1996, with more recent examples. For instance, I compare legislative hearings pertaining to teenage pregnancy and welfare policy from 1995 and 1996 to 2001, showing how the overriding explanations of and approaches to the issue greatly transformed in that short timeframe. I also look at policy, such as the Personal Responsibility Education Program, a measure aimed at teenage pregnancy prevention within the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Examining the shifting federal policy regimes relating to teenage pregnancy within the last two decades, I show how claims about the effects of social structures and



inequalities on reproductive behavior have given way to a focus on sex and pregnancy as the result solely of individual choices. In conjunction with this new understanding, policy approaches to teen pregnancy eschew questions of welfare, educational equality, and job opportunities in favor of “innovative” approaches to training youth in appropriate sexual conduct. In the post-welfare era, the politics of teen pregnancy constructs and operationalizes a notion of an abstractly equal society of adolescents in which sex and pregnancy are dangerous to any girl’s prospects for future proper motherhood.

An important exemplar of precisely the type of “innovation” encouraged in public policy is the recent surge of prevention-oriented television shows. In chapter 2, “Sex Edutainment: Televised Teen Pregnancy Prevention,” I investigate representations of teenage pregnancy within popular culture sources that explicitly claim a prevention agenda. These include the MTV “reality” television series *16 and Pregnant* (2009-), the ABC Family scripted television series *The Secret Life of the American Teenager* (2008-), and the Lifetime movie *The Pregnancy Pact* (2010). In accordance with the shift in political discourse outlined in chapter 1, these television texts forward a multicultural politics of teen pregnancy in which pregnancy appears equally damaging to all teenage girls, regardless of race or class, by ruining their abilities to achieve success, normalcy, and happiness in the form of popularity, recreation, and consumption. I argue that while welfare reform was the primary biopolitical approach to teen pregnancy in the 1990s, regulating the sexual and economic lives of impoverished families based on welfare incentives and punishments, these recent mass-mediated texts comprise the most far-reaching aspect of the new biopolitics of teen pregnancy, which targets all adolescents in

a heteronormative campaign that both complements and obscures the workings of welfare reform.

In chapter 3, “‘Taming the Media Monster:’ Teen Pregnancy and the Neoliberal Safety (Inter)Net,” I examine the work of two prominent national teen pregnancy organizations, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and the Candie’s Foundation. I trace the connections between the emergence of the National Campaign and the politics of welfare reform, illustrating the important role that privatized teen pregnancy prevention plays in the broader project of neoliberal social policy and citizen formation. I examine the social media-based tactics of the National Campaign and the Candie’s Foundation, arguing that these tactics form a redefined notion of the social “safety net” based on a vision of citizens distributing vital, attractively packaged information about proper sexual and reproductive behavior amongst themselves via a privatized cyber-network. Viewed as impulsive, naïve, media savvy, and trend-obsessed, teenagers appear to require provocative market-based interventions into their most intimate moments. Grounded in the neoliberal discourses of multiculturalism, market rationality, and intimate citizenship, this teen pregnancy prevention work serves as an important counterpart to the punitive work of welfare reform and its deepening inequalities based on race, class, gender, and sexuality by working to delink questions of social wellbeing from materially redistributive policies in the national consciousness.

To convey the complex ways that everyday realities reflect, challenge, and exceed national narratives, I also look at teenage pregnancy prevention at the state and local levels. In chapter 4, “Pathology and Path-Breaking: ‘Teen Pregnancy’ and ‘Young

Parents' in New Mexico," I examine the politics of teen pregnancy and parenthood in the particular context of New Mexico. New Mexico has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in the nation, which is often attributed to large numbers of Latino residents, high rates of poverty, or both. In this specific context, organizations such as the New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition urgently funnel national teen pregnancy prevention tactics into the state. Other organizations, such as the American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico and Young Women United, promote the rights of pregnant and parenting teens through public policy and grassroots organizing that is based in a critical analysis of inequalities based on histories of colonialism, environmental racism, and heteronormativity. I trace how these differing discourses overlap and diverge, arguing that the local contours of race, class, gender, and immigration in New Mexico make teen pregnancy a tool for both continued deepening social stratification and an affirmative politics of teen parenthood.

In the conclusion, I suggest ways for understanding the meaning of this new politics of teen pregnancy within the shifting contours of neoliberal social politics and for the teens who have gotten and will get pregnant in this era. Many interpret teen pregnancy as an issue primarily about conservative crusades to prevent premarital sex and abortion, liberal championing of contraception and sexual liberation, or a corporate drive to reap profits from scandalous sex and scintillating dysfunction. While all of these elements are certainly at play, the coordinated use of reality television, social media, posters, billboards, text-message campaigns, and community-based programs, substantiated through social science and funded by public and private resources is better understood as generative and representative of a new horizon of neoliberal material

disinvestment in social equality and wellbeing. Even as Chicago's and Milwaukee's apparently freakish pregnant boys provide a visual attempt at a gender-blind politics of teen pregnancy—one that in fact reifies normative gender categories—it is primarily the real and living impoverished young mothers and their families who bear the brunt of the current “problem” of teen pregnancy and the neoliberal social and economic agenda that it serves.

## CHAPTER 1: MAKING THE POLITICAL PERSONAL: TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND POLICY DISCOURSE

### Introduction

In May of 2010, *NPR* ran a story about a woman whose boyfriend stole her birth control pills, regularly locked her in a room all day, raped and physically abused her, and then, when she became pregnant, threatened the fetus with violence and abandonment.<sup>68</sup> The story, “The Nation: When Teen Pregnancy Is No Accident,” focuses on new studies that suggest partner violence to be a significant factor in the occurrence of adolescent pregnancy. Discussing “reproductive coercion,” as well as “pregnancy ambivalence,” or the frame of mind in which girls and women claim to not want a pregnancy, but do nothing to prevent it, the story proposes that new research into the relationship and personal dynamics of sexually active teenage girls may open doors for more effective ways of preventing teen pregnancy. Quoting advocates for comprehensive sex education who argue that curriculum about healthy relationships must be included in prevention efforts, *NPR* notes that President Obama has recently allocated \$25 million for “research and testing of innovative new approaches” to teen pregnancy prevention.<sup>69</sup> The head of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, Sarah Brown, is then quoted as lauding the new focus on “the interpersonal complexities of unintended pregnancy.”<sup>70</sup> In this chapter, I ask how and why the political problem of teen pregnancy has transformed from one tied almost exclusively to the purported self-serving monetary calculations of welfare recipients to one defined through the alleged interpersonal deficits of sexually active teenagers.

While teen pregnancy continues to be touted as a chief domestic political concern, the contours of its problematic shape have transformed with the trajectory of neoliberal governance. This chapter examines the changing terms through which this has been and continues to be accomplished. It argues that, since welfare reform, teen pregnancy has increasingly been understood as a problem of adolescent sexuality, rather than perverse welfare incentives and their supposed resulting pathological cultural formations.<sup>71</sup> As such, legislators have turned their focus away from policy solutions addressing the shortcomings of social programs to meet people's needs, and toward measures that aim to cultivate certain kinds of sexual and moral individuals. In the wake of welfare retrenchment, this turn has helped to configure the conditions of possibility for discussions of public wellbeing such that public infrastructure, redistributive programs, and state responsibility are bracketed out of the conversation. These new conditions obscure the shortcomings of neoliberal workfare policy, bolster state disinvestment in substantive social welfare, and further the neoliberal logic of intimate citizenship in which successful Americanness appears attainable only through a citizen's proper navigation of personal and intimate relations to achieve the characteristics associated with whiteness, marriage, and entrepreneurial prowess.

In order to explore the changing identity of teen pregnancy and its effects, I look at national legislation and surrounding debates, hearings, and reports, as well as national political news, from 1990 through 2010. Policies include 1996 welfare reform (the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity and Reconciliation Act, or PRWORA) and its 2005 reauthorization (the Deficit Reduction Act), the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2010 (CAA, passed in 2009), and the 2010 healthcare reform bill (the Patient

Protection and Affordable Care Act, or PPACA). Political news includes articles from three main Washington, DC publications, *Washington Post*, *Roll Call* and *The Hill*, as well as other national periodicals, such as *The Economist*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and *The New York Times*. In these sources, I trace a gradual alteration in the terms through which the social problem of teen pregnancy is constructed and the measures used to address it. I show that teen pregnancy transitions from a problem associated primarily with impoverished Black and Latina communities, stemming from and resulting in poverty, crime, delinquency, drugs and unbridled irresponsible sex, to a problem named as an equal-opportunity threat affecting all communities regardless of race and class, and defined almost exclusively in terms of the objectionable nature of teenage sexuality.

While welfare reform itself is a prime example of neoliberal social policy based on the tenants of privatization and personal responsibility, I argue that this post-welfare discourse of teen pregnancy marks a new horizon of neoliberal social politics, in which the management of adolescent sexual and reproductive behavior purportedly secures the production of successful American adult citizens. Grounded in a politics of neoliberal multiculturalism that presents capitalist markets as the arbiters of equality and moral fortitude as the backbone of entrepreneurial spirit,<sup>72</sup> this framework renders unintelligible all structural forces that shape reproductive politics, such as economic structure, institutional racism, and heteronormativity. In the previous discourse, the racially coded, class-centered language of teen pregnancy prevention, while perpetuating racist stereotypes and policy, also allowed for the possibility of understanding difference as socially produced rather than natural. The more recent construction, on the other hand, forecloses that opportunity by denying any difference whatsoever and portraying teen

pregnancy as a personal moral issue. Along with this new understanding come new disciplinary tactics within policy that is less punitive, but with more emphasis on a comprehensive campaign of moral indoctrination, and only a mild increase in resources that enable variances in reproductive choices and behaviors.<sup>73</sup> In conjunction with these new approaches, we see the silent preservation of punitive workfare policy and an ongoing public disinvestment in material wellbeing and reproductive justice.

Progressing chronologically, the chapter proceeds with a brief discussion of teen pregnancy in welfare reform rhetoric of the 1990s, continues with a comparison between teen pregnancy legislative hearings from welfare reform and its reauthorization, moves on to an analysis of the politics of teen pregnancy prevention in the first decade of the 2000s, and concludes by suggesting how these political changes help condition the production of the specific forms of teen pregnancy prevention discussed in the following chapters.

### **1990s: A Cycle of Babies having Babies**

In order to illustrate the stark shift in the way that policymakers have constructed teen pregnancy it is useful to review the pre-welfare-reform discourse of pathological teenage reproduction. According to welfare reform debate of the mid-1990s, teen pregnancy was a root cause of a wide swath of societal ills. In a 1993 *New York Times* article on a proposed Republican welfare reform bill, Newt Gingrich is quoted as saying, “You can’t maintain civilization with 12-year-olds having babies and 15-year-olds killing each other and 17-year-olds dying of AIDS.”<sup>74</sup> Aiming to justify the strict work requirements placed on welfare recipients within the proposed legislation, Gingrich suggests that the demise of American society would come at the hands of impoverished



teenagers. He presents teen (or in this case pre-teen) pregnancy as the first in a series of implicitly connected deviant behaviors. In 1995, one year before the passage of welfare reform legislation (the PRWORA), Bill Clinton named teen pregnancy and out-of-wedlock births America's "most serious social problem" in his State of the Union Address.<sup>75</sup>

Teenage pregnancy was a defining and mobilizing issue within welfare reform debate. In the arena of national public policy during the 1990s, teenage pregnancy appeared almost exclusively within discussions of welfare, specifically the purportedly perverse incentives of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and the necessary disciplinary elements of its impending replacement Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).<sup>76</sup> Within these discussions, as Holloway Sparks notes, politicians across the mainstream political spectrum described the problem of teen pregnancy by pairing it with statistics about African Americans and drawing on racialized imagery of drugs, welfare dependency, school dropout, delinquency, and unemployment.<sup>77</sup> As I will briefly explicate here, throughout the early and mid 1990s, teen pregnancy was a crucial element of welfare reform rhetoric that reflected and generated anxiety about the nation's future by indexing a host of other social ills associated with economic demise and racial upheaval.

Important to the overall construction of teenage pregnancy within national political debate of this period is the positioning of adolescents as volatile nascent citizens. Queer theorists have pointed to the ways that the construction of children as innocent, nonsexual, and in need of protection has fueled many moral panics and punitive policy measures.<sup>78</sup> Lauren Berlant argues that the innocent child, endangered by bad parenting

and damaged adults, was a powerful figure in national culture of the 1990s, helping to underwrite neoliberal reforms that narrowed definitions of citizenship and further entrenched and protected heteronormativity.<sup>79</sup> Through an analysis of multiple cultural texts, she shows that proper behavior in the “private” domains of life was forwarded as the gateway to state nurturance and protection, as well as to the national future, while public political engagement that framed the nation-state as complex and alterable was demonized as reckless, misguided, self-indulgent, and unpatriotic. As actual state programs and services were being contracted, she suggests, sentimental and patriotic identification with the nation through its increasingly policed norms of intimacy became the primary avenue through which U.S. citizenship was popularly envisioned. This was accomplished through mass-mediated rhetoric that revised and replaced fraught national histories with monolithic figures of pure, “virtual” citizens such as the innocent girl and the American fetus, in need of protection from dangerous adults, such as sex workers, irresponsible parents, and corrupt politicians. These discourses, she argues, served ultimately to underwrite the enforcement of norms that regulate the behavior of nonvirtual or actual citizens, perpetuating and deepening the contradictions between the abstract, disembodied notion of liberal citizenship that guides the logic of the nation-state and the embodied experiences of subjugation that this notion helps to carry out.

These insights are useful for understanding discussions of teen pregnancy during this same period and the role these discussions played in justifying punitive welfare reform. In the context of discussions about teen pregnancy, children represent America’s future, requiring protection, but also discipline, and guidance to help them make choices that will usher them into full adult self-governance, economic and familial responsibility,

and appropriate democratic participation. In contrast to the innocent girl and American fetus of Berlant's analysis, teenagers are themselves capable of transgression and thus demand particular forms of discipline and vigilance.

In a speech in 1996, Hilary Clinton argues that citizens “‘have to do what we can to cut the rate of teen pregnancy and out-of-wedlock births’ by developing programs at home and in the schools to help children ‘acquire the skills to say no -- no to tobacco, no to alcohol, no to drugs, no to early sexual activities, no to things that will undermine their capacity to become the kind of adults and citizens America needs.’”<sup>80</sup> Teen pregnancy results from a tangle of undesirable behaviors to which children are vulnerable as they enter the interstitial zone of adolescence. In discussing the state of education and Republican interest in improving it, Representative Michael Castle writes, “Issues such as youth violence and teen pregnancy have rippling effects - not only do they scar the life of the young person, but that of everyone close to him or her, and the greater society, as well.”<sup>81</sup> Teen pregnancy both results from vulnerability and perpetuates it. Here, teenagers are dangerous to themselves, others, and the nation.

As the above statement by Newt Gingrich makes clear, adolescence is a category charged with fear. Whereas the construction of “children” often references hope and innocence, teenagers are frequently presented as volatile, dangerous, foolish, and irresponsible. When asked about teen pregnancies on *Larry King Live* in 1996, presidential candidate Ross Perot said that teenagers “can't rationalize getting high, getting drunk, getting pregnant” and suggested that the lack of shamefulness associated with teen pregnancy is at the root of the problem.<sup>82</sup> Stating that teens need to repeat to themselves everyday that they are not “rabbits,” he portrays adolescents as fundamentally

irrational beings, requiring the social pressure that a culture of shame would apply in order to alter their behavior. A variety of news stories recounting horrific episodes of teenage girls getting pregnant and killing their babies, either with sheer irresponsibility or some kind of inexplicable lack of maternal instinct and love, help to convey adolescence as a period of extreme selfishness in which becoming a parent is a perverse act of the severely misguided.<sup>83</sup> In one story exploring the tough love approach of the PRWORA, a 14 year-old described as “slow,” the daughter of a former teenage mother herself, becomes pregnant with twins, disregards her doctor’s advice about staying on bed rest due to a high-risk pregnancy, and goes into labor early after a trip to the mall. One of her babies dies after a caesarian-section birth, while the other suffers serious and expensive health problems with long-lasting effects.<sup>84</sup> As this story makes clear, a teenage girl’s frivolous concerns with consumption and recreation, otherwise perhaps appropriate to her age, are precisely contrary to motherliness.

As the irrational and irresponsible future full citizens of America, teenagers are poised to bring down the country through multiple avenues. Welfare reform discourse positions teens in general as a major target of social engineering, in part because pregnant and parenting teens are a parasitic drain on national resources. Numerous accounts of the danger of escalating teen pregnancy rates cite the eminent pressure they pose on already strained public coffers.<sup>85</sup> In a statement about the importance of education and jobs to winning the war on drugs, Charles B. Rangel states,

I am emphasizing to US firms that they can retain their international leadership and remain competitive by making certain that our workers acquire the necessary skills and that they maintain their superiority in research and development.

It is time we put an end to the national hemorrhage of human resources. Drug addiction, crime, teenage pregnancy, school dropouts,

unemployment, and hopelessness are all symptoms of failures that cannot be solved by law enforcement alone.

If we expect to put an end to this continued threat to our nation's future, there must be a renewed sense of outrage.<sup>86</sup>

Here, teen pregnancy and its related dynamics are bound to lessen the quality of the future workforce, thereby lowering American competitiveness on a global scale. An article in the *Washington Post* in 1995 paints a picture of America's economic future if teen pregnancy and welfare dependency are left unchecked:

If there was ever a place that could use a free lunch, it is Jefferson County. The community is completely dependent on monthly welfare checks and food stamps. Four of 10 residents live below the poverty line, including more than half the children. The number of unwed teenage mothers has doubled in the past decade. The county's largest employer is the school system, followed by the county government. Were it not for the monthly government checks, Jefferson County would not have an economic reason to exist.

Two of the county's three small manufacturing plants have closed in the last three years -- the jobs gone to Mexico. Many of the graduates of the high school who don't get pregnant leave the county for jobs in Houston or Atlanta. It is a county of mothers and children and old people.<sup>87</sup>

In this unfortunate place, teen pregnancy, unwed motherhood, and pregnancy in general are at the root of its economic obsolescence, making it wholly dependent on public money, driving away any viable (non-procreative) human resources, and emptying it of private enterprise.<sup>88</sup>

The economic implications of teen pregnancy are explicitly linked to the particular construction of teenagers as volatile and unreasonable discussed above. A *Washington Post* article quoted Republican Senator Phil Gramm discussing a proposed welfare reform measure to require teens on welfare to live with a parent in order to receive benefits: "It is a 'national policy of suicide,' Gramm said, to continue the system

under which a 16 year old can escape her mother by simply having a child and setting up an independent household with taxpayers' money."<sup>89</sup> Here Gramm not only implicates teen pregnancy in the demise of the nation, but attributes a cold, calculating, yet immature and impulsive intention to teenage mothers, once again depicting them as devoid of the requisite motherly qualities.<sup>90</sup> In this account, the economic death of the United States comes at the hands of disgruntled teenagers, annoyed with their moms and seeking immediate gratification at the expense of responsible citizens.

Although a focus on the category of adolescence allows for a putative race-neutrality, the associations of teenage pregnancy with other racialized issues such as inner-city poverty, drug-use, juvenile delinquency and welfare dependency, as well as the pairing (noted above) of discussions of teen pregnancy with statistics about Black and Latina rates, produce it as a distinctly Black and Latina problem.<sup>91</sup> Presented precisely as in issue of over-abundant undesirable reproduction, coded references to racial upheaval are often intertwined with economic and social concerns in discourse around teen pregnancy in the 1990s. Advocating for vocational education, Representative William Ford states,

America's schools face an unprecedented challenge if we are to have a work force in the 21st century capable of competing effectively in the world economy.

Of the 3.4 million children who began 1st grade last fall, 23 percent were from poverty families, 12 percent were children of teenage mothers, 11 percent were physically or mentally disabled, 15 percent were immigrants who speak a language other than English, 26 percent were children living with only one parent, 40 percent will live with a single parent before they reach age 18, 12 percent have poorly educated parents (neither parent having finished high school), and 25 percent or more will not finish high school.

If we look at the other end of the pipeline, the Hudson Institute's Workforce 2000 tells us that "only 15 percent of the new entrants to the

labor force...(by the year 2000) will be native white males, compared to 47 percent in that category (in 1987)."

Those entering school and the work force are increasingly from population groups that in the past have had lower levels of achievement and motivation. The challenge is not only to bring these traditionally hard-to-reach groups up to the level of white males but to raise the level of education and skill of all students and workers.<sup>92</sup>

Teenage pregnancy appears once again amongst a host of other associated social ills that are framed as nonwhite issues, and which are producing a potential national crisis by overturning the dominance of "native white males" and replacing them with unmotivated, underachieving women, people of color, immigrants, poor people, people with disabilities, and children of broken (or never in-tact) homes. With better education policy, Ford Suggests, these less desirable workers can be made suitable and their associated problems, like teenage pregnancy, presumably cured. In this way, he claims, a national disaster can be averted.

Some discussions of the problem of teenage pregnancy cite Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action" as an unheeded call to action, one that named and described the problem of teenage pregnancy much earlier than most.<sup>93</sup> These discussions present teen pregnancy as an issue within Black communities that has been ignored and growing rapidly for 30 years. Other depictions refer to immigration as a culprit in the raising rates. Noting that the majority of immigrants are Hispanic and Asian, and that Hispanics workers in California "lag far behind all other groups in wages and educational attainment, even through the third generation" one article states,

If current levels of immigration remain in place, an estimated 10 million new immigrants will settle in the United States within the next decade, [a Center for Immigrant Studies] report says. Increasing the number of poor

people through immigration complicates current anti-poverty efforts, it adds. Moreover, if immigrant children grow up in poverty, they will be more likely to turn to crime, to have higher teenage pregnancy rates and to do poorly in school, the report says. Thus, the report calls for restrictions on the number of "low-skill" immigrants allowed into the country.<sup>94</sup>

In this account, immigration "increas[es] the number of poor people," and poor people are prone to teenage pregnancy, among other things. In order to prevent huge numbers of incoming Hispanics and their offspring from perpetuating these problems, the influx of immigrants must be curbed. Teen pregnancy becomes a symptom of a larger troubling national demographic change.<sup>95</sup>

Along with these depictions of teenage pregnancy in welfare reform debate and related policy discussions came particular legislative proposals and outcomes.<sup>96</sup> As noted above, the primary piece of legislation pertaining to teenage pregnancy and parenthood passed in the 1990s was the PRWORA.<sup>97</sup> Widely understood by scholars of the U.S. welfare state as highly regulatory and punitive, this law established specific rules for teenage parents, structuring their eligibility for TANF resources with various regulations of their living situation, and educational and employment activities.<sup>98</sup> Among the rules included in the enacted law were specifications about school participation hours; a mandate that a teen parent live with one of her/his parents whenever possible; a monetary incentive for states to lower teen pregnancy rates, while not raising abortion rates; a family-cap option for states to refuse to increase support to teens and other welfare recipients who bear more children; child support enforcement measures to discourage non-marital childbearing; and funding for abstinence-only sex education.<sup>99</sup> Other measures proposed by congress members, governors, and state legislators pertaining to teen parents included denying them cash benefits altogether, urging them to put their



children up for adoption, placing them in group homes, requiring them to have the birth control Norplant implanted under their skin, and rewarding teens who avoid pregnancy with cash or scholarships.<sup>100</sup> As the PRWORA illustrates, a major strategy in shaping the behavior of teen parents and teens in general was the use of economic carrots and sticks. Understood as a problem associated with impoverished and pathological communities of color, teenage pregnancy and parenthood would be dealt with and curbed through the conditional provision of money and support services. “House Republicans,” for example, wanted to “[send] a message that unmarried women, especially teenagers, should not bear children.”<sup>101</sup> In the following section, I analyze three congressional committee hearings on teenage pregnancy, two in the mid 1990s and one in 2001, in order to show the changes already occurring within that brief time period in both the constructions of the problem and proposed solutions.

### **Changing Terms: The Perils of Teenage Sexuality**

National political discourses of teenage pregnancy and parenthood began to change only a few years after the passage of the PRWORA. As early as the first discussions of TANF reauthorization, conceptions of the problem and potential solutions had already shifted away from the demonization of welfare recipients. As is evident from a comparison of legislative hearings on teen pregnancy and its prevention from the mid 1990s and one in the reauthorization context of 2001, a focus on the dangers of teen sex and the need for better cultivation of values in American youth had already begun to overshadow discussions of the broader set of troubles associated with racialized inner-city poverty and the social policy reform that could address it.

Two congressional committee hearings took place in the mid 1990s addressing teen pregnancy and parenthood, *Teen Parents and Welfare Reform*, before the Senate Committee on Finance on March 14, 1995, and *Preventing Teen Pregnancy: Coordinating Community Efforts*, before the House Subcommittee on Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations on April 30, 1996. These hearings depict teen pregnancy and parenthood first and foremost as a problem about welfare and draining of resources, contributing to possible economic and labor crises, and solvable through welfare reform, education policy, and job creation, in addition to family planning, sex education, and media campaigns discouraging teens from having sex and getting pregnant. Both values inculcation, such as cultivating personal responsibility and promoting marriage, and systemic overhaul, such as reforming social and educational policy, are promoted as reasonable approaches. In keeping with the legislative debate and news media coverage analyzed above, these hearings racialized teen pregnancy and parenthood as a Black and Latina problem using both coded and explicit language and imagery and contributing to the stereotype of an irresponsible inner-city teenage mother of color. At the same time, their framing of the issue as the result of a broad confluence of social processes allowed for a discussion of systemic factors involved in the reproductive choices of impoverished teenagers.

In both of these hearings, welfare and its impending reform provide the context for discussion.<sup>102</sup> In his opening remarks, chairman of the Committee on Finance, Senator Bob Packwood states, “If there is anything this Committee has heard about in its welfare hearings, it is teenage pregnancy, teenage pregnancy, teenage pregnancy, and the relation between teenage pregnancy and the likelihood of being on welfare for a long period of

time.”<sup>103</sup> Teenage pregnancy is up for discussion precisely because it is linked with long-term welfare dependency. Likewise, in his opening statement, Representative Edolphus Towns of the Subcommittee on Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations discusses the cyclical dynamics of generational teen pregnancy and states, “These problems are urgent, and they are costly. The fiscal impact of adolescent motherhood in terms of public expenditures, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Medicaid, and food stamps was 34 billion dollars in 1992.”<sup>104</sup> The problem of teenage reproduction is constructed wholly within the frame of welfare and public monetary resources.<sup>105</sup> As such, and in keeping with the broader public discourse, it is understood as threatening the economic viability of the nation through both the wasting of public money and the diminishing of the labor force.<sup>106</sup>

Although this construction of the problem of teenage pregnancy both demonizes poor people of color and describes the economic and racial inequality of the U.S. as a byproduct of personal and familial pathology, as I will illustrate, it allows for a discussion of social circumstances and policy outcomes that were inconceivable only a few years later. In her discussion of the “underclass research” of the 1980s and 1990s, Alice O’Connor writes that, “for all its connotations of pathology, a strong current of underclass research pointed to the need for a far more proactive agenda, of economic investment, labor market intervention, social welfare expansion, and, for some, antidiscrimination enforcement, than [the Bush and Clinton administrations were] willing to contemplate.”<sup>107</sup> She goes on to explain that while these aspects of poverty knowledge existed, policymakers took up primarily the research that lent itself to the project of welfare reform. Welfare reform debate surrounding teen pregnancy illustrates the

tensions between research that points to the need for public investment in structural changes and policy agendas aimed at public disinvestment geared toward personal behavioral changes.

For example, as Representative Nancy Johnson stated in her testimony before the House Subcommittee on Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations, “The problem [of teen pregnancy] is rooted in deep-seated social and economic conditions, which require comprehensive interventions. Among the poorest populations, there is often no reason to delay pregnancy and childbirth.”<sup>108</sup> She goes on to discuss the low expectations that poor youth have for the future and their resulting lack of motivation to delay childbirth in order to pursue “greater opportunities.” Although this formulation continues a trend within welfare reform discourse of reducing complex decisions about reproduction to economic calculations (in this case, having a child as a teen is no more or less financially savvy than waiting until adulthood), it also makes reference to a difference in the quality and number of opportunities readily apparent to a teenager, depending on socioeconomic class.<sup>109</sup> Johnson continues by proposing programs that “target and strengthen families” and instill hope for “future life prospects,”<sup>110</sup> an approach that clearly locates the problem in personal values instead of structural conditions.

Other hearing participants suggest that creating more opportunities for low-income teens to be hopeful about would curb adolescent pregnancy. In an article submitted to the Senate Committee on Finance, American Enterprise Institute scholar Douglas Besharov writes, “Increasing the life prospects of disadvantaged teens is surely the best way to raise the opportunity costs of having a baby out of wedlock. A good education and real

job opportunities are the best contraceptives.”<sup>111</sup> Here, Besharov both forwards a reductionist explanation of the desires and motivations of “disadvantaged teens” and acknowledges a social structure that perpetuates disadvantage through unequal distribution of opportunities.<sup>112</sup> Besharov goes on to state that in addition to improving the life chances of poor youth, it would also be worthwhile to make teen parenthood “inconvenient.” He writes that “different welfare policies could have a real impact. The ultimate ‘inconvenience,’ of course, would be to deny welfare benefits altogether. But there is a less drastic way: impose an unequivocal requirement to finish high school and then to work.”<sup>113</sup> He thus portrays reproductive behavior as intimately tied to economic conditions in which raising the “opportunity costs” of teen pregnancy should include both making the avoidance of pregnancy more lucrative and constraining the economic, education, and professional choices of those who become pregnant.

The idea that engineering economic disincentives for early childbearing would deter teens from becoming parents permeated welfare reform discourse, despite the fact that experts questioned the likelihood that such policy measures would be effective. First, many legislators believed that existing policies were structured to “encourage pregnancy and discourage marriage.”<sup>114</sup> As Robert C. Granger, Senior Vice President of Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, testifies at the *Teen Parents and Welfare Reform* hearing,

Should teen mothers be denied cash benefits? It seems like a logical question to pose, given that many people are believing that cash assistance is encouraging out-of-wedlock births. Our work suggests that a categorical denial of public assistance to certain teens will have many effects. Some women will not become pregnant. Others will abort. Some will have children and work. Some will have children and marry. And many will have children and be much poorer.<sup>115</sup>

Granger ultimately recommends against cutting cash assistance to teen parents in the name of protecting their children, but his testimony indicates how what “many people are believing” became an important frame for debate in the face of a clear the lack of evidence for such a belief.<sup>116</sup>

Similarly emphasizing the importance of belief, Representative Christopher Shays, in the *Preventing Teen Pregnancy* hearing, insists that economic incentives for teenage childbearing provided by welfare must be part of the policy discussion at hand:

I believe that we have more out of wed children and more children raising children, because there are financial incentives. I really believe that there are financial incentives. Now the dialog would be to what extent, but it has got to be out on the table. We have got to say to what extent does welfare for a 14-year-old kid, given all of the other outrageously unavailable options, to what extent does that become a better option... I want you to tell me to what extent do you think paying a child to have a baby in a sense creates the possibility that they are going to have a baby?<sup>117</sup>

Although answers to his questions largely refute the notion that welfare leads to teen pregnancy, as did answers to similar questions raised in the earlier *Teen Parents and Welfare Reform* hearing, the potential for altering teens’ behavior with monetary incentives and disincentives remains an important part of the discourse during this period. This is due both to the repeated posing of questions like Shays, and to the continued presence of other welfare policy measures deemed effective in shaping teen conduct.

For example, although Maynard disputes the belief that welfare incentives encourage teen pregnancy, she maintains that requiring teens to stay at home with a parent and attend school in order to receive welfare is important to curbing their long-term dependence. “Unconditional welfare benefits promote dependency, while welfare tied to education and employment mandates will promote transitional assistance by the

truly needy.”<sup>118</sup> In Maynard’s formulation, even if teen pregnancy cannot be prevented through economic carrots and sticks, those who are already teen parents can be disciplined through conditional support. According to her, “adolescents are adolescents” and will engage in “risk-taking behavior,” such as reproductive sex, regardless of structural forces like welfare incentives and disincentives.<sup>119</sup> However, those structures can provide an important disciplinary function once the damage of risk-taking behaviors has occurred. In this way, the problematic status of teenage pregnancy and parenthood is founded in both the personal deficits of teenagers *as teenagers*, and the structure of welfare policy.

Likewise, Kristin Moore, executive director and director of research at Child Trends, suggests that cutting welfare benefits will have no effect on the decisions of teenage girls to have babies, partly because teenage pregnancy is an issue of low motivation on the part of impoverished teenage girls. On the contrary, comprehensive sex education, increased funding for family planning, and the creation of “a set of positive, as well as negative, sanctions” within public policy that includes child support enforcement as a disincentive for adolescent boys and men will help lower the rate of teen pregnancies.<sup>120</sup> Here again, the problem is constructed as resulting from a complex combination of personal and structural factors that require a multi-faceted approach.

The disciplinary rules and regulations up for debate within the context of welfare legislation make up the most significant policy approaches to teen pregnancy and parenthood in these hearings. However, largely in reference to ideas about the general lack of apparent future prospects for impoverished youth mentioned above, participants discuss issues that implicate other societal structures and suggest new policy measures as

well. When asked by Senator Packwood “what went wrong” besides the purportedly perverse incentives of the welfare system to create this problem, Rebecca Maynard states that “a large part of this is the community, and the fact that nobody in an inner city area has employment opportunities, whether male or female, and these young women certainly do not.”<sup>121</sup> Here, Maynard presents the geographic dimensions of urban economic structure as clearly implicated in the problem of teen pregnancy and, by virtue of providing this information in response to Packwood’s question, she suggests that the state plays a role in structuring those geographic realities.<sup>122</sup>

Lack of job opportunities and access to a decent education are often cited in these hearings as policy areas to focus on. Proclaiming that “we can do better,” Representative Constance Morella states, “Educational opportunities build self-esteem, as do girls sports and community activities, improving our education system, building our communities, increasing job opportunities, giving young girls something to look forward to and reduce teen pregnancy.” Also understanding teen parenthood as an issue of having nothing “to look forward to,” Kristin Moore suggests that motivating impoverished children is crucial and education is the key to achieving that. She states that “the process of providing that motivation starts very young, and then continues through the adolescent years when kids are hopefully enrolled in good strong education, and see the prospects for jobs out there.”<sup>123</sup> Implicating the downfalls of the education system for “disadvantaged” youth, she names accessibility to a “strong” education as an important aspect of preventing teen pregnancy. Along these same lines, the imperative to improve high schools and vocational education is mentioned numerous times throughout the Senate hearing. As Besharov explains, “I am a real advocate of vocational education. There is a national



survey of what has happened to vocational education. And the interplay you have heard here is typical of the findings of that commission, which is Voc/Ed is alive and well in the suburbs. Where it has shrunk is in the inner city.”<sup>124</sup> The need for better schools in poor inner-city communities is cited here and elsewhere as an important policy arena and a clear acknowledgement of the material differences that structure unequal opportunities in racialized zones of poverty.

One of the clearest examples of the construction of teenage pregnancy as a complex problem resulting from multiple structural societal issues and necessitating systemic change comes from Henry Foster Jr., Senior Advisor to the President and White House Liaison to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. In his testimony before the House Subcommittee on Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations, he responds to the question of what the federal government can do about teenage pregnancy suggesting that a national coalition must be formed to address it. He states,

I think that we need a domestic Marshall plan. That is what I think we need. I think that the best teacher-pupil ratios ought to be in the inner city than elsewhere until some kind of parity is reached... But help us set up a strong coalition at the State level, that would involve the Department of Education, the Department of Health, and it should involve the private sector, all sectors, the clergy, the media, volunteer organizations. That is how the coalition will have to look.<sup>125</sup>

Foster describes his vision of a “domestic Marshall plan” in terms of aiding and overhauling the education system to correct geographic (and, implicitly, racial and class) inequalities, and creating a broad coordinated effort amongst governmental and nongovernmental entities to address the circumstances of “functional illiteracy” and joblessness that prevent fathers from being “good” fathers. His reference to the Marshall Plan, which aimed to rebuild the European and Japanese economies after World War II,

shaping them according to the U.S. global political and economic agenda, suggests the need for more than education and health reform. It depicts U.S. inner cities as war-torn zones on the brink of collapse and in need of financial assistance, new infrastructure, and better economic philosophy.<sup>126</sup> In other words, the U.S., as indicated by the state of its inner cities and the rates of adolescent procreation, requires structural adjustment.

Foster's comments are received with statements of agreement and appreciation. Some participants in these hearings point directly to racial difference as a factor in the occurrence of teen pregnancy in the U.S., and by implication, as a marker of material inequality. For example, addressing the reasons that some European countries have lower teenage child-bearing rates than the U.S., Kristin Moore states that one of the "most important" things to note is their "limited differences," going on to claim that, although this is the case, teen pregnancy in the U.S. is "not *just* a race problem."<sup>127</sup> She therefore suggests that racial differences and the inequalities that result from them are a key factor in high rates of teenage pregnancy in the U.S. In the accounts analyzed here, race and class are often presented as social realities that have real consequences, helping to determine the number and types of opportunities children confront and conditioning their sexual and reproductive decisions.<sup>128</sup> Although most participants leave unspoken the causes of inequality, or imply that it is more personally than systemically produced, they suggest that its consequences are under the purview of the government to reinforce or alter with public policy and resource allocation.<sup>129</sup>

In contrast, the terms through which teenage pregnancy is defined as a social problem in the 2001 *Teen Pregnancy Prevention* hearing before the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the House Committee on Ways and Means are drastically narrowed.

Participants in this welfare reauthorization hearing maintain an almost unwavering focus on teenage sex as the root of all problems associated with teenage pregnancy. While this notion exists quite prominently a few years earlier, it is offset by a number of other concerns outlined above. In 2001, despite the similar policy context in which the issue is being discussed, questions of the potential or existing economic carrots and sticks of welfare policy as mechanisms for preventing teen pregnancy are almost completely absent. Likewise, there are very few mentions of the racial and class dimensions of teen pregnancy, and the possible attendant structural changes needed to address those. Instead, participants remain interested primarily in preventing and/or regulating teenage sexual behavior, debating policy measures related to funding for various types of sex education and other methods for indoctrinating teens with certain values pertaining to sex and family. As such, this hearing helps initiate the public redefinition of teen pregnancy in accordance with intensifying discursive frameworks of intimate citizenship and neoliberal multiculturalism. My analysis of it illustrates both the ways that intimate citizenship and multiculturalism constitute each other and the crucial role they both play in the ongoing project of welfare retrenchment via the politics of teen pregnancy.

In the 2001 hearing, according to Subcommittee Chairman Wally Herger, teen pregnancy remains an important problem that is about more “than just welfare.”<sup>130</sup> Herger thus both references teen pregnancy’s indelible link to welfare politics and sets the stage for a departure from previous discourses. Noting that “impressive progress” has recently been made in teenage pregnancy rates, he insists that continued focus on the issue is necessary, due in part to the “important health consequences for young people who are sexually active as we will hear today.”<sup>131</sup> Acknowledging that teenage pregnancy

rates were declining throughout the 1990s (for years before the PRWORA was enacted), Herger describes the purpose of the hearing as, among other things, to ask the following questions: “First, why are we making progress against teen pregnancy? And second, what further steps should we consider during next year's reauthorization of the 1996 Welfare Reform Law.”<sup>132</sup> Progress, then, cannot automatically be attributed to the measures enacted in 1996, outlined above, suggesting perhaps that those measures and their effectiveness would be an important topic of discussion during this hearing. However, the second question he poses forecloses that debate with the phrase “further steps,” implying that current aspects of welfare policy that address teen pregnancy are to be left alone or perhaps built upon, rather than dismantled or altered. This confused perspective on the role of the 1996 law in preventing teenage pregnancy sets the stage for a discussion that does in fact largely ignore the existing policy, focusing narrowly on the funding it sets forth for abstinence-only sex education and “further steps” to be taken regarding teen sex in general.

In his opening statement, Representative Benjamin Cardin presents a similarly convoluted perspective on the role of the PRWORA in reducing teen pregnancy and ultimately pinpoints the sexual dimensions of the issue as the most crucial for moving forward. He states, “So the question is, what can we do to build upon the success that we have had as we go to the next level of TANF and Welfare Reform?”<sup>133</sup> Although he later acknowledges that there does not seem to be “any real evidence” that the “direct actions” taken in the PRWORA had any effect, and therefore proclaims, “We need to take a look at that, Mr. Chairman. We need to take a look at what we should be doing on welfare reform,”<sup>134</sup> his question implies that to “build upon” that success is to ascend to the “next

level” of welfare reform. He goes on to list increased awareness about sexually transmitted diseases, increased accessibility and effectiveness of contraception, and local counseling efforts as the primary contributors to the reduction. Locating contributing factors in areas wholly related to decreasing and regulating teen sex, he sets forth these recommendations:

In terms of what this means for the future, I would say that we should continue our focus on personal responsibility. We should do a better job of not only funding local efforts to combat teen pregnancy, but also highlighting successful programs, which should increase access to youth development and after-school programs that give teenagers productive activities to pursue, and we should promote the value of abstinence without undercutting our commitment to providing access to and information about contraception.<sup>135</sup>

Leaving “personal responsibility” completely undefined, Cardin presents it as part of an interconnected set of strategies aimed at shaping the behavior and decisions of a group defined solely by age. Despite the continued nods to teen pregnancy as a welfare issue, and despite the larger context of welfare reform reauthorization, participants in this hearing overwhelmingly neither point to welfare as a formative part of the problem, nor overtly dispute its roll and call for the rolling back of punitive policies. For the most part they avoid the implicit and explicit racial and class politics that permeated the hearings of the mid-1990s, focusing instead on the dangers of teen sex, defined as the volatile combination of immature, irresponsible, impulsive minds with sexual, reproductive bodies.

A telling example of how the prevention and regulation of teen sex eclipses all other possible factors in these discussions exists in the testimony of Joe McIlhane Jr., President of the Medical Institute for Sexual Health in Austin, TX. Devoting his career to helping prevent the problems of “non-marital pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease,

and the emotional damage of inappropriate sexual behavior,” he argues that sex itself is the culprit, and that the TANF emphasis on promoting marriage, two-parent families and abstinence-only sex education must be maintained and bolstered.<sup>136</sup> Drawing a comparison between smoking and sex, McIlhaney urges an unwavering campaign of abstinence for teens:

What we need to also remember about this is that smoking hardly ever hurts a teen while they are a teen-the cancer and emphysema do not usually happen for years. Sexual activity, however, often hurts teens while they are still teens with disease and/or pregnancy. We need to be as comfortable and intentional in urging them to be abstinent from sex as we are in urging their abstinence from cigarettes. And we need to be patient and unrelenting so efforts can mature.<sup>137</sup>

McIlhaney utilizes a common theme in advocacy for abstinence-only sex education, claiming that teenagers require a clear, unambiguous message in order to understand that it is necessary resist their bodily urges. Like smoking, he suggests, sex is unhealthy and should be avoided altogether. Sex, according to him, is not only the root of the problem of teenage pregnancy, but is at the core of a range of other social problems that could be avoided by containing sex within its only redeemable context, marriage. “Sex,” he argues, referring presumably to all other types besides marital, “is sexist.”<sup>138</sup> Describing various ways that STDs affect women, their fertility, and their babies significantly more than men (who are “hardly bother[ed]” by herpes, for example, and apparently have no investment in their babies being infected during birth by an infected mother), he goes on to note the ways that women “are the ones who suffer from nonmarital pregnancies” as well. Sex is the problem, in his formulation. It is “sex” that is sexist, rather than the institutions, ideologies and people who support the structural enforcement of the feminization of poverty and the inequality of access to family planning and healthcare. In

equating sex with disease and unwanted pregnancy, and emphasizing the unequal burden of those things on women and girls, McIlhane draws on the authority of medical science and the cache of gender equality to present non-marital sex as a crucial health and social issue—as a secular, liberal concern, “not just a moral and religious issue,” and one that requires a unified ideological campaign to that will overcome the self-absorption and confusion of adolescence. He states, “We need a cultural transformation regarding sexual activity for the protection of all society.”<sup>139</sup> Sex is such a threat to the nation, McIlhane suggests, that this campaign must also address itself to unmarried people in their 20s as well, because even adults are unable to make responsible decisions when it comes to their bodily desires. In this way, he substantiates the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy’s (later, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy) work, which I discuss in depth in chapter 3, of building a bipartisan consensus around the regulation of sex and reproduction for all unmarried people, but especially naïve and unruly teens who occupy the fraught position of being both potential innocent victim and potential offender.

Similarly, other participants proposing to address teenage pregnancy with continued and greater funding for abstinence-only sex education uphold virginity as the key to proper adolescence. Gale Grant, director of the Abstinence Education Initiative of the Virginia Department of Health, explains her experience working with teen parents, stating, “I realized that until we deal with teens engaging in sexual activity, we truly cannot have an impact on teen pregnancies. We must deal with the source and the sexual activity, young people engaging in sexual activity that leads to pregnancies and other consequences of that activity.”<sup>140</sup> Again, sex is the real issue, not the various

circumstances surrounding sex, including the specific sexual behaviors, the use or nonuse of some kind of contraception, the teenager's race, class, school performance, interest in procreating, or ability to care for a child without government assistance. She goes on to promote the apparent success of her Virginia program and its mission, explaining, "We are trying to keep kids from moving from virginal to non-virginal status in terms of our design." Because, as is the case with theories of "gateway" drugs, once a teen engages in sexual activity (it is unclear what behavior constitutes a shift from virgin to non-virgin), that teen's likelihood of downward spiral into pregnancy and disease is presumably much heightened.<sup>141</sup> As in McIlhane's testimony, teenagers must both be protected and be protected against. In this case, they must be protected from themselves, making them appear as complex and urgent targets in a moral campaign to ensure proper intimate citizenship.

Those hearing participants who counter the notion that an abstinence-only message is crucial for teen pregnancy prevention nevertheless also emphasize the undesirability of teen sex and the need to address teens' propensity for "risky" behavior.<sup>142</sup> Noting that most of the American public supports comprehensive sex education that includes promoting abstinence, Representative Benjamin Cardin states, "Two-thirds of our high school seniors have engaged in sexual activities. That is the facts. We would all like to see that number lower. We all would like to see that number lower. We should work to get that number lower."<sup>143</sup> Although supporters of comprehensive sex education generally agree that abstinence is the best choice, they want to acknowledge what they see as the fundamental truth that some teens are going to have sex. Teenagers cannot be fully controlled and must therefore be informed. Sarah Brown, director of the National



Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, notes that “the reality is that many teens in high school become sexually active, whether we like it or not.”<sup>144</sup> The falling teen pregnancy rates, according to her, are due to teens having less sex *and* more responsible sex. The reasons for these changes, she maintains, are many, but revolve primarily around comprehensive sex education and programs that engage teens in activities other than sex.

If the problem is primarily about sexual behavior, then efforts geared toward engineering proper sexual behavior appear to hold the solution. In addition to sex education and after-school programs that instill values and occupy teenagers during the hours that their parents are at work, many of the hearings participants point to the media as an avenue through which to alter attitudes toward sex, thereby preventing teen pregnancy. Brown states that “popular teen culture, is sending kids messages that getting pregnant at a young age is no big deal, that having sex ‘early and often’ is just fine, that contraception is not all that important, that refraining from sex is square and unrealistic, and that parents can't do anything about their children's sexual attitudes and behavior.”<sup>145</sup> To address this, the National Campaign proposes to use the entertainment media to influence the values of teens and their parents and I analyze the products of this mission in chapters 2 and 3.<sup>146</sup> Many other participants in this hearing suggest that combating the proliferation of sex in the popular media is a crucial aspect of preventing teen sex and therefore pregnancy.<sup>147</sup> As I will show in the following chapters, this emphasis on the role of popular media lends itself to privatized, and in some cases profit-making, approaches that further promote the economic and cultural politics of neoliberalism.

According to hearing participants, another substantial contributor to the problem of teen pregnancy, in part because it enables teen sex, is “fatherlessness.” As Representative

Nancy Johnson argues, the lack of “parental oversight” for children with single mothers, particularly when the mother is required to work in order to receive TANF, must be addressed.<sup>148</sup> It is unclear exactly what “fatherlessness” means (whether it refers to fathers who are not known to their children, do not live with their children, do not contribute monetarily to their lives, or some other reality, is unclear), but it is associated with increased opportunities for teens to have sex, due to lack of supervision, and with lack of the requisite love and role-modeling that prepares children to avoid the temptation of sex. In some accounts, fatherlessness results in such deplorable sexual behavior as promiscuity in women and rape in men.<sup>149</sup> It is associated with the occurrence of “premature” fatherhood, which then begets more fatherlessness.<sup>150</sup> While these themes certainly were present in the hearings of the mid-1990s, epitomized by the statements of Charles Ballard, director of the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood, and two of the Institute’s participants, they were couched in explicitly and implicitly racial terms (the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood serves “African American fathers in particular”) and were aimed at addressing fathers’ ability to provide economically for their children by increasing their education and employment prospects.<sup>151</sup> In 2001, however, very few references to race or class (other than the claim that fatherlessness is related to welfare dependency) frame the discourse of fatherlessness. Instead, participants emphasize teen sex and other unruly teen behaviors as reason for concern around fatherlessness as both its cause and its result.

Overwhelmingly, then, teenage pregnancy is posed in this hearing as essentially a problem about sex.<sup>152</sup> Generational welfare dependency, inner-city crime and juvenile delinquency, drugs, and educational failure, are seldom explicitly referenced. When they

do arise, they are presented primarily as results of teenage pregnancy, rather than potential contributing factors.<sup>153</sup> While they, as well as fears about the decline of the American workforce and economy, and the potential for racial upheaval due to the over-reproduction of poor people of color, may remain as implied corollaries of the now taken-for-granted problematic status of teenage pregnancy in the minds of many, their role in provoking outrage and urgency is greatly diminished and they have been relegated to the background of a discourse in which anxieties surrounding teenage sex take the fore. This focus prevents discussion of the multiple factors legislated and carried out by the state, such as welfare, healthcare, marriage, childcare, labor, and more, that differentially regulate reproduction and parenthood in the United States. As a result, proposed methods for addressing the problem are greatly narrowed as well.

While media campaigns and further child support enforcement measures also arise as part of possible prevention plans proposed in 2001, sex education is the most widely discussed and generally assumed solution to the problem of teen pregnancy. This is in stark contrast to the mid-1990s hearings discussed above. For example, in the *Teen Parents and Welfare Reform* hearing in 1995, Kristin Moore states that “Sex education can encourage teens to delay sex and use contraception. But the effects today are rather small.”<sup>154</sup> Suggesting that solutions must go beyond sex education, she calls for increased funding for family planning and contraception, and a set of incentives and disincentives that apply to “young men as well as adolescent females.” In the 1996 *Preventing Teenage Pregnancy* hearing, she explains,

I think that many of us are in agreement that the causes of teen pregnancy in many cases are very profound. They are family dysfunctions, single parent families. They are poverty. They are early school failure. They are early behavior problems. The current approaches, on the other hand, are a

week or two of sex education during the junior year in high school. They are short term, and they are superficial, and they are too late.<sup>155</sup>

Moore's formulation of the problem is certainly as a personal one that can be addressed by programs aimed at correcting the damage that personal and familial "dysfunction" create. However, contrary to the discourse of the 2001 *Teen Pregnancy Prevention* hearing, Moore understands teenage pregnancy as inherently tied to the hardships associated with poverty. In 1995, she states, "Again, it is a matter of low motivation, combined with the disorder and difficulties inherent in the lives of young single parents that leads to pregnancies that are not wanted or intended, but which are not prevented either."<sup>156</sup> As discussed above, Moore and other hearing participants in the mid 1990s viewed "low motivation" as something that results from a perceived lack of opportunities, and the "disorder and difficulties" in the lives of these adolescents results from a complex interplay between economic, cultural, and familial circumstances. These problems, Moore suggests, fall under the purview of the federal government, requiring not just funding for sex education, but also resources that reward desired behavior, enforce child support laws, and address things like reproductive health and school performance.

In the 2001 hearing, on the other hand, participants' proposals for preventative measures revolve largely around funding what they deem to be the most effective types of sex education. Advocates for continuing or increasing funding for abstinence-only sex education through welfare reauthorization make one or more of the following arguments. They claim that children need a clear message to abstain from sex, which will get muddled with the inclusion of information about contraception.<sup>157</sup> They argue that funding streams for comprehensive sex education are available through other policies,

and funding set out in the PRWORA helps to create “parity” between abstinence-only and comprehensive sex education.<sup>158</sup> Advocates for abstinence-only sex education also maintain that the funding set aside for these programs allows local communities the flexibility they need to decide what will work for their teens, making it possible for them to get resources for an abstinence-only message if they choose.<sup>159</sup> Proponents of comprehensive sex education overwhelmingly maintain, as noted above, that abstinence from sex is in fact the best choice for teenagers.<sup>160</sup> At the same time, they argue that some teens will have sex regardless of what they are told, so they need to be prepared to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.<sup>161</sup> They point to a lack of evidence that abstinence-only sex education is effective in preventing teens from engaging in sex, getting pregnant, and contracting STDs.<sup>162</sup> Finally, similar to the abstinence-only supporters, advocates for comprehensive sex education also argue that local communities require flexibility to address their problems (a founding principle of the PRWORA), but instead of presenting funding for abstinence-only as a valid alternative to comprehensive programs that are funded through other sources, they claim that the PRWORA abstinence-only funding “pigeon-holes” states and localities into a particular approach to the issue of teenage pregnancy.<sup>163</sup> This hearing sets the stage for what will become the contemporary politics of teen pregnancy prevention. As I show in chapter 3, teen pregnancy prevention politics of the early 2000s frames teen pregnancy as an issue of sexuality that requires apparently open education about and access to a small spectrum of equally valuable and acceptable consumer-esque choices, including abstinence, contraception, relationship advice, and tools to combat peer pressure.

Throughout this debate, the idea that the unbridled sexuality of teenagers is volatile

is axiomatic. Teen sex demands regulation, be it through the cultivation of informed individuals, armed with statistics and prophylactics, or through the production of avowed virginal foot soldiers in the war against premarital sex. Sex, in and of itself, becomes the problem that begets all other problems at hand, which allows for an almost complete abandonment of race and class as useful frameworks for understanding the issue.

Examining the differences between the teen pregnancy hearings of the mid 1990s and the one in 2001, it is clear that in the few years that passed between them much has changed about the way the problem is constructed and the methods proposed to address it. Rather than being explicitly and implicitly—through the use of racially coded terms like “welfare dependency,” “inner-city crime,” and “juvenile delinquency”—racialized as a problem of poor people of color, teen pregnancy is produced as racially nonspecific. Where often this would imply a tacit whiteness, as whiteness is the unmarked category and unspoken norm, the legacy of racist and classist representations of pregnant and parenting teens continues to arise, especially in moments when welfare reauthorization—the legislation in question—is directly addressed. With this new focus on sexuality, teen pregnancy begins to approach a multicultural model, in which bad cultures of sex may previously have been more prevalent among teens from poor communities of color, but are now equal opportunity problems that plague the generic American family and can be addressed with a broad-based strategy of strengthening the moral character of entrepreneurial and consuming individuals in their formative years. Indeed, this focus on sex helps consolidate a discourse of neoliberal multiculturalism that I outline in chapters 2 and 3, in which good moral behavior facilitates effective market participation, thereby ensuring individual success and social equality.

Many scholars have examined the emergence in the post-Civil Rights era of forms of multiculturalism that serve to maintain unequal structures of power and racial exploitation. David Theo Goldberg and others name these forms “managed multiculturalism,” “corporate multiculturalism,” and “difference multiculturalism.”<sup>164</sup> They point to the ways that these multiculturalisms valorize and fix versions of racial and ethnic difference based on a depoliticized notion of culture, reifying the norms and privileges of whiteness, and detaching race from any associations with the forces of political economy.<sup>165</sup> Building on these analyses, Melamed argues that neoliberal multiculturalism instantiates new forms of racialization that cut across traditional racial categories in ways that justify the distribution of the burdens and spoils of racial capitalism.<sup>166</sup> In her analysis, those who bear the burden of neoliberal policies are racialized as backward and monocultural in opposition to enlightened multicultural citizens. Other scholars point to the ways that nonwhite subjects are folded into neoliberal multiculturalism through adherence to heteronormativity.<sup>167</sup> In the case of teen pregnancy prevention, teenage sex and reproduction is racialized as naïve and misguided in opposition to heteronormative teenage intimacies, which involve the delaying of sex until adulthood and marriage. As I will show in the following chapters, within the post-welfare multicultural teen pregnancy prevention discourse, this racialization not only does the work of justifying and naturalizing the unequal results of racial capitalism, but in some cases completely denies the existence of inequality altogether.

Naming various bad cultures of sex as the locus of the problem, policy options are markedly different in the 2001 hearing than they were in the mid 1990s. With the rise of a multicultural politics of teen pregnancy emerges a less punitive approach to the problem,

involving proposals for education, family planning, and media campaigns aimed at changing behavior through the cultivation of values, motivation, and self-esteem, not just for welfare recipients, but for teenagers at large.<sup>168</sup> This multicultural politics is even more evolved in the legislative debates surrounding teen pregnancy in the years following this hearing, in which teen pregnancy becomes detached completely from issues of welfare and poverty, and appears almost entirely within battles over “family values” and reproductive health.

### **2001-2010: Pre-Mothers and Reproductive Politics**

In 2007, Hillary Clinton drew on her mother’s birth to teenage parents as an effort to shape her image on the presidential campaign trail. She highlighted her mother’s life story as part of the campaign’s “ambitious effort to present the candidate the way they want her to be seen: as a pragmatic Midwesterner with a compelling life story of her own, rather than just the famous, and sometimes polarizing, senator and former first lady most of the country already knows she is.”<sup>169</sup> In 2009, President Barack Obama relayed the fact of his own birth to a teenage mother as part of an address to a gathering of over 500 Native American leaders in Washington, D.C. Using his mother’s age and his father’s departure when he was two years old as way of illustrating that he knows “what it means to be an outsider,” Obama labored to convince tribal leaders that his White House would break the pattern of exploitation and marginalization that the federal government had established in regard to Native Americans.<sup>170</sup> In both of these cases, teenage pregnancy and parenthood were evoked as a way of both making an extremely privileged and inaccessible person seem more relatable, and confirming the myth of the American Dream in which even the child (or grandchild) of a teenager can persevere to become a



U.S. senator or the president. By extension, even those who have been systematically excluded for centuries can be drawn into the national fold.

These two strategic uses of teen pregnancy help illustrate the characteristics of the public image of teen pregnancy in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century that make it particularly useful to the neoliberal logics of personal responsibility, multiculturalism, and entrepreneurship. Clinton's campaign was apparently counting on the public's lack of historical knowledge when it comes to the issue of teen pregnancy, since the construct of teenage pregnancy as a social catastrophe leading to specific and significant hardships emerged no earlier than the 1970s.<sup>171</sup> As such, her use of it shows the ubiquity of public understanding that teenage pregnancy leads and has always led to hardship. And her use of her grandmother's teenage motherhood to indicate something about herself and her own character speaks both to the perceived severity of that hardship—that it could still be felt by a senator grandchild—and to the idea that it could, and can, be overcome. In other words, anyone can be plagued by teen parenthood, and having survived and thrived despite it only makes one more American. Similarly, Obama's teenage mother establishes him as someone who understands adversity, while also marking teenage pregnancy an all-American trait. The fact that neither of them is a teen parent—perpetuating the cycle, as emphasized in the 1990s—shows that teen pregnancy is no longer to be seen as a one-way ticket to generational poverty, but rather an unfortunate setback resulting from misguided sex.

Rather than incurring the stigma of welfare and crime, these teen parents are invoked to create a point of identification, a sense of normalcy, and the notion that America is the land of equal opportunity. In what follows it is clear that teenage

pregnancy has become detached from the issues that defined it as a social problem in the 1990s, such as generational poverty, national economic decline, and urban decay. As the 2001 *Teen Pregnancy Prevention* hearing discussed above only begins to show, the public identity of teen pregnancy within national political discourse in the 2000s is about inappropriate and irresponsible sex that can occur in any socioeconomic or racial context and is generally threatening to the constitution of the American family, which is the sole and rightful unit of social reproduction and wellbeing. As such, Clinton and Obama can draw on it to gesture toward a “bootstraps” history precisely because they overcame the hard legacy of teen pregnancy to produce their own “intact” families. In this section I examine news coverage, legislative debates, and public policy surrounding teen pregnancy during the first decade of the twenty-first century to show how a multicultural politics of teen pregnancy emerged as a result of the terms through which it is defined as a problem. Sex education, reproductive rights, and family values shape the issue in ways that foreground proper sexual and reproductive conduct as the backbone of American citizenship, and establish race and class as superficial categories that have no bearing on distributions of power, privilege and opportunity.

In the first decade of the 2000s, teenage pregnancy and parenthood were important issues in three main pieces of legislation and surrounding debates: welfare reauthorization (versions were proposed and debated in 2002, 2003, 2004, but finally enacted in 2005), the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2010 (CAA), and the healthcare reform bill of 2010 (PPACA). Welfare reauthorization debates, in keeping with the teen pregnancy hearing discussed above, addressed the issue primarily as one of sex education and the most effective ways of deterring teenagers from engaging in

reckless behaviors.<sup>172</sup> The CAA and the PPACA reveal not only a continued interest in finding the most effective ways to prevent and regulate teen sex in general, but also an explicit linking of teen pregnancy to abortion politics in which prevention efforts of all varieties are cast within an agenda of reducing abortions.

Although both pieces of legislation include teen pregnancy prevention measures, neither set of debates entertains teenage pregnancy and parenthood to any great extent. Its rare appearance, however, reveals a telling new focus. Whereas a rhetoric of protecting children from poverty and their parents' irresponsible and neglectful parenting permeated all sides of the mid 1990s welfare reform debate, a different kind of menace apparently threatens children in the following decade.<sup>173</sup> Sex and reproduction endanger children of all ages. As illustrated above, children in the beginning of the twenty-first century must first and foremost be molded in a way that helps them avoid or, at the very least, reduce the negative effects of sex in their lives.<sup>174</sup> The imperative to shape the decisions teens make about sex is cast in terms of preserving their health and well-being.<sup>175</sup> Teens are not the only children affected by teen sex, however. As the Annie E. Casey Foundation claims, "Teen childbearing affects young people at both ends of childhood."<sup>176</sup> While debates about sex education and teen pregnancy prevention more broadly have often focused on shaping children at the exiting end of childhood, it is those at the threshold of childhood, the potential unborn children of pregnant teenage girls, who hold the interest of debaters in 2009 and 2010. However, unlike the American fetus as ideal citizen in Berlant's analysis of 1980s and 1990s cultural politics, the fetus of post-welfare teen pregnancy prevention is a fraught figure whose life is first and foremost to be prevented, and often ironically and impossibly in the name of its own wellbeing.<sup>177</sup>

Although the prevention of potential children of teenagers has been a primary preoccupation of political discourse related to teen pregnancy since it arose as a social problem, these later discussions revolve almost exclusively around this issue. As teen pregnancy becomes all but contained within abortion politics, the imperative to prevent abortions *and* teen parenthood takes the fore.<sup>178</sup> Discussing an amendment to the CAA that would eliminate funding for Planned Parenthood, Representative Christopher Smith states, “Mr. Chairman, no child is safe in a Planned Parenthood clinic. That goes equally for the preborn child who is yearning to be born as well as for the 15-year-old pregnant girl being told she is entitled to a secret abortion, an abortion procured with neither her parents' knowledge or consent.”<sup>179</sup> Here, the government must protect the children who are “preborn” from both an immoral organization such as Planned Parenthood, and the misguided actions of an accidental and underdeveloped pre-mother. I use the term “pre-mother” here to connote two different dynamics. First, it references a dominant approach to women’s health in which all women who are able to conceive a child are treated as potential child bearers.<sup>180</sup> Second, it references the assumption that teenage girls are not yet prepared for motherhood, but are instead in training for adult womanhood and therefore motherhood. (For the imagined fetus, it would be better to never be conceived at all than to be conceived by a “pre-mother.”)

While teenage girls are pre-mothers in this dual sense, the widespread sentiment that more abortions must not be the price paid for reducing the number of teenage parents requires an emphasis on pregnancies being carried to term. Stating that the proposed healthcare reform involves prenatal care and funding to help pregnant and parenting teens, Representative Marcy Kaptur states,

Mr. Speaker, the best anti-abortion bill we can pass is one that gives women and children a real chance through health insurance coverage that allows fragile life to come to term. This bill does that. It gives hope, to every family, to every woman to every child yet to be born. It says you have a right to be born... No family, no mother, no father will ever have to question again whether they can afford to bring a conceived child to term.<sup>181</sup>

In Kaptur's account, teens need to be supported throughout the pregnancy and beyond (should they choose not to give up their children for adoption<sup>182</sup>) in order to prevent abortion and facilitate children's health.<sup>183</sup> In this instance, as well as in examples I discuss in chapters 3 and 4, the contemporary conditions of possibility for reproductive politics are such that an anti-abortion stance provides a tool for structural change on behalf of disadvantaged teen parents. The price of using this tool is of course the ongoing naturalization of abortion as an invalid and demonized reproductive choice.

Similarly, teen pregnancy also arises in the discussion of a proposed aspect of the CAA called the Reducing the Need for Abortions Initiative. An effort on the part of anti-abortion Democrats to establish common ground within the polarizing abortion debate, the initiative aims to reduce unintended pregnancies and provide support for women to carry such pregnancies to term. As such, it includes funding for teen pregnancy prevention, adoption awareness, parenting skill-building, and childcare for parents attending college, among other things. Teen pregnancy is therefore again mentioned as part of a larger set of issues within a reproductive politics framework. Up for debate is not whether teens should become parents or not; the teen pregnancy prevention efforts passed as part of both the CAA and the PPACA make it clear that they should not. Rather, debaters are concerned both with preventing such pregnancies through the cultivation of certain types of moral individuals and with shaping what happens when

something goes wrong and teens do become pregnant.

For some pro-choice debaters, unintended pregnancy is something that can happen to anyone, and therefore support must be made available for teenage girls and women choosing to carry the pregnancy to term. Advocating for the Pregnant and Parenting Teens and Women Amendment to be included in the CAA, Senator Robert Casey states that,

[T]here is a ... category [of pregnant women] where a woman finds out she is pregnant and that moment of discovery is not a moment of joy. For her, it is a moment of terror or panic or even shame. She may be in a doctor's office or she may be at home-she may be in a number of places-but for her that moment begins with a crisis in which she feels overwhelmingly and perhaps unbearably alone, all alone. She could be wealthy, middle income, or poor-but most likely, if that pregnancy is a crisis, she is poor. Whatever her income, she feels very simply all alone.<sup>184</sup>

Including teenage girls in the category of “women” here, Casey emphasizes that unintended pregnancies happen, regardless of factors like class (although, he notes, poor people are more likely to consider it a “crisis”). For a teenage girl, it is presumably the timing that is at issue and she may not feel prepared to support a child “at this point in her life.”<sup>185</sup> He goes on to describe the ways that the amendment supports pregnant women and girls with funding for prenatal care, education, and other services in order to create the best outcome for their children. The idea of making resources available for pregnant teenagers to help facilitate their child-bearing runs exactly counter to previous claims about the role of welfare as catalyst in the production of teen parents. The construction of accidental pregnancy as devoid of racial and class dimensions allows the trend within teen pregnancy prevention politics of nullifying structural inequity to continue.

Indeed, income is often presented as largely incidental to whether pregnancy will be difficult and require various types of support. Discussing a similar amendment that

was eventually passed as part of the PPACA, Casey states,

Why should a woman on a college campus who makes a decision to have a baby be left alone? Why shouldn't we be giving her help? We don't do it now. I know some do it, and I will hear from others that this group does this and this group does that, but unfortunately it is not nearly enough, especially for someone who happens to be a teenager, a woman who is pregnant, or a young woman who is pregnant as a teenager or before the age of 18. Are we doing enough to help that woman who happens to be pregnant get through the challenge of a pregnancy?<sup>186</sup>

Emphasizing again that unintended pregnancies are “faced by pregnant women of all incomes, of all backgrounds, and of all circumstances” Casey suggests that pregnant women ought not to have to go through the “challenge” alone.<sup>187</sup> The notion that pregnancy might just “happen” to anyone at anytime appears to be a fundamental justification for the outlaying of support, which comes primarily in the form of services rather than direct monetary assistance. This, again, is in sharp contrast to the 1990s situating of teen pregnancy squarely within the racialized discourse of welfare, and the austere and punitive response.

Rather than withholding government assistance to coerce impoverished teenagers into specific conduct, policies passed in 2009 and 2010 approach teen pregnancy as an issue requiring public expenditure to inform, guide behavior, and enable choice. As referenced in the *NPR* story with which this chapter began, the CAA provides funds for “competitive contracts and grants to public and private entities to fund medically accurate and age appropriate programs that reduce teen pregnancy,” as well as for “research and demonstration grants to develop, replicate, refine, and test additional models and innovative strategies for preventing teenage pregnancy.”<sup>188</sup> A similar focus on medical accuracy and innovation can be seen in the PPACA, which establishes funding for Personal Responsibility Education Programs (PREP) geared toward reducing teen

pregnancy. The program specifications are as follows:

“(i) The program replicates evidence-based effective programs or substantially incorporates elements of effective programs that have been proven on the basis of rigorous scientific research to change behavior, which means delaying sexual activity, increasing condom or contraceptive use for sexually active youth, or reducing pregnancy among youth.

“(ii) The program is medically-accurate and complete.

“(iii) The program includes activities to educate youth who are sexually active regarding responsible sexual behavior with respect to both abstinence and the use of contraception.

“(iv) The program places substantial emphasis on both abstinence and contraception for the prevention of pregnancy among youth and sexually transmitted infections.

“(v) The program provides age-appropriate information and activities.

“(vi) The information and activities carried out under the program are provided in the cultural context that is most appropriate for individuals in the particular population group to which they are directed.<sup>189</sup>

PREP funds focus primarily on influencing sexual behavior, but programs must also include at least three “adulthood preparation subjects,” such as “healthy relationships,” “adolescent development,” and “healthy life skills.” The portion of PREP funds that go toward “innovative strategies” must be aimed at “high-risk” populations as well as pregnant women under 21. Abstinence-only sex education funds that were originally part of the PROWRA were also included in the PPACA, as well as some funding for programs supporting pregnant and parenting teens and women.<sup>190</sup>

As these measures illustrate, while punitive welfare policies still exist upon the passage of the CAA and the PPACA, the public focus on teen pregnancy has shifted along with new policies aimed at it. Concerns with educating teenagers about sex and cultivating the values and skills required to avoid it or do it properly eclipse any explicit



interest in deterring teen pregnancy through the disciplining of teenage welfare recipients. Within this paradigm teens are not to be mothers and fathers because they are not to have sex and are broadly not prepared to be parents. Although justifications for teen pregnancy prevention efforts are often completely absent, these notions appear to be the guiding logic. Teenage girls are, by definition, pre-mothers. Should they become pregnant, however, the best option for them appears to be adoption and, barring that, they require support and instruction in order to carry out the task of parenthood in an inopportune situation. These pre-mothers are, for the most part, implicitly racially and class non-specific, and their potential premature motherhood constitutes not a national disaster, but a manageable inconvenience for the individual, her family, and the federal government.

In this way, a focus on the intimate and sexual lives of abstractly equal teenagers fuels a multicultural understanding of teen pregnancy in which a “culture” of sex is the target of efforts, while racial difference is depoliticized and rendered incidental. As I will show in the following two chapters that analyze teen pregnancy prevention media, this discourse valorizes difference in its superficial form as a way of denying the existence of substantive racialized inequality, while promoting a narrow definition of proper moral and economic adolescent citizenship.

## **Conclusion**

In the 2008 presidential election, Republican candidate John McCain named Governor Sarah Palin as his running mate after learning of her 17 year-old daughter’s unplanned, out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Questioning if women voters would back Palin and “embrace her all-too-human story,” the *Washington Post* quotes a spokesperson from the Republican National Coalition for Life: “Everybody, especially women as well as

men, knows people who have been in this situation before. It makes their family real, which is what we've seen from Day One...It will resonate with women voters because they'll say, 'That happened to me. That happened to someone down the street.'"<sup>191</sup> Like the strategies of drawing on histories of teenage pregnancy in the Clinton campaign and Obama's address to tribal leaders, many accounts of the effects of Bristol Palin's pregnancy on her mother's campaign stated that it made her more relatable.<sup>192</sup> As Sarah Palin was lauded for being open about her family circumstances and helping her daughter avoid abortion, she provided a prominent example to the country that teenage pregnancy is not a problem of the impoverished inner city. As long as it is part of a past in which a generational cycle of early child-bearing has already been precluded (as in the Clinton and Obama cases), or imbedded within a familial context of private wealth and conservative family values, teenage pregnancy can be rendered familiar and domestic, if still distinctly problematic.

In keeping with Senator Robert Casey's remarks above, Palin's familial debacle confirms the notion that this problem can happen to anyone and the hardships it occasions are not the result of income levels, geographic factors, or social inequality. In fact, as the *NPR* story suggests, teen pregnancy may be largely the result of teenagers' bad relationship skills. While Bristol Palin, in a public service announcement against teen pregnancy put out by the Candie's Foundation, emphasizes her relative privilege and how much more difficult her early childbearing would have been under different circumstances (those of the presumed average-American teenage audience), having to grow up too fast and not being able to behave and consume like a regular teenager are the real costs within the new multicultural politics of teenage pregnancy.<sup>193</sup> The following

two chapters, on popular culture and national advocacy treatments of the issue in the beginning of the twenty-first century, discuss these new emphases and their implications. Here, I have shown the ways that national political discourse—legislative debate, political news, and public policy—has redefined both the terms through which teenage pregnancy is understood as problematic to the nation, and the tools available to address it. This redefinition supports the economic and cultural goals of neoliberalism by operating within and naturalizing a paradigm of reproductive politics based almost solely in personal morality and behavior, erasing questions of poverty and structural inequalities.

In the mid 1990s, teen pregnancy was equated with excessive and misguided public expenditures to poor people of color living in dirty, dangerous, and devastated city centers. As Representative Christopher Shays illustrates in remarks made during the 1996 *Preventing Teen Pregnancy* hearing, the public identity of teenage pregnancy as a problem of racialized welfare-seeking, drug-addicted adolescents was intimately connected to the notion that the best hope for them and their offspring was the denial of government assistance and, in some accounts, the removal of their children from their care. He states, “When Newt Gingrich talked about orphanages, people jumped on him. But he was putting it not in the same relationship of a Norman Rockwell, two cars in every garage, and two-and-a-half kids, he was talking about crack mothers raising kids.”<sup>194</sup> He suggests that this is not a problem that can be solved with government outlays of money for programs that “we would not want if we were doing it for our own kids,” but instead with direct manipulation of people’s intimate lives and relationships. Only a few years later, teen pregnancy was largely presented as exactly a problem threatening the “Norman Rockwell, two cars in every garage, two-and-a-half kids” type

of home. If teen pregnancy is a problem about individual morality, then policies developed to address it logically provide government funds in the form of competitive grants for “innovative” programs and campaigns that engineer specific values—virginity, marriage, “safe sex,” “life skills”—teaching teenagers how to live properly.

The teen pregnancy prevention measures of the PRWORA, most of which are still in effect, were largely geared toward a specific set of poor racialized teenagers. They serve, along with welfare reform in general, to widen racial and class inequalities, conditioning meager public relief for the most impoverished Americans upon specific personal, reproductive, and economic decisions and plainly increasing their vulnerability to labor exploitation and physical harm. At the same time, the racialized public discourse of teen pregnancy that helped occasion these punitive policies also provided the conditions of possibility for acknowledgements of structural inequalities that were completely precluded only a few years later. Without convincing evidence that the PRWORA has had the desired effect on teen pregnancy, teen pregnancy prevention efforts have departed completely from a focus on welfare dependency.<sup>195</sup> Instead of a public realization that the problem is not a cultural deficiency of poor people resulting from the perverse incentives of government assistance, but a valid choice, particularly on the part of young people whose economic and social circumstances sometimes lend themselves to early childbearing, the issue has been all but stripped of its racial and class dimensions. Rather than the recognition that the category of “children” encompasses people who are sexual and reproductive, those traits have come to occupy the sole perversion within, and the crux of a social problem that had previously been considered far more complex. In the next two chapters, I show how the privatized teen pregnancy

prevention efforts conditioned by these changes in political discourse work as a crucial counterpart to welfare reform by popularizing the neoliberal logics of multiculturalism, intimate citizenship, and privatization that underwrite welfare retrenchment.

## CHAPTER 2: SEX EDUTAINMENT: TELEVISED TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION

### Introduction

The goal of The National Campaign's Entertainment Media program is to get messages about pregnancy prevention and consequences to our target audiences via the entertainment media they already like to consume...We do this by cultivating relationships and partnerships with media leaders, educating them about our issues, supporting their efforts to include our issues, and collaborating with them to produce fresh, engaging, and relevant content.<sup>196</sup>

In the last decade, there has been a swell of popular media addressing teen pregnancy.<sup>197</sup> This is in large part due the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy's Entertainment Media program, described above as an effort to reach teens through their assumed interest in and consumption of specific forms of popular culture. In comparison to this component of contemporary media, popular culture renderings of teen pregnancy during the 1980s and 1990s were not as prevalent.<sup>198</sup> Although some of the earlier texts deal with the defining tropes of contemporary teen pregnancy-related popular culture, my contention is that the primary public discourse about teen pregnancy in the era leading up to welfare reform was generated in the news media through the political discourse of pathological communities of poverty analyzed in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I suggest that the most visible public discourse surrounding teen pregnancy in the post-welfare era is propagated via popular culture rather than political news. As critics argue about the effects that this media has on actual teen pregnancy rates, it becomes clear that some of the most widely viewed television shows and movies about the topic—even those that explicitly aim to prevent teen pregnancy—generate complex and contradictory meanings.<sup>199</sup> The question of whether

these texts promote certain sexual, reproductive, and contraceptive behaviors over others in U.S. teens has provoked multifarious responses.

This chapter is concerned not with the actual effects of shows like *16 and Pregnant* and *The Secret Life of an American Teenager* on teen sexual and reproductive behavior, but with the representations and regulatory technologies that these texts forward, and how they further the post-welfare discourses and strategies surrounding teen pregnancy set forth by the policy and political discourse analyzed in chapter 1. In order to address these questions, I have chosen to examine texts that explicitly claim a prevention agenda, focus entirely on teen pregnancy and motherhood, and result from partnerships between the producing television channel and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

The National Campaign is a private, nonprofit advocacy organization (originally the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy), “inspired” by the Clinton White House and founded in 1996, receiving a portion of its funding from the Department of Health and Human Services along with private funds.<sup>200</sup> It plays a prominent role in advocacy and policy debate about teen pregnancy at the congressional level, which I discussed in chapter 1.<sup>201</sup> The National Campaign is one of the foremost national voices in teen pregnancy politics and, as I discuss more thoroughly in chapter 3, represents the leading logic by which the issue is constructed by a variety of interested parties, including policymakers, social scientists of prominent conservative and liberal think tanks, national reproductive health organizations, and media corporations. It offers a publicly supported while simultaneously privatized approach to teen pregnancy

prevention in the post-welfare era, with its partnerships with television corporations representing the enlistment of profit-driven industry into the prevention project.<sup>202</sup>

To examine how this particular response to the call for “innovative” approaches builds on and forwards neoliberal logics, I look at the MTV show *16 and Pregnant*, the Lifetime movie *The Pregnancy Pact*, and the ABC Family series *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*.<sup>203</sup> I show how teen pregnancy in these mass-mediated texts projects the post-welfare politics of teen pregnancy directly onto the personal screens of millions of viewers. Teen pregnancy prevention on television portrays it as something that can happen to anyone, regardless of race, class, and geography. In the framework of neoliberal multiculturalism, teen pregnancy stems from problematic sexual behavior and familial relationships and results in stifled physical, emotional, and consumer development for the individuals involved. The apparent solution is thus to raise awareness about the dangers of sex and the hardships of too-early pregnancy, instructing parents on how to effectively regulate their children’s sex lives and persuading teens not to reproduce by emphasizing the importance of achieving bodily, economic, and familial normality.

While the welfare reform legislation of 1996 represents the defining biopolitical approach to teen pregnancy of that decade, with its focus on dictating the household, familial and labor arrangements of impoverished teen moms of color, these texts are part of a dominant biopolitical approach to the reformulated social problem in these first decades of the twenty-first century. Michel Foucault’s theory of biopolitics holds that the modern state simultaneously operates on both the individual level, disciplining behavior, and the level of the population, regulating the national body based on notions of



desirability and undesirability.<sup>204</sup> These efforts to cultivate the optimal citizenry follow a eugenic logic, encouraging and cultivating the lives and reproduction of some, while discouraging, neglecting or preventing others. Modern state power, particularly in the era of neoliberalism, is diffuse, flowing through public as well as private institutions that are sanctioned and supported by the dominant political logic and that help to produce particular types of citizen-subjects. In this chapter, I argue that these pop culture texts are a crucial part of a new stage in the biopolitical regime of teen pregnancy prevention, instructing American teenagers in the forms of comportment, sexual conduct, and consumption that make up proper adolescent citizenship.

This new biopolitics of teen pregnancy both coexists with and serves to obscure the more punitive work of welfare reform. As welfare reform pushes poor “noncompliant” families off the roles and into deeper poverty, materially enforcing their expendability, mass-mediated teen pregnancy prevention efforts ignore the existence of these families altogether. Rather than targeting the purportedly wayward teens of impoverished inner cities, these efforts focus on disciplining teenagers and their parents at large according to a neoliberal logic that presents a moral frame of economic success and multicultural equality. In this way they help to confirm, impose, and obscure the disposability and invisibility of the nation’s deeply impoverished, furthering the neoliberal project of welfare reform, while working to regulate and prevent certain kinds of life.

The chapter proceeds with an analysis of *16 and Pregnant* and the ways that teen pregnancy is being remade within the framework of neoliberal multiculturalism. It then examines depictions of the imperiled white middle class in *The Pregnancy Pact* and *The*

*Secret Life of an American Teenager*, arguing that even with a clear focus on whiteness, these texts racialize white teen pregnancy as culturally backward, feeding the broader logic of neoliberal multiculturalism in which proper intimate and economic conduct consolidates individual and familial success, as well as social equality. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how these texts form a crucial part of the ongoing cultural, political, and social project of welfare retrenchment.

### **Teenage Frivolity Sacrificed: A Multicultural Politics**

MTV's "reality" series *16 and Pregnant* has been both listed as one of the "most dangerous shows your kids are watching," because it is thought by some to glamorize teen pregnancy, and credited with informing and dissuading teens from sex and pregnancy.<sup>205</sup> While the direct effects of the show on teenagers' decisions regarding sexuality and reproduction are difficult to determine, the series is clearly helping to shape the dominant construction of adolescent pregnancy. I argue that the episodes illustrate the transforming racialization of teen pregnancy and parenthood, where images of the generational poverty of poor Black and Latina single-parent households give way to a multicultural teen motherhood, in which race and class appear incidental to a teenager's circumstances, while morality determines her personal success.

Scholars of neoliberal multiculturalism point to the ways that it presents superficial forms of difference as inherently valuable in order to ultimately reify white, middle class norms.<sup>206</sup> By presenting a somewhat diverse cast—*mostly* white and *mostly* middleclass—in which nothing is explicitly made of racial and class differences, and the social inequalities they represent and engender, *16 and Pregnant* naturalizes the norms of the white, middleclass, nuclear family by presenting it as morally and economically

correct. In her discussion of the relationships between multiculturalism and biopower, Rey Chow points to the replacement of biological definitions of race with a putatively more tolerant cultural framework of difference. Drawing on Etienne Balibar, she argues that the resulting proliferation of biopolitical processes that classify and define cultural groups are compatible with and extend racial discourse.<sup>207</sup> She writes, “Humane, genteel, philanthropic, ever-expanding, ever-eager for a bigger and brighter future, this liberalist alibi is itself generating endless discourses of further differentiation *and* discrimination even as it serves as enlightened correction/civilized prohibition against physical and brutal violence...”<sup>208</sup> Melamed’s analysis of neoliberal multiculturalism highlights the new forms of racialization that map over and across phenotypical racial categories to naturalize the spoils of neoliberalism as rightfully belonging to morally and culturally enlightened people, in opposition to the backwards and monocultural people who bear the multiple burdens of neoliberal policy.<sup>209</sup> The multicultural discourse present in *16 and Pregnant* participates in the biopolitical project of promoting heteronormative whiteness as a means to individual success for each member of the show’s multiracial cast and presenting deviation from those norms as naïve, misguided, and morally bankrupt.

Chow, Melamed, and others argue that multiculturalism provides liberalism and neoliberal capitalism an alibi for racial exploitation and violence.<sup>210</sup> I contend that the texts analyzed here do more than naturalize the unequal outcomes of racial capital. In presenting teen pregnancy as an unfortunate problem of morality, disconnected from material hardship, they often occlude the existence of substantive inequality altogether. Instead of material hardship, these texts produce both the causes and costs of teen pregnancy as primarily personal and interpersonal. The negative consequences appear as

both an inability to achieve normalcy and a grimly tenuous grasp on happiness. As Sarah Ahmed illustrates, the cultural machinery that defines and promotes happiness associates it with particular social ideals, familial forms, and types of personhood, which, as I will illustrate in the example of teen pregnancy prevention, makes it a crucial mechanism for biopolitical governance and multicultural racialization.<sup>211</sup> In constructing the enactments and rewards of proper adolescent citizenship wholly within intimate and affective terms, these texts help set the conditions of possibility for a new dominant notion of a public safety net that I examine in depth in the next chapter, in which public wellbeing is ensured through the privatized dispensation of instruction on proper intimate and moral behavior for the optimization of personal success.

*16 and Pregnant* has a viewership of over 2 million and has run for four seasons with the fifth currently in production.<sup>212</sup> Scholars of reality TV point to the ways that the genre is particularly suited to the cultivation of personal and intimate citizenship in the face of a scaled back public welfare apparatus.<sup>213</sup> *16 and Pregnant* performs this work, as I will illustrate, by utilizing “real” pregnant and parenting teenagers to instruct young people in the characteristics of proper and improper adolescent sexual behavior, consumption, and recreation, elucidating the path to suitable adulthood. In stark contrast to the heavily racialized and class-based problematic of teenage pregnancy in the 1990s, in which concerns about national economic and social decline at the hands of teen welfare queens of color provided some of the most salient imagery in the drive to end welfare, *16 and Pregnant*’s critique of teen parenthood revises previous rhetorics of “cycles” of “broken families” and “too-early” pregnancy to present reproduction as

wholly personal, eliding the complexity of structural forces by which people's reproductive behaviors are produced, enabled, regulated, and prevented.

As mentioned above, *16 and Pregnant*, along with its spin-off series *Teen Mom* and *Teen Mom 2*, is part of a collaboration between the National Campaign and the cable television channel MTV. The National Campaign partnered with MTV, owned by media conglomerate Viacom, to create these programs as part of the organization's long-standing goal of using media as a "force for good," showing that "sex has consequences," and presenting "teens making the case to each other that postponing sexual involvement is their best choice for many reasons."<sup>214</sup> Meanwhile, the shows unscripted, heavily edited format, use of non-actors, and emphasis on apparently unpredictable real-life drama follows a current template of successful MTV programming. *16 and Pregnant* is thus a product of a complex intersection of public, private, philanthropic, and profit-driven interests aimed at influencing its young audience. This section focuses only on *16 and Pregnant* because, although the series differs somewhat from *Teen Mom* and *Teen Mom 2*, these episodes exhibit important themes occurring throughout those series as well.

While the makers of *16 and Pregnant* may have multiple, sometimes conflicting aims, producing various intentional and unintentional representations of sex, teen motherhood, and proper adolescence, its explicit cautioning against teen sex, "premarital" sex, "unprotected" sex, and pregnancy in the episode narrations, intermittent public service announcements, and "Finale Specials" with "Dr. Drew" Pinsky yield a straightforward interpretation.<sup>215</sup> This glaring discourse of prevention differs significantly from the urgent warnings typical of 1990s welfare reform debate, in which teen

pregnancy, coupled with a lenient welfare system, would be the downfall of American civilization.<sup>216</sup> In this post-welfare-reform moment, a lack of evidence that welfare reform has successfully reduced teen pregnancy or poverty might suggest that its focus on adolescent reproduction as a problem should be revisited.<sup>217</sup> Instead, teen pregnancy is taking on a new identity as a problem that is forwarded and exemplified by *16 and Pregnant*.

In these episodes, teen pregnancy and parenthood are problematic for reasons entirely separate from poverty. There is barely any mention or depiction of welfare or urban decay in the entire series so far.<sup>218</sup> In the few instances in which public assistance of some type comes up in the show, it makes only a passing appearance. For example, Katie and her boyfriend explore the option of income-based housing, but it is unclear if they do not end up qualifying for it or do not utilize it for some other reason.<sup>219</sup> Alex's mother worries that she might turn to the "wrong support network" if she keeps her baby, rather than giving her up for adoption.<sup>220</sup> What exactly she means by this is never clarified, but it would be reasonable to assume she might be referring to public assistance. Markai's boyfriend James receives unemployment in her episode, but has gotten a full-time job as a debt collector in the "Where Are They Now Special."<sup>221</sup> In the absence of any discussions about substantial welfare use, these teenage parents appear to draw on themselves and their relatives for their material needs. Financial hardship is only represented by teen parents who are unable to purchase key luxury items or to live separately from their parents or grandparents.

Similarly, the previous connections between teen pregnancy and urban blight are left unsubstantiated within the context of the show. Out of 47 teen mothers portrayed in

the show, there are a handful depicted as struggling with these issues in some way, but often only temporarily and with no racialized geographical dimension. Jenelle's child's father is said to be frequently in jail, and she says does not want him involved in the baby's life.<sup>222</sup> Nikkole's child's father apparently has an addiction and is in jail, and she moves in with him and his parents when he gets out.<sup>223</sup> Kianna's child's father goes to prison for burglary, but she plans to be with him when he gets out in 15 years.<sup>224</sup> Danielle says her child's father is in jail for a drug-related offense, and Alex's daughter's father is on probation and is portrayed as struggling with drug and alcohol addiction, but in recovery.<sup>225</sup> Domestic violence lands Cleondra and her boyfriend, Mario, in jail for one night, and Jennifer's fiancé, Josh, ends up in jail for one night because of a domestic dispute or possible kidnapping.<sup>226</sup> Some of these incidents appear to be isolated, most perpetrators are apparently white, and even those perpetrators that are portrayed as having long-term problems rarely fit clearly with the imagery of city centers overrun with drug trafficking, murder, and welfare fraud.

Rather than being a one-way ticket to life-long poverty and dependence in a crime-ridden inner-city setting, teen pregnancy is largely presented as an unnecessary curtailment of normative adolescence and all its sanctioned frivolity. Teens who become parents can no longer participate in the carefree, narcissist consumption, social life, and recreation that are apparently integral to a proper teenage life. Many of them lament that they are missing their prom, or cannot fit into their desired prom or homecoming dress. For example, in the "Unseen Moments Special" episode of season 2, Dr. Drew says, "It's hard for a woman of any age to accept the way her body changes when she's pregnant, but it's *really* hard for a teenager, especially when she wants to be a part of *normal*

teenage life,” as the show cuts to a sequence of clips in which Megan “agonizes,” in Dr. Drew’s words, over finding a homecoming dress to fit her pregnant body.<sup>227</sup> Next, Kayla is shown trying on a dress one week after her baby is born and being unsatisfied with it. The show then skips to 3 weeks later when she is wearing the dress she eventually chose and Dr. Drew says, “At least for one night, Kayla could still be a teenager. Well, almost,” as a shot of her baby flashes on the screen.<sup>228</sup> In this way, the show defines an apparently definitive experience of all women’s pregnancies—struggling with bodily changes—while opposing that experience to “normal” adolescence. Teenage motherhood thus appears to both exacerbate the automatic burdens of motherhood and counteract the joys of being a teen.

The show also emphasizes the monetary, bodily, and time constraints that reproduction puts on other appropriate teen activities. Some teen moms emphasize their own ability to “grow up” in an instant, while their baby’s fathers continue to spend money on unnecessary things like normal teens.<sup>229</sup> Most episodes emphasize the teen mom’s favorite extracurricular activities (e.g. Farrah and Leah are cheerleaders, Jenelle likes going to the beach, Brooke races cars, Lizzie plays in a marching band, Jordan is a model, Kayla does gymnastics, Izabella is on the drill team, Kianna does softball, Lindsey does cage fighting, etc.) and the ways that being a teen mom infringes on those.<sup>230</sup> As Mackenzie tries on her midriff-bearing cheerleading outfit while pregnant, she says she is determined to be wearing it “with a six-pack and no stretch marks” soon after the baby is born.<sup>231</sup> Her mom looks on in disbelief and her sister sarcastically says, “Good luck with that,” to which Mackenzie rolls her eyes and bows her head to look at her belly as somber music begins to play. Likewise, the shows repeatedly stress the havoc



that teenage pregnancy and motherhood wreak on a girl's social life.<sup>232</sup> For instance, when Katie wants to go to prom, she not only has trouble finding a dress, but her experience at the dance is also unsatisfying, as people stare at her, her feet get sore, and she gets tired quickly.<sup>233</sup> She is both physically inappropriate for the attire and strenuous activity of dancing, and she must also cope with social discomfort as well.

Whereas the dominant 1990s critique of teenage pregnancy drew on racialized discourses of poverty and welfare, *16 and Pregnant's* multicultural critique attributes undesirable characteristics to adolescent childbearing in any racial and class context, ultimately signaling the inherent superiority, inclusivity, and universality of heteronormative reproduction. Twelve of the sixteen pregnant teenagers followed in the first two seasons appear unambiguously white and the majority middleclass. Their pregnancies are therefore presented as unsettling and burdensome in a way that affects all teenage girls with the same basic consequences- by ruining their lighthearted innocence and disrupting their life course. This is well illustrated by a close look at Kayla's episode in season two. Kayla lives in rural Alabama. She and her boyfriend JR appear to be white and middle class. Although a major source of drama throughout the series is the apparent irresponsibility of teenage fathers, JR has a high school diploma and a steady (while perhaps low-paying) job as a mechanic. He is portrayed as committed to Kayla and their baby Rylan. Kayla and JR appear to each live with their parents who are married to each other and accommodating of the pregnancy (although Kayla's mom does talk about being sad about the news at first). Both Kayla's and JR's parents appear to provide emotional and material support to them.

Nonetheless, Kayla's life is not free of turmoil. One major source of conflict in the episode is that JR wants to marry Kayla and move in to a house (which appears spacious and has "brand new cabinets and appliances in it") that his parents own, but Kayla is not "ready" to move away from her mother.<sup>234</sup> Kayla is also portrayed as somewhat distraught over having to sacrifice apparently crucial high school experiences and go to community college instead of the university she had planned on attending with her friends. As Kayla puts it to JR, "you got to have your senior year, but I had to miss out on a lot of stuff, like me moving off with all my friends and going to college."<sup>235</sup> Although her mother tries to reassure her that the community college is a "wonderful" school, and that she will still be able to pursue the career as a nurse that she had planned and make new friends, Kayla cries over these changes in her life. Despite saying repeatedly "I love being a mom," having no cause for concern over providing for the material needs of herself and her baby, and being fully able to complete high school and go to college to pursue the career she had planned (her mother and JR's mother have agreed to provide childcare), Kayla's story is presented as a cautionary tale against teenage pregnancy.

While the episodes of *16 and Pregnant* produce many different and contradictory meanings, the authoritative prevention message of Kayla's and most of the other episodes is basically as follows: Do not get pregnant as a teenager if you want to continue participating in *normal* teenage activities, such as sports, looking thin and fashionable, attending a regular high school, buying trendy nonessential goods, and moving away to college to live in a dormitory with your friends. Whereas the social science and political discourse that propped up teen pregnancy as a social problem in the 1990s held it to be a

dire symptom of a larger culture of poverty that accepted early childbearing as the norm due to welfare incentives or the decline of family values, Kayla and many of the other *16 and Pregnant* teen moms, as noted above, are portrayed as enduring social ostracism due to the precisely non-normative status of their actions.<sup>236</sup> In one of the animated illustrations that punctuate certain moments throughout the episodes, Kayla is depicted as back at school pulling bottles out of her locker while her schoolmates stand by discussing a party, “cheer practice,” and going to “the game.” They then walk away, leaving her standing alone and dejected (her head hanging) next to a wall of lockers.<sup>237</sup> Kayla does not live in a pathological community in which “babies” are commonly “having babies” to get a welfare check, while “deadbeat dads” are always shirking their responsibilities, but rather in an apparently normal setting in which the consensus about what constitutes proper adolescence makes teen pregnancy alienating.

Not only is she “growing apart” from her friends as a result of becoming a teen mom, but she is also no longer able to participate in beauty pageants, a previous pastime of hers. She is shown calling a “local pageant director” to ask why girls with children are not allowed to participate, and being told that “this is for kids who just don’t have children.” In another segment, an animation depicts her standing in a line of pageant contestants while her belly grows and knocks them all over like dominoes (see Figure 1). This is similar to an illustration that shows her pregnant belly growing until it breaks the school desk in which she is sitting. As Wanda Pillow points out, pregnant teenagers do not “‘fit’ literally and figuratively into educational research, theories, policies, and practices.”<sup>238</sup> The exclusion of pregnant/mothering teens’ from their desired extracurriculars and social circles, as well as from the educational politics and practices

that Pillow discusses, is reflected and reinforced in Kayla's episode as a way of demonstrating the universal wrongfulness of teen motherhood.



Figure 1. Kayla knocks over pageant participants. *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, Episode 17.

Social exclusion, relationship turmoil, and decreased freedom of recreation and consumption are shown affecting almost all the teen moms of *16 and Pregnant* (perhaps with the exceptions of Catelynn, Lori, and Ashley, who place their babies for adoption, which I discuss below). In the final segment of Kayla's episode, she states, "When I had unprotected sex, I really wish I had thought it through more, because even though I had all the love and support in the world, the emotional struggle that you have to go through along with being pregnant is really, really hard and I just wanna slow down my life a little bit."<sup>239</sup> As some of Kayla's final words, these help solidify the notion that the problem with teenage motherhood is not that it might lead to poverty, crime, or generational welfare dependency, but that it interferes with the natural and logical course of life. As such, no structural factors, such as social policy, racial inequality, economic structure, reproductive politics, or health policy, appear to be in play. Rather, teenage motherhood is universally a personal failure that comes with personal sacrifices.

A defining aspect of the “epidemic” of teen pregnancy that helped drive social reformers to overhaul welfare in 1996 was its purported self-perpetuation.<sup>240</sup> “Babies” were having babies who would have babies as babies, and so on, due to a lack of proper role models and the perverse incentives of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). The intersecting racialized tropes of the culture of poverty, generational welfare dependency, and teenage pregnancy were enough to paint a harrowing portrait of U.S. economic and social decline at the hands of misguided, inner-city adolescents of color, whose actions were part of a cascading snowball of degeneracy. The “cycle” of teen pregnancy needed to be broken, and welfare reform, with its monetary “carrots and sticks,” was an important strategy for doing so.<sup>241</sup> Although teenagers currently can still draw on public assistance in many forms when they become parents, the perils of early pregnancy appear to have nothing to do with poverty or cyclical dependency on the government in *16 and Pregnant*. In fact, while there are some instances of relative poverty and some discussions of cycles, these things hardly coexist. Instead, the new cycle of teen pregnancy results from inadequate familial relationships, with the regulation of sex and reproduction as the clear solution.

While most cast members appear far removed from the stereotypical teen mom of 1990s discourse, Catelynn comes close. Although she and her boyfriend, Tyler, are white (something true of a large portion of actual teen parents, but obscured by the racialized discourse of the late twentieth century), they describe their lives as “unstable,” an apparent euphemism for growing up in relatively impoverished households with emotionally unsupportive parents.<sup>242</sup> Catelynn’s mother has substance abuse issues and gave birth to her when she was 19. Tyler’s dad has been “in and out of prison”

throughout his life. In this way, Catelynn and Tyler's situation bears the most resemblance to the cycle of teen pregnancy that Republicans and Democrats mutually concerned themselves with in welfare reform debate. As the story goes, a child of a teen mom grows up in a poor, dysfunctional home and becomes pregnant at 16 as a result of that dysfunction, as will her own daughter. Catelynn's episode, however, forecloses that possibility by depicting the difficult process that she and Tyler go through to place their daughter for adoption so that she can have a "better life." In this way, they are redeemed within the logic of the show and, in keeping with Melamed's formulation of multiculturalism as the spirit of neoliberal capitalism, they are held up as evidence that equilibrating markets, in this case, the market for adoptable babies, provide the avenue toward inclusion into proper American citizenship.<sup>243</sup>

As Catelynn and Tyler choose adoptive parents for their child, rather than continuing the purported pathological cycle, their actions consolidate the heteronormative ideal. Per Catelynn and Tyler's preferences, the adoptive mother will be a "stay-at-home mom" with a husband who is "a provider." The couple they choose explains that they met at church and that Brandon, the adoptive dad, works as a financial planner, while his wife Theresa has a job at a "private Christian school" that she presumably plans to quit when the baby comes. This married, white, Christian, middle class (their large brick house with white pillars and lush, manicured lawn is pictured) couple is attributed by Catelynn and Tyler with the ability to give a child a "stable household" and a "better life," and to make her "so happy."<sup>244</sup> Although they name emotional stability as their primary hope for their daughter's adoptive household, defending their decision not to raise her to Tyler's father, who appears to take offense at the implication that their household "is not good enough,"

the episode does little in the way of explicitly describing what emotional stability might look like. Instead, as Catelynn and Tyler thumb through Brandon and Theresa’s portfolio from the adoption agency, visual imagery of Brandon and Theresa’s apparent material wealth—their house, dress, and disposable time and income channeled toward recreation—is accompanied by Catelynn and Tyler’s exclamations about these things and how “perfect” they would be as parents (see Figure 2). In this way, an “emotionally stable household” is equated with being a white, middle class, nuclear family with traditional gender roles.



Figure 2. Catelynn and Tyler view a photo of the adoptive parents' house. *16 and Pregnant*. Season 1, Episode 6.

In her discussion of the ways that happiness is constructed through the valorization of heteronormative family formations, Sarah Ahmed elaborates a theory of the sociality of happiness in which happiness is understood to be a shared orientation toward the reproduction of social relations. She writes, “Parents can live with the failure of happiness to deliver its promise by placing their hopes for happiness in their children.”<sup>245</sup> Catelynn and Tyler’s emotional turmoil in placing their child for adoption is

portrayed in precisely this light. They offer their baby the apparent happiness of being placed in a white, wealthy, heteronormative home, thus justifying their own pain. As such, they not only secure and take pleasure in their child's future happiness, making her happiness, in Ahmed's words, a "shared object," but also, in the logic of the show, they open themselves up to a future happiness based in the potential consolidation of the heteronormative ideal through properly timed marriage and parenthood.<sup>246</sup>

In fact, in keeping with the show's biopolitical goal of cultivating in its audience specific types of moral subjectivities, Catelynn and Tyler's decision to give their daughter to this couple is unambiguously promoted and celebrated by the moral and psychological authority of the series, Dr. Drew. In all of the "Life After Labor Finale Specials," Dr. Drew speaks with the teen moms about their sex lives, struggles in their relationships, and other hardships attributed to being a teen mom. He probes and gives advice and counseling about contraception, healthy romantic partnerships, and parenting. In speaking with Tyler and Catelynn, he repeatedly refers to their "strength and courage" in making the choice that was "natural" to them and "right" for their daughter.<sup>247</sup> Out of the six pregnant teenagers of the first season, Catelynn is the only one to receive this kind of praise and admiration from Dr. Drew. Her choice of adoption is presented as the best and most logical choice that a pregnant teenager can make, not just because of her "unstable" household, but also because it leaves open the option of postponing parenthood until she and Tyler are "ready."<sup>248</sup> Catelynn and Tyler can form a proper family, regardless of their apparent disadvantages, if they just time their parenthood appropriately.



Catelynn and Tyler's story thus helps *16 and Pregnant* negate the consequences of social inequality, in fact recoding socioeconomic class into the affective terms of "instability" and "happiness," while also dismantling the links between teen parenthood and poverty.<sup>249</sup> After Catelynn explains to Dr. Drew why she is not currently living in her mother's household with "drunks, loud music, and partying," he commends her on her ability to recognize that she could and should "break the cycle." Rather than leading her to become a teen mom, Catelynn's apparent lower socioeconomic status and familial "instability" seem to have spurred her on in her decision not to parent her child, presenting an opportunity for a celebration of the universal accessibility of white, middle class ideals.<sup>250</sup>

Laura Briggs outlines a longer history in U.S. policy and social reform of a discourse that poses adoption as a way to break cycles of pathology in poor racialized communities.<sup>251</sup> She argues that in the wake of welfare reform and other neoliberal policy developments, adoption is promoted and structurally enforced as "an ideal solution to the problem of caring for impoverished children."<sup>252</sup> Catelynn and Tyler's story in *16 and Pregnant* provides an important illustration of this. The entire series is engaged in the project of constructing the children of teen parents as adoptable. Briggs argues that Madonna and child images figured "hunger" and "need" and fueled a transition from solidarity to rescue in the emergence of international adoption.<sup>253</sup> Similarly, regular shots in *16 and Pregnant* showing teen parents leaving their babies in the bed or on the couch to cry alone figure the need to intervene in their supposed bad parenting. In keeping with a broader adoption discourse that constructs white middle class parents as automatically "best" for children, the structural inequalities that condition Catelynn and Tyler's

apparent inadequacy for parenthood in relation to the rightfulness of the adoptive parents are wholly naturalized through appeals to happiness, stability, and preparedness.

The trope of the “cycle,” however, rather than disappearing in the absence of substantiating evidence in the series, becomes redefined in accordance with the broader shift in the problematic of teen pregnancy. Rather than being tied to things like class status or welfare policy, this newer version of the cycle of teenage pregnancy is understood in purely intimate, familial terms. As Dr. Drew interviews each teen mom, he utilizes the term “cycle” liberally and sometimes in the absence of any apparent cycle of poverty, dependency, or teen pregnancy. For example, Dr. Drew prompts Kailyn to talk about her “rocky” relationship with her mother (who has never been identified as a teen mom herself). When Kailyn says she is afraid that Joe, her son’s father, might leave her because “everyone just leaves,” referring presumably to her father (whom she only met for the first time during filming of her episode) and her mother, Dr. Drew says she can “hang in” with her son, adding that she has the ability to “change that cycle.”<sup>254</sup> In this case, he uses the term “cycle” to refer to one generation’s worth of behavior. Similarly, although Lindsey’s mother has not been established as a teen mom, nor does Lindsey appear to be part of a pattern of generational poverty or welfare dependency, Dr. Drew asks her how she plans to talk to her child in order to prevent “the cycle from going on.”<sup>255</sup> According to these interviews, adolescent pregnancy is so transferrable to future generations that one instance of it already constitutes a cycle that must be stopped.

At times when he does use the term “cycle” to discuss what could be considered a generational pattern of behavior, it is nonetheless stripped of its associations with theories about poverty and welfare. Dr. Drew says to Samantha that there is a “cycle of teen

pregnancy we see here in your family system,” and he wonders how she plans to help her daughter break that cycle, when Samantha’s parents tried and failed to do so with her. Samantha answers that she will talk to her daughter and give her birth control, and, when prompted by Dr. Drew, says that she will try to get her to delay sex. Samantha is the daughter of apparently middle class Latina parents. Neither her mother nor Samantha appears to want or need public assistance, and there is no explicit broader familial or cultural acceptance of adolescent pregnancy as normal portrayed in the episode. In this segment, as in much of the series, teen pregnancy appears to be a problem solely because it is a “hard” (in Samantha’s words) consequence of early and irresponsible sex, and its purported cyclical nature remains tied to parents’ ineffectiveness at regulating their children’s sexuality. Rather than justifying the burdens felt by those who bear the brunt of capitalist exploitation, then, this multicultural politics of teen pregnancy denies any such burdens altogether, suggesting that such generational moral lapses are in and of themselves problematic, even when they are devoid of material consequences.

Many of these discussions likewise emphasize how the teen mother in question did not heed her parents’ sound advice to avoid pregnancy. After talking with Felicia, whose mother had her as a teenager, about how she disappointed her mother by getting pregnant at 16, he addresses Alex, Felicia’s boyfriend, saying, “You come from a broken family too.”<sup>256</sup> Alex explains that his mother raised him, and he did not have a father growing up. In this way, Dr. Drew implicitly equates teen parenthood and growing up in a “broken family.” Without elaborating on why he inquires about Felicia’s mother’s early pregnancy and Alex’s family structure, Dr. Drew leaves the audience to refer back to his discussion with Brooke, one segment earlier, about the “heritage” of teen pregnancy in

her family, and how she ignored her mother's warnings about teen motherhood. The audience can thus assume that Felicia and Brooke (the latter appears to be white) became teen moms because of something inherent in their family structure, despite something explicit in their upbringing, and regardless of their race, class, or cultural context. Dr. Drew's references to cycles thus repurpose a large body of social science research and political discourse about poor, racialized communities, toward a multicultural critique of "broken families" in which they apparently (no matter how hard they try not to) propagate inappropriate sex and bad morals.

In a telling segment of his interview with Alex, Dr. Drew asks her if she thinks that giving up her daughter for adoption would have given the child a better life. After Alex answers with "I don't know," Dr. Drew says the child "wouldn't have to deal with" Alex's boyfriend (who has a drug problem) and Alex could have had an open adoption. Alex says "And I couldn't have handled that," to which Dr. Drew says, "Yeah but, *you* couldn't have handled that. Was that the right thing for the child?" And Alex answers "No." After asking her if she ever considers giving her up for adoption still and she says no, he asks her what she fears most for her daughter. Alex says she is afraid that her daughter will end up in the same situation she is in, to which Dr. Drew nods, adding, "The cycle continuing."<sup>257</sup> While, like Lindsey and Kailynn, Alex's mother is not identified as having been a teen mom, Dr. Drew's line of questioning and Alex's answers suggest that the cycle is underway and her child is likely to become a teen parent, but would likely not have faced that fate had Alex given the baby to the adult, married couple that offered to adopt her. Here again, teen pregnancy and parenthood are equated with

unhappiness, selfishness, and immorality, while adoption into a heteronormative household is part of the social goal of securing happiness and moral good.

While the term “cycle” still deploys the stigma associated with denigrating images of poor people of color, its application to any kind of familial context that has begotten a pregnant teenager serves to distance the public image of teen pregnancy from its former social, economic and political implications. The cycles that require breaking on *16 and Pregnant* threaten personal and familial happy futures first and foremost, affecting not the national economic future but more abstract notions of social goods such as stability and rightfulness. This is a marked shift in the discourse of teen pregnancy in terms of both representation and tactics. If the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, which ushered in a new era of welfare, could be said to define the biopolitics of teen pregnancy in the 1990s and early 2000s, *16 and Pregnant* initiates a new stage of the biopolitics of teen pregnancy. The debates and political discourse leading to the passage of the PRWORA presented teen pregnancy as both a structural and personal issue. It was said to arise out of the conditions of poverty and the temptations of welfare, both of which were attributed the power to corrupt character and diminish personal responsibility. The only way to reduce poverty was to reduce teen pregnancy, which could be done with the “tough love” social engineering of welfare policy.

Although many of the regulatory measures of the PRWORA still affect the lives of teen parents on cash assistance, some of the most publicly apparent discourse around teen pregnancy emanates from and surrounds *16 and Pregnant*, and its spin-offs. As I have argued, the first two seasons of *16 and Pregnant* make very little of things like race,

class, urban geography, and the state of the economy in their depictions of what makes teen pregnancy occur and why it should be prevented. As these episodes appear to be primarily aimed at disciplining the sex lives of teenagers, while generating profit, they present teen pregnancy as a product of personal behavior, and a producer of personal drama and sacrifice.

Despite being significantly redefined, teen pregnancy remains a problem to be solved. Although some claim that the show is not effective in its efforts, or may even be achieving the opposite, *16 and Pregnant* is at least in part, a prevention strategy. As teen mom after teen mom is quoted as saying something similar to “I love my child. I don’t regret my child, but I wish I had waited. I wish I hadn’t gotten pregnant as a teenager, because I had to grow up so fast,” it becomes clear that the goal is to prevent certain lives from beginning, because those lives and the conditions they are thought to create are considered undesirable for individual bodies and therefore for the social body. Even this explicit effort to dissuade teenagers in the audience from becoming parents “too early” is a somewhat confused and mixed set of messages. Often, their list of regrets form the narration to scenes of them loving their babies and apparently surviving the experience relatively happily. There are other moments when the prevention message is disrupted entirely and teen pregnancy emerges as a valid choice. For example, in Christinna’s episode, her husband Isaiah reasons that they will be fully able to realize all their life goals, because when their child turns 18, they will be in their 30s with the rest of their lives in front of them, and they won’t know what is “really important,” he suggests, until they look into their child’s eyes.<sup>258</sup> Nonetheless, Dr. Drew’s urges to make “smart”

sexual decisions provide the official message of the show and the backbone of the newest multicultural model of responsible and moral adolescent citizenship.

### **“Good Girls” Gone Bad: Whiteness in Distress**

The National Campaign has also been involved in the production of numerous scripted films and television series that deal with teen pregnancy. Rather than enlisting “real” teens to talk directly to their teen audience, these texts portray the lives of fictional pregnant and parenting teens to illustrate the problematic consequences of teenage pregnancy. This section focuses on two such texts, the Lifetime original movie *The Pregnancy Pact*, which premiered with a viewership of over 3 million adults age 18-49 and continues to air regularly, and the ABC Family series *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, which is currently cable’s foremost program in its timeslot for viewers ages 12-34.<sup>259</sup> As I describe below, these programs overwhelmingly present teen pregnancy as a problem that threatens middleclass white America, resulting from an almost inexplicable failure of young girls to understand and internalize core family values, an entrepreneurial spirit, and/or merely the barest information about sex.<sup>260</sup>

Within this production of whiteness-in-distress, even in the context of a fully white cast (as in the case of *The Pregnancy Pact*) these texts promote the logics of neoliberal multiculturalism outlined above. They participate in the apparently benevolent forms of differentiation Chow identifies as a key aspect of multicultural biopolitics by identifying and describing the cultural context in which teen pregnancy occurs.<sup>261</sup> In keeping with Melamed’s claim that neoliberal multiculturalism’s new forms of racialization occur across traditional phenotypical race categories, these texts portray white teen pregnancy as backward, morally problematic, and culturally bankrupt.<sup>262</sup> In so

doing, they solidify the notion that race and ethnicity are incidental to the achievement of goodness and success. They provide a supposedly universally accessible, practical, and moral guide to proper American citizenship, constructing an apparent rational middle ground between two supposed extremes, sexual liberation and conservative family values, coupled with a healthy faith in the liberating and inclusive power of markets.<sup>263</sup> The result is a pedagogical approach that combines the liberal notion of education and information as empowering, and the conservative valuing of abstinence until marriage, in an effort to maximize individual teenagers' potential for the desired heretonnormative, entrepreneurial citizenship. In this way, similar to *16 and Pregnant*, these texts promote white, middleclass norms, while naturalizing the policies and cultural logics of neoliberalism.

*The Pregnancy Pact* was created by Lifetime Networks, a media company that, according to its website, “celebrates, entertains and supports women” in its content and has a “legacy of unifying both parties to participate in bipartisan activities in Washington D.C.” as part of its advocacy mission.<sup>264</sup> The film is an effort that reflects the company's apparent interest in engaging a female audience across the mainstream political spectrum and it is a telling example of the new dominant image of teen pregnancy as a problem that is increasingly cropping up in white, middleclass America.<sup>265</sup> It begins with the message: “This film is the story of a fictional ‘pregnancy pact’ set against actual news reports from June 2008, and although some of the locations and public figures are real, any resemblance to actual persons is purely coincidental.”<sup>266</sup> Next, the words, “Inspired by a True Story” appear on the screen. This confused set of messages garners the film legitimacy in its didactic claims about the true nature of the problem of teen pregnancy,



while affording it the liberties it ultimately takes in depicting the events that “inspired” it.<sup>267</sup> News clips flash on the screen from actual events in Gloucester, MA where 17 girls became pregnant at one school at the same time. Beginning with Anderson Cooper and footage of Gloucester’s actual mayor explaining the multiple pregnancies that occurred there, footage of these events appear both at the start of the movie and at crucial moments throughout the film, furthering the sheen of authenticity. As the film portrays who gets pregnant and why they do it, its authoritative message about the nature of the problem and the appropriate solution appears clear and rational.

The plot unfolds in a small New England town. After the initial news clips, there is a montage of small town scenes—depicting main street, shiny pick-up trucks, clean streets, green grass, a sculpture, boats in the water—to establish the quaint setting. The main characters are white, many are church-going Christians, and they appear to be materially comfortable. The film tells the story of the unfortunate choices that one girl (Sarah Dougan) makes as she falls victim to her own ignorance and her friends’ pressures. Sarah participates in an agreement with her high school friends to each become pregnant. While some of her friends come from backgrounds perhaps more typical of the teen pregnancy discourse of the 1980s and 1990s (Karissa’s mother was a teen mom and is upset to find out her daughter is pregnant because she can “barely feed” Karissa as it is, while Rose lives with her grandmother and is depicted smoking cigarettes and watching television late in her pregnancy), Sarah is the daughter of local restaurant owner and head of the Family Values Council, Lorraine, and temporarily out-of-work, Michael. She is a typical “good girl,” trusted fully by her mother, and identified as “such a bright girl” by

the video blogger/former pregnant teen, Sidney Bloom, who has come to Gloucester to do a story on the upsurge of pregnancies in the town.

Sarah is presented as having the requisite emotional maturity, self-respect, and parental guidance to avoid sex and pregnancy. When Lorraine justifies to Michael why she let Sarah go over to her boyfriend Jesse's house without ensuring that his parents were home, she states, "She's got respect for herself. I trust her." Always appearing neat and clean, in modest clothes, Sarah's somewhat meek demeanor and glowing, white, unmade-up face indicates her innocence and general unlikelihood as a candidate for misbehavior. Moreover, Sarah's mother, the film's primary advocate for an abstinence-only approach, has talked to her repeatedly about "valuing herself," and not "giving it away." Although her father is struggling with his lack of employment, Sarah's family is not "broken," and both of her parents appear to be loving, concerned about her well-being, and cognizant of the apparently important differences between adolescence and adulthood. Justifying her strict curfew and rules, Lorraine says to Sarah, "Growing up is not a race. Rushing won't get you there any faster." The film thus conveys that no amount of participating in traditionally adult activities will turn a teenager into an adult, confirming and naturalizing the division between child and adult.

Not only is Sarah, herself, an unlikely candidate for mischief, her boyfriend fails to fit the mold of typical teen parent as well. He is the star pitcher for the high school baseball team and his parents are wealthy Christians. Again, justifying her leniency with Sarah and Jesse, Lorraine says to Michael, "Jesse's a good kid. Goes to church. Good morals." Rather than appearing aloof, manipulating, or predatory in any way, Jesse is portrayed as a sincere and loving boyfriend who wants to marry Sarah after graduating

from high school and attending college. Sarah and Jesse perfectly embody the childhood innocence of “puppy love,” as his dad calls it, with no inklings of crime, poverty, welfare dependency, or even a dearth of instruction in morality. In other words, none of the former indicators of bad citizenship (such as “broken families,” crime, drugs, etc.) help to explain the deviant reproduction that unfolds in the film.

The only depicted incompatibilities between these families and the heteronormative ideal involve a slight disruption in the traditional gendered distribution of power in each household. Michael, for example, appears slightly emasculated as he discusses his lack of work and is informed by Lorraine that there is always work to do around the restaurant and that “pride” won’t “pay the mortgage.” His role as father/head-of-household is also undermined as his concerns about Sarah and Jesse are summarily dismissed by Lorraine. Jesse’s father is depicted texting during a conversation with Lorraine, as though he is generally detached or distracted with business, and says that Jesse’s mother is away visiting her sister. These scenes imply that Sarah’s overbearing mother and disempowered father might be factors in her fall, while Jesse’s home lacks the appropriate supervision to prevent them from having sex there. The question as to exactly why Sarah ends up pregnant drives the narrative, as well as Sydney’s investigatory blogging, and the film slowly reveals the cultural and moral deficiencies that led to Sarah’s enigmatic and misguided actions.

Sydney provides both the primary voice of the politically liberal, comprehensive sex education stance (also represented by the school nurse, who resigns in protest over the policy prohibiting dissemination of contraceptives at school), and the vehicle through which the audience comes to understand that Sarah’s extreme naïveté led her to become

pregnant. Sydney not only has a video blog about “teen issues” that has been focusing on teen pregnancy, but she is also a former Gloucester resident and former pregnant teen. In this way, she is another example of a white, middleclass pregnant teenager, but her pregnancy, as we gradually discover, ended in her baby’s adoption, unbeknownst to the baby’s father, her ex-boyfriend and current assistant principal at the Gloucester high school. Sydney’s decision to give her baby up for adoption is presented as the rational choice (despite that she lied to the father, who wanted to marry her and raise the child, about having an abortion, and lied to the adoption agency about not knowing who the father was, in order to prevent him from protesting) because, unlike the deluded girls of the pact, she knew she was not ready to be a parent.<sup>268</sup> As such, Sydney perplexity at Sarah’s decision to intentionally get pregnant at 15 years old helps illustrate the fundamental irrationality of that decision.

As clips of Sydney’s video blog, citing teen pregnancy statistics and apparently asking the trenchant questions that no one else is asking, punctuate the film’s plot developments, she is presented as the film’s moral authority. She repeatedly admonishes the adult townspeople for their complacency about their teen pregnancy problem. To her ex-boyfriend, the assistant principal who advises her to wrap up her story and go back to New York, Sydney passionately states, “I’m giving them a chance to tell their story. Is anyone actually talking to them?” To her blog’s audience she asks, outraged, “Why isn’t this in the news every day?” In other words, Sydney appears as the only person who understands the gravity of the situation, while local and national authority figures ignore or mischaracterize the crisis in their midst. After a *TIME Magazine* story breaks about the pregnancy pact and news crews swarm the town, Sydney tells her viewers that everyone

is focusing on whether there was a pact or not, which is “the wrong issue. Teen birth rates are up everywhere, not just here. The real question that we should be asking is why are so many young girls choosing to get pregnant and have babies?” In this way, the film establishes the sheer ridiculousness of girls like Sarah *choosing* to get pregnant, meaning something must be terribly amiss in the formerly quaint and reliable rural bastions of true American values where this is occurring. Teen pregnancy is thus portrayed as an equal-opportunity cultural pathology that will crop up wherever vigilance against it is not properly kept. While *The Pregnancy Pact* does not portray racial diversity, it participates in the new forms of racialization that Melamed identifies as a key aspect of neoliberal multiculturalism by presenting whiteness as threatened by the lesser personhoods that both generate and result from these intimate transgressions.<sup>269</sup>

Through Sydney, the film gradually reveals that the problem cannot be solved by the two established opposing proposals—more access to contraception or more emphasis on abstinence. This is most evident in the scenes that portray Sarah’s thought process leading up to her pregnancy. Although Sarah at first seems confused and scared about her promise to her friends, cowering apart from the rest of the group as they watch Karissa go to the nurse for a pregnancy test, she later appears to decide pregnancy is a good way to ensure that Jesse will not leave her behind for college when he graduates before her. First, Jesse tells her that he plans to marry her eventually, by which she is both surprised and elated. Later, she listens intently as her friends talk about how their babies’ fathers do plan to be involved in their lives despite the common conception that teen dads tend to abandon their responsibilities. Sarah is then pictured sitting on Jesse’s bed, talking to him about what their wedding will be like (see Figure 3). A shirtless Jesse shushes her in

order to kiss her, lay her down, and, presumably, they have sex. Sarah says, “I love you. We are going to be so happy.” This last scene reveals that Sarah is wrapped up in a fantasy of how sex will lead to pregnancy and marriage, while Jesse is apparently interested in sex in and of itself. Further revealing the moral message of the film, Sarah’s father says to her mother, implying that she is too lenient, Jesse may be a good kid, but “he’s still a 17 year-old boy. They’re not much for keepings their pants on, if you know what I mean.” The film thus naturalizes a popular narrative about teenage sex in which girls are easily fooled into confusing a boy’s uncontrollable sex drive for love and commitment.



Figure 3. Sarah discusses their wedding, while Jesse unbuttons her shirt. *The Pregnancy Pact*.

The pregnant girls make their naïveté glaringly obvious in their visions of their future motherhood. They walk the school halls talking about how they hope to all have baby girls. One says, “Oh my god, that would be so cool—having a little girl to hang out with and be my best friend. We’d get little matching outfits and I’d paint her fingernails.” At another point they explain that their children will all be in the same class and be best friends. They say that they will “dress them up” and “cook them dinner” and “never yell at them.” For these reasons, Sydney characterizes them in her blog as living in a “fantasy

land,” and believing that teen motherhood looks like a “Huggies commercial.” She asks, why they aren’t thinking about the hardships they are going to face and says, “I don’t understand why they aren’t thinking about these things and why hasn’t anyone else made them think about these things. Given them a reality check.” Later, in a confrontation with Lorraine, Sidney demands to know why Sarah “is walking around with her head in the clouds.” Presenting both the purportedly wholly personal nature of the problem of teen pregnancy and the moral bankruptcy that it apparently engenders, the film portrays Sarah and her friends as extremely ignorant about motherhood and what makes for healthy relationships, as they knowingly deceive the boys with whom they plan to procreate.

The delusional and unfortunate nature of Sarah’s aspirations become clear through the various responses of everyone around her to her pregnancy. Jesse, not yet realizing that Sarah meant to get pregnant, laments that he has “ruined” their lives and should have “pulled out” or used a condom every time, to which Sarah responds, “You didn’t ruin anything. Everything’s perfect.” When the pact is later revealed, Sarah tells him he must forgive her for the sake of the baby. Jesse exclaims, “No! I don’t want a baby, OK? Not with anyone, but especially not with a liar like you! I really thought we’d be together forever. I really did. But you ruined it. It is all ruined because of you. So just leave me alone, OK? Leave me alone.” Rather than ensure a lifelong partnership with Jesse, she has prevented it. At the end of the film, Jesse is shown passing by Sarah, late in her pregnancy, to meet up happily with a different, not-pregnant girl. Much like the narratives presented in *16 and Pregnant*, teen pregnancy appears in *The Pregnancy Pact* as the precise opposite of heteronormative domestic bliss and thus a crucial tool of racialization within the logic of multiculturalism. Rather than pathologizing an

established social group, defined by race, ethnicity, or class, this discourse of teen pregnancy as cultural deficiency constructs it as a problem that creeps up where there are invisible cracks in the intertwining structures of heteronormativity and, as I will show, entrepreneurialism.

Sarah's parents' shock and dismay help present Sarah's pregnancy as a mysterious disaster. Lorraine, who has maintained throughout the film that teen pregnancy is a "private matter," which is no business of the school's or the media, simply does not understand how Sarah has become "that kind of girl—the kind of girl who gets into trouble." In her opinion, Sarah and her parents will now have to "face the humiliation" that will inevitably be the result in their social context. Having completely disregarded both Jesse's aspirations to leave Gloucester and go to college, and her parents' commands not to have sex, Sarah's actions appear totally irrational and confused. This is further emphasized by Karissa's realization that the pact was not a good idea. She says, "I hate this. People were right, you know, we were so dumb," and goes on to recount how unhappy Rose, who has given birth by this point, is as a teen mom. As the pregnant girls begin to understand the gravity of their mistake, teen pregnancy appears to be the result of a cruel hoax the girls unwittingly played on each other. As with Dr. Drew's tautological discourse of cycles, the cause of deviant pregnancy in this film revolves around sex and morality, but is ultimately strangely inscrutable.

A conversation between Sarah and Sydney further reveals this inscrutability, but points to a fundamental lack of entrepreneurial spirit as the main reason for Sarah's downfall. When Sydney is still the only person who knows about the pact, she asks Sarah why she and her friends wanted to get pregnant. Sarah responds that it is really no



“mystery. Everyone wants a baby.” Sydney points out that not everyone wants one when she is 15, and Sarah says that all she really needs to be happy is Jesse and her baby. Sydney responds in disbelief, “Really? You’re such a bright girl. Is that really your only dream for yourself?...I just don’t understand. I mean if you’re gonna make a pact with your friends, yeah, but why not make a pact to go to college, go to Europe, start a rock band, plant a tree?” Sarah accuses Sydney of being “judgmental” right before their conversation is cut short by call that Rose had her baby accompanied by a foreboding, low piano chord in a minor key. Part of the problem with these girls, this scene illustrates, is their lack of imagination and ambition. Sydney’s flabbergasted response to Sarah’s dreams of happiness indicate that knowingly choosing teen parenthood over the other options would seem to be impossible. Unlike Sydney, who, as a pregnant teen, aspired to be an online journalist rather than a parent, these girls lack the ability to envision themselves as anything else and thus to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by a presumably free and equal society. In keeping with the logic neoliberal multiculturalism, in which markets provide the avenue toward success and equality, Sarah and her friends’ improper conduct at this key period of intimate citizenship sentences them to lives of physical and emotional discomfort, as I illustrate below.

As a teenager who cannot be held fully responsible, Sarah’s dreams of marrying Jesse and having his baby are portrayed as the result of a failure on the part of the adults in her life. Her arguments with her parents illustrate that this was not only a failure to instill her with dreams of success beyond teen motherhood, but was also a failure to communicate effectively and honestly about sex. When Lorraine reminds her that she talked to her repeatedly about abstaining from sex until marriage, Sarah points out that

Lorraine only ever said “that one thing,” but she loved Jesse and she did not want to wait. Later, responding to the accusation that she was devious in her plan to get pregnant, Sarah yells, “You guys won’t let me be myself...I’m not supposed to want to be close to my boyfriend. I’m not supposed to want anything I want so I have to hide it. I have to hide it! At least my baby won’t care if I have sex or not, or if I go to college or not, or whatever I do.” These scenes illustrate the oft-repeated pro-comprehensive sex education axiom that some teenagers will have sex, no matter what. In fact, as Lorraine admits later to Sarah, even she and Michael did not wait until marriage to have sex. “There were a few times we—we gave in,” Lorraine said, after Sarah expressed that she was afraid to talk to her mother about sex, because she thought Lorraine “wouldn’t understand,” having waited “forever” to have sex with her father. Sarah’s parents, then, ignored the apparent reality that they themselves experienced—that abstinence may not really be possible—and imposed an unrealistic standard on their daughter.

In this way, the film casts doubt on the liberal agenda of providing contraceptives—summed up by the high school principal, who points out that girls who are trying to get pregnant will not use contraception anyway—and the conservative abstinence-only approach. Sarah had sex despite her parents’ “single, unambiguous message,” because she wanted to be “close” to her boyfriend, but she also wanted a baby, making the issue of information about and access to birth control a moot point.<sup>270</sup> The film constructs teen pregnancy as a problem that stems from a mysterious breakdown in communication between adults and teenagers, about the relationship between intimate behavior and economic success. Somehow, Sarah and her friends missed important information about the equal opportunity to wealth and success afforded by free markets

and U.S. neoliberal governance. Talking to Sydney, one pregnant girl comments that “in the old days, girls our age always had kids, so it can’t be that bad,” citing that Mary, mother of Jesus Christ, was only 14 years old. Sydney responds that in the “old days,” those girls were all married and they did not need “two incomes just to survive.” Adhering to an antiquated view of proper womanhood, these girls are ignorant of the opportunities and the hardships afforded them by modern life. Not only have they been deprived of instruction on the basics of the American Dream—anyone can achieve material success and self-fulfillment with the right amount of ambition, entrepreneurship, and perseverance—but no one has explained to them that the price of acquiring the American Dream is delayed marriage and parenthood. Their small pocket of American culture is thus pathologically traditional and deficient.

Throughout the film, Sydney’s video blog, in which she is often shown speaking directly into the camera, citing general information about teen pregnancy, and advising teens on how and why to avoid it, functions in a similar way to Dr. Drew in *16 and Pregnant*. She says, “The truth is, when you get pregnant that young, there are no good options. Adoption, abortion, keeping it. They’re not gonna turn out exactly like you think. They’re gonna be painful and your life will be completely changed forever.” Brandishing expert status, resulting in this case from her own pregnancy as well as her career reporting on the issue, she explicitly instructs her audience (both fictional and real) about reality, seeming to move beyond the petty politics about reproductive rights and religious morality to tell the “truth.” Within the logic of the film, teen pregnancy is not fun for anyone no matter what; in fact it is “painful” and should therefore be avoided.

In accordance with the racializing discourses that portray the enlightened accommodation of difference as the multicultural ideal, *The Pregnancy Pact* portrays the solution to the encroaching problem of teen pregnancy as a rational, natural, and balanced response between two extremes. Lorraine, abstinence-only advocate and mother of a pregnant teen, addresses the Family Values Council, persuading them to keep her as their president despite her personal scandals (aside from her daughter's pregnancy, her husband, perhaps redeeming his injured manhood, spent a night in jail for attacking a press crew trying to report on the pregnancy pact). She states that although she still thinks abstinence is the "healthiest choice for our kids... we need to be more honest with ourselves. A 15 year-old girl is too young to be a mother. Now, birth control may not be a choice that I would accept in my home, but we can't stand in the way of schools offering contraceptives for the families that want them." The experience of having her daughter ignore her discussions of abstinence and intentionally get pregnant has persuaded her that birth control should be available through the school. It is not clear from what she says whether "families" (like hers) that do not want their teenagers to use contraceptives would be able to prevent them from getting it from the school. Lorraine's conclusion is apparently received by the council as perfectly logical, despite this obvious blind spot.

This rational compromise is further illustrated by the next scene, in which Sydney explains to Sarah that Lorraine was not voted out of her role as president, because of her ability to persuade a "knee-jerk liberal" like Sydney that "that there's a lot more to" dealing with teen pregnancy than "just hand[ing] out enough condoms." In the end, both Lorraine and Sydney learn that their previous views of the problem were one-sided and overly simplistic. The film illustrates that an emphasis on abstinence and information

about contraception are both important for teen pregnancy prevention, but it is even more crucial to instill in young girls the proper desires for achievement leading to heteronormative adulthood. Without this, sex and reproduction will apparently win out over the most comprehensive and moral-infused sex education.

The new politics of teen pregnancy that I have been outlining thus far is consolidated in the sole reference to welfare in the entire film. As Sarah's out-of-work father protests against Lorraine's suggestion to ask Jesse's wealthy father for help paying for the baby, exclaiming, "[We] might as well put our hand out for welfare," public assistance appears as an always already unacceptable recourse with which to cope with teen pregnancy and the real dissolution of the white middleclass becomes palpable. Rather than turn to the stigmatized social supports of a previous era's typical teen mom, afflicted communities must shore up of family values, engage in bipartisan compromise, and forward the American bootstrap ethic. In this way, discourses about teen pregnancy's attack on whiteness register social anxieties about the reality of a shrinking middle class and increasing poor population.

While deep impoverishment of the racialized poor is completely ignored in this discourse, teen pregnancy becomes a scapegoat for the circumstances in which low wages, high unemployment, increased flexibilization of labor, and lack of a material safety net thrust middle class families into the ranks of the poor. The right combination of morality, birth control, and entrepreneurial spirit appears to provide protection from these naturalized social trends. Thus, in this brief moment in *The Pregnancy Pact*, the racialization of teen pregnancy performs the kind of "rationalizing power" that Melamed identifies as a key function of official antiracisms and, in particular, neoliberal

multiculturalism.<sup>271</sup> However, with the relative absence of portrayals of any material consequences to teen pregnancy or any significant class inequality in most post-welfare teen pregnancy prevention discourse, as we have seen and will see below, the costs of moral and cultural deficiencies are largely presented in terms of physical pain and unhappiness. Rather than rationalizing inequality, then, teen pregnancy's multicultural discourse more often denies it altogether.

Many more scripted popular culture texts of this period depict the face of teenage pregnancy as a white, middle (or upper) class girl. While such texts often portray pregnancies that do not result in teen motherhood, as the characters choose adoption or sometimes have a miscarriage (rarely is abortion presented as a real option), perhaps the foremost example of teen pregnancy that results in teen motherhood is *The Secret Life of an American Teenager*.<sup>272</sup> The series runs on ABC Family, which is owned by the Walt Disney Company and airs a parental advisory notice before each episode due its sexual content. The show begins with 15 year-old Amy Juergens finding out she is pregnant after having sex only once, at band camp, the summer before her freshman year of high school. She lives in a middleclass household with her younger sister and two parents—although it later turns out that her father is having an affair, because her mother has lost interest in talking to and having sex with him.<sup>273</sup> Her defining characteristic before becoming pregnant is that she plays the French horn, and her mother refers to her as “the good girl” in comparison to her sister.<sup>274</sup> The multicultural cast of teenage characters includes Ricky, suave white foster child and Amy's seducer; Adrian, promiscuous Latina who is in love with Ricky; Grace, blonde cheerleader and chaste Christian; Jack, Grace's sexually frustrated blonde boyfriend who cheats on her with Adrian; Ben, geeky nice

white guy who loves Amy even though she's pregnant with someone else's baby; Lauren, Amy's calm and rational Black friend; Madison, Amy's sweet and naïve white friend; Henry and Alice, Ben's Asian friends who are dating each other and obsessed with their computers. While these teens and their parents come to represent some standard perspectives on abstinence and birth control, the first season of *The Secret Life* all but sidesteps questions of sex education and access to contraception, jettisoning any connections to social and political concerns, and rendering teen pregnancy completely personal and familial.

The show's explanation for Amy's pregnancy is most clearly displayed in the second-to-last episode of the first season, "One Night at Band Camp."<sup>275</sup> In this episode, shots of Amy in labor, lying in her hospital bed, are intercut with flashbacks of her short journey toward sex and pregnancy eight months and two weeks earlier at band camp. In this way, Ricky's skillful seduction is juxtaposed with Amy's excruciating labor pains to convey a clear causal relationship and associate teenage sex with unnecessary suffering. The episode begins with a shot of horn players marching under a banner that reads "Welcome to Best of the Best 2008 Band Camp." The camera cuts to Ricky and two other boys sitting on the bleachers as the musicians march by and Ricky, holding his drumsticks, nudges one of his friends with a knowing grin. Amy is one of the marchers and looks over at Ricky as she passes. He smiles and waves and she gets out of step with her band members and runs into a tuba player. Ricky is shown smiling again and then the picture fades out before his face reappears, much more somber this time, as he stands gazing at Amy in her hospital bed. It is already clear from these opening shots that teen pregnancy results, as in *The Pregnancy Pact*, from sex-driven boys manipulating naïve

and likely un-sexual girls. As Amy describes it to Lauren and Madison in the first episode, “It was not that great...I’m not even sure it was sex, OK guys?...I didn’t exactly realize what was happening until, like, after two seconds and then it was just over and it wasn’t fun and definitely not like what you see in the movies. You know, all romantic and stuff.”<sup>276</sup>

Amy’s innocence and Ricky’s ill intentions are further illustrated in the scenes leading up to the seduction. Back at band camp, Ricky approaches Amy as she thumbs through her French horn music in the cafeteria. They discuss how she will be starting at Ricky’s high school in the fall, and he asks her if she wants to hang out after the concert that night, in which she will be the featured soloist. During this exchange Amy’s inner monologue (saying things like, “Oh my god! I think he likes me!”) conveys to the audience how nervous and excited she is to be talking to a cute, older boy, and how oblivious she is to his desires, even as he is approached by another girl—obviously a former conquest—whom he pretends not to remember.

Ricky’s moral bankruptcy combines with Amy’s labor pains and continued naïveté to portray the inherently brutal and perverse nature of teen pregnancy. During the labor, Amy is depicted as a bitter, reluctant, and ignorant participant in the birth of her child. She is rude to Ricky, who has changed his smarmy and irresponsible ways since attending counseling and gaining a sense of responsibility in the face of teen fatherhood. Her mother says, “I really don’t think this is the time to be resentful.” To which Amy sarcastically responds, “When would be a good time? I’m thinking the rest of my life.” Amy apparently sees herself as a victim of Ricky’s recklessness, her future needlessly sacrificed. After sending Ricky on an errand for a hamburger, she says to her mother,



teary-eyed, “I’m hungry and I’m tired and I don’t want to do this.” Her mother responds, “Well I don’t really think that you have much choice.” Illustrating the apparently inevitable and painful force of labor set in motion by a single sex act, another contraction begins and she exclaims, “Oh no, here it comes again!” (see Figure 4). After the contraction, noting that she is looking forward to her epidural, she says, “This stinks.” Amy is not only descending down a path of physical turmoil she did not anticipate when she had sex and feels she does not deserve, but is also apparently still very childish and ignorant. Complaining desperately to her mother about her predicament she says, “I just don’t see how this is gonna work. I mean how do we even know I have a birth canal?” When her mother looks at her with exasperation, she exclaims, “What!?! I don’t know anything about anything other than the French horn!” and the show cuts to her playing her horn at band camp. In this way, the audience learns that not much has changed since she fell for Ricky’s wiles. She is still a child who understands very little about how the world works.



Figure 4. Amy braces for a contraction. *The Secret Life*, Season 1, Episode 22.

The show thus suggests it is some cruel act of nature that children can physically have sex and get pregnant, but cannot possibly be mentally prepared for the result. As such, teens form the perfect vehicle for a multicultural politics that naturalizes cultural deficiency as a justification for misfortune. Teenagers of all races are apparently inherently culturally deficient, unable to control their bodies and unable to comprehend consequences, which take the form of physical and emotional pain rather than economic degradation. Since teenagers are naturally pathological in these ways, parents and other adults must compensate in particular ways or risk exacerbating the problem.

Unlike in *The Pregnancy Pact*, teen pregnancy in *The Secret Life* results in part from Ricky's pathological sexual behavior that stems explicitly from bad parenting. At band camp again, Ricky unveils more calculated wooing techniques—flattering Amy about her looks and her musicianship, touching her leg. Later, he tells her she is “special” and that he hopes “this can be the start of something big” (of course, the audience knows that “something big” really is beginning, despite Ricky's short-term intentions). In addition to the cues about his insincerity present in this episode, previous episodes establish Ricky as a “troubled” foster child who is not to be trusted.<sup>277</sup> A victim of sexual abuse at the hands of his birthfather, Ricky sees a counselor, who tries to dissuade him from his compulsively seductive ways. In addition to Amy, he manages to garner the affections of Grace and Lauren (both in danger of being duped into losing their virginity to him) and have regular sex with Adrian, all in the first season. He is thus established as a sexual predator, the regrettable result of bad parenting (his birthmother and birthfather also had drug problems) and sexual deviance. In this way, teen pregnancy enters the white middle class by way of predatory bad boys preying on innocent girls.<sup>278</sup> This

narrative about the special dangers and needs of foster children likely stems from a National Campaign initiative to address the particular occurrence of teen pregnancy amongst teens in foster care.<sup>279</sup>

The final scenes of “One Night at Band Camp” drive home the show’s commentary about teen sex and pregnancy as a personal problem with personal consequences. The night of Amy’s deflowering, sitting on the couch with Ricky in the cafeteria that they broke into after hours, she tells him it is time for her to go back to her cabin. Her voiceover says, “Why did I say that? He’s being so nice. I’m an idiot,” again displaying her naïveté.<sup>280</sup> Ricky says, “Alright. If you want—I just thought we were both enjoying this.” He then persuades her to stay by reasoning that if they feel the same way about each other, what is the harm in hanging out for a few more minutes. Amy says, “Yeah, what’s a few more minutes?” and then the picture fades to white before a shot of Amy in her hospital bed saying “Crap!” She touches her belly and says, “Not you. Me.” That few more minutes, the audience is asked to assume, was all it took to propel Amy into this painful and unreasonable situation and generate collateral damage in the form of a fetus that is even more fragile and innocent.

Unlike Sarah in *The Pregnancy Pact*, Amy is not delusional about the joys of teenage motherhood, but about her prospects for having an impressively older and good-looking boyfriend. Both girls fail to get the proper education from the knowing adults in their lives before it is too late. Both girls also come from ostensibly heteronormative nuclear families that, upon closer inspection, do not measure up to the ideal. As mentioned, Sarah’s father is unemployed and struggling with his pride and familial authority. Amy’s father finds the emotional and physical attention he does not get from

his wife outside of his marriage. It appears to be the breakdown of white middleclass patriarchal marriage that is in part to blame for teenage pregnancy, preventing each parent from fulfilling his or her rightful role in the upbringing of proper young women.

Without question, specific types of parental participation are required to end teen pregnancy, as *The Secret Life* makes clear. When “One Night at Band Camp” ends, Shailene Woodley, the actor who plays Amy, appears on the screen, dressed in her character’s clothes and seated on Amy’s dining room table. She delivers a public service announcement that appears during and after many episodes: “The first time too many teens have the sex talk with their parents is when they’re telling them that they’re pregnant.” As she is speaking the words “national campaign to prevent teen and unplanned pregnancy stayteen.org” appear on the screen. She continues, “Parents, if your teens have a question about sex, don’t assume they’re doing it. And teens, if your parents aren’t talking to you about sex, don’t assume they don’t care. Teenage pregnancy is 100% preventable. Start talking. For more information, please visit stayteen.org or abcfamily.com.” The PSA is implicitly aimed at girls, as they are the ones who would be telling their parents they are pregnant. The message suggests that teen pregnancy can be completely eliminated by the right kinds and amounts of discussions between parents and their daughters, which would convince teenage girls not have sex. The claim that it is 100% preventable betrays an emphasis on abstinence over forms of contraception, all of which have an effectiveness of slightly less than 100%. The website Stay Teen, as I will discuss in the next chapter, is created and maintained by the National Campaign and is devoted to informing teens on how to avoid sex and pregnancy.

In this way, like *16 and Pregnant*'s use of Dr. Drew and *The Pregnancy Pact*'s teen issues blog, *The Secret Life* participates explicitly in a new dominant biopolitical approach to teen pregnancy. Rather than altering the material world that teenagers live in, making it easier or more difficult to become pregnant through changes in access to contraception, public assistance, education, jobs, etc., this prevention strategy utilizes popular entertainment as a forum to teach teenagers how to avoid the unnecessary emotional and physical pain that comes with inappropriate sex. The replacement of welfare drawing Black and Latina teen moms with white middle class pregnant teens helps convey both the multicultural politics of teen pregnancy—that it is an equal-opportunity personal disaster—and the moral message that necessarily results from that revelation—that in a society governed by open access to freedom, prosperity, and happiness through proper moral and economic behavior, every American has both the opportunity and duty to reach these ideals. In other words, in a post-racial, multicultural context, there is neither systemic racism nor white privilege. In fact, there appears to be no significant social inequality at all. Rather, there are individuals who are more or less equipped to achieve success in the form of happiness, physical comfort, and normalcy.

### **Conclusion**

Together, these texts help to consolidate a new discourse of teen pregnancy in the post-welfare era. They construct teen pregnancy as a problem that exists independently of racial and class difference, threatening the comfort and happiness of would-be normal Americans. In so doing, and in keeping with multiple iterations of multicultural politics that have had both antiracist and normative effects, they may help debunk long-standing racist stereotypes surrounding adolescent pregnancy, but they also have many more

implications.<sup>281</sup> In the 1990s, teen pregnancy helped to usher in the severe regulation of welfare recipients and poor people at large through welfare reform. It did so as a vehicle that combined concerns about the structure of welfare programs with an emphasis on personal responsibility. Welfare reform debate was riddled with discussions of changing the “culture of welfare,” raising “self-worth” through work experience, and cultivating “hope” and “self-sufficiency” by taking away a “perverse system of incentives” to have babies and draw on taxpayers money. While these sentiments clearly constructed poverty as the result of bad decision-making and irresponsible behavior, using racialized stereotypes of welfare queens and teen moms to demonize poor people, they also necessarily implicated societal structures in personal, sexual, and reproductive choices, through their indictment of the welfare system.<sup>282</sup> Out of this context came punitive legislation that continues to curtail the choices of impoverished people, while teen pregnancy takes on a new identity toward different ends.

Today’s public discourse of teen pregnancy foregrounds the emphasis welfare reform put on personal responsibility in order to elide the role that legislation and other social structures continue to play in regulating reproductive behavior. The popular culture texts analyzed here promote an apparently apolitical citizenship, explicitly teaching proper sex, reproduction, consumption, and recreation as the desired modes of adolescent participation in US society. They attempt to convince their audience that teen pregnancy is universally unpleasant—portraying the physical discomfort of pregnancy and labor, the social turmoil that results from being pregnant in high school, and the stress of caring for a crying newborn. As Sarah and Sydney, in *The Pregnancy Pact*, visit Rose in the hospital after giving birth, they arrive to Rose saying pathetically, “It hurts.” Karissa

responds, “Tell the nurse to give you another shot of morphine.” Iris, another pregnant teen, turns to Sarah and Sydney saying, “She had to have like thirty-seven stitches,” to which Sydney replies, “She must have tore really bad.” Sarah, showing her ignorance once again says, “Tore? Tore what?” “Down there, stupid,” says Karissa. Similarly, when Rose attempts to breastfeed her baby, her grandmother looks on and says, “With all the soars you got, the baby probably don’t like the taste of blood,” to which Rose says, “But my boobs are full! They hurt!” Showing no sympathy, her grandmother says, “Welcome to motherhood. Why don’t you try the breast pump?” Counting on the commonly held conception of teenagers as universally averse to hard work and unnecessary trials of character, these programs emphasize the irritating, excruciating, and disgusting aspects of parenthood—things that are a part of parenting for most people of any age—in hopes of deterring them.<sup>283</sup> This is part of the goal of “helping young women make more informed choices for themselves,” as Sydney puts it in her video blog.

Rather than justifying and naturalizing the economic burdens of racial capitalism, then, as Melamed and others have suggested, the neoliberal multicultural politics present in post-welfare televised teen pregnancy prevention portrays almost no such burdens. These texts suggest that if teenage girls were properly educated in some important truths—that unprotected sex leads to pregnancy, which leads to physical pain, unhappiness, and failure to achieve entrepreneurial success—they would not choose to do it and would instead reap the personal emotional, physical, and consumer benefits of multicultural enlightenment and normalcy. They thus pave the way for what I analyze in the next chapter, a revised system for ensuring public wellbeing that eschews material

wealth redistribution for privatized cyber-networks of entertaining instruction in morality and proper intimate adolescent citizenship.

Multiple policies and institutions differentially affect the choices of teens and teen parents—legislation and programs related to health insurance, abortion and contraception, sex education, welfare, immigration, and more— based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and other categories of social difference. However, these televised texts are part of a broader trend of portraying personal decision-making as separate from social structures. They underwrite the delinking of social welfare from the formal state apparatus both institutionally and in public consciousness. They are part of a larger channeling of private funding and private industry into the business of cultivating a narrow definition of citizenship focused on intimate relationships, and ignoring unequal access to resources and support for reproductive choices. This new biopolitics of teen pregnancy attempts to directly discipline a broader swath of the population than punitive welfare policy. At the same time, its embeddedness in profit-generating industries results in perhaps a more convoluted message. Discussing more media-based tactics of privatized teen pregnancy prevention in the next chapter, I show how the market logic of such work lends itself to multiple conflicting meanings about the social desirability of teen sex. Perhaps most importantly though, this new approach results in the wholesale depoliticizing of reproductive issues, removing them from questions of access to healthcare, public assistance, childcare, sustainable jobs, adequate housing, etc., posing reproductive behavior as the effect of unencumbered choices based entirely on personal morals, values, and responsibility. Ultimately, this new popular discourse of teen pregnancy effectively eclipses the deepened social inequalities and heightened



differential regulation that the older discourse of teen pregnancy helped to initiate. As such, and in accordance with the teen pregnancy advocacy work examined in the next chapter, it furthers neoliberal cultural politics by promoting versions of citizenship and social wellbeing defined through properly cultivated morality and entrepreneurial spirit, rather than publicly ensured material and bodily health and safety.

## **CHAPTER 3: 'TAMING THE MEDIA MONSTER:' TEEN PREGNANCY AND THE NEOLIBERAL SAFETY (INTER)NET**

### **Introduction**

In December of 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention launched its “Teen Pregnancy and Social Media” web page, which includes tools and content that can be copied or utilized directly by agencies and organizations working on the issue. Badges, buttons, content syndication, e-Cards, Facebook, podcasts, Twitter, mobile web pages, video presentations, and widgets are all examples of the CDC’s strategies for utilizing social media toward teen pregnancy prevention goals.<sup>284</sup> Social media has become a popular venue for health education and social reform efforts and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy has spearheaded many of these methods in the field of teen pregnancy prevention. In this chapter, I am interested in the ways these strategies both reflect and shape changing notions of social welfare and citizenship in the contemporary moment.

In the first chapter of this dissertation I traced a shift in political discourse surrounding teenage pregnancy since welfare reform, showing the increased focus on teenage sexuality as a part of a turn away from policy solutions addressing the shortcomings of social programs to meet people’s needs, and toward measures that aim to cultivate certain kinds of sexual and moral individuals. In the second chapter, I illustrated how that shift in discourse is reflected and consolidated in the recent surge of television shows and film with explicit teen pregnancy prevention messages. I argued that those texts forward a multicultural politics of teen pregnancy that presents deviant, too-early pregnancy as a looming danger to the average American family, obscuring the inequality

and increased vulnerability of the welfare population in the aftermath of welfare reform, which was fueled by racist and class-based images of teen pregnancy and stripped away many supports for poor young mothers.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, as the leading national nonprofit advocacy organization focused on teen pregnancy, has both arisen out of and been an important influence on those political and cultural discourses. An examination of its work in producing materials, commentary, and internet-based media about sex, age, and reproduction offers further insights into the role of adolescence and teenage pregnancy in the neoliberal discourses of abstract equality and multicultural belonging and their existence alongside deepening inequality and exclusion.<sup>285</sup> In this chapter, I show that the National Campaign and its partners forward a politics of teen pregnancy that mobilizes a new version of the social “safety net.” This version eschews the state-arbitrated process of taxation and welfare that redistributes wealth among citizens in favor of a private, market-based model of cyber-linked national subjects who ensure each other’s well-being through the dispensation of values and information. Key to this revamped notion of the safety net is the particular construction of teenagers both as volatile, naïve, hypersexual, nascent citizens, and as enigmatic arbiters and consumers of marketable trends.

The National Campaign emerged out of the context of welfare reform as a private solution to problems deemed unsolvable by the state. As such, it forms a crucial counterpart to the punitive work of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), helping to redefine the public image of teenage pregnancy as something no longer tied to poverty or perverse welfare incentives, but

stemming from inappropriate sex and inadequate personal values, while engineering a distinctly privatized set of disciplinary tactics and modes of belonging that reformulate the methods through which social well-being is supposedly assured. In the work of the National Campaign and its partners, the welfare of individuals and the nation appears to rest upon effective regulation of teenage sexuality, which can be accomplished by operationalizing the apparently already existing linked-in, consumer-oriented, trend-obsessed status of teenagers.

In making this argument I aim to bring together and build upon the fields of citizenship studies, new media studies, and analyses of welfare reform. Many scholars have outlined the contours of neoliberal welfare reform, its severe regulatory measures and their gendered, racial, sexual, and class-based effects.<sup>286</sup> Work within this field has also described the ways that welfare reform has increased the role of the private sector in ensuring social well-being, and mobilized a logic of personal responsibility for understanding the occurrence of poverty.<sup>287</sup> Scholars of citizenship have shown how political and cultural discourses in the age of neoliberalism have instantiated ideals and norms of citizenship that foreground personal, intimate, and market-oriented modes of belonging over public and overtly political ones.<sup>288</sup> New media scholars have pointed to the Internet as a force for the production of neoliberal logics of colorblindness and privatization, as well as corporate technologies for the widespread production of cyber-consumer subjects.<sup>289</sup> This chapter draws on all of these insights to present teenagers and their sexuality as key sites for the pioneering of new market-driven, media-based technologies of national belonging that ultimately serve to uphold and obscure the deepening social inequalities of the post-welfare era.

To begin, I outline the origination and contours of the National Campaign, and its role within the broader neoliberal redefinition of the safety net. I then provide a discussion of the media-based methods of subject formation that it and its affiliates practice and their grounding in and cultivation of particular definitions of adolescence and adolescent sexuality. Finally, I compare tactics geared toward adolescents to recent attempts to regulate the sexuality and reproduction of people in their 20s, showing that an understanding of the uniqueness of adolescence as a category for the neoliberal production of national subjects is crucial to studies of national belonging in the contemporary U.S. I conclude by discussing how the privatized politics of teen pregnancy prevention serves to help consolidate a new frontier of neoliberal social politics in which the state has no direct role in maintaining public wellbeing.

### **Privatizing the Safety Net**

The National Campaign has its origin in the dismantling of the U.S. welfare state. As the looming specter of teen pregnancy helped bring down Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), it also engendered a nongovernmental response geared in part toward addressing the shortcomings of state social programs. In President Bill Clinton's State of the Union Address on January 23, 1996, he discussed efforts toward welfare reform (a version of which later passed in August of that year), calling on citizens and private groups to support that project, and then announced the creation of the National Campaign:

Let us be candid about this difficult problem. Passing a [welfare reform] law, even the best possible law, is only a first step...

To strengthen the family we must do everything we can to keep the teen pregnancy rate going down... Tonight I am pleased to announce that a group of prominent Americans is responding to that challenge by forming

an organization that will support grass-roots community efforts all across our country in a national campaign against teen pregnancy. And I challenge all of us and every American to join their efforts.<sup>290</sup>

The neoliberal critique of the welfare state holds that the private sector is better suited to the task of caring for the disadvantaged and solving social problems than the apparently plodding, out-of-touch, inefficient federal government. The National Campaign, despite providing no actual material assistance to anyone regarding means of survival, access to healthcare, childcare, or work, theoretically addresses the problems posed by teen pregnancy better than federally mandated social programs. Based in the idea that the private sector, fueled by good will, can effectively streamline and innovate the work of ensuring social welfare, Clinton urges “every American” to contribute to their work. Arguing that nonprofit organizations “do a much better job than the government could” in addressing certain social needs, this Copley News Service editorial states,

With many government services in decline and welfare reform changing the way we help the less fortunate, the need for volunteers and for support of nonprofit service agencies is greater than ever.

Already, volunteer organizations and nonprofit groups are shouldering responsibilities that once might have belonged to government programs. For example, in his last State of the Union speech, Clinton spoke out against teen-age pregnancy. But instead of a new federal program, a nonprofit organization called the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy was formed.<sup>291</sup>

Here, the National Campaign is viewed as a direct response to welfare reform, as it effectively “plugs a hole” in the “safety net.” Born out of neoliberal welfare reform, the National Campaign is the post-welfare response to teen pregnancy. It forges a discourse of teen pregnancy that eschews welfare as a frame for the debate and thereby forecloses the possibility of revisiting the PRWORA, discussing its failure at meeting its nominal goals, and rolling back its severely regulatory measures. Instead, the National Campaign

bears out its neoliberal destiny by emphasizing personal responsibility, abstract equality, and national consensus around the issue, while drawing on market rationality and partnering with for-profit entities.

With its origin story as the impassioned answer to Clinton's call for a coordinated, private response to teen pregnancy, the National Campaign has helped shape notions of proper adolescence, sex, and reproduction for over 17 years. In 2011, it employed 49 people and spent about \$12 million for its operations.<sup>292</sup> Its board is made up of high-ranking individuals from the various sectors of society that both shape its mission and which it aims to affect. The president of the board, Isabel Sawhill, and three other members, Ron Haskins, William Galston, and Hugh Price (member emeritus), are Brookings Institution Senior Fellows. As I discuss below, they, along with National Campaign CEO, Sarah Brown, and other board members such as Roland C. Warren (member emeritus, from the National Fatherhood Initiative), former Republican Representative Nancy Johnson, and former Republican Senator Nancy Kassebaum-Baker (member emeritus), have been influential voices in national political discussions of the 1990s and 2000s surrounding the roles of family structure and welfare policy in the economic and social well-being of the country. The board also includes members from other national think tanks, research organizations, and academic institutions that reflect and shape the organization's emphasis on social scientific study.<sup>293</sup> Another contingent of board members is made up of National Campaign partners, such as Planned Parenthood Federation of America and Advocates for Youth, who have overlapping goals regarding notions of adolescent and sexual health. The board also includes celebrities and figures from the news media (Whoopi Goldberg, Judy Woodruff, and David Gergen), as well as

media network executives (from MTV Networks, OWN Network, and Warner Bros. Television Group), relating to the organization's mission to use popular media to influence the attitudes and behavior of its target populations.

Broadly, the National Campaign aims to reduce teen and unplanned pregnancy by affecting the values and attitudes of teenagers, young adults, and society at large. Specifically, the organization encourages parenthood within the context of adult, college-educated, married, couples who expressly intend to become parents. This goal is understood to be a path toward better well-being for all families and children.<sup>294</sup> It aims to do this by producing and disseminating research and materials (to state and local organizations, schools, parents, for example), influencing national and popular media portrayals (with shows and movies like those discussed in chapter 2), and supporting specific policy measures (funding for teen pregnancy prevention programs, increased access to family planning services, etc.).

As a crucial part of its redefinition of the national safety net in the post-welfare era, the National Campaign presents deviant pregnancy as the primary cause of individual and familial hardship and itself as the only rational response to it. In order to do this, it draws upon and continues a tradition of social science that places reproductive behavior at the root of social inequality, while painting its work as unencumbered by the pitfalls of contemporary politics. As I will show, the National Campaign forwards its social research and advocacy efforts as non-ideological, objective, and science-based, discursively positioning itself as both respectful of and rising above the divisions between Republicans and Democrats. In this way, it narrowly defines the horizons of debate as either Right, Left, or Science, where Science reconciles the differences between Right



and Left. While Republicans and Democrats have failed to ensure the well-being of the nation's vulnerable through decades of misguided welfare programs and policies, the apparently clear-headed, unbiased, scientifically grounded, collaborative efforts of private, concerned citizens will negotiate petty political differences toward the greatest good.

The National Campaign's claim to scientific rigor has its roots in the dismantling of the old, publicly funded and administered safety net. The organization's leadership is positioned squarely within the camp of social science that helped generate the rhetorical legitimacy of welfare reform. Part of a longer social scientific tradition of explaining social inequalities by compiling and interpreting data about marginalized groups' reproductive behavior, family structure, and parenting techniques, poverty research of the 1980s and 1990s generally constructed poverty as a problem related to individual deficits resulting in a person's inability to compete in a politically neutral market.<sup>295</sup> National Campaign President, Isabel Sawhill, working for the Urban Institute in the 1980s, co-headed a wide scale effort to study Reagan-era workfare initiatives called Changing Domestic Priorities. The decade-long study was part of what Alice O'Connor refers to as, "[T]he prevailing culture among mainstream analytic experts," in which they "let the facts speak for themselves, maintaining a veneer of apolitical neutrality, and in this way stradd[le] the hazards of assessing Reagan administration policy while continuing to rely on federal government contracts for support."<sup>296</sup> Claiming to be non-ideological, it was nonetheless criticized on the Right for being politically biased and on the Left for presenting poverty as an individualistic problem.<sup>297</sup> Ultimately, O'Connor argues, it was the individualistic framing of poverty within the context of supposedly objective research

that paved the way for the increased pathologization of the “undeserving” poor and undergirded the dismantling of AFDC.

As Senior Fellow of Economic Studies at the Brookings Institution, Sawhill has authored and co-authored numerous studies and briefs that continue to support the scaling back of public assistance and the backing of social engineering projects, such as marriage promotion and work incentives. For instance, she and Ron Haskins—who co-directs the Brookings Institution’s Center on Children and Families with Sawhill, was a Republican welfare reform advisor, and is also a National Campaign board member—co-authored the report “Work and Marriage: the Way to End Welfare and Poverty” in 2003, which argues that work, marriage, education, and family size are more important “determinants” of poverty than the amount of welfare benefits received, and therefore promoting work, marriage, education, and family planning are better policy solutions to poverty than cash assistance.<sup>298</sup> With Sawhill representing an apparently more liberal point of view, and Haskins providing the conservative perspective, the brief appears as both expert and moderate. It proposes a “set of normative expectations for the youngest generation. They would be expected to stay in school at least through high school, delay childbearing until marriage, work full-time to support any children they choose to bear outside marriage, and limit the size of their families to what they could afford to support.” They go on to list policy measures to enforce these expectations, including making assistance conditional upon work, capping benefits at two children per family, and eliminating marriage and work “disincentives.” While these are clearly the same or more extreme versions of policy measures that are currently part of the PRWORA, the authors present them as solutions that are “far more popular than existing programs.”<sup>299</sup>

This policy brief falls in line with a general trend within poverty research, outlined by O'Connor, of using scientific language and quantitative data to present individual behaviors as the causes of class inequality, ignoring economic structure, racial and gender discrimination, and other factors, while rendering market forces stable and neutral. In so doing, it supports the National Campaign's role as an objective, non-ideological, post-welfare-reform replacement for the safety net. Not only does it help elide the role of the current workfare policy in relinquishing support from single mothers by suggesting that high school drop-out, early childbearing, and out-of-wedlock births continue to occur because the government rewards single motherhood,<sup>300</sup> it also sets forth precisely the formula that the National Campaign names the "success sequence"—high school, then college, then marriage, then children—and forwards as the proper path from adolescence to adulthood, claiming that "research makes clear" that teens who follow this sequence are more likely to reach their "life goals."<sup>301</sup> According to Sawhill, Haskins, and the National Campaign, all teenagers can and should follow the "success sequence," thus ensuring the prosperity of all Americans far better than any redistributive policy could.

National Campaign CEO, Sarah Brown, also comes from the tradition of social scientific support for individual behavior and familial form as the causes of social ills with a revolution of values as the solution. As Senior Study Director at the Institute of Medicine (part of the National Academy of Sciences, the IOM is a nonprofit that "advises the nation" on issues of health and medical science),<sup>302</sup> she headed the 1995 study *Best Intentions: Unintended Pregnancies and the Well-Being of Families*. Its primary claim is that all pregnancies should be intended, due to a long list of negative outcomes associated

with unintended pregnancies, including lower rates of prenatal care, lower birth outcomes, lower rates of health care for the child, greater rates of child abuse, greater rates of maternal health problems and depression, greater likelihood of parental separation, greater economic hardship, greater parental difficulty in achieving goals, and higher rates of abortion.<sup>303</sup> The study also notes that unintended pregnancies, while an issue facing people of all ages and socioeconomic status, tend to occur most among adolescents, unmarried women, and women over the age of 40, “demographic attributes that themselves have important economic and medical consequences for both children and parents.”<sup>304</sup> Although the causal relationships between all of these factors remain unclear, the study forwards the goal of building a “national consensus around th[e] norm” that all pregnancies be intended.<sup>305</sup>

Noting that AFDC does not encourage unplanned pregnancy (contrary to claims we saw in chapter 1 and above), *Best Intentions* holds that a complex mixture of individual and structural factors are involved in the high rates of unintended pregnancy in the U.S. Its proposed methods for addressing the problem, however, would indicate that the issue is first and foremost about the individual behavior of contraceptive use and a few select structural forces that enable that behavior. The study proposes that a “national campaign” to reduce unplanned pregnancy should improve knowledge about contraception and pregnancy, increase access to contraception, “explicitly address the major role that feelings, attitudes and motivation play in using contraception and avoiding unintended pregnancy,” create and evaluate programs to reduce unplanned pregnancy, and produce more research about new contraceptives and contraceptive use.<sup>306</sup> Aside from the discussion of access to contraception, as well as the claim that a

dearth of educational and job opportunities in poor communities may contribute to lack of motivation to prevent childbearing, these goals largely sidestep any historical or current economic and political processes that variously condition the circumstances of pregnancy in the U.S., relying instead upon statistical correlations between seemingly discrete, supposedly knowable attributes (efforts to determine the “wantedness” of pregnancies and children, for example, have been heavily criticized)<sup>307</sup> to project an authoritative, apolitical claim. By proposing to address poverty, child abuse, single parenthood, and more through promotion of contraception, *Best Intentions* suggests that unintended pregnancy is the root cause of a variety of social and health problems that can be cured by a wide-scale emphasis on the importance of sexual responsibility. *Best Intentions* lays the groundwork for Brown and the National Campaign to present access to contraception as the only materially redistributive aspect of a newly defined safety net that otherwise largely consists of increased access to instruction in proper life goals and morality.

In keeping with the legacy of social science research that ushered in its existence, forms the expertise of its leadership, and lays the ideological groundwork for its goals, the National Campaign relies on social scientific methods to legitimate its claims that teenage pregnancy is the rightful target of post-welfare social reform. Their self-generated social science aims to prove that teenage pregnancy is inherently undesirable, resulting in numerous social ills, and solvable by values and sex education campaigns. Promoting its interest in “high-quality research” as one of the things that makes it “distinctive,” the organization’s website is filled with studies, reports, fact sheets, surveys, polling data, maps, and charts.<sup>308</sup> For example, its Putting What Works to Work

(PWWTW) initiative, funded since 2002 through a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant, aims to compile research on the best teen pregnancy prevention practices, repackaging that research into an easily consumable form, and distribute it to state and local entities. Partnering with Child Trends and other research organizations, the National Campaign creates reports on effective prevention programming, as well as studies of the relationships between teen pregnancy and other factors, such as sexual abuse, sexual “risk,” and low school readiness.<sup>309</sup>

In an effort to generate “user-friendly” versions of the PWWTW research, the National Campaign also produces a series of research briefs called “Science Says.” Since June of 2003, the organization has created forty-six “Science Says” briefs on topics ranging from where and when teens have their “sexual debut,” to the particulars of the sexual behavior of community college students. One 2010 example, “Science Says 45: Evaluating the Impact of MTV’s *16 and Pregnant* on Teen Viewers Attitudes about Teen Pregnancy,” summarizes the findings of a study attempting to assess the ways that the show *16 and Pregnant*, discussed in chapter 2, affects its teenage audience.<sup>310</sup> The study surveyed 162 Boys and Girls Club members ages 10 to 19. It concluded that the episodes have a largely “positive” effect on teens’ attitudes about teen pregnancy, meaning that they prompted conversations with parents and others, and convinced most viewers that teen pregnancy is both less common and more difficult than they previously thought, rather than “glamorizing” it, as many critics have asserted.<sup>311</sup> The brief encourages parents and teens to watch these shows and discuss them together, directing readers to the discussion guides created by the National Campaign on MTV.com and Stay Teen, the National Campaign’s teen-oriented website. The organization therefore draws on the

authority of science, in all its assumed detached objectivity, to evaluate its own work in partnering with MTV on the production and promotion of *16 and Pregnant*. Hardly a randomized, representative study, this research nonetheless provides both a salient counterargument to the show's critics and an additional vehicle with which to promote MTV and the National Campaign. In this way, the organization produces scientific legitimacy for its popular media-based tactics, perhaps the most far-reaching aspect of the new information-based safety net.

“Science Says 45” is also a prime example of the ways that the science-esque study of human attitudes and behaviors often manufactures self-contained categories and false oppositions that elide complexities. Not unlike the shortcomings of a survey question in assessing the wantedness of a pregnancy, a questionnaire is not well suited to ascertaining the complex ways that a television show can denigrate, caution against, glamorize, and celebrate teenage pregnancy all at once in a fashion that may have both felt and unfeared effects on its audience. As research subjects are asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement, “I learned that teen pregnancy is harder than I imagine from these episodes,” the question of whether *16 and Pregnant* presents a “realistic” portrayal (it is assumed that a realistic portrayal discourages the audience from becoming teen parents) or a “glamorizing” portrayal is in fact not even addressed. Whether most teens think that teen pregnancy is more difficult (however they may define that) after viewing *16 and Pregnant* does not necessarily have a clear and direct relationship to the portrayal's relative realism or romanticism (in other words, the glamorization of something does not preclude an emphasis on the hardships and difficulties it entails). Nevertheless, the brief reads:

The teens in this study enjoyed watching and discussing the *16 and Pregnant* episodes and thought that the show was realistic. Neither the boys nor the girls who watched the show wanted to imitate the teens in the episodes they watched. In fact, nearly all teens (93%) who watched the show agreed (53% *strongly* agreed) with the statement: “I learned that teen pregnancy is harder than I imagine from these episodes.” Although some have claimed that the show “glamorizes” teen pregnancy, the findings from this evaluation and the polling data noted above show that teens do not share this view.<sup>312</sup>

Because the brief does not provide a full description of the questionnaire and its results, it is impossible to know whether the claim that teens do not want to imitate the *16 and Pregnant* cast is based on the one response that is noted or some more directly related question.<sup>313</sup> Also unknown, within the context of this brief, are the methods by which the study determined the level and nature of “enjoyment” attained by the participants.

Despite this convoluted language, the brief aims to convey a concise message that *16 and Pregnant* is a positive, rational, scientifically proven, effective response to teen pregnancy. Without being explicitly situated as a direct rebuttal to criticism of the National Campaign’s work, the brief is clearly meant to participate in a wider public debate about the role of *16 and Pregnant* as a teen pregnancy prevention tool. The authors betray this further with this caveat:

#### Television Shows versus Prevention Programs

Television and other media alone do not cause—and cannot prevent—teen pregnancy. However, entertainment media can reach millions of teens with important messages about teen pregnancy. It is important to note that there is a critical distinction between this evaluation—which attempts to understand teens’ views about teen pregnancy as a result of MTV’s *16 and Pregnant*—versus an impact evaluation of a prevention program whose sole purpose is to reduce teen pregnancy. While evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs are guided by specific behavioral theories and have the explicit goal of changing behavior to reduce risk of teen pregnancy, television shows such as *16 and Pregnant* are created for entertainment with the goal of attracting viewers and keeping them engaged.<sup>314</sup>



This is a somewhat confused disclaimer, implying that teen pregnancy prevention programs have the potential to directly prevent teen pregnancy, whereas television shows do not, despite being able to “reach millions of teens with important messages about teen pregnancy.” The crucial difference between the types of evaluations each requires is never actually described. Rather, the authors emphasize the distinction between evidence-based programs and TV shows themselves, erecting another false division between the goals of “changing behavior to reduce risk of teen pregnancy” and “attracting viewers and keeping them engaged.” This paragraph seems to simultaneously promote and deny the National Campaign’s work with corporate entertainment television, suggesting that TV shows cannot prevent teen pregnancy, while also pointing to them as the frontier of such work. In this way, the authors obscure the National Campaign’s vested interest in the efficacy of *16 and Pregnant* to affect teen viewers’ attitudes and behavior in particular ways, preserving the power of “science,” and celebrating the show’s apparently inadvertent usefulness.<sup>315</sup> In keeping with the social scientific methods and premises that helped bring down AFDC and inspire the creation of the National Campaign itself, the organization produces and disseminates a self-justifying body of research that poses teenagers, as I show below, as the most vulnerable and important beneficiaries of a redefined, information-based, mass-mediated, cyber-linked, value-laden system for ensuring social well-being.

It is not surprising that the National Campaign would be interested in providing justification for its role in *16 and Pregnant*, given the show’s controversial status and the organization’s attempt to appear neutral, bipartisan, and practical about the diversity of beliefs and opinions about teen sex. Part and parcel to forwarding its scientific authority,

the National Campaign actively presents itself as the site of sensible negotiation between liberal and conservative concerns pertaining to reproductive politics. Recent op-ed pieces in the *Washington Post* by Sarah Brown exemplify the ways the National Campaign attempts to be seen as a vehicle for concerned citizens to reach consensus about social and sexual health outside of the established political divisions that bog down the government. Brown repeatedly confirms “conservative” family values, while proposing to use “liberal” policy measures to advance them, effectively forwarding a sharply narrowed reproductive health and social welfare debate, in which contraception and sexual responsibility eclipse all other possible terrain, such as wealth redistribution, and access to jobs, healthcare, nutritious food, childcare services, and the ability to care for one’s children.

On March 26, 2011, in “Is Contraception a Code Word,” Brown argues that rather than being opposed to contraception, Republicans are actually opposed to the “crude culture” in the U.S., in which people have casual sex, sex outside of marriage, and out-of-wedlock births. She writes that Republicans are worried about the “discouraging state of the American family and intimate relationships at present—hook-up culture, high levels of divorce and extra-marital affairs, violence against women, date rape, sexting, online child pornography and...well the list goes on.”<sup>316</sup> In stringing together these drastically different phenomena as though they are each equally detestable social ills, she suggests that Republicans use the term “contraception” as a code word for sexually deviant culture, missing the importance of contraception to married people’s lives and its role in reducing abortion. In another *Washington Post* essay “Abortion-Contraception Arguments Are Really About Teen Sex,” from January 26, 2012, she suggests that

politicians and religious leaders who oppose contraception and abortion are actually opposed to teenage sex, or “‘bad’ sexual behavior.”<sup>317</sup> After all, she posits, if we imagine that the majority of abortions and contraception use occurred within the context of marriage, it is doubtful that such a protest against these things would exist. With this “relevant thought experiment,” she aims to prove that unruly sex is the problem. In other words, deviant sexual behavior and pregnancy are the legitimate targets of stigma and regulation, but reproductive services should not be blamed for them.

However, in much National Campaign rhetoric, abortion actually deserves stigmatization along with deviant sex. In “Is Contraception a Code Word,” she asks “national leaders,” “Aren’t you, in truth, more worried about things like the fact that 60 percent of women ages 20 to 24 who gave birth in the U.S. last year were unmarried? Or that seven in 10 pregnancies to single women in their 20s are unplanned? Or that about one-third of women in the U.S. will have an abortion by age 45?”<sup>318</sup> These are the issues, she argues, that require everyone’s attention. In this way, she assumes a widespread support for anything that will effectively reduce abortions and out-of-wedlock pregnancies, forwarding contraception as, at best, a method married people use to space their children, and at worst, an unfortunate but important tool in the battle against the universally disdained behaviors of abortion and deviant pregnancy.

This framing of reproductive rights contains a similar logic to the proposed Reducing the Need for Abortions and Supporting Parents Act, introduced first in 2006 by Democratic Representatives Tim Ryan and Rosa DeLauro, in which increased teen pregnancy prevention, access to contraception, and services for poor mothers are presented as a means toward the bipartisan goal of reducing abortions. It aims to “provide

for programs that reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies, reduce the need for abortion, help women bear healthy children, and support new parents.”<sup>319</sup> The assumption, present in this proposed legislation and the National Campaign’s rhetoric—that abortion is inherently undesirable and should be prevented—eschews its status as both a right and the valid action of a legitimate citizen. It creates a false opposition between contraception and abortion, portraying them as inversely related, rather than two services among many that, when available, help a person make whatever reproductive decision is appropriate for her.

This discourse also obscures the drastically different circumstances in which women make decisions about their reproductive lives. Poor women, whose access to abortion is severely limited due to the Hyde Amendment (which prohibits federal funding for abortion services, effectively preventing Medicaid from covering abortion), often carry pregnancies to term that they would have terminated if able.<sup>320</sup> Although it may be true that increased access to contraception could prevent pregnancies that would otherwise be aborted or carried to term by women whose access to abortion is severely limited, abortion for many women is already an inaccessible option and their likelihood of avoiding it would not be increased with access to contraception. This framing constructs a moral hierarchy of reproductive choices and ignores questions of social inequality that lay bare the need for federal funds to enforce reproductive rights, including abortion. Although the bill provides for increased access to “family planning services” for low-income women, pregnant girls and women are largely presented within this anti-abortion discourse as abstractly equal and interchangeable individuals in a reproductive landscape in which abortion is a wholly undesirable, but supposedly

available, last resort option. Here, again, contraception emerges as the only material good to which all citizens have a legitimate right in the broader effort to ensure social well-being.

When a version of the Reducing the Need for Abortion bill was reintroduced in 2009, the National Campaign came out with a statement supporting it. Noting the organization's belief that "reducing conflict and respecting a range of deeply held opinions is essential to making progress on the important issues of reducing both teen and unintended/unplanned pregnancies," the National Campaign reminds readers that it does not have an official stance on abortion.<sup>321</sup> Rather, it supports the bill's efforts to build "common ground" in its goal of reducing deviant pregnancy. Based on the apparent consensus that "virtually all of us see value in lessening the need for abortion," the organization's stance forecloses any opportunity to address the role that unequal access to abortion plays in denying women a reproductive right, while presenting particular types of pregnancy as universally undesirable.

In another *Washington Post* essay, "Why Aren't Faith Leaders Top Advocates for Birth Control?" (March 4, 2011), Sarah Brown argues again that anti-abortion advocates should support birth control because it prevents abortions, which is the greater of two evils (the lesser being casual, non-marital, and teen sex).<sup>322</sup> Appealing this time to the authority of science as that which transcends the subjective commitments of politics, she argues that rather than being a form of abortion, as some conservatives suggest, contraception is technically an alternative to abortion (preventing pregnancy, rather than terminating it) and should therefore be highly valued by anti-abortion advocates. To summarize the series of misconceptions about contraception and their results, she writes,

So, here we are: birth control and abortion are the same, contraception doesn't even work, and we'd rather have pregnant teens than a cost effective initiative to prevent teen pregnancy in the first place. How, for heaven's sake, does all this square with the CDC's recent declaration that modern contraception is among the top ten public health advancements of the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century—on par with antibiotics, clean water and modern sanitation?<sup>323</sup>

Sidestepping the various reasons (having to do with religious doctrine, competing definitions about the beginning the life of a fetus, and the scientific ambiguity as to the actual function of certain forms of birth control) for why religious leaders could oppose contraception despite its role in preventing abortions, Brown again validates the status of abortion as universally disdained, by presenting the potential for unruly sexual behavior as the unfortunate price that must be paid for fewer abortions and, by implication, fewer deviant pregnancies. Taken together, these positions exhibit a stance in which unruly sex (both enabled and mitigated by contraception) is the price of fewer out-of-wedlock pregnancies and abortions, despite being a legitimate target of concern and social action, such as “abstinence-first” sex education.

The National Campaign employs a similar consensus-building strategy within sex education debates. In her testimony before the Senate Finance Committee Hearing on Building Strong Families in 2002, National Campaign president Isabel Sawhill discusses potential measures in TANF reauthorization that could help “build stronger families.” In an effort to bridge the gap between advocates of comprehensive sex education and supporters of abstinence-only education, she notes that the National Campaign supports an “abstinence first message,” in which teens are encouraged not to have sex (because “abstinence is the first and best choice for young people”), but are given information about contraception as well.<sup>324</sup> Because the efficacy of abstinence-only programs has not

yet been proved, she argues, the federal government can “signal its support of abstinence as a value,” but should not dictate the content of sex education curriculum. In a similar strategy of appealing to conservative family values, Sawhill cites statistics that show women who have a child out-of-wedlock have reduced future prospects for marriage.<sup>325</sup> Since marriage taken to be the rightful goal of a government interested in reducing poverty and promoting “strong” families, according to Sawhill, policy should engage in comprehensive teen pregnancy prevention services that publicize this negative outcome of out-of-wedlock pregnancy. In these ways, the National Campaign proposes to meet conservative goals through liberal policy, forwarding teen pregnancy prevention through comprehensive sex education as marriage promotion, and access to contraception as abortion reduction. By presenting its stance as the product of consensus building and scientific rigor, the organization’s pro-contraception, anti-abortion, pro-marriage viewpoint appears moderate and normal, while also affording it an air of transcendence above the “muddied” debates that it claims ordinarily govern reproductive politics.<sup>326</sup> In these ways it cultivates its status as the purveyor of a new and improved safety net, one that ensures individual and national well-being by benevolently and expertly providing the means through which teens can effectively manage their sexuality, overshadowing the harsh regulation of impoverished teens and adults that simultaneously results from welfare and the demonization of certain forms of pregnancy and childbearing. In the next section I examine how the National Campaign embarks upon this mission by drawing on the widely touted efficacy and efficiency of market models and profit-making strategies in order to take advantage of some of the supposed defining aspects of adolescence.

## **Harnessing the “Cool Factor”**

The National Campaign’s use of media reveals strategies that draw upon and promote certain characteristics of adolescence as it is defined in popular U.S. culture. The characteristics that most coincide with market models, corporate partnerships, and low overhead costs, such as distractibility, rebelliousness, preoccupation with trends, and an unwavering love of screens form the basic logic behind the organization’s media-based tactics. From its inception, the National Campaign has named popular media a crucial factor in the problem of teenage pregnancy and the manipulation of it a primary method for influencing the attitudes and behavior of young people.<sup>327</sup> With heads of major media corporations on its board, such as Bruce Rosenblum, president of Warner Brothers Television Group, and Judy McGrath, chairman and CEO of MTV Networks, the National Campaign’s approach to working with networks on shows and films like those analyzed in the previous chapter is in line with the producers’ profit-making goals. The organization recognizes TV’s ability to generate a “cool factor” that a nonprofit could not.<sup>328</sup> As such, they do not attempt to change storylines, but instead provide writers with information about the apparent causes and consequences of teenage sex and pregnancy. In this way, teenage pregnancy prevention can become commensurate with the high levels of sex, drugs, and other content that helps create a sense of intrigue, rebellion, or “coolness” and draws adolescent viewers. Working with media conglomerates, piggybacking on their already-established access to and cache with the target population, makes the National Campaign’s efforts highly visible, controversial and fraught with conflicting meanings, which I discuss below.



Beyond television networks, the National Campaign works diligently to harness the power of the Internet and social media. It approaches these venues in much the same way as TV. During a 2009 conference put on by the National Campaign, titled, “Taming the Media Monster,” Senior Manager of Digital Media, Laura Lloyd discusses the National Campaign’s efforts toward utilizing social media as a sex education tool.<sup>329</sup> She explains the broader organizational strategy of enveloping “conversations that are already happening,” such as those generated by YouTube-based celebrity personalities who already have a large following, in order to influence a broader audience. In this way, teenage and unplanned pregnancy are framed as problems related to attitudes and behaviors that can be effectively altered through the forces of the free market, which set the standards of what products adolescents and young adults are willing to purchase and what messages they will internalize. Social reform, like business, is apparently best accomplished through the logic of the market, in which the profit motive promotes competition, innovation, and efficiency.

A 2000 print ad and poster campaign titled “Sex Has Consequences” exhibits the extent to which the National Campaign utilizes market logic, while challenging the conventional definitions of “sex education” and “raising awareness,” and mobilizing a particular construction of adolescence. In collaboration with the international advertising agency Ogilvy and Mather, whose former chairman and CEO, Charlotte Beers, is a National Campaign board member, the organization produced images of skinny, scantily clad, sad-faced girls of various ethnic backgrounds wearing heavy eyeliner with the words “CHEAP,” “NOBODY,” “DIRTY,” or “REJECT” written in red letters across them. In much finer print are the phrases, “Condoms are CHEAP. If we’d used one, I

wouldn't have to tell my parents I'm pregnant," "Now that I'm home with the baby, NOBODY calls me anymore," "I want to be out with my friends. Instead, I'm changing DIRTY diapers," and "I wanted to have sex so my boyfriend wouldn't REJECT me. Now I have a baby. And no boyfriends."<sup>330</sup> One ad, featuring a white teenage boy with the word "USELESS," says "My scholarship is USELESS. Now I need a job to support my family." Sparking significant controversy for the ways that these ads appear to present negative messages about teenagers, primarily girls, and their sexuality, the National Campaign held that their goal was to get teens' attention, specifically the attention of "the ones that aren't listening, the ones that are still giving us the highest rates [of teen pregnancy] in the industrialized world."<sup>331</sup> They appeared in *Teen People*, *The Source*, *Cosmo Girl* and other teen print publications, as well as on websites such as the Ricki.com and Oxygen.com, were sold on the National Campaign website in hard copy, and were available to be electronically forwarded as e-postcards.<sup>332</sup>

This campaign drew upon the resources and techniques of the advertising industry in order to provoke interest, appeal to emotions, and ultimately sell the idea that "sex has [depressing, degrading, and miserable] consequences." The goal was to get teens to "listen" and change their sexual behavior, by any means necessary. The implication is that those teens who are "still giving us the high rates" are particularly attention-deficient and need to be addressed in terms that will both draw them in and communicate a message they will understand. Implicit in this analysis of teen pregnancy is a multicultural logic in which the depiction of teenage mothers of multiple ethnic backgrounds attests to the universality of the problem (one of the fundamentally distractible abstract teenager), the pathological nature of too-early sex and pregnancy,

and the inherently inclusive and equalizing force of proper heteronormative participation in U.S. society.

Because the posters were founded on the idea that teenagers will not pay attention to the average public service announcement, requiring a provocative veneer disguising an educational message, the meanings the posters convey are multiple and conflicting. The National Campaign is called upon to defend these posters in the same way that it must defend its work with *16 and Pregnant*, because the content both denigrates and glamorizes sexualized, reproductive teenagers precisely as methods for conveying a disciplinary, officially nonjudgmental, anti-sex, anti-pregnancy message. These methods take teenage pregnancy prevention far outside the realms of conventional sex education, abstinence training, welfare disincentives, or family planning provision, making it instead a business of selling ideas, promoting trends, and delicately balancing risqué representations with conservative moral messages. Following a logic that constructs teens as best disciplined via the market, these efforts constantly call into being, promote, and rely upon that which they aim to prevent and contain. Ultimately, as we saw in chapter 2, they appeal to the purported hedonistic, self-absorbed nature of adolescence. Specifically, they provoke interest in sexual abandon, while cautioning against it as that which prevents other forms indulgence. In using these controversial methods in the “Sex Has Consequences” posters, the organization garnered national news coverage for its name and its cause, while Ogilvy and Mather likely raised its profile by doing pro bono work for a cause backed by numerous powerful politicians and business people.<sup>333</sup>

In similar fashion, one of the National Campaign’s partners, the Candie’s Foundation, enmeshes the goals of nonprofit advocacy and corporate profit-making even

further in an effort to sell teen sexiness while quashing teen sex.<sup>334</sup> Founded in 2001 by Iconix Brand Group, Inc. CEO Neil Cole, the Candie's Foundation is a teenage pregnancy "awareness-raising" organization aimed at "shap[ing] the way youth in America think about teen pregnancy and parenthood."<sup>335</sup> Carrying the namesake of Candies, Inc., Cole's fashion brand specializing in shoes, clothing, and accessories for women and teenage girls, the foundation functions as a secondary source of promotion for the fashion brand's products. It defines its primary work as creating video and print public service announcements that it shares with community-based organizations. To do this it also employs the strategies of the advertising industry.<sup>336</sup> Aiming to "use celebrities that teens can relate to, in a style that speaks to teens on their own terms," the Candie's Foundation utilizes the same celebrities who are employed as spokespeople for Candie's, Inc. products.

For example, Jenny McCarthy, subject of the infamous 1997 Candie's, Inc. shoe advertisement in which she is seated on a toilet wearing nothing but her underwear around her ankles and pumps, as well as other more recent Candie's, Inc. ads, is featured in the video "Welcome to Reality."<sup>337</sup> In this video, she interrupts a teenage couple making out in a car, just as the boy is convincing the girl to have sex. She presents them with the crying baby that will implicitly inevitably result from their behavior, at which point the boy exits the vehicle and the girl is shown holding the baby, looking up into the camera with an expression of panic. This video forwards Jenny McCarthy's status as an authority on female desirability, while defining the appropriate limits of a girl's sexuality. The "reality" of smart girlhood sexuality is that one should look sexy, but not have sex.

Or, as another Candie's Foundation slogan puts it, "Be Sexy: It Doesn't Mean You Have to Have Sex."<sup>338</sup>

Media created by the Candie's Foundation literally advertises Candie's, Inc. products, promoting sexiness as a consumer good while warning against the nefarious effects of sex. As such it presents sex as something that ultimately prevents sexiness by ruining one's freedom to properly consume it.<sup>339</sup> Another video, "Back Talk Baby," portrays a teen mom, all dressed up in Candie's, Inc. gear for a night out on the town, who is stopped by her baby on her way out the door (see Figures 5 and 6). The baby admonishes her in a fatherly voice about his dirty diaper before celebrity teen mom Bristol Palin appears, saying "And you thought your parents were controlling? Don't let a teen pregnancy get in the way of your freedom. Pause before you play."<sup>340</sup> In this way, the Candie's Foundation is able to promote the Candie's, Inc. fashion label by creating more visibility for its spokespeople and products, while forwarding a message of abstinence and personal responsibility in the name of teenage frivolity, freedom, and consumerism. This video also foreshadows New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's use of imaginary future babies of teen mothers to lecture them on the negative consequences of their sexual and reproductive behavior in his 2013 teen pregnancy prevention poster and text-message campaign, which I discuss further in the conclusion of this dissertation.



Figure 5. "Back Talk Baby." Candies Foundation.



Figure 6. "Back Talk Baby." Candies Foundation.

The Candie's Foundation has promoted this logic in complex interlinked, cross-marketed, multimedia formats. In a 2012 radio contest held by Z100 New York, a Clear Channel Media and Entertainment station, teens were instructed to view the Candie's Foundation video "Consider Your Options," in order to enter to win a concert at their

high school with up-and-coming pop sensations Hot Chelle Rae and Karmin. The video, 55 seconds long, uses kinetic typography, a method of animation seen frequently in advertising, involving text in motion. Often, the text moves in time with music, the motion simulates camera techniques, and the words are mixed with animated pictures, all which are meant to enhance the emotive power and meaning of the text. “Consider Your Options” employs all of these techniques, consisting of pink and white words and girl paper doll shapes moving on a black background to the sounds of dramatic piano and violin music and babies crying. The text of the entire video reads as follows:

85 girls get pregnant each hour  
2,000 girls a day  
Almost 750,000 girls a year  
That’s more than the entire population of Alaska  
It only takes one time  
It only takes 1<sup>st</sup> time  
Only time  
In love time  
One time = the rest of your life!  
Think it can’t be you?  
Think again  
3 out of 10 girls becomes [*sic*] pregnant!  
Consider your options  
[Underneath that sentence these words appear one at a time] waiting, condoms,  
abstinence, birth control, condoms, abstinence, birth control, waiting, think about  
your future  
the candie’s foundation [facebook and twitter symbols pictured]<sup>341</sup>

Presenting these various options (condoms, waiting, abstinence, birth control) as discrete, uncomplicated, interchangeable choices in a broader project of avoiding the obvious mistake of pregnancy, it illustrates a popular paradigm of reproductive politics. Drawing on a larger discussion by Rickie Solinger and others, Laura Briggs writes that such a politics “only makes sense in the context of consumerism, with individuals picking and choosing between variously enticing but essentially equivalent things (what we might call

the *Juno* narrative).”<sup>342</sup> This video is apt example of such politics, while providing nothing in the way of information about how to use and access resources or accomplish the potential goals of waiting or abstinence. It uses the veneer of objectivity and authority afforded to the fast-paced presentation of statistics and stand-alone, bold-faced text to construct the ominous specter of teenage pregnancy as the imminent result of poor consumer decision-making.

By baiting teenagers into watching the video with the possibility of a free concert, the Candie’s Foundation and Z100 epitomize this new convoluted, market-driven, self-serving variety of teen pregnancy prevention. They promote their own brands, relying upon and raising the recognition of celebrities Hot Chelle Rae and Karmin, while delivering a highly contested message of personal responsibility in which the lyrics to these pop artists’ songs, which openly advocate for unfettered sex, debauchery, and narcissism, simultaneously undercut and serve as the vehicle for the official goals of the contest.<sup>343</sup> The concert itself, held at Bethpage High in Long Island, NY, included teen pregnancy “facts” discussed between musical acts by “Erica America,” a Z100 radio personality. As Evan Dahlquist of the Candie’s Foundation says, “We are trying to get across our message about teen pregnancy prevention in a way that kids will listen... This concert is much better than those educational pamphlets you pick up in the nurse’s office.”<sup>344</sup> This statement reveals the extent to which teen pregnancy prevention discourse has narrowed since 1996. Whereas, as we saw in chapter 1, teen pregnancy was previously viewed as problem related to poverty, access to education and jobs, healthcare, and the structure of welfare policy, Dahlquist sees two possible types intervention in the current moment: pamphlets in the nurse’s office, or corporate-



sponsored events incentivized by celebrity and saturnalia. In this comparison, “pamphlets,” an outdated vehicle for boring information (the words just sit there on the page, after all) are ineffective. The idea that health professionals, such as nurses, would be the appropriate authorities on sexual health is equally passé and misguided. Rather than the importance of access to healthcare, toward which this option at least gestures, the preferred teenage pregnancy prevention strategy relies on cutting-edge media technology and chic to get teens, again, to “listen,” which they are apparently notorious unwilling to do. That this method targets a certain group of teens—those who have both the requisite internet access and interest in the latest pop music sensation—is obscured by the larger set of generalizations made about teenagers and their obsession with marketable “coolness.”

Together, these examples illustrate a particularly neoliberal response to “holes in the safety net” left by welfare reform. Engaging in mutually beneficial partnerships with corporations, utilizing the techniques of the advertising industry, harnessing the popularity of celebrities, and relying upon the skill of television writers, these private organizations produce a public image of teen pregnancy as a personal, sex-related problem solved through innovative, market-driven, campaigns that arm teens with key information. This approach is based in the assumption that all teenagers are basically equal, attention-deficient, and driven by mass-mediated trends, an interest in manufactured rebellion, and an aversion to anything difficult. As there is no need, in this understanding, for government assistance, helping to create equal access to healthcare, shelter, and nutrition, national teen pregnancy prevention efforts capitalize on young

girls' purported inherent consumerism to instruct them on the undesirability of pregnancy.

### **The Biopolitical Media Monster**

Mobilizing the construction of adolescence outlined above, the National Campaign and its partners have located new social media technologies as the frontier of their work. Based in the reality that social media interfaces, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr, increasingly shape the daily lives and identities of the majority of Americans an increasing number of nonprofit and governmental organizations utilize them for certain aspects their missions.<sup>345</sup> In developing social media-based tactics of teen pregnancy prevention, the National Campaign and its partners rely on the notion that teenagers typify a general trend toward a perpetually interlinked, screen-based society in which individuals publicly and semi-publicly define themselves through the selection of preprogrammed characteristics, and practices of consuming and sharing online activities, media, and information. An answer to the call for “innovative” approaches to teen pregnancy prevention present in post-welfare political debate, these strategies make up a set of biopolitical technologies that help to construct a kind of cyber safety net based on the notion that social well-being is secured through appropriate sexual behavior, which is in turn secured through dissemination of key information and proper values to teenagers. In this section, I examine some of the ways that teen pregnancy prevention efforts via new media technologies, such as social media websites, smartphone applications, and web-based video games, instruct audiences on proper behavior and values, enlist participation in desired activities, and compile data about target populations. I show that teenage sexuality is a primary site for the biopolitical operations of the redefined safety

net, which draws on the perceived neutrality and universality of internet-based technologies to produce desired national subjects.

The National Campaign's teen-oriented website Stay Teen ([www.stayteen.org](http://www.stayteen.org)) is an important hub within the massive web of teen pregnancy prevention media created and proliferated by the organization. Linked on the corporate website, [thenationalcampaign.org](http://thenationalcampaign.org), Stay Teen also has a YouTube channel, Facebook page, and Twitter feed. The website itself employs a number of elements characteristic of social media, such as low-budget videos, interactive games, opinion polls, opportunities for users to leave comments on various content, and journal-style essays (with the author's name hyperlinked to all other content by that author), making it appear as a venue for user-led, networked sociality in which teenagers perform their identities and values. These public performances derive from the simultaneously personalized and massifying qualities of social media. As Robert Gehl argues, Web 2.0 sites, including Google, Facebook, Wikipedia and more, function to structure users' experiences and emotions in certain uniform ways, while offering degrees of personalization that allow for users to indicate preferences and experience intimacy.<sup>346</sup> They are designed to both circumscribe the actions, identities, and lives of their users while also extracting value in the form of creative labor and user data.<sup>347</sup> Stay Teen, along with other social media-based teen pregnancy prevention, rely on precisely these characteristics to generate and promote norms, as well as compile content by and information about their users in an effort to optimize their work.

In an apparent attempt to speak to teens "on their own terms," the website presents writing by teenagers about issues related to sex and relationships, videos

featuring “real” teens, and results from polls of ostensible teens. It also attempts to generate its “cool factor” by enticing participation with games and prizes.<sup>348</sup> The website’s mission reads:

The goal of Stay Teen is to encourage you to enjoy your teen years and avoid the responsibilities that come with too-early pregnancy and parenting. The more you know about issues like sex, waiting, and contraception, the better prepared you will be to make informed choices about the future. We’re not telling you how to live your life...we just want to give you some food for thought and the latest facts. It’s up to you to make your own smart decisions.<sup>349</sup>

Although the website is heavily disciplinary, it is strategic for it to be framed as “not telling you how to live your life.” As discussed above, the governing logic of the organization’s tactics targeting teenagers holds that market forces—those that supposedly naturally produce YouTube’s viral videos and promote MTV’s teen mom cast members to fame—dictate the vernacular of adolescence and determine the popularity and effectiveness of a product or message with teens. The social media aspects of Stay Teen are particularly well suited to the task of simultaneously manipulating the website’s structure and content to forward its values—framing, developing, and harnessing certain kinds of user participation—while claiming unadulterated, voluntary, teenage participation.

One of the five main sections of the Stay Teen website, the “Fun and Games” page includes interactive elements that instruct and discipline, while also compiling data about the website’s users.<sup>350</sup> This section includes polls and browser-based games. The polls elicit responses to questions like “Would you talk to your parents about sex?” “Can guys and girls be ‘just’ friends?” “Are guys more likely to cheat than girls?” and “Did you learn a lot from your school’s sex ed program?”<sup>351</sup> The poll questions are overtly

heteronormative (like all National Campaign-created materials), and once the user provides an answer, the results are provided along with instructional commentary in line with National Campaign values. There is no assurance that responders to the polls are universally teenagers and the lack of accountability for the accuracy of the polling results allows for the possibility that they may be directly manipulated in some fashion, making it easier for them to be presented as substantiation for the agenda of the National Campaign. For example, the results of “Would you consider dating someone if you knew that they believed in abstinence until marriage?” showed seventy percent of responders choosing “Yes, if I liked them, I’d respect their decision.”<sup>352</sup> The commentary below the results reads:

In your grandparent’s day and maybe even in your parents [*sic*] it wasn’t uncommon for people to wait until after they’d tied the knot to have sex. This generation is a different story. Sex is very much a part of teen culture. If you don’t believe it, read the lyrics to Katy Perry’s “Teenage Dream”. It’s in our TV shows, music, and magazines. It’d be easy to look at this generation’s obsession with sex and assume that everyone is having it, but what about those teens who still want to wait?

The temptation to have sex, especially as a teen, is no doubt great. Believe it or not, there are teen couples who don’t even kiss in order to avoid the temptation. Some might call this extreme, while others might see it as romantic. It’s easy if you both agree, but what if you like someone who has different beliefs about sex before marriage than you do? Would you respect their beliefs or drop them like a bad habit? Let us know what you think!<sup>353</sup>

The results of this poll and accompanying commentary are meant to convince teenagers that the “crude culture” of sex does not fully dictate individual teens’ attitudes about their own sexual behavior. The commentary suggests that abstinence both was traditionally normal (before this apparently more sex-obsessed generation of popular media) and in fact still is, despite what Katy Perry may suggest. So normal, in fact, that “some” teens do

not even kiss in their relationships and this is just as likely to be considered “romantic” as “extreme.” This poll defines normalcy, creating the impression of consensus among actual teens about the acceptability of abstinence, and advocating “respect” for people who abstain as opposed to “drop[ping] them like a bad habit.” By addressing users directly and commanding them to contribute to the discussion, the poll and its commentary enlist users to publicly participate in that definition of normalcy.

In response to the injunction to “Let us know what you think!” statements as to the rightfulness of waiting until marriage to have sex, and respecting a person’s desire to wait abound in the comments section underneath the polling results. Of the first fifty comments listed, nineteen proclaimed that the users themselves are abstaining from sex until marriage, the vast majority exhibit some kind of reverence for abstinence, while only seven either say they would not date someone who wanted to abstain or admitted to having had premarital sex.<sup>354</sup> The fact that there is no reliable identifying information of the users who comment allows for both the anonymity that such a public discussion would require in order to garner participation and, again, a complete lack of accountability or assurance that the information is not being manipulated by the website administrators. Nevertheless, the polling results and comments are presented as “What other teens are saying,” without any qualifiers to this effect. Visitors to the website are thus asked to believe in and perform a shared and mutually enforcing valuing of abstinence.

The Stay Teen games are similarly designed to recruit users into disciplinary activities that cultivate particular values. As Nick Dyer-Witherford and Greig de Peuter point out, no longer viewed as useless, time-wasting activities, video games are now

often “perceived by corporate managers and state administrators as formal and informal means of training populations in the practices of digital work and governability.”<sup>355</sup> Stay Teen’s games represent the increasingly popular use of this training technology in nonprofit advocacy, specifically as it relates to teen sexual health. The five games include *Crush!*, *My Paper Boyfriend*, *Myth Monsters*, *My Paper Girlfriend*, and *Block Party*, each conveying the National Campaign’s information about sex, teen pregnancy, “healthy” relationships, sexually transmitted infections, etc. They enlist user participation by using the format of this typical teenage electronic recreational activity as an educational tool, while affording the organization opportunities to generate data about usage with which they can, theoretically, better reach their target population.

Debuting in May of 2012, *Crush!*, for example combines messages about peer pressure to have sex and ways to avoid it with a platform video game style.<sup>356</sup> The goal is to help the character on each level avoid being crushed by peer pressure to have sex (see Figure 7). The player drops various ladders, platforms, and bridges, flips over springboards, and unlocks doors to facilitate a character’s movement through an obstacle course, helping him/her collect “Power-Ups,” such as headphones, running shoes, and cell phones that allow him/her to outrun, block out, or talk through the peer pressure. Meanwhile, peers on either side of the screen slowly push the walls of the game in toward the center, threatening to crush the character if s/he does not reach the end of the obstacle course fast enough. The player must also help each character avoid “Power-Downs,” such as alcohol and drugs, rumors, and the “heat-of-the-moment,” that will thrust him/her into a vulnerable state in which he is likely to succumb to pressure. Once the game is won, a message appears informing the player that “sex is a big deal” and in

order to avoid succumbing to pressure, a person must know the “facts, have a plan, and take control.” Players are then directed to Stay Teen for more information.

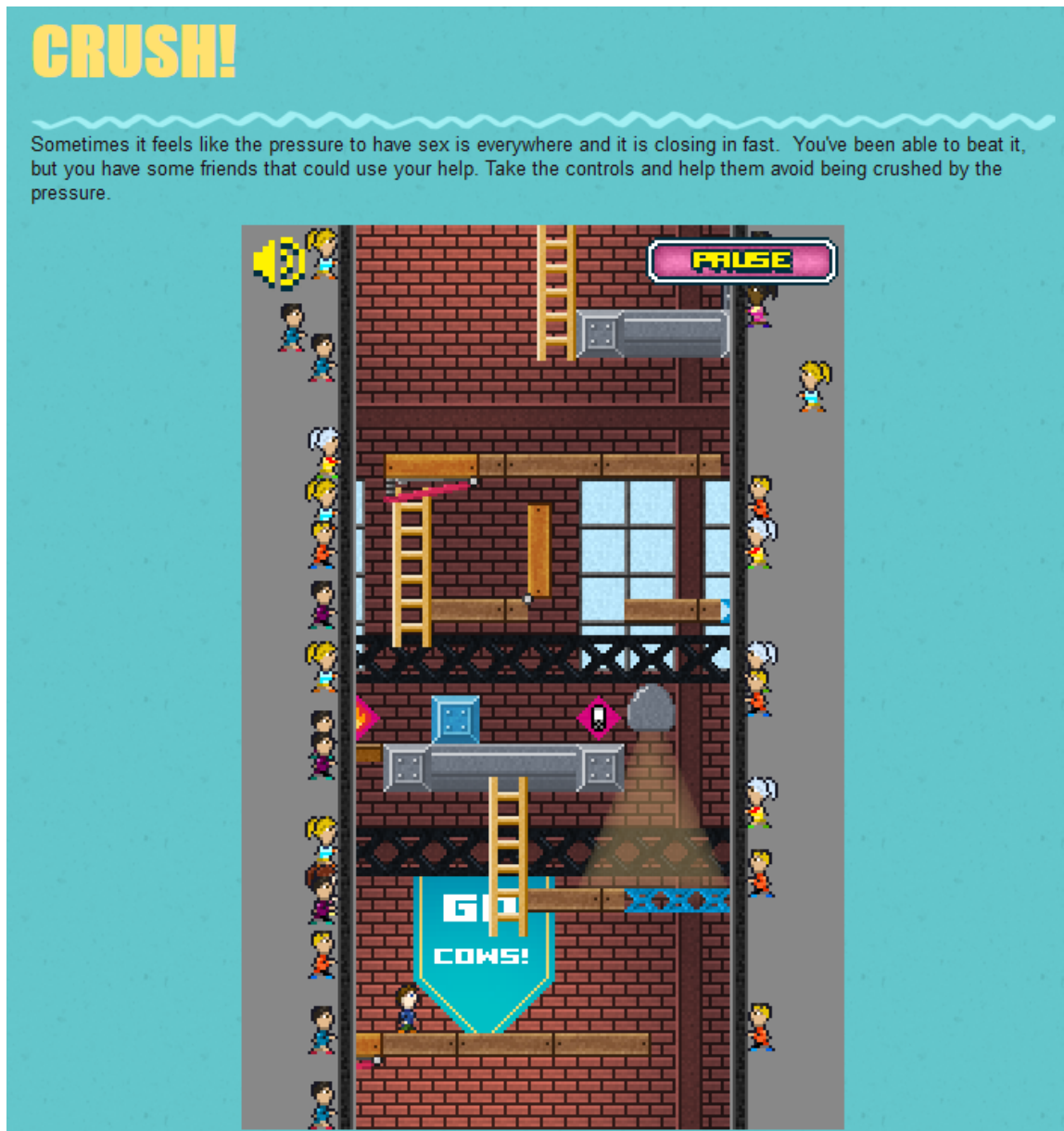


Figure 7. Level 1 of *Crush!* National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

With its variously raced characters (presumably white, Asian, and Black), it is yet another example of the multicultural politics of teen pregnancy prevention, in which racial difference is deployed in a way that assumes a basic interchangeability between



teenagers of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.<sup>357</sup> The gameplay is simple and the educational value consists of one lesson: avoiding peer pressure to have sex is tricky, but necessary, because sex is a “big deal.”<sup>358</sup> While each player may have his/her unique experience playing the game (advancing levels at different times, choosing certain paths and tools over others), the lesson remains constant. It is given that regardless of race, class, or gender the problem and the solution are basically the same for every teen.

The game thus recruits players into a course instructing them on good and bad behaviors, relying on an assumed distinction between peer pressure and trendiness (the widespread success of the game actually depends on the pressure one might feel to play *Crush!* after a friend “shares” it on Facebook). Sexual responsibility is figured in *Crush!* by the possession and proper utilization of certain trendy material goods—running shoes, cell phones, portable music player—which secure the desired moral fortitude necessary to survive adolescence (and not be literally crushed to oblivion). Succumbing to peer pressure, the path toward sex and demise, derives from a weakness of character or moral vice emblemized by alcohol, drugs, and sexual arousal. This formulation continues the post-welfare teen pregnancy prevention work of promoting certain forms of teenage consumerism as natural, desirable, and in opposition to deviant sex and pregnancy. In presenting a multicultural cast characters, it also organizes the boundaries of good versus bad personhood around a set of character traits and consumer behaviors that appear equally accessible to all.

In addition to its disciplinary functions, the game also offers more opportunities for the National Campaign to extract labor from users in the form of publicity for the organization and usage data. Sexual health education browser games are an approach to

sex education—part of the National Campaign’s broader strategy of harnessing new media technologies—that is meant to bypass the constraints of public policy and school bureaucracies, utilizing the private infrastructure created by Internet-based corporations, to communicate directly with teenagers. During his presentation at the organization’s 2009 “Taming the Media Monster” conference, Dan Melton, founder/CEO npT Labs (a company, no longer in existence, that consulted with nonprofits to enhance their online social networking capabilities) explains the potential power of sexual health education video games. First, he describes the current generation of teenagers as the “MyTwitFace” generation, indicating their always-already-socially-networked status via sites like MySpace, Twitter, and Facebook.<sup>359</sup> Suggesting that this generation, while not interested in perusing a sexual health clinic’s Facebook page, is in fact willing to play an interactive sexual health education game, he describes the multiple benefits of this approach:

And what we’re doing is we’re developing a system in my company to help organizations develop question sets and deliver ‘em through an interactive game on Facebook that are [*sic*] tailored to your geographies. And what’s really interesting and what I love about the MyTwitFace generation is that they give us their demographic information so I know who is accessing your service by demographic, by location; by age; by race; by gender; by the content on their actual site; by what they look at online; what other games they have and how many friends they have. Who are those friends? What are [*sic*] their demographic information? What do they do on Facebook?<sup>360</sup>

This set of information available to Melton’s company via a sexual health Facebook game allows the entrance of npT Labs and its partners into the private lives of its target population (users likely technically agree to the dissemination of their demographic information to any Facebook application they use, whether they are fully aware of this reality and its implications or not). The demographic information Melton is able to compile helps organizations to construct an image of their clientele based on a given set

of variables meant to signal the types of services and information those individuals need, and the best ways of delivering it to them.

This technology, Melton suggests, can revolutionize sexual health provision by creating low-cost methods of individualized service provision. In addition to providing “all the data on all the plays, all the shares, all the demographic information associated with every single player when they play it” as well as “pre-imposed surveys on a percentage of people who play it,” his company creates a “tailored intervention” for each player based on that demographic information. Despite his admission that evaluation of this kind of program is extremely difficult due to both this kind of individualization and the unknowable presence of uncontrolled advertisements with sexual content in them that can accompany the game, he states, “[Y]ou can pay fifty, a hundred dollars a month and still have access to things like this [system] and deploy ‘em at your local level and get evaluation data out of it as well.”<sup>361</sup> An online sexual health education game, he implies, can mimic the personalized and informative experience a teen might have in an actual sexual health clinic in their “geography,” but at a fraction of the price.

This approach is in keeping with the tenant of neoliberal social policy that suggests that local control facilitates the best addressing of local particularities. Whereas, in the case of welfare reform, the valorization of local control helped to dismantle federal mandates,<sup>362</sup> here it is used as part of an argument for further privatization, reduction of overhead costs, and the detachment of sexual health education from the provision of health services. Taking advantage of the ways that Facebook directs participants to define themselves through the structure of the interface (choosing from preset gender options, filling in birth date, providing a representative photograph, compiling “friends,” etc.), this

method of promoting sexual health relies on and helps cultivate a model of social welfare in which citizens become demographic profiles that are linked to virtual resources by the private sector.

Constructed as obsessed with marketable trends and new media technologies, teenagers are theoretically the perfect population for this new privatized model. During the question-and-answer period after Metlon's talk, he was asked what tips he has for organizations working with teens through social media. His response reveals continued focus on "coolness" as a crucial but difficult landscape through which non-profits must navigate. He states,

Uh, it was cool in the eighties, but it's not cool now, so just don't type it. Don't...don't put it in there. Anytime you're gonna have word [*sic*] that you think is cool, uh, don't use it; just don't do it...Like so focus group first I mean, right, I mean this is, you need to have like thirteen to seventeen year-olds like telling you what's cool...let them say it themselves...is the biggest piece of advice.<sup>363</sup>

Teenagers are presented in this discourse as a mysterious monolith reachable only through a shared language governed by consumer preferences. As the National Campaign's work would indicate, that language is mediated primarily through popular culture and cyberspace. In this way, Melton and the National Campaign propose that sexual health education video games can attract teens, deliver pertinent, individualized information, and enhance sexual health organizations' knowledge about their enigmatic target population.

While Melton's promises at "Taming the Media Monster" describe the potential of and intentions behind this technology to mobilize a demographic calculus toward individualized sexual health messages, the Stay Teen games may not be so evolved. *Crush!* and its counterparts can easily be "shared" on a variety of social networking sites,

including Facebook, MySpace, StumbleUpon, Tumblr, Bebo, and Twitter, but it is unclear whether the act of “sharing” these games results in the same deluge of information from users’ profiles that Melton describes into the hands of the National Campaign. This function does, however, facilitate rapid publicity for Stay Teen directly via users’ friend networks. The games also elicit information from users in the comments section of the website, where hundreds of presumable teenage players discuss the games’ effectiveness in communicating sexual health information, their level of difficulty, and the amount of fun derived from them. The games are designed to entice teenagers based on the presumed cache and entertainment value of video games, providing them with simplistic sexual health messages, which they will hopefully disseminate widely via the lightning speed of the Internet. No public infrastructure of any kind is necessary for this technology, which will reach only those teens who concern themselves with and have access to online leisure time.<sup>364</sup> Rather than providing information about or advocating for confidential reproductive health services for teens (let alone actually providing the services themselves), such as medical exams, contraception and abortion, or counseling of any kind, the National Campaign attempts to cultivate and mobilize teenage citizens to perform sexual responsibility in the online public.

One social media-based teen pregnancy prevention strategy is designed to both cultivate public performances of sexual responsibility and enter directly into intimate moments as a kind of virtual chastity belt (or for the inevitably sex-crazed teenage boys, a mobile reminder to use condoms<sup>365</sup>). The Candie’s Foundation’s “Cry Baby” app, an iPhone application developed by York & Chapel, a digital marketing firm, is dubbed a “turn off for when you are feeling turned on...”<sup>366</sup> As it loads, a picture of a pink pacifier

with the words “Cry.Baby.” appear on the screen. Next, a set of teen pregnancy statistics inform the user that “Teen pregnancy can take away your freedom,” as the user is encouraged to “share this App!” with “friends and family.” Then, four differently raced (Black, white, Asian, and Latino) babies appear on the screen. The user chooses one of the babies, initiating an eighteen-second video of that baby crying. Last, appear the words “Pause before you Play. The Candie’s Foundation.” Users can thus personalize their cry-baby experience, participating in a multicultural politics that depoliticizes and dehistoricizes racial difference by presenting it as a consumer preference (see Figure 8).

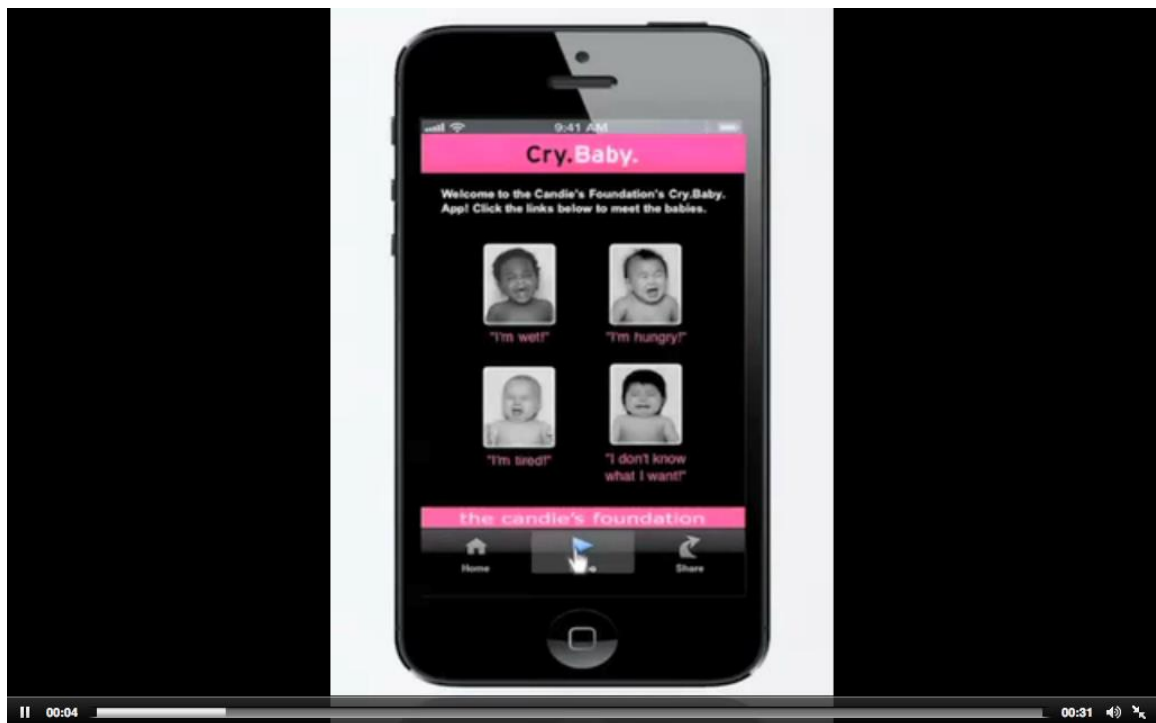


Figure 8. "Cry Baby App." Candie's Foundation.

Rather than an experience to *remember*, like *Crush!*, when trying to avoid “the heat of the moment,” the “Cry Baby” app is meant to be *used in* that moment. The Candie’s Foundation description reads, “Get an insta-dose of parenthood with the ‘Cry Baby’ app, brought to you by The Candie’s Foundation. This revolutionary new app

keeps teens one crying click away from getting caught in the moment. Help teens protect themselves against pregnancy. Spread the message and download the app today!” Similar to Jenny McCarthy’s role in “Welcome to Reality,” the “Cry Baby” app is explicitly aimed at intervening into an intimate moment to discourage sex by instilling fear and anxiety about its consequences, rather than explicitly advocating abstinence, or providing condoms. As the description on the iTunes website reads, “Find out how much you can handle—if just 30 seconds of crying makes you want to tear your hair out, that’s nothing compared to taking care of a real-life baby 24 hours a day!”<sup>367</sup> While “Pause [to listen to this baby crying] before you Play” may sound like an even less realistic request than asking teens to stop to put on a condom, teens are ostensibly meant to stop making out, find their phone, play the app, get “turned off” and decide not to have sex. More likely, the makers hope that promoting the app and getting teens to download it and share it with their friends, creating a community of people who recreationally play their crying babies as an indirect affirmation that teen pregnancy is bad, will further the cause of teen pregnancy prevention by reminding teens how inconvenient and socially unacceptable getting pregnant would be.

The National Campaign, Candie’s Foundation and others, including Planned Parenthood Federation of America, forward this kind of cyber-biopolitics aimed at producing proper teenage subjects through the management of teen sexuality.<sup>368</sup> These methods reveal the extent to which the post-welfare privatization of the safety net employs social media to cultivate a multicultural, consumer-based model of sexual responsibility as key to successful U.S. citizenship. In this context, adolescent sexuality is constructed as a particularly fragile and fraught site for the production of proper citizens

that demands a delicate balance between, on the one hand, operating within and producing provocative trends and dangerous desires, and, on the other hand, instructing, managing, and cultivating values and behaviors based on notions of responsibility, self-control, and virtue. As I discuss below, this moral frame of citizenship, constructed through the enlisted participation of poll respondents, video game players, iPhone app users, and so forth, is particularly applicable to adolescents.

### **Adolescence versus the “Odyssey Years”**

In 2007, the National Campaign expanded its mission beyond the prevention of teenage pregnancy, to include the prevention of unplanned pregnancy in general.<sup>369</sup> Amongst the multifarious “resources” that the organization produces for download or purchase by state and local entities (which include “Fact Sheets,” lists of “tips,” brochures, videos, and more aimed at “teens,” “parents,” “religious groups,” “educators,” “Latinos,” “males,” etc) many express the organization’s conflation of teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy. For example, “Aunt Sarah’s List: Things We All Need to Say to Teens and Young Adults,” apparently written by National Campaign CEO, Sarah Brown, instructs readers on how to explain to teens and young adults that families are not something to be “stumbled into.”<sup>370</sup> “We,” it reads, are always focusing on “less important things,” like “what’s for dinner, March Madness brackets, and what movie to see this weekend,” but we should devote at least some time and attention to thinking about “when to become a parent, with whom, and under what circumstances.” She then presents the list of things that all teens and young adults need to think about before becoming parents:

1. Babies need adult parents.



2. “If it happens, it happens,” is no way to start a family. And “I just never really thought about” it isn’t either.
3. Babies don’t cement relationships; they often put great stress on them. Be sure you are in a solid relationship before you begin a family.
4. Sex has meaning, risks, and consequences. It’s not a casual activity. Take it seriously.
5. Babies don’t give unconditional love; they demand it from the adults around them.
6. Children do best when they are raised by parents who are committed to each other and to years of devoted parenting.
7. *To boys and men*: Making babies doesn’t make you a man. Being a devoted partner and father may.
8. *To girls and women*: Sex won’t make him yours and a baby won’t make him stay.
9. Personal responsibility and parental responsibility mean it’s not just about “me” the adult—it’s also about what’s in the best interests of children, the community, and future generations.<sup>371</sup>

Sarah Brown is positioned here as the ultimate authority on the proper way to budget attention, have sex, become a parent, and navigate a romantic relationship. Her list of insights constructs sex and pregnancy outside the context of a “solid,” “committed,” and long-term relationship (presumably marriage, as much National Campaign discourse presents “cohabiting, unmarried parents” as less than ideal)<sup>372</sup> as reckless, irresponsible, and damaging to babies, children, and future generations. This list reveals that while teenagers are by definition not ready to be parents, adulthood does not necessarily confer readiness. Rather, young adults must be properly situated and their pregnancies must be planned and guided by the right intentions.

While teen pregnancy maintains its status as an unambiguously undesirable phenomenon, the contours of its problematic image are transforming, as I argued in chapters 1 and 2. As teen pregnancy becomes separated from its connections (however tenuous or robust) to structural inequality, national economic demise, and apocalyptic visions of urban decline, its undesirability is tied ever more exclusively to the

inappropriate sex and reproduction that it evidences. Unmarried sex and reproduction, however, are realities that extend well into adulthood. As National Campaign board member and Brookings Institution Senior Fellow William A. Galston argues in his essay “The Changing Twenties,” while people in their teens and people in their 30s experience the same things they did a generation ago, people in their 20s, or in what some have called “the odyssey years,” do not.<sup>373</sup> They are more likely than previously to live on and off with their parents, rely on parents for healthcare, go back and forth between jobs and educational pursuits, not necessarily think of themselves consistently as adults, get married later, and cohabit with significant others. Also, he states, women now complete more post-secondary education than men and their earnings have become more comparable to men’s.<sup>374</sup>

Although Galston does not provide direct evidence of this, he implies that all of these changes contribute to an increased likelihood for people in their twenties to participate in unmarried sex and reproduction, while being less prepared to enter parenthood.<sup>375</sup> He writes, “I don’t think it is an exaggeration to say that the period of young adulthood is to the 21st century what adolescence was to the 20th century, namely, a distinctive new stage of life that both reflects and reshapes long-cycle changes in the economy, society, and demography of our country and it would appear other post-industrial nations as well.”<sup>376</sup> In this way, 20-somethings are constructed as experiencing an “extended adolescence”<sup>377</sup> just as, at the dawning of the category of adolescence, teenagers were considered to be in an extended period of childhood.<sup>378</sup> As such, he claims, people in their 20s are the rightful targets of efforts by the “National Campaign and others in the field.”<sup>379</sup>

Even so, important differences exist in the constructions of adolescence versus the odyssey years. As we have seen, teens are consistently constructed within teen pregnancy prevention discourse as impulsive and risky, not fully aware enough of themselves and the world to avoid dangerous temptations. As such, they require not only guidance in the form of good parenting and instruction from other adults, they also need responsible popular media portrayals, and widely marketable, innovative sexual health campaigns. In contrast, as indicated by the National Campaign website [Bedsider.org](http://Bedsider.org)—the “Birth Control Support Network” geared toward 20-somethings—young adults simply require neatly packaged information on how to have non-procreative sex, so that their path toward preparedness for parenthood, in which they float back and forth between dependence and independence, education and career, and singlehood and monogamy, can be fully realized. While 20-somethings are assumed to be sexually active, teens who have sex are often constructed as lacking self control, responsibility, confidence, knowledge, and resources. Teens are the more urgent and vulnerable subjects in the war against unprepared parenthood, as their engagement in sexual behavior in general is immediately viewed as deviant, reckless, and dangerous. They are also the more accessible and malleable of the two age groups. As Galston points out, most 20-somethings “are living outside of institutions and, therefore, without the structure and norms those institutions provide.”<sup>380</sup> Campaigns to engineer adolescent behavior are thus more straightforward, common, and acceptable.

This is evident in “Aunt Sarah’s” lesson for both “men and boys” on how to become a “man.” It is a convoluted project to instruct a “man” on becoming a “man.” The firm linguistic status of men in their 20s *as men*, indicates a long-standing reality of the

construct of adulthood that makes people in their 20s a somewhat more difficult disciplinary target. For example, in 2006, the Bush Administration made a controversial effort to promote federal funding for abstinence-only programs for people ages 19-29. Resistance to this policy, deemed an “ideological campaign” that “has nothing to do with public health,” by Advocates for Youth president James Wagoner, was felt even by those, such as Sarah Brown, who accept abstinence-only approaches as a legitimate teen pregnancy prevention tool.<sup>381</sup> She states,

[T]he notion that the federal government is supporting millions of dollars worth of messages to people who are grown adults about how to conduct their sex life is a very divisive policy...I think the program should talk about the problem with out-of-wedlock childbearing — not about your sex life...If you use contraception effectively and consistently, you will not be in the pool of out-of-wedlock births.<sup>382</sup>

In this argument, while teens could benefit from having information about contraception withheld from them during conversations about sex, people in their 20s are actually the rightful users of birth control. Brown’s logic maintains that teens are appropriately discouraged from having sex, whereas young adults already automatically have a “sex life,” which ought to be none of the federal government’s concern. Since over ninety percent of “adults ages 20-29 have had sexual intercourse,” she suggests, it is an absurd strategy to encourage them to abstain.<sup>383</sup> Rather, the National Campaign holds, “grown adults” merely require access to information about contraception (and perhaps a little relationship advice from Aunt Sarah) to prevent transgressive citizenship.

These examples reveal the continued status of adolescence as a category uniquely suited to the production of discourses and biopolitical technologies for neoliberal citizenship regulation. Teenagers’ social and legal status as children makes their potential interest and engagement in sex deeply disturbing to the institutions and discourses of

citizenship that hold children to be asexual, vulnerable, unable to give consent, and in need of protection. On the other hand, adolescence is seen as a precarious period of transition, in which concerns with popularity, conformity, and rebellion against authority meld with hormonal mayhem and tendencies toward risky behavior. As such, adolescence appears as a fragile period of citizen formation with dire need for direct and indirect modes of regulation and intervention. Moreover, age categories such as adolescence can signal race, gender, and class neutrality, and are therefore conducive to a neoliberal politics of multiculturalism and privatization. Operating through the apparently equally trend-obsessed, social media-crazed, characteristics of all teenagers, the market-based models of teen pregnancy prevention that I have been describing claim to effectively navigate the difficult terrain of shaping teenagers attitudes and behavior, thereby increasing social and national well-being through the management of teen sexuality.

## **Conclusion**

In conjunction with the book *Managing the Media Monster: The Influence of Media (From Television to Text Messages) on Teen Sexual Behavior and Attitudes*, which can be downloaded for free or purchased for \$15 in hardcopy on the National Campaign website, the organization presents a “Quick Link” to the document “Tips for Working with Media.”<sup>384</sup> This document, geared toward state and local agencies working on teen pregnancy prevention, delineates strategies for utilizing media and constructing easily consumable messages. Instructing advocates to “capitalize on existing opportunities,” “simplify your message,” and “personalize, personalize, personalize,” the document encapsulates some of the founding principles of the post-welfare safety net. The new

biopolitics of teen pregnancy is a coordinated effort to instill values and alter behavior via the flexible, personal, media technologies that already permeate the lives of teenagers and most people of all ages in the U.S.

This new safety net, rather than a set of publicly funded services meant to ease the burden of social inequality and enable the equal participation of all citizens in the dominant standard of living, is built on the notion that individuals are wholly culpable for their circumstances, which arise out of unencumbered choices. While the National Campaign at times advocates for increased access to reproductive services, its funds and efforts are largely wrapped up in its intersecting and mutually enforcing projects of social scientific data generation and media manipulation, aimed at changing the “culture” of sex and reproduction in the U.S. In this framework, what rescues individuals from a life of hardship is not government assistance, but the best, most attractively packaged information. The private sector, rather than the state, is the logical venue for the work of circulating such information. Where an earlier discourse of teenage pregnancy constructed the deviant teenage welfare mom of color, helping to dismantle the already tenuous welfare state, teenage pregnancy now serves to enforce a collective amnesia around welfare reform, erasing questions of race, class, and public accountability from discussions about reproduction, sexuality, and age. This discourse, and the media-based biopolitical regime that disseminates it, work to enforce a form of U.S. citizenship in which abstractly equal adolescent citizens, whose ties to the state and other citizens can and should be mediated through privatized, seemingly transparent and unvested technologies, can achieve proper American adulthood through the effective navigation of their sexual and reproductive lives.

## CHAPTER 4: PATHOLOGY AND PATH-BREAKING: “TEEN PREGNANCY” AND “YOUNG PARENTS” IN NEW MEXICO

### Introduction

Adults must do a better job of reaching the youths who are most likely to wind up pregnant[--] those who have behavioral problems, are reared in dysfunctional families, live in poverty and are failing school, Lehrer said. ‘This is really key to New Mexico’s (teen) birth rate,’ she said. . . “One of the major solutions to teen pregnancy is parents being more parental. Parents need to be sexuality educators for their kids.”<sup>385</sup>

-*Abuquerque Journal*, Jan 30, 2002

In this 2002 *Abuquerque Journal* article, New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition (NMTPC) community liaison, Linda Phillips Lehrer, discusses the high rates of teen pregnancy particularly among “Hispanic teens” in New Mexico. Her discussion, which both names poverty as an important factor in the occurrence of teen pregnancy and fully sidesteps it in her recommendations for prevention, is characteristic of the dominant discourse around teen pregnancy in the state. Every year, as state-by-state teen pregnancy rates are calculated and released, representatives from NMTPC and other interested groups give their analyses of the causes of and solutions to New Mexico’s always higher (and currently highest) rate among the 50 states.<sup>386</sup> Even as the personal and multicultural discourses of teen pregnancy, which I have been tracing in this dissertation, have solidified on the national level, the high rates of teen pregnancies and births in New Mexico have remained the subject of a complex struggle over the contours, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship within the state. The state’s multiple histories and ongoing struggles around colonialism, racism, land appropriation, poverty, and environmental degradation help to create a unique context for the occurrence and politics of teen pregnancy, in which various competing political and social agendas converge and conflict

in a dynamic assemblage that neither reflects nor simply opposes the national politics of teen pregnancy prevention. In this context, pathologizing discourses of sexual and parental responsibility, like that espoused by Lehrer above, exist alongside narratives of neoliberal multiculturalism, as well as activism informed by analyses of structural social inequality.

In this chapter, I attempt to unpack the politics of teen pregnancy in New Mexico, identifying the multiple strands of discourse and the ways they come together and diverge toward varying political ends. Beginning with an overview of the historical processes that have affected and continue to shape reproductive politics in New Mexico, I then turn to a description of the current landscape of programs, policies, services, and funding related to teen pregnancy in the state. With this context, I move on to explore recent state and local media, government documents, and nonprofit advocacy to disentangle the ways that teen pregnancy is both a political tool toward the advancement of intimate citizenship and a site of transformative social critique and activism.

I argue that due to the situated politics of race, class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship in New Mexico, the multicultural discourse of teen pregnancy outlined in chapters 1 and 2 often breaks down or is expressly contested in political and advocacy actions here. With some of the highest rates of teen pregnancy and poverty in the country, and as one of the few “majority-minority” states (states in which nonwhites make up more than half the population),<sup>387</sup> New Mexico is a unique and telling case study. Efforts within the state to improve the educational, economic, and health outcomes of the poorer and more “at risk” populations display a complex interplay of neoliberal cultural logic with other forms of knowledge. They consist of a variety of overlapping strategies that



blur the lines between the judgmental framework of teen pregnancy prevention, rights-based activism on behalf of young parents, and redistributive service provision with varying practical or morality-based missions. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy has significant influence on the public discourse, and policies in place to address the structural factors that make teen pregnancy and parenthood a difficult option are only marginally more robust than those in other states.

A close look at the particular context of New Mexico thus illustrates alternative frameworks for approaching the issue of teenage reproduction, while also confirming the widespread acceptance of dominant national discourses of personal sexual responsibility even where they are challenged substantially. This localized study reveals both the role of neoliberal multiculturalism as an alibi for racial capitalism, as Melamed and others argue, as well as the cracks and fissures in that rationalizing power. In the face of explicit racism on the one hand, and grassroots rights-based advocacy on the other, neoliberal multiculturalism is at least partially exposed as an inadequate framework for explaining and promoting public wellbeing. Nonetheless, teen pregnancy in New Mexico political discourse serves as a vehicle for the continued racialization and stigmatization of poor people of color, and a continued lack of public investment and redistributive programs to address inequalities.

### **Colonialism, Racialized Poverty, and Reproduction in New Mexico**

In order to understand current reproductive politics in New Mexico and their intersections with questions of race, class, and citizenship, it is crucial to review some of the formative historical and ongoing processes that have led to high rates of both poverty and the purportedly deviant familial configurations that are often associated with poverty.

While there is not a direct causal relationship between this history and the present-day politics of teen pregnancy, a brief look at the historical development of racial politics and poverty in New Mexico reveals the central role of discourses about and management of reproductive behavior in the maintenance of inequalities within the state. The colonial history of what is now the state of New Mexico is layered and complex. The territory was originally colonized by the Spanish, then became part of Mexico, and was later colonized by Anglo-Americans and annexed as a territory by the U.S. After an unusually long push for statehood fraught with racial tensions, New Mexico became a state in 1912. Since then, the politics of tourism, uranium, environmentalism, and immigration, as well as ongoing struggles over land and water rights, continue to structure social inequalities in New Mexico.

As the work of scholars such as Ann Laura Stoler, Andrea Smith, and Laura Briggs illustrates, sexual and reproductive conduct have been key mechanisms in the execution of colonial power.<sup>388</sup> This is evident in the many iterations of colonialism in New Mexico. Native American groups living in, as well as coming and going from New Mexico prior to European contact included Pueblo, Apache, Comanche, Navajo, and Ute Indians.<sup>389</sup> Initial Spanish explorations of the area occurred in the 1500s and resulted in Spanish settlement at the turn of the seventeenth century. Native Americans endured the violent consequences of Spanish colonization to various degrees throughout the following two and a half centuries, as ties of servitude, economic exchange, and blood developed between them, peasants of mixed Spanish and indigenous Mexican (referring to what is now Mexico) descent, and colonists of Spanish descent.<sup>390</sup> As James Brooks argues, the relationships between and among the various groups living in the area prior to U.S.

colonization were structured in part through forms of slavery and kinship that resulted from the “exchangeability of women and children.”<sup>391</sup> As Ned Blackhawk also notes, “Captives were overwhelmingly women and children whose sexual and reproductive behavior became essential to the colony.”<sup>392</sup> In this way, gender and reproduction structured relations of subordination, conflict, and cooperation between the internally stratified groups of colonizers and colonized.

As Anglo-Americans began settling in New Mexico, both Native American and Mexican American populations—those of mixed Spanish and indigenous heritage—were the target of reforms. Increasingly throughout the 1800s, the prevailing racial logics that justified slavery and Manifest Destiny, which presented the assumed inferiority of non-European groups as hereditary, began to inform New Mexican politics and culture. In this context, as Laura Gomez and John Nieto-Philips have illustrated, the long history of intermixing between Spanish colonists and indigenous New Mexicans necessitated both a society hierarchized by perceived ethnic heritage, and a campaign to present the elite Mexican American population in New Mexico as purely Spanish.<sup>393</sup> These discourses of Spanish purity, key to the ultimate success of New Mexican politicians aiming to achieve statehood, continue to shape and describe divisions between a relatively powerful “Hispano” elite, and the poorer, discursively browner, Mexican American and Latino people in New Mexico, which include an expanding immigrant population. As Pablo Mitchell illustrates, central to these processes of racialization, which allowed for both the incorporation of New Mexican bodies into the national citizenry and the maintenance of relations of colonialism and inequality for most Native and Mexican Americans, were technologies of discipline that targeted bodily comportment, sexuality, and gender

performance.<sup>394</sup> These histories of Spanish and U.S. colonialism in New Mexico also shed important light on the racial politics and ongoing settler colonial relations within the contemporary politics of teen pregnancy in the state, in which a general institutional focus on “Hispanic” teens often results in the bracketing out of Native American and African American teens altogether in the public discourse.

Accompanying these racial ideologies and technologies of sexual and reproductive discipline were new forms land management, which divested both Native American and Latino people of their livelihoods and set the stage for centuries of struggle over land and resource ownership. Maria Montoya describes the processes by which the varying understandings of land use rights held by Native and Mexican Americans, as well as the Mexican land grants and the usufructory rights that they bestowed on groups of rural New Mexicans after the U.S.-Mexican War, have been rendered invalid through the U.S. legal system.<sup>395</sup> She argues that “landlessness” formed a crucial part of the racialization of impoverished Native and Mexican Americans and fueled the processes by which those groups were dispossessed of land they were considered incapable of properly utilizing.<sup>396</sup> “Indeed,” she writes, “it was important to conflate landlessness with ethnicity as Americans fulfilled their Manifest Destiny to occupy, liberalize, and democratize the open spaces of the American West.”<sup>397</sup> Once conflated with ethnicity, misuse of the land becomes an inheritable trait, which results from either genetic or cultural generational incapacities. Battles over property and land use rights continue to rage in ways that perpetuate discourses of cultural pathology against poor, racialized communities.<sup>398</sup> Racialized poverty and dispossession in New Mexico, then, can be said to be both cause

and symptom of denigrating discourses in which deviant genetics, reproduction, parenting, and/or cultural practices purportedly pass from one generation to the next.

Processes of environmental racism via the military industrial complex and other polluting industries have also contributed to poverty and degradation throughout rural and urban New Mexico, generating racialized conflicts in which employment and survival for impoverished communities of color are conditioned upon land and resource contamination that result in dire generational health effects. The uranium industry in New Mexico, for example, has involved uranium mining; nuclear weapons engineering, testing, and storage; and nuclear waste storage, most of which has occurred in and around marginalized communities who form a core part of the low-wage labor force in these industries.<sup>399</sup> Largely white, mainstream environmentalist movements that have emerged in response to various forms of environmental degradation in New Mexico, as Joseph Masco and Jake Kosek have examined in their research on nuclear and forestry politics, respectively, have often served to further racialize and marginalize the communities that rely on such industries for their livelihoods.<sup>400</sup> In these ways, Native American and Latino bodies in New Mexico have incurred generations-long damaging effects of intertwining material and discursive denigration. Although these processes directly determine neither reproductive behavior itself nor the politics that surround it, they contribute to a context in which there is precedent for both the ongoing intensified stress on the reproductive lives of racialized communities in New Mexico, and for the politics of affirmation and self-determination present in grassroots activism surrounding reproductive issues in the state.

All of these processes, the construction and deployment of racial difference, divestment of land and resources from impoverished communities, and the pollution and destruction of healthy landscapes, hinge upon and contribute to the ongoing interstitial status of New Mexico as both foreign and belonging to the nation. Alyosha Goldstein explains that even after statehood was attained, as poverty increasingly became associated with racialized underdeveloped nations in the mid-twentieth century, New Mexico continued to be understood as a foreign and primitive part of the nation.<sup>401</sup> In her dissertation on reproductive politics in New Mexico between 1919 and 1945, Lena McQuade argues that this interstitiality has been constructed and enforced in part through the notion of New Mexicans' "troubled reproduction."<sup>402</sup> New Mexico has a long history of both having "troubling" reproductive health outcomes, such as high infant mortality rates, and its inhabitant being constructed as "troubled" reproducers for the nation. McQuade traces the "symbolic and material relationships between reproductive outcomes and national belonging," attending to the ways that the reproductive lives of Native and Mexican Americans in New Mexico have been shaped by both neglect and stigma, as a result of federal policy, the professionalization of reproductive health, scientific research on reproduction in New Mexico, and photographic representations of reproducing New Mexicans.<sup>403</sup> In this chapter, I extend this analysis, looking at the ways that current debates about and approaches to teenage pregnancy in New Mexico revise, reiterate, and uphold the stigmas and structural neglect surrounding reproduction, contributing to the status quo of racialized poverty within the state.

At the same time, the marginalization of New Mexico within the nation and of impoverished Native Americans, Latinos, and people of African descent within New

Mexico has engendered grassroots organizing and radical activism to challenge this status quo. Some examples include indigenous resistance to Spanish colonization,<sup>404</sup> a long history of Hispano activism against the Anglo and U.S. government occupation of land in Northern New Mexico,<sup>405</sup> and the forms of organizing that Native and Mexican American reproductive health workers used in response to the rise of institutionalized public health and white women's take-over of reproductive health professions.<sup>406</sup> These counter-hegemonic projects of have historically complicated and disrupted the processes of dispossession that characterize New Mexico's history. The same can be said for the particular politics of teen pregnancy in contemporary New Mexico and, in this chapter, I emphasize the role that grassroots activism on the part of women of color, young parents, and queer families is currently playing in contesting both the pathologizing discourses and structural forces that condition inequalities in New Mexico.

### **Players, Policies, and Programs: Teen Pregnancy in Contemporary New Mexico**

The politics of teen pregnancy in New Mexico is characterized by a complex intertwining of prevention discourses and agendas aimed at curbing sex and reproduction among teens, service provision programs targeting teen parents and youth considered “at risk” for a variety of interrelated so-called problems, and activism geared toward increasing the resources available to and acceptance of pregnant and parenting young people. While there are a great many different organizations, government offices, and politicians participating to various degrees in the politics of teen pregnancy in New Mexico, I focus here on those advocacy and service organizations I identify as the primary players, based on their prominence in the public discourse around teen pregnancy in the news media and legislative debate. These include NMTPC, the New

Mexico Department of Health Family Planning Program (NMDOH FPP), New Mexico Graduation, Reality & Dual-Role Skills (NM GRADS), and Young Women United (YWU). In examining these organizations I use visual and discursive analysis to unpack the politics of their websites, organizational materials, strategies, and public statements. I then briefly discuss state policies and federal funding within New Mexico that pertain to teen pregnancy. Other important voices in these debates, such as those of the prominent advocates of abstinence-only education, abortion prohibition, and bans on the distribution of contraception to minors, will arise in the next section of this chapter, which deals more specifically with the racial and sexual politics of teen pregnancy in New Mexico's recent legislative and media discourses.

One of the most visible players in debates around teen pregnancy in New Mexico is the New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, founded in 1989 and based in Albuquerque. In 2011, NMTPC had five employees and spent \$519,418 on operating costs.<sup>407</sup> Almost two thirds of its funding comes from federal and state government grants and the rest comes from private donors. NMTPC appears to take its cues on policy and strategy from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Although it pre-dates the national organization, it serves as one of the main conduits for National Campaign materials and discourses into New Mexico. For example, the banner at the top of the NMTPC website, ahead of even the name "New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition," contains a large red block with white words saying "Find Out Now" and a link to the National Campaign corporate website.<sup>408</sup> The NMTPC website also contains numerous other links to National Campaign documents and media, reiterates the National Campaign's emphases, discussed in chapter 3, on disseminating "the best and latest



information, training, and research on teen pregnancy,” and foregrounds the role of social networking sites (Facebook and Twitter, specifically) in communicating information about sex and pregnancy to teens.<sup>409</sup>

Despite this obvious relationship, NMTPC’s focus on the particular circumstances of teen pregnancy in New Mexico result in both a greater stress on “improving outcomes for teen parents,”<sup>410</sup> a part of the organization’s explicit mission, and a more concentrated centering of its work on impoverished and Latino communities.<sup>411</sup> Some of its recent program initiatives include the New Mexico Young Fathers Project (supported by Children Youth and Families Department of New Mexico [CYFD]),<sup>412</sup> which aims to “promote social and family stability by improving the quality of father/child relationships in young families and by preventing repeat pregnancies,” the Plain Talk/*Hablando Claro* program geared toward teaching parents and community members how to talk to youth about sex, and a Teen Outreach Program that combines educational activities and community service to steer youth away from “negative youth behaviors.”<sup>413</sup> All of these programs, while in some ways breaking with the national multicultural politics of teen pregnancy by explicitly targeting impoverished Latino youth, continue the long-standing, national trend of attempting to engineer personal and intimate behaviors in communities considered problematic to normative notions of Americanness.

NMTPC also partners with the New Mexico Department of Health Family Planning Program (NMDOH FPP), in a state-run Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program. NMDOH FPP, located in Santa Fe, administers Title X family planning clinics throughout New Mexico,<sup>414</sup> and aims to “promote health and reproductive responsibility” by providing clinic-based family planning services, community outreach, and

education.<sup>415</sup> The Teen Pregnancy Prevention program involves comprehensive sex education, both in and outside of schools, training for those doing teen pregnancy prevention, service learning for youth, and education for parents. Funding for the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program comes in part from the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) funds, discussed in chapter 1, that form part of the federal approach to teen pregnancy in the 2010 Affordable Care Act.<sup>416</sup> The NMDOH FPP website for the program describes NMTPC and links to their website. The website also cites the National Campaign numerous times in a discussion of teen pregnancy statistics in New Mexico<sup>417</sup> and links to Stay Teen (a National Campaign website, discussed in chapter 3), directing youth to take a quiz in honor of the National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (May 1, annually).

Aside from these explicit linkages to the national politics of teen pregnancy, the NMDOH FPP Teen Pregnancy Program website also includes a telling graphic. Next to the description of the program there is a black and white rectangular image (a print ad design) depicting an apparently un-pregnant teen on one side and an apparently pregnant teen on the other, with the words “What’s worse?” at the top, and “Telling him to wait?” above the non-pregnant teen, “or” in the middle, “Telling him you’re late,” above the pregnant teen, and “Sex has consequences,” at the bottom (see Figure 9).<sup>418</sup> This graphic is placed prominently on the website in a way that suggests it is representative of the NMDOH FPP philosophy about teen pregnancy, indicating that teen pregnancy is a personal behavior problem in which teenage girls make the wrong choice in allowing their boyfriends to have sex with them. It falls perfectly in line with the broader intimate

and multicultural politics of teen pregnancy at the national level that I have been tracing throughout this dissertation.



Figure 9. "Late or Wait?" New Mexico Department of Health.

While NMTPC and NMDOH FPP espouse the discourses and implement the strategies that most resemble the current national agenda, which, as I have been arguing, has shifted from one of coded racism and classism to a more multicultural politics of intimate citizenship, other New Mexico-based groups, such as NM GRADS and YWU, have been attempting to shift public discourse in a different direction. NM GRADS, founded in 1989 with a main office in Socorro, NM, is now a statewide school-based program for increasing the graduation rates of teen parents in New Mexico. The organization's mission is to "Facilitate parenting teens' graduation rates and economic independence; Promote healthy multi-generational families; [and] Reduce risk-taking behavior."<sup>419</sup> Throughout most of the organization's history, it has represented itself and been represented as a social service provider aimed at mitigating the damage done by

teen pregnancy. For example, it has been most frequently mentioned in the *Albuquerque Journal* in the context of articles about the disturbing nature of the high rates of teen pregnancy in New Mexico and localities throughout the state.<sup>420</sup> NM GRADS is generally listed among the entities, along with New Futures High School in Albuquerque (the Albuquerque Public Schools’ “school of choice” for pregnant and parenting teens), that are helping to give teen parents a “second chance.”<sup>421</sup> NM GRADS has been described as teaching teen parents how to “balance education and parenting,” implicitly presented as naturally incompatible roles.<sup>422</sup> Both NM GRADS and New Futures are examples of how attempts to provide material assistance to pregnant and parenting teens have historically been framed as rehabilitating teens, rather than as ensuring their basic rights. Recently, however, NM GRADS has emerged as an active public advocate for the educational rights of teen parents, taking part in a broader project of redirecting the discourse and policy around teen pregnancy in New Mexico, and intentionally amending the educational landscape to make it more compatible with parenting.<sup>423</sup>

Spearheading these efforts is YWU, an Albuquerque-based grassroots organization founded in 1999 and run by and for young women of color. Informed at the outset by an analysis of systemic racial, class, gender, and sexuality inequalities in New Mexico, YWU aims to “change the relations of power in Albuquerque.”<sup>424</sup> YWU’s current campaign to alter the discourse around adolescent reproduction and change the structures that deny rights and opportunities to young parents is meant also as a correction to its own historical official discourse on the issue.<sup>425</sup> In the past, YWU has had an explicit teen pregnancy prevention agenda as part of efforts to advocate for comprehensive sex education.<sup>426</sup> In recent years, YWU has eschewed the fundamentally

judgmental prevention framework, which critics argue has had no meaningful effect on teen behavior aside from further isolating and marginalizing teen parents, in favor of one that stresses the need for young people to be able to make “real decisions about their bodies and lives.”<sup>427</sup> Within this framework, teens in rural and urban New Mexico need access to affordable, safe, and confidential reproductive health services in order to make unencumbered choices that may or may not involve the decision to parent. Beyond that, though, as YWU, NM GRADS, and their partners have argued, pregnant and parenting students need policies in place that help them graduate from high school, thereby increasing their prospects for jobs, housing, healthcare, and more.<sup>428</sup> It should be noted that, although NMTPC has historically been one of YWU’s allies, there is no evidence of its substantive participation in any of the efforts to promote the rights of young parents.

In April of 2013, New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez announced that she signed into law the bill that YWU and others had promoted to serve those ends.<sup>429</sup> HB 300, *School Excused Absences for Pregnancy*, creates a mandate for all New Mexico public school districts and charter schools to enact a policy allowing for a minimum of 10 days of excused absence for the birth of a child, and 4 days of excused absence throughout the year for prenatal care and parenting.<sup>430</sup> As I discuss below, this victory was the product of a large-scale mobilization of pregnant and parenting teens, as well as strategic work with both Democrat and Republican state legislators. Although this agenda both addresses some of the shortcomings of the particular structure of public education for dealing with pregnant and parenting teens, and works to replace images of irresponsible, deviant teen parents with those of responsible, hard-working young people,

it makes only a small dent in the structures of inequality that leave many New Mexican families in conditions of poverty.

Aside from HB 300, there is little in the way of state policy aimed at improving the conditions in New Mexico that make being a pregnant or parenting teen difficult. New Mexico's Medicaid program involves a Family Planning Waiver that covers family planning services for up to twelve months for "women of child-bearing age," or 18-50, whose household incomes are up to or below 185% of the poverty level (or \$2,391.13 per month for a family of 2).<sup>431</sup> While this makes family planning services available to many uninsured women, it does not help the plight of sexually active, pregnant, or parenting teenagers under 18 who do not otherwise qualify for Medicaid and do not have access to private insurance. NewMexiKids and NewMexiTeens, the Children's Health Insurance Programs in New Mexico, provide health insurance to minors whose parents earn up to 185% of the poverty level.<sup>432</sup> There is no hard data on how many pregnant and parenting teens in New Mexico are uninsured, but estimates based on data from live births to teens ages 15-19 in New Mexico between 2009 and 2011 suggest that about 24% of teens are uninsured before conception, 9% during pregnancy, and 4.5% at the birth.<sup>433</sup> People in this category could include undocumented immigrants or noncitizens who do not meet immigration eligibility criteria, as well as teens who are disconnected from information about subsidized insurance and/or access to the application process.<sup>434</sup> For those teens, Title X family planning clinics throughout the state, administered by NMDOH FPP, do provide family planning services to many uninsured people in New Mexico.<sup>435</sup> Beyond these more general programs, including some early childhood education programs for impoverished children, many of the proposed policies for allocating material assistance

specifically to pregnant and parenting teens in recent years have not succeeded in the legislature.<sup>436</sup>

New Mexico's TANF program, NM Works, adheres to all of the federal regulations for TANF public assistance programs including time limits, work and school requirements, the mandate for minor parents to live with a parent or guardian, child support enforcement, and sanctions for noncompliance.<sup>437</sup> Providing minimal monetary support conditioned upon extreme regulation of parents' professional and personal choices, NM Works generally constrains rather than enables the choices of adolescent parents. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), the federal policy that enacted TANF in 1996, dictates that states spend Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds at a rate of eighty percent the state's 1995 Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) expenditures. These funds must be spent on programs that support TANF goals, two of which include curbing out-of-wedlock pregnancies and promoting two-parent families.<sup>438</sup> As such, the state of New Mexico has allotted MOE funds (otherwise known as "state TANF funds") to NMTPC and NMDOH FPP.<sup>439</sup> These programs, then, are meant to carry out the mission so crucial to the passage of the PRWORA, discussed in chapter 1, of curbing the occurrence of teen pregnancy. NMTPC and NMDOH FPP have utilized TANF funds to help establish the image of teen pregnancy in New Mexico as a problem of personal choices (which I discuss in more depth below), in keeping with the National Campaign's multicultural discourse of intimate citizenship and their larger redefinition, discussed in chapter 3, of who is responsible for ensuring public well-being. As such, they both directly carry out and

obscure the inevitable consequence of TANF: an ever-increasing deepening of poverty and inequality.

The landscape of federal funding related to teen pregnancy further illustrates how the politics of teen pregnancy in New Mexico is conditioned by the national discourse of intimate citizenship. Besides MOE funds and the PREP funds received by NMDOH FPP, other federal funding for teen pregnancy prevention in New Mexico includes federal abstinence-only education funding, originally part of the PRWORA and TANF reauthorization, but incorporated into the Affordable Care Act of 2010. New Mexico received this funding in the 1990s and then again in 2012, after refusing it for many years as a result of lack of evidence of its effectiveness.<sup>440</sup> This funding must go toward “medically accurate” abstinence “education, mentoring, counseling, and adult supervision,” and is aimed at preventing pregnancy by preventing sex.

Teen Pregnancy Prevention funds, part of President Obama’s Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative, were awarded to New Mexico organizations, Capacity Builders (for replication of an “evidence-based” program) and National Indian Youth Leadership Project (for a new “innovative approach”) both of which engage in teen pregnancy prevention with Native American youth in New Mexico.<sup>441</sup> “Evidence-based” approaches used by Farmington-based Capacity Builders include service learning projects and mentorship targeted at Navajo youth, but open to all children. Their program curriculum involves “values clarification,” “goal-setting,” and “decision-making,” among other things.<sup>442</sup> The Gallup-based National Indian Youth Leadership Project utilizes “experiential education” and “adventure-based” activities to promote service, leadership, and certain values such as being “safe,” setting goals, and “speak[ing] your truth.”<sup>443</sup>



Their teen pregnancy prevention program involves all these elements, including parent education and sex education.<sup>444</sup> These programs appear to follow the dominant logic that teenagers who are taught proper values, have high enough self-esteem, and perceive a productive future for themselves will avoid pregnancy and achieve success. While they may meet a real and felt need within these communities to address the effects of structural violence and erasure, these programs do not directly target the political and economic structures that condition poverty, aside from the possibility that the hardworking entrepreneurial young adults who emerge from these programs might innovate a better job market for future generations.

Pregnancy Assistance Funds, authorized through the Affordable Care Act, are being used in a partnership between the New Mexico Public Education Department, the New Mexico Department of Health, and NM GRADS to increase the effectiveness of NM GRADS in assisting pregnant and parenting teens, including creating a “public awareness campaign” that targets teens and the general public “about the importance of high school completion and other needs of pregnant and parenting teens.”<sup>445</sup> NM GRADS served 613 teen parents in 2012.<sup>446</sup> The number of teen births in 2010 (the most recent year for which this data exists) was 3,872.<sup>447</sup> While these numbers do not provide the precise proportion of New Mexico’s pregnant and parenting teens that NM GRADS is able to serve, they do reflect the reality that there are far more than the Pregnancy Assistance Funds (in combination with the other funding sources for NM GRADS) are able to reach.

The broader picture of federal funding related to teen pregnancy in this state, then, reflects the national mission of managing teenage sexuality via promoting

“responsibility” and abstinence, but also includes assistance to pregnant and parenting teens in the form of material services, such as childcare and healthcare. Although the exact monetary amounts going to each mission are difficult to determine, in part because of the ways that disciplinary technologies are interwoven into programs that also provide services and material assistance to pregnant and parenting teens, the situation in New Mexico exhibits the ways federal funding related to teen pregnancy shapes the programs and services on the state-level, gearing them in large part toward altering personal behavior rather than ameliorating the difficulties that condition the lives of impoverished teenagers, pregnant, parenting, or not.<sup>448</sup>

The current landscape of teen pregnancy politics in New Mexico primarily denigrates and regulates pregnant and parenting teens in ways that reflect and perpetuate historical processes of colonialism, racism, and dispossession. Continuing the ongoing marginalization of New Mexico within the nation, these young families serve as symbols of the state’s exclusion from and failure to live up to national standards and aspirations. They represent a “core problem,” from which a number of other disquieting realities and statistical outcomes are said to originate that place New Mexico in embarrassingly low status in comparison to other states.<sup>449</sup> In the next section, I explore the entangled discourses of intimate citizenship, coded racism, and structural critique suspended within the politics of teen pregnancy in New Mexico, tracing the ways that the particular context of New Mexico disallows either a complete reiteration or eschewing of national narratives.

## **Racism and Rights: The Confused Public Identity of New Mexico's Young Parents**

Looking at state and local news media, government documents, and advocacy materials, I show that the rather clear transformation in teen pregnancy discourse that has occurred on the national level has not succeeded fully in New Mexico. Instead, the politics of teen pregnancy in New Mexico maintains a complex and conflicting set of narratives about the nature and implications of adolescent pregnancy and parenting. The multicultural paradigm of teen pregnancy, in which race and class are empty categories that have no bearing on the lived experience of “too-early” pregnancy and parenting, is less potent in the context of both widespread racialized poverty and a substantial state-wide contingent of critically engaged nonwhite, nonnormative adults and families.

While a multicultural politics of teen pregnancy does exist, in which colorblind and class-blind language renders the problem universally undesirable, there is a more common focus within New Mexico on the exceptionally “high rates” of teen pregnancy among “Hispanic” teens, which fuels a version of intimate citizenship that portrays Latinas, recent Mexican immigrants, and sometimes Native Americans, as pathological through narratives of bad parenting, dysfunctional families, and irresponsible behavior, and mirrors a previous colonial discourse of nonbelonging. Alongside these racist narratives, however, is also an understanding of poverty as a crucial factor in both New Mexico's teen pregnancy rates and many other indices by which New Mexico does not measure up to other states. This foregrounding of poverty at times disrupts discourses of intimate citizenship by highlighting the potential role of structural factors, although it often occurs within accounts that sidestep nuanced analyses of the occurrence of poverty in New Mexico. Finally, another discourse that has gained increasing ground, but not in

total isolation from some of these other logics, is the understanding of pregnancy and parenting as a valid choice for teenagers, and also as a trend that registers a larger set of inequalities that constrain the opportunities and choices of many teens in New Mexico.

As this section will show, a detailed analysis of these various frameworks for understanding teen pregnancy reveals the ways in which groups, individuals, and organizations with different and conflicting views on the issue find themselves forming strategic, sometimes unexpected alliances in the service of achieving mutual goals. The contours of these temporary assemblages highlights the conditions of possibility for public action around issues of racism, poverty, welfare, and reproductive justice set by the national and local iterations of neoliberal multiculturalism and intimate citizenship.

Although substantially challenged, the multicultural discourse of teen pregnancy forwarded by the National Campaign and the Candie's Foundation plays an important role in the politics of teen pregnancy in New Mexico. For example, a 2011 interview with National Campaign CEO Sarah Brown aired on New Mexico's PBS show *New Mexico in Focus* in which Brown recounts the standard National Campaign explanations and solutions to teenage pregnancy within the framework of discussing the particularly severe "problem" in New Mexico. When asked by interviewer Gwyneth Doland what "we," in New Mexico, "are doing wrong," Brown explains, "I mean in sort of a biological sense, what it means is that there is a whole lot of teenagers—a lot of teenagers—having sex, without using contraception, and getting pregnant."<sup>450</sup> Although she goes on to mention that New Mexico "may have some pockets of poverty" and has a "large Native American population, which has always had very very high rates," gesturing toward some of the race- and class-based discourses I discuss below, the bulk of the interview revolves

around explaining teen pregnancy within the frame of intimate behavior in isolation from those categories of difference.

Throughout the interview, Doland's questions seem crafted specifically for the purpose of letting Brown voice the National Campaign's usual talking points as though they are tailored to the particular context of New Mexico. A direct response to Brown's first answer, Doland's second question presents two options as strategies for curbing teen pregnancy in New Mexico. She says, "It strikes me that, in talking about teenagers out there who are having sex, but not using birth control, that there are two things to look at. One of them is, um, trying to get teenagers to not have sex, or trying to get them to use birth control. How are those things related? Which should we be doing? Both?"

According to the wisdom that the National Campaign propagates nationally, geared toward presenting a moderate, bipartisan take on the sex education debate, Brown predictably answers that both are important. She goes on to explain the ways that younger adolescents are "developmentally" more appropriate targets of campaigns to get them to "delay" sex, whereas 18 and 19 year-olds are already having sex at such high rates that it makes more sense to focus on getting them to use contraception. Reiterating a logic that naturalizes constructed life-stage categories, discussed in the previous chapter, Brown implicitly attributes New Mexico's teen pregnancy rates the lack of proper guidance for teenagers at their various stages of development. She goes on, prompted at every step by Doland's questions, to explain the effectiveness of shows like *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* to convey the difficulties of teen pregnancy, the "evidence" that these shows are not glamorizing teen pregnancy, the importance of New Mexico's use of "evidence-based"

practices to address teen pregnancy, and the need to teach parents how to talk to their children about sex.

When asked if school-based daycare centers, which exist in places like New Futures High School in Albuquerque and other facilities in New Mexico, provide incentives for teens to get pregnant or are simply tools to make the lives of teen parents easier, Brown equivocates:

Well, you know, it's a very important question, what is the effect not just on the teenage mothers themselves, but also on the young women in school who haven't gotten pregnant. You know some of them look at these teen mothers and say 'Well wait, why are they getting tutoring and all this extra support? I *don't* have a child and I'm not getting as much help as I need.' There are lots of complicated dynamics.<sup>451</sup>

She continues, saying that, although there hasn't been substantial research to confirm this, she "suspects" that these facilities increase high school graduation for teen mothers, which is "beneficial over time."<sup>452</sup> Without significantly addressing any political, economic, cultural, or other dynamics specific to New Mexico, Brown explains to the *New Mexico in Focus* audience that the state's problem has to do with adults' inability to properly guide teenagers through their adolescence to make the right choices. She applauds National Campaign-approved efforts in place within the state to teach parents and teens about the desired behavior, while casting doubt on attempts within New Mexico to alleviate the material difficulties of teen parents, suggesting that they could even increase teen pregnancy rates. This interview funnels into New Mexico the multicultural politics of intimate citizenship forwarded nationally by the National Campaign and its partners, in which the most effective ways of ensuring the well-being of citizens is by managing teen sexuality, not by providing material assistance or wealth redistribution.

As mentioned above, the main purveyors of National Campaign rhetoric in New Mexico are NMTPC and NMDOH FPP. For example, a handout created by NMTPC and provided on the NMDOH FPP website lists “10 Teen Pregnancy Facts.”<sup>453</sup> It contains statistics about the U.S. teen pregnancy, birth, and abortion rates as highest in the “industrialized world,” New Mexico’s teen birth rate as 3<sup>rd</sup> highest in the nation, and the purported negative health effects and social costs to teen childbearing.<sup>454</sup> The final teen pregnancy “fact” reads “It’s better for everyone when babies are born to adult parents.”<sup>455</sup> An assumption made within the majority of discourse on teen pregnancy in New Mexico and the nation, the idea that babies should be born to adults usually does not even warrant a mention in public discussions of the issue. NMTPC mentions it here to drive home the notion that the list of negative outcomes, including health problems, educational failure, child abuse, incarceration, and costs to taxpayers, are a direct result of the age of the mother at the birth of her child. One “fact” ignored in this list is the well-founded claim that these things are, at best, correlated with each other, rather than being in a causal relationship.<sup>456</sup> While these various statistics might be better explained by an in-depth description of colonialism, structural racism, and neoliberal social policy within New Mexico, this handout presents an analysis of teen pregnancy in which each individual, regardless of race, class, nationality, gender, and sexuality is equally positioned to suffer from too-early pregnancy and parenthood.

Within this framework of multicultural intimate citizenship in New Mexico, there is often an explicit attempt to point out and propose solutions to the inadequacies of New Mexico parents. In the 1999 *Albuquerque Journal* article “Experts: Families Key to Prevention,” then-principal of New Futures High School, Sandy Dixon, explains that

“knowing what your children are up to” is the way to get your children to delay “having sex and children.”<sup>457</sup> In the same article, NMTPC’s Linda Philips Lehrer says teenage pregnancy is an “adult problem.” Although she mentions poverty and education as factors, she does not elaborate on how those things matter. Instead, she says, “Teens are victims of the act of following adult patterns.”<sup>458</sup> In this way, she references a discourse of pathological cycles, discussed in chapter 2, which ultimately comes to replace theorizations of poverty in the context of teen pregnancy in current national discourse. In a *Las Cruces Sun-News* “Healthy Living” piece titled “Parents: Talk with Your Kids about Sex” in 2006, health services social worker Julie Grenko discusses the ways that teen pregnancy has “become more normative in our communities” since she was a teenager, challenging parents to address the issue.<sup>459</sup> Noting that “precursors” to teen pregnancy include “early school failure, early behavioral problems, dysfunctional/distressed families, and poverty,” she ultimately reiterates the solutions outlined by the National Campaign, imploring parents to provide “clear messages” about sex, supervise and monitor their children, know their friends and their friends’ families, and not allow their daughters to date older men.

Another opinion piece in the *Albuquerque Journal* in 2006 echoes these sentiments, explaining the implementation of the Pain Talk/*Hablando Claro* program in the South Valley neighborhood of Albuquerque. Making no mention of the racial or class composition of this neighborhood, one of the poorest in the city, made up mostly of Latinos with a large immigrant population, the author explains that in this neighborhood and some others, “a common problem is that parents are intimidated or too shy and scared to talk about sex with their kids.”<sup>460</sup> Ignoring any role that access to healthcare,



stable employment, or any other structural factors may play in shaping the behaviors, relationships, and outlooks of parents and teenagers, the claim that Plain Talk/*Hablando Claro* can adequately assess and address the issue presents teen pregnancy as solely a matter of parental responsibility. At the same time, the focus on the South Valley as an area filled with particularly “shy and scared” parents displays a subtler version of the race- and ethnicity-based discourses that both disallow a multicultural model of teen pregnancy and deploy a rhetoric of dehumanization so familiar in the long histories of colonialism and racism within the state.

There is a distinct focus, within both national and New Mexico politics of teen pregnancy, on the higher-than-average rates of teen pregnancy and teen births among “Latino” and “Hispanic” youth. The National Campaign, for example, has a “Latino Initiative,” which attempts to understand teen pregnancy within this socially constructed racial group through “cultural” factors, like levels of “acculturation,” “language status,” and “generation status.”<sup>461</sup> Rendering the issue mostly in terms of depoliticized cultural trends, the National Campaign is able to maintain their discourse of intimate citizenship even while foregrounding and constructing racial difference. While the National Campaign largely avoids heavily racialized and pathologizing terms like “dysfunctional” and “chaotic” to describe Latino families, constructing a cleaner, more politically correct version of colorblind politics than was used to describe the racialized welfare population in the mid-1990s, discussions around high rates of teen pregnancy among Latinos in New Mexico contains language more closely resembling that of welfare reform discourse.

Most clearly represented in newspaper coverage of teen pregnancy in New Mexico, explicit discussion of high rates of teen pregnancy among “Hispanics” continues

a long tradition in New Mexico of openly denigrating the reproductive and parenting capacities of poor racialized groups. As Lena McQuade argues, question of the adequacy of Mexican American reproductive and parenting practices characterized debates about New Mexican statehood and continued to inform policy and public health practices in the state after statehood was granted in 1912.<sup>462</sup> In contemporary teen pregnancy politics, Hispanic parents and youth are often constructed as irresponsible, ignorant, and otherwise deficient. In the *Albuquerque Journal* in 2004, after mentioning that Hispanics have the highest rates in New Mexico and the nation, Sylvia Ruiz, executive director of NMTPC, states that “risk factors” for teen pregnancy include “low school achievement” and “chaotic” families.<sup>463</sup> Similarly in 2002, Linda Philips Lehrer is quoted saying, “It’s very clear our Hispanic youths are experiencing the brunt of our teen-pregnancy problem,” and goes on to reference how “serious and entrenched” the problem is, noting that it is a “core issue” contributing to “child abuse, distressed families, and poverty.”<sup>464</sup> She ultimately concludes, as noted in the quotation in the beginning of this chapter, that the issue is one of parents needing to be “more parental.” Just as Lehrer paints Hispanic parents as deeply un-parental, numerous articles on teen pregnancy conclude, implicitly and explicitly, that Hispanic parents are uninvolved, do not adequately value education, are afraid to talk to their kids about sex, and convey outmoded religious and cultural values to their children in which birth control, abortion, and adoption are not real options.<sup>465</sup>

As was often the case in the discussions of teen pregnancy during the welfare reform debates of the mid-1990s, discussed in chapter 1, these pathologizing narratives about poor families of color often contained within them at least a gesture toward the role

of structural forces in the lives of these families. Such continues to be true of discussions of Hispanic teen pregnancy rates in New Mexico, despite the shift away from these tropes on the national level.<sup>466</sup> Even in many of the examples of attempts at multicultural politics above, experts on teen pregnancy in the state find it difficult to avoid mentioning poverty as a factor, although it ultimately goes completely unanalyzed. In the many articles that expressly deal with the rates of Hispanic teen pregnancy, experts attempt to describe the issue with a mixture of cultural, personal, and structural explanations that both draw upon racist tropes and reference race-based social inequality. A close reading of the 2006 *Albuquerque Journal* article “Fragile Motherhood - Teen Pregnancy: Rates in New Mexico are Highest Among Hispanics,” elucidates this convoluted approach to explaining Hispanic teen pregnancy.<sup>467</sup>

The article begins by quoting a presumably-Hispanic, Albuquerque mother stating that Hispanic parents should talk to their teens about sex. The author then recounts a long list of “theories” about why Hispanics have higher rates. “Some say Hispanic teen pregnancy rates are tied to religious beliefs, or poverty. Others blame broken homes, a lack of role models, limited education and resources, poor teen-parent communication, peer pressure and, far too often, a combination of these factors.”<sup>468</sup> Although “poverty” and “limited education and resources” form important counterparts to the denigrating language of “broken homes” and (backwards) religious beliefs, no mention is made of reasons Hispanic teens might suffer from these things, including heavily segregated and unequal public schools, disinvestment in public infrastructure and welfare programs, and the flexibilization of racialized low-wage labor markets.

Instead, the article continues in a vein that combines a racist discourse of faulty Hispanic culture with the logic of intimate citizenship. NMTPC's Sylvia Ruiz is quoted as saying that Hispanic families do not "frown upon" teen pregnancy as much, and that it is a "cyclical" problem.<sup>469</sup> It is not, however, that teens consciously try to get pregnant, Ruiz maintains, but that they are "developmentally" interested in "love, romance or affection—especially if they are coming from a dysfunctional family or lacking love and attention at home." Employing the logic of naturalized developmental stages, Ruiz suggests that Hispanic teens get pregnant because their parents do not love them adequately for the needs of their age group. Concluding that section of the article, the author references a 2005 study done by the national think tank Child Trends, which concluded that Hispanics' "lower educational attainment" and "lower income levels" than non-Hispanics put them more at risk for teen pregnancy. In this way, Hispanics are framed as in their teen pregnancy predicament in part due to poverty. However, since their poverty is left unexplained, the reader is able to attribute it to the various tropes of cultural and parental deficiency scattered throughout the article.

The article goes on to interview two Hispanic teen mothers, one having had "many sex education talks" with her mother, and the other, a child of parents only recently reconciled after a separation, having had none. Both young mothers are daughters of teen mothers. The article quotes them talking almost exclusively about sex: their decisions to have sex, their prior knowledge of sex, how many of their peers are having sex. It is suggested that the girl who had knowledge of sex via conversations with her mother still chose to have sex because her boyfriend wanted to and "a lot of other girls" were doing it, thinking they would not get pregnant. These stories, in combination

with the advice offered in the next section to “parents” by a former teen mom about the importance of talking about sex with your teens, portray teen pregnancy among Hispanics to be a matter of precisely those familial factors listed above: broken homes, inadequate parenting, peer pressure.

The article continues by discussing the role of Catholicism in both conditioning and potentially solving the problem of Hispanic teen pregnancy rates, and interviewing the then-principal of New Futures, who names poverty as the “key cause” of teen pregnancy, but is then quoted substantially about the importance of good “role models” and “parental involvement,” and her knowledge of the “cyclical nature of teen pregnancy.” It concludes with statistics about Hispanic teen pregnancy rates and a list of “strategies to curb Hispanic teen pregnancy,” which include targeting Hispanics with Spanish-language, culturally “sensitive” materials and programs that encourage abstinence, changing “attitudes” about teen pregnancy, emphasizing the importance of contraception, and “supporting” teen mothers. Although making reference to realities of race-based inequalities that structure the reproductive behavior of Hispanic teens in New Mexico, this article ultimately reinforces the racist notions that impoverished Hispanics are dysfunctional, culturally backward, and lacking parental skills, and are therefore perpetuating a deep-seated problem that plagues the state. Accordingly, effective approaches to teen pregnancy prevention among Hispanics require cultivating a kind of “sensitivity” that allows for the active alteration and management of attitudes and behaviors around sex. What it means to “support” teen mothers is left wholly unexplained.

At the same time that an explicit focus on racialized poverty in the context of teen pregnancy politics in New Mexico both disrupts the national multicultural discourse of teen pregnancy and engenders racist narratives of cultural pathology, this focus has also helped to produce a substantive structural critique of social inequalities in the state. This structural critique is part and parcel of an affirmative discourse of adolescent parenthood, which both conditions and is aided by an increased presence of young parents' voices in the public discourse. As noted, even within the dominant discourse of NMTPC, poverty is frequently mentioned as a primary cause, rather than just an effect, of teen pregnancy. For instance, in a 2011 presentation to the Legislative Health and Humans Services Committee on New Mexico's teen pregnancy situation, Sylvia Ruiz lists "teen birth rates and poverty," "per capita personal income," "children under 18 living in poverty," and "children living in poverty are at higher risk for teen pregnancy," as the first four items under "Risk Factors for Teen Pregnancy."<sup>470</sup> Although her presentation goes on to make the usual recommendations for programs that target parent-teen communication and service learning for youth, she also recommends increased family planning services and increased "opportunities" provided by "business."<sup>471</sup> A dominant public discourse like this, in which the foremost player within the politics of teen pregnancy foregrounds the important roles of access to healthcare and jobs in conditioning reproductive behavior, helps create the conditions of possibility for a much more trenchant analysis of social inequalities than exists on the national level.

That more trenchant analysis has become increasingly part of the public discussion in 2012 and 2013, but has existed for decades among those who work directly with pregnant and parenting teens. In keeping with Lena McQuade's account of New

Mexico's long history of reproductive health advocacy and activism on the part of women and families of color, many professionals working in the field of healthcare and education for pregnant and parenting teens have a sustained interest in resisting dominant narratives about teen pregnancy.<sup>472</sup> Evidence of a relatively long tradition of affirmative discourse around teen pregnancy can be found in the book *Teenage Pregnancy: A New Beginning*, written by New Futures educators and health professionals and published by New Futures, Inc., a nonprofit that supported New Futures High School and was dissolved in 2010.<sup>473</sup> This book, originally published in 1983 and revised numerous times until its last revision in 2006, provides a guide to teen parents on how to navigate sexuality, pregnancy, birth, and motherhood. Toni Berg, one of the contributing authors and an employee of New Futures High School since the mid 1970s, notes that this book was one of the "first of its kind," in that it was comprehensive, nonjudgmental, "supportive," and "not superficial or condescending."<sup>474</sup> The book incorporates the words of New Futures students talking about their pregnancies and their experiences as mothers. It also contains encouraging words about dealing with the interventions of people who "still want to treat you like a child," and advises students to do "what seems best in your situation."<sup>475</sup> The authors write,

"We believe that you can become the person you want to be and make it in life. But it's not enough for us to believe in you. You need to believe in yourself. You have a choice about this: You can put yourself down for this pregnancy. If you do, you can expect to be unhappy...or you can accept it as a chance to grow. If you do, you can come out knowing yourself better and feeling more confident than before. The choice is yours!"<sup>476</sup>

An obvious effort to help pregnant and parenting teens resist the negative effects of widespread denigration of their personal choices, parenting skills, and general role in society, the authors suggest that pregnancy and motherhood can actually be

transformative in a productive and positive way for adolescents. This book appears to represent the work of many professionals and teen parents in New Mexico working for decades to combat the politics of shame and stigma that both displace meaningful public discussion of social inequalities, and help to deepen those inequalities.

Some more recent work in this regard has taken this agenda to more public and prominent forums. As mentioned above, YWU, NM GRADS and others, including the American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico (ACLU-NM), have been organizing in recent months to change the terms of the discussion around teen pregnancy in New Mexico (see Figure 10). YWU policy and resource director Micaela Cadena explains that YWU and its allies are interested in “creating a more nuanced dialogue on young families in New Mexico,” and “pushing back on the stigmatizing framework.”<sup>477</sup> Part of that effort has involved moving away from the term “teen parents,” which holds decades of denigrating cultural baggage, and replacing it with “young parents” or “pregnant and parenting students,” in the case of their campaign for education reform. Cadena explains that YWU wants to place emphasis on people’s parenting status and their families, rather than their age, because “people of all ages deserve access to the information, education, and resources they need to make decisions about their bodies and lives.”<sup>478</sup> Inherent in this agenda is an understanding of the lack of such information, education, and resources for young people across the state due to poverty, lack of transportation, education discrimination, a dearth of livable-wage jobs, and environmental degradation that affects people’s health and livelihoods.



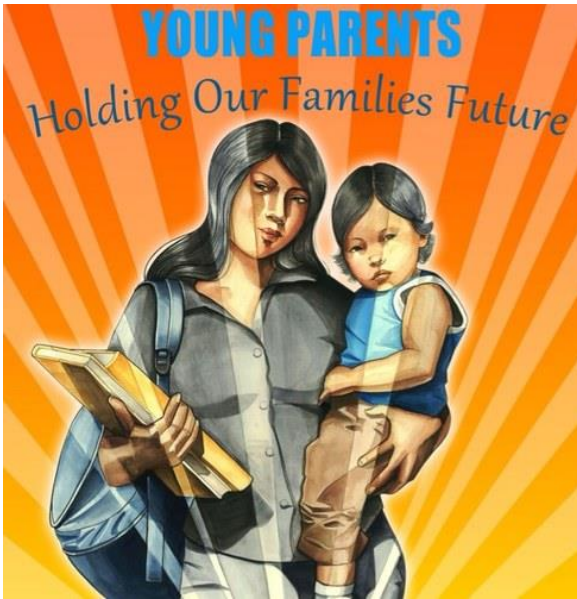


Figure 10. "Young Parents." Young Women United.

In a blog post on the national ACLU blog *Blog of Rights*, YWU argues that instead of blaming teen parents for their poverty and the lower amount of tax dollars they typically pay due to their low-wage employment, the public should recognize the ways that pregnant and parenting students are being pushed out of school and therefore doomed to such low wages. Advocating for education reform that will increase pregnant and parenting students' abilities to graduate from high school, the authors write, "Meaningful change in the lives of all young people is rooted in equal access to educational opportunities, living wage jobs, affordable healthcare, and safe housing."<sup>479</sup> This phrasing is also a part of the New Mexico Senate Memorial "Recognizing the Contributions of Young Parents in New Mexico and Designating August 25, 2012 as a Day of Recognition of Young Parents," which was drafted by YWU and passed on January 30, 2012.<sup>480</sup> This memorial, geared toward recognizing and emphasizing the humanity of teen parents, both draws on categories such as "responsible" and "contributing" community members as though they are unproblematic (always gesturing

toward those who could be understood as irresponsible and a drain on their communities), and emphasizes the negative effects of teen pregnancy prevention programs and cuts to public programs for families in New Mexico on young families. This memorial, unanimously passed in the New Mexico Senate, makes an important contribution toward the alteration of public discourses surrounding teen pregnancy, priming the legislature for the policy changes that YWU and its allies successfully lobbied for at the end 2012 and beginning of 2013.

Pioneering grassroots advocacy for the rights of pregnant and parenting teens, YWU and its allies, including Republican anti-abortion Senator Alonzo Baldonado, promoted House Bill 300 (HB300), mentioned above, which mandates excused absences for pregnant and parenting students. Key to the passage of this bill was the bipartisan work done to ensure that it could be understood as both pro-young parents and anti-abortion. For instance, Baldonado, as one *Las Cruces Sun-News* article notes, “said he would ask 14- or 15-year-old girls not to terminate a pregnancy. Therefore, he said, he wanted to make available the tools to help teenage mothers succeed in school.”<sup>481</sup> While this successful attempt at bipartisanship in some ways resembles the consensus-building strategies of the National Campaign, discussed in chapter 3, the outcome is a change in the structure of public education to ensure the rights of teen parents, rather than the production of a heteronormative discourse about the morality of abortion and contraception. At the same time, since YWU is an openly pro-choice organization, advocating for comprehensive reproduction freedom that involves the full range of reproductive options ensured through safe, affordable access, their partnership with Baldonado illustrates the limited horizon for an affirmative discourse of young

parenthood.<sup>482</sup> Similar to the proposed federal Reducing the Need for Abortions Initiative discussed in chapter 1, this alliance confirms that the only publicly acceptable context in which to make structural changes enabling reproductive justice is an anti-abortion one.<sup>483</sup>

The various oppositional responses to the bill make the conceivable boundaries of public discourse surrounding pregnancy and abortion even clearer. The bill's bipartisanship did not prevent politicians and community members from framing it in ways that mobilized the market-based logic of welfare reform. Just as welfare reformers, like those discussed in chapters 1 and 3, argued that an entitlements-based welfare program encouraged out-of-wedlock and teen pregnancy, critics of HB300 viewed it as creating incentives for teenagers to get pregnant due to the special treatment they would receive. Reiterating the logic that Sarah Brown gestured toward in regard to daycare centers in schools on *New Mexico in Focus*, Representative Dennis Roch (Republican from Texico, New Mexico) decries the passage of HB300 in the state House, saying "When we make it easy for people to make bad choices, they make bad choices."<sup>484</sup> Teen pregnancy, he maintains, is about personal choices, suggesting that "special considerations," as Republican Representative from Albuquerque Monica Youngblood puts it will only increase the number of, rather than improve the outcomes for, teen parents.<sup>485</sup> Despite the presence of this common narrative, which hearkens back to the specific welfare reform agendas of disincentivizing teenage childbearing through the complete denial of public assistance to teenage parents, the bill passed and was signed into law by the Republican governor in April of 2013. Given the continued pathologization of racialized communities of poverty in New Mexico through the politics

of teen pregnancy, the campaign for HB300 is notable for the ways it overcame that discourse, if some what quietly.

One of the most important factors in passing this bill appears to have the participation of pregnant and parenting teens, themselves, in the advocacy. In November of 2012, a group of advocates reported on educational barriers for pregnant teens before the New Mexico Legislative Educational Study Committee (LESC). The group included Sally Kosnick (executive director of NM GRADS), Jinx Baskerville (current principal of New Futures High School), and Carrie Robin Menapace (legislative liaison and policy analyst for Albuquerque Public Schools).<sup>486</sup> Kosnick presented on national educational outcomes for pregnant and parenting teens, and then outlined the much improved outcomes for pregnant and parenting teens served by NM GRADS, illustrating the point that this population is capable and willing to finish high school, but requires the appropriate support. She then introduced two teen mothers, Melissa Romero and Eilsiana Montoya, who discussed their own experiences and what they viewed as necessary next steps. Romero, for example, “said that all students deserve respect and a good educational foundation,” while Montoya said she “wants to be a good provider for her daughter.”<sup>487</sup> Although these young parents are not quoted at length in the LESC meeting minutes, that they were present, had the opportunity to speak, and emphasized their rights and future goals as members of society and parents, is arguably crucial to the larger goal of combating the longstanding pathologizing, dehumanizing discourses that pervade public conversations of teen pregnancy in New Mexico.

After the two teen parents spoke, Kosnick introduced Cadena, who reported to LESC about the focus group YWU had formed of 40 teen parents from across New

Mexico. She noted that these young parents overwhelmingly wished “to be treated as members of the community, not teen parents.”<sup>488</sup> In this way Cadena both models a humanizing approach to the issue of teen pregnancy, foregrounding the importance of understanding the experiences and desires of pregnant and parenting teens, and emphasizes their own apparent understanding of the label “teen parent” as a dehumanizing one. With its roots in the welfare reform discourse of the 1980s and 1990s, itself a response in part to the welfare rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s in which welfare recipients organized and advocated for their own rights,<sup>489</sup> the label of “teen parent” was part of a broader denigration of the welfare population and devaluing of their participation in public discourse. As Holloway Sparks notes in her study of welfare reform discourse of the mid 1990s, welfare recipients made up an extremely small portion of legislative witnesses and were largely ignored in the media.<sup>490</sup> Ange-Marie Hancock argues that the public identity of the “welfare queen” has contributed to a broad devaluing of the public participation for welfare recipients in political debate.<sup>491</sup> These realities create a vicious circle in which the pathologizing rhetoric of welfare reform went largely unchallenged, which helped discredit the input of recipients attempting to participate in public discourse, which enforced the lack of such input, which ultimately shored up and left unchallenged the pathologizing rhetoric.

In this current New Mexico debate about the rights of pregnant and parenting teens, the racialized stigmatization of teen pregnancy and parenting has been significantly challenged by the kind of teen-parent participation that occurred before the LESC. NM GRADS has played a crucial role in facilitating such participation on the part of pregnant and parenting teens in the public discourse surrounding HB300. February 6, 2013 was

NM GRADS Day and Young Parents Day of Action at the New Mexico State Legislature. On that day, over 100 NM GRAD teen parents met with legislators and media representatives in Santa Fe, NM, discussing their lives, the challenges they face, and the ways that NM GRADS has helped them graduate from high school and get the healthcare they need.<sup>492</sup> These parents, along with representatives from NM GRADS and YWU, came from all over the state, some with their children and some without, to advocate for HB300. These organizations publicized the event, posted photos of young families interacting with legislators on their social media websites, and promoted the participation of teen parents in the political process and public discourse relating to their lives.

Although NM GRADS and YWU ensured that pregnant and parenting teens were able to successfully advocate for themselves at the state capitol, mainstream New Mexico media coverage of teen pregnancy during this time period did not reflect this, choosing instead to focus mainly on opposition to HB300 or ignore it altogether. A report on the Albuquerque news program *KOAT Action 7 News* on March 11, 2013, involves an interview with one teen parent, Gladys Rivera, who has not gotten her diploma yet at age 19. She is quoted saying that she would have been able to spend more time bonding with her daughter if that policy had been in place.<sup>493</sup> The program then interviews another, apparently white, teen parent who opposes the bill, saying, “We need to be promoting responsibility. When I was pregnant, I didn’t just get time off. I had to step up to the responsibilities.”<sup>494</sup> The report culminates in a progress report on an ongoing poll on KOAT.com, asking “Should NM students get maternity leave?” in which 82% of responders answered “No.”<sup>495</sup> The segment presents an overall picture of the bill as

having very little public support as a result of instituting special treatment for teen parents who, if they are hardworking, do not really need it. In this report, the hardworking teen parent is represented implicitly as white.

A February 26, 2013 report on *KOB Eye Witnessnews 4*, focusing on New Mexico's status as the state with highest rate of teen pregnancy in the country, interviews one teen parent, Monique Olivas, who had been a "star student," but had to "give up a full scholarship to become a mother." Olivas is quoted saying that "Your life changes in a matter of a moment that you find out your pregnant," and that in Northern New Mexico, "you are kind of judged and put down because you are a teen mom."<sup>496</sup> Although Olivas may or may not have elaborated on the injustice of this judgment and the material effects of it on people's lives, her comments in the report suggest that the isolated act of getting pregnant ruins an otherwise bright future. Despite the timing of the report, no discussion of rights to education for pregnant and parenting teens occurs, and questions as to why Olivas had to give up her full scholarship are raised.

Instead, the KOB report cuts to an interview with NMTPC's community liaison, Jessica Tafoya, who answers the question of why New Mexico's rates are so high by explaining, "Well they're saying that our kids are, um, are engaging in risky behavior at a very yearly age. They're participating in, um, behaviors that have really hard consequences." Listing poverty, lack of sex education, and "cultural and religious influences" as factors in New Mexico's high rates, Tafoya ultimately points to immigration as an important contributor. In regard to Doña Ana County, which has the highest teen pregnancy rates in New Mexico, she states, "Yes it is poverty, um but we, but because it's also a border state, a border county, we have a lot of families that are

migrating into that county.” Without any further elaboration, Tafoya’s comments suggests that immigrants from Mexico, with their particular cultural and religious characteristics, are (re)producing New Mexico’s continued marginal status within the nation. The report concludes having made no mention of HB300, NM GRADS Day and Young Parents Day of Action at the legislature, the New Mexico Day in Recognition of Young Families, or any other affirmative discourse about the rights and humanity of pregnant and parenting teens.

KOB’s coverage of HB300 is similarly unconcerned with representing the pregnant and parenting teens who participated in legislative debates around the bill. Titled “Bill to Give Maternity Leave for Middle Schoolers Makes its Way through Legislature,” the report focuses on the views of one white male teacher, Ryan Angell of Albuquerque, who explicitly ties his rate of pay to the test scores of the students who miss school for pregnancy and parenting. He asks, “When are they going to do the make-up work?” suggesting, implicitly, that pregnant and parenting teens are not going to do that work (despite the fact that the law allows schools to enforce consequences when students do not complete it within the same number of days they missed), and that this will ultimately result in their poor test scores and his lower salary.<sup>497</sup> Providing a logic very similar to the valorization and purported victimization of the “taxpayer” by welfare recipients in welfare reform discourse, Angell casts HB300 as a misguided punishment for hardworking teachers. Moreover, KOB, through its foregrounding of “middle schoolers,” presents HB300 not as a bill ensuring the rights of pregnant and parenting teens, but suggests that it is a perverse accommodation of deviant children.



While some other examples of public and alternative media coverage of issues related to teen pregnancy and parenthood do include the largely unedited voices of teen parents,<sup>498</sup> mainstream, corporate media in New Mexico largely chooses sound bites from pregnant and parenting teens that reflect standard narratives of hardship associated with too-young pregnancy and parenting. These sound bites are generally framed, as is evident from the KOAT report and newspaper articles discussed above, by explanations from local experts—almost always NMTPC—engaging tropes of racial and class pathology alongside discourses of multicultural and intimate citizenship. From these portrayals it is clear that, although transformative work is being done through grassroots organizing and legislative advocacy, the public identity of teen parents in New Mexico is primarily constructed through a convoluted collision of carefully constructed, self-conscious, National Campaign-influenced rhetoric of personal responsibility and intimate choices, and narratives of racial, cultural, and sexual deviance structured by both welfare reform rhetoric of the 1980s and 1990s, as well as centuries of conquest, conflict, inequality, and degradation in New Mexico.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have outlined the current public discourse surrounding teen pregnancy in New Mexico, arguing that the particular context of this marginalized state offers important insights about the power and endurance of local discourses of racialized pathology in the face of a national agenda to remake teen pregnancy as a multicultural issue of intimate citizenship. Equally important, this chapter also illustrates the power and endurance of both of those discourses in the face of targeted, strategic, well-executed grassroots activism on behalf of young parents. While such activism may foreclose the

possibility of teen pregnancy prevention tactics of the likes of New York City's recent controversial poster campaign, which are based in an overt politics of shame and humiliation for pregnant and parenting teens relating to narratives of poor education, relationship skills, and parenting,<sup>499</sup> the overall material and discursive situation for pregnant and parenting teens in New Mexico differs little from those of other states. There is a distinct lack of material support and policy addressing the systemic inequalities that condition reproductive choices in New Mexico.

As in other states, the TANF program continues its very marginal and conditional support of young impoverished families. Debates about the morality of making contraception accessible in public schools prevent teens from accessing the reproductive healthcare they need. Larger processes of structural and environmental racism, disinvestment in public infrastructure, police brutality, and high incarceration rates continue to enforce the precise inequalities that are regularly named as integral parts of New Mexico's teen pregnancy "problem." The ultimate overriding formulation of that problem in the terms set by national debate, in which unruly teen sex and inadequate parenting ruin young lives and national futures, supports the ongoing extreme social stratification set in motion by the forces of colonialism and western territorial expansion. At the same time, it is undeniable that New Mexico is leading the nation in advocacy on behalf of pregnant and parenting teens.<sup>500</sup> While HB300 only chips away at the structural barriers to reproductive equality, and does so at the expense of an affirmative politics of abortion, it is an approach to teen pregnancy in which attempts to alter teenage sexual behavior with values-based campaigns are eschewed in favor of tactics altering institutional circumstances that constrain the lives of impoverished young families. It

both signals new possibilities for tactics and discourses aimed at changing the politics of teen pregnancy and points to the limits for such change within the current neoliberal context that upholds intimate citizenship, heteronormativity, multiculturalism, and market rationality as its governing logics. The politics of young parenthood in New Mexico helps prove that teen pregnancy continues to be an indispensable instrument to the neoliberal state and its goal of public disinvestment in both the national and the more localized context.

## **CONCLUSION: THE LIMITS AND POTENTIALS OF POST-WELFARE TEEN PREGNANCY**

On March 3, 2013, Michael Bloomberg, mayor of New York City, announced a new teen pregnancy prevention campaign that has sparked heated debate about teenage reproduction, its connection to poverty, and the merits of shaming as a tool of social reform. Titled “Cost of Teen Pregnancy,” the campaign uses print ads, texting, and a YouTube PSA, attempting to dissuade teenagers from getting pregnant by sharing the “consequences” of teen pregnancy.<sup>501</sup> The bus shelter and subway ads each feature a distraught-looking baby with one of the following quotations:

Honestly mom...chances are he won't stay with you. What happens to me?  
Dad, you'll be paying to support me for the next 20 years.  
Got a good job? I cost thousands of dollars each year.  
I'm twice as likely not to graduate high school because you had me as a teen.  
If you stay in high school, get a job, and get married before having children, you have a 98% chance of not being in poverty.<sup>502</sup>

On the national stage, the ads have been lauded for telling the “truth” about teen pregnancy and criticized for publicly shaming teen parents.<sup>503</sup> I conclude this dissertation with a discussion of this campaign because it bears striking resemblance to the politics of teen pregnancy discussed throughout, while differing in some crucial and telling ways. As such, and in keeping with the analysis in chapter 4, it sheds light on the reach, the endurance, and the limitations of the post-welfare politics of teen pregnancy.

Drawing on the statistical magic of social scientific research like that discussed in chapter 3, the campaign suggests that high school dropout, single parenthood, and poverty are direct results of irresponsible teen sex.<sup>504</sup> As Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs explains, “We know that teens can be impulsive and some impulsive behaviors have

greater consequences than others.” She goes on to name “unprotected sex” as “one of those behaviors” that has higher consequences, because it “can lead to teen pregnancy.”<sup>505</sup> Following the logic of intimate adolescent citizenship outlined in the previous chapters, the campaign is founded on a construct of adolescence as a particularly irresponsible and reckless life stage. Moreover, the campaign relies on the notion that teens are fundamentally consumeristic and trend-obsessed. The YouTube video features a young Black man explaining to the audience that teen dads don’t have “money left over for new kicks and video games.”<sup>506</sup> With teenagers understood as both volatile and materialistic, the logical way to manage them is, again, by delivering the proper instruction on achieving normalcy via the management of sex. As New York’s Human Resources Administration Commissioner Robert Doar states, “We cannot dictate how people live their lives, and sometimes even the best plans don’t work out, but we must encourage responsibility and send the right message, especially to young people.”<sup>507</sup> Whether because young people are the easiest targets for such “encouragement”—Gibbs suggests that teens need to be “guide[d] toward healthier decisions”—or because they appear as the most urgent subjects of sexual regulation in the post-welfare paradigm of citizenship, they stand out in as the prime audience for such instruction.

In the face of critiques that these ads forfeit accurate information about teen pregnancy, sex, and contraception in favor of scare tactics and public shaming, proponents of the campaign maintain that the problem necessitates such strategies. An opinion piece in the *Chicago Tribune* that is also posted on the National Campaign’s corporate website reads:

Planned Parenthood’s Morales says the New York poster campaign misunderstands [the] cycle. “It’s not teen pregnancy that causes poverty,

but poverty that causes teen pregnancy,” she told the *New York Times*. Actually, it’s teen sex that causes teen pregnancy. We’re pretty sure the teens know that. There’s no point in sugarcoating the challenges that follow.<sup>508</sup>

In keeping with the pop expertise of Dr. Drew, the author blames an unsituated and abstract “teen sex” for “teen pregnancy,” which appears as a problem in and of itself, whether it causes poverty or not.

Along with these important similarities to the dominant teen pregnancy politics I have been discussing, this campaign is also built around the notion of the “success sequence.” Bloomberg states, “By focusing on responsibility and the importance of education, employment and family in providing children with the emotional and financial support they need, we’ll let thousands of young New Yorkers know that waiting to have children might be the best decision they ever make.”<sup>509</sup> Presupposing that having children is an unambiguously free “choice,” Bloomberg echoes Ron Haskins, Isabel Sawhill, and Sarah Brown in their formula for achieving the American Dream—simply plan and situate your reproductive activities properly. With the 2013 U.S. Supreme Court decision to overturn the Defense of Marriage Act, this is no longer an option that by definition excludes same-sex couples, but it nonetheless perpetuates and condones the heteronormative structures and discourses that privilege and naturalize white, middleclass domesticity, while pathologizing, neglecting, and punishing everything else.

While this campaign utilizes some of the same tactics and justifications as the national teen pregnancy discourses in *16 and Pregnant*, *Stay Teen*, and other venues, it differs somewhat in its implied target audience. Rather than relying on teens to have the spending cash and leisure time for cable television, fashion magazines, and hours surfing the internet, this campaign primarily targets users of public transit. The posters can be

seen at bus stops and on subway trains throughout the five boroughs. In this way, given that most teen pregnancy occurs in poor communities who would be more likely to utilize public transit than own a car, the ads seem designed both, as some critics have argued, to shame actual teen parents, or as an acknowledgement that poverty is in fact a conditioning factor in the occurrence of teen pregnancy. Even with this implicit acknowledgement, however, and the more explicit focus on the existence of poverty and high school dropout within the ads, the campaign is an important tool for instruction on both intimate citizenship and the privatized safety net of neoliberalism. For instance, the texting game provides teenagers who text “NOTNOW” to 877877 with a narrative about “the real cost of teen pregnancy,” in which a girl gets pregnant and becomes socially isolated.<sup>510</sup> Miriam Pérez, writing for the reproductive justice publication *RH Reality Check*, notes that the game is filled with scenarios about the character Anaya “being ignored by her ‘babydaddy’ and shunned by her parents.”<sup>511</sup> Texters can also choose to follow a boy character through his own personal turmoil after becoming a teen dad. In order to experience the full effects of this campaign then, teens must ride public transit, have access to a mobile phone, and have a text-messaging plan that accommodates multiple exchanges with this interactive service. In this way, the campaign is likely actually meant to reach a wide swath of impoverished and affluent teenagers, some of whom will simply see the posters, while others will spend the time and resources to play the texting game.

The babies in the posters provide further evidence as to whom the ads are targeting. Each ad features a different small child, one appearing white, one Black, and two others interracial (presumably white and Black). In this way, the ads could arguably

be following the multicultural logic of teen pregnancy prevention, but could perhaps also be said to register the fear that poor Black and white teenagers have dangerously intermingled to the point that they are now a monolithically pathological subset of the population. This hearkens back to the race-based fears of welfare reform rhetoric, in which the rising rate of teen pregnancy among white teens was seen as the most pressing reason for systemic change.<sup>512</sup> These ads therefore mobilize various aspects of the national post-welfare politics of teen pregnancy—public/private partnerships, the use of sensationalism and social media, a discourse of intimate citizenship—but also employ some racialized and class-based imagery and strategy that disrupts neoliberal multiculturalism.<sup>513</sup> It is perhaps partly for this reason that the campaign has engendered such vehement critique for its stigmatizing discourse in which ignorant teens ruin their babies’ lives by having them too early. Some responses have pointed to how the information provided by the campaign inaccurately suggests that racialized poverty is the result of inappropriate sexual choices. Melissa Harris-Perry, for example, responding to the campaign on her MSNBC television show, called on Bloomberg to explain why he would imply that teen pregnancy and poverty were linked when he “know[s] full well” that teen pregnancy has gone down while poverty has gone up, and “that poverty among African Americans and Latinos has increased even though those communities have seen the most dramatic decreases in teen pregnancy.”<sup>514</sup> She goes on to suggest that the poster featuring an African American girl telling her hypothetical mother that her father will leave her is part of a larger system of discourses that renders Black women and girls disposable in the public eye (see Figure 11).





Figure 11. "Honestly Mom..." Human Resources Administration, New York, NY.

Most critics of the campaign, however, have focused primarily on whether shame-based tactics are effective tools of social change, or just ways of making people feel bad about themselves.<sup>515</sup> This has generated responses by proponents of Bloomberg's efforts who claim that shame has been a reasonable strategy in anti-smoking, anti-obesity, and anti-drunk driving campaigns.<sup>516</sup> In fact, Brookings Institution Senior Fellow Richard V. Reeves argues in direct response to attacks on the New York City teen pregnancy posters that shame plays a very important social function in deterring both illegal and undesirable legal behaviors, such as smoking, obesity, racism, homophobia, child abuse, and smoking while pregnant.<sup>517</sup> He goes on to state that shaming is justified in the case of teen pregnancy because "it is a fact" that teen pregnancy is "bad" for the children of teenage parents.<sup>518</sup> In the typical fashion of Brookings Institution and National Campaign political rhetoric (discussed in chapter 3), Reeves attempts to portray himself as an objective, apolitical voice of reason and science, implying that valid concerns about racism and homophobia, presumably held by those same "liberal" critics of Bloomberg, are actually met by the politics of shame.<sup>519</sup> Part and parcel to the assumption that teen pregnancy is a

universally accepted problem (held even by many of those who argue against the politics of shame), the post-welfare projection of intimate multicultural citizenship appears to result from a rational consensus across party lines and political factions. Reeves suggests that shaming teen parents for the harm they do to their children is simply a reasonable and scientifically sound way to prevent further social ill. As he puts it, “shame legitimately attaches to teen pregnancy.”<sup>520</sup> In this way, he openly embraces the normalizing function of shame that Michael Warner points to as exclusionary and violent in his discussion of sexual shame.<sup>521</sup>

If children remain, as Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman argue, the symbols of ideal citizenship for which the national future is secured in the era of neoliberalism, then this campaign brings sexual shame to new heights (or perhaps lows) by featuring upset children as the rightful instructors for their naïve, selfish, and impetuous teenage parents.<sup>522</sup> Berlant writes that the American child as a national icon is “still innocent of knowledge, agency, and accountability and thus has ethical claims on the adult political agents who write laws, make culture, administer resources, and control things.”<sup>523</sup> Within the context of these posters, the hypothetical children of teenage parents are forced into a premature state of knowing by reckless teenage sex. Even they know better than their ignorant teen parents, who would unwittingly sacrifice their future children’s health and happiness for the instant gratification of unprotected sex. Having to be publicly lectured by one’s own crying baby about poor sexual choices may epitomize shamefulness in a culture that structures children as fundamentally threatened by all things sexual. While, according to Berlant, in the 1980s and 1990s, the state and groups of concerned “social parents” were called upon to compensate for bad parenting, in this NYC campaign

children themselves are figured as needing to step in.<sup>524</sup> One could argue that this replacement of policymakers, teachers, doctors, and other adult leaders with babies takes the politics of intimate citizenship to its logical conclusion: we are better off being governed by the innocent infants—who embody a good, decent, innocent America—than any form of adult political organization.

In some ways, the current debate about the politics of shame has directed public discourse away from what is really at stake in the post-welfare politics of teen pregnancy. The question of whether or not shame adequately prevents teen pregnancy distracts from discussion of why pregnant and parenting teens are an important topic of discussion in the first place. As Melissa Harris-Perry asks, “Why in the world, as the [teen pregnancy] crisis is abating, and fewer teens are facing the challenges of early child-rearing, would the city of New York spend \$400,000 on a campaign to publicly shame teen parent?” Aside from her assumption that there ever was, in fact, a teen pregnancy “crisis,” and her primary concern with the campaign’s shaming tactics, Harris-Perry gestures toward this most pressing question of why teen pregnancy is even an issue at all (despite, framing it as perplexing simply because rates have been steadily decreasing). Although she does not directly answer this question, she provides a number of reasons why the posters are misleading and points to how they “might cause people to, you know, blame young mothers for America’s deepening poverty crisis, rather than putting the blame where it belongs, on a financial system that concentrates wealth at the top and public policies that entrench it there.”<sup>525</sup> Gesturing toward the argument I have been making throughout this dissertation, that the post-welfare politics of teen pregnancy is a crucial counterpart to the neoliberal retrenchment of welfare, Harris-Perry and other feminist responses to

Bloomberg's efforts finally begin national public conversations around issues that the revised image of teen pregnancy has helped to prevent since 1996—such as the systemic economic and political causes of racialized poverty.<sup>526</sup>

This has been made possible, I would like to suggest, because discourses of multicultural intimate citizenship reach their most penetrable limits where the local and the national meet—in other words, where strategies developed by national organizations and disseminated on a national scale are adopted, altered, and deployed in local contexts that have their own specific politics of social inequality. In the case of this New York City campaign, the situated racial and class politics of the place became the subject of national debate. In an effort to directly target and speak to (and shame) the groups that have the highest rates of teen pregnancy in the city, New York's Human Resources Administration, like the New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, (perhaps unintentionally) exposed the social stratification within its population. The racial and class-based dehumanization that resulted thus re-entered local and national discussion of teen pregnancy, despite a broader attempt within national teen pregnancy prevention to pretend that race and class have no further relevance in society. I have been arguing that the post-welfare politics of teen pregnancy serves to obscure the work of punitive welfare reform and the deepening social inequalities resulting from neoliberal social and economic policies; that it helps redefine public wellbeing as ensured by a fully privatized social safety net; that it bolsters the heteronormative cultural logics of neoliberal citizenship; and that it does these things through the salient trope of unruly adolescent sexuality and reproduction. The degree to which the grassroots activism and news media responses to Mayor Bloomberg's teen pregnancy campaign will have breached these

processes remains unclear. Months after the initial controversy, the campaign continues throughout the city and is touted by many as a revolutionary step in the battle against teen pregnancy.<sup>527</sup>

In this dissertation I have attempted to contextualize the contemporary politics of teen pregnancy within debates about public wellbeing, social policy, and citizenship over the last two and a half decades. Specifically, I have looked at how teen pregnancy and welfare reform were intertwined in explicit ways in the early and mid 1990s and asked how they might continue to be intertwined and mutually reinforcing in the years since the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. By looking, in chapter 1, at how teen pregnancy has been defined as a social problem in public policy, how that definition has shifted over time, and how policy approaches to it have changed, I argued that subsequent teen pregnancy prevention regimes have served to shift focus and resources away from questions of welfare policy and toward personalized, privatized, morality-based strategies. Through an analysis of popular culture-based teen pregnancy prevention discourses in chapter 2, I showed that the post-welfare public image of teen pregnancy is one that revises older discourses of racialized, pathological communities of poverty, rendering them legible in a paradigm of neoliberal multiculturalism through an exclusive focus on the perils of teen sex. In chapter 3, I traced the origins and current strategies of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and its allies, connecting them directly to the politics of welfare reform and arguing that their privatized, media-based prevention tactics perform crucial work toward redefining the social safety net as something outside the purview of the state. I then examined teen pregnancy prevention in New Mexico, arguing in chapter

4 that the national post-welfare politics of teen pregnancy both endures and breaks down in the face of the specific contours of social stratification within the state. I suggest that despite significant challenge at the local level, teen pregnancy continues to be a tool for neoliberal social and economic agendas that deepen inequalities based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and immigration status.

In concluding this dissertation with a discussion the Bloomberg campaign I hope to show both the dire potentials and the encouraging weaknesses of this teen pregnancy discourse. By authorizing and perpetuating a widespread denigration of teen parents so extreme that even teens' own toddlers should apparently be disappointed in and ashamed of them, the HRA's posters reach a new horizon for the privatization of citizenship, relinquishing not only the state, but adults as a whole, from any part in the securing of successful Americanness. Adolescents, in this formulation, are kept in check by the specter of their future ruined offspring. This campaign further clarifies the ultimate potentials of intimate citizenship—defined by proper sex, reproduction, and familial arrangements—for the rearrangement of state powers against any attempt at the egalitarian maintenance of social wellbeing and toward the securing of class power, racial privilege, and shoring up of heteronormativity.

On the other hand, the juxtaposition of the New Mexico and the New York case studies reveals an important development within grassroots reproductive politics. Not only are grassroots feminist movements for reproductive justice making important contributions to public discourse and public policy on reproductive issues in these states, but they are also increasingly making trans-state alliances around the public image and treatment of teen pregnancy and teen parents locally and nationally. Organizations across

the country, including New Mexico's Young Women United, the New York Coalition for Reproductive Justice, the Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy, Strong Families, the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, have begun publicly networking, collaborating, and promoting each other's work on issues pertaining to teen pregnancy and teen parents. Currently, these organizations are working together on a project called "No Teen Shame" that targets the Candie's Foundation for one of its recent anti-teen pregnancy campaigns (see Figure 12).<sup>528</sup> This project calls on Neil Cole, founder of the Candie's Foundation, to meet with a group of activist teen moms to discuss his organization's tactics, mission, and impact.<sup>529</sup> Therefore, at the same time that the national post-welfare politics of teen pregnancy naturalizes its common sense through multiple cultural and political realms, becoming an ever-stronger presence in the national imaginary as a personal problem with public consequences, grassroots responses challenging its assumptions and tactics are fortifying, cropping up, and bonding together. My hope is that this dissertation will contribute to this process, providing insight into both the direct and indirect links between the "social problem" of teen pregnancy, the politics of welfare reform, and the project of neoliberalism.



Figure 12. "No Teen Shame." Strong Families.

“Teen pregnancy” is a potent placeholder in dominant U.S. culture for the various non-normative familial formations that are brought about by advanced capitalism, and which appear threatening to it.<sup>530</sup> It indexes the increasing abandonment of the low-wage and surplus labor forces by the state, in conjunction with the delayed achievement of economic stability for the middle class. Pregnant impoverished teenagers, while perhaps timing their reproduction in a way that either makes little difference to their life course and economic potential or is in fact practical, appear to signal an extreme pathology in the context of a rising age of childbearing for wealthier women. As such, we must understand how “teen pregnancy” marks lives for discipline, regulation, and prevention by the increasingly privatized political and economic order, and is constructed as a tool for the maintenance that of that order. Without an analysis of the relationship between the contemporary politics of teen pregnancy and neoliberal reformulations of the obligations of a state to its citizenry, concerns about stigmatizing and shaming teen parents can appear sentimental and benign. With this perspective, teen pregnancy prevention’s attempt to foreclose the possibility of certain lives, while humiliating and punishing others, can be seen not just as an effort to discipline the majority into normative sexual, gender, and familial roles, but also as an agenda to eliminate any direct responsibility of the state to provide material support for all its residents to achieve the minimum standard of living—a responsibility that, while it has never been fully realized, has been one of the theoretical functions of the modern democratic nation state since the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>531</sup>



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Greenberg, “Pregnant Teen Boys? Teen Pregnancy Campaign,” *The Huffington Post*, May 21, 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/barbara-greenberg/pregnant-teen-boys-an-ant\\_b\\_3303310.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/barbara-greenberg/pregnant-teen-boys-an-ant_b_3303310.html).

<sup>2</sup> Daily Mail Reporter, “New Billboard Campaign Launched in Chicago Features Images of Pregnant Boys to Remind Them that a Baby Isn’t Just a Girl’s Responsibility,” *Mail Online*, May 15, 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2325100/New-billboard-campaign-launched-Chicago-features-images-pregnant-boys-remind-baby-isnt-just-girls-responsibility.html?ito=feeds-newsxml>.

<sup>3</sup> Daily Mail Reporter, “New Billboard Campaign.”

<sup>4</sup> “Barbara Greenberg,” *The Huffington Post*, accessed January 28, 2014, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/barbara-greenberg/>.

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Greenberg, “Pregnant Teen Boys?”

<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most controversial recent example of this is a 2012 New York City initiative heavily criticized for shaming teen mothers with a poster and text message campaign. Daily Mail Reporter, “New Billboard Campaign.”

<sup>7</sup> Media Literacy Project, “Deconstruction Gallery: Pregnant Boys and a Counter Ad,” Media Literacy Project, accessed December 5, 2013, <http://medialiteracyproject.org/deconstructions/pregnant-boys-and-counter-ad>.

<sup>8</sup> James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America’s Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Regina G. Kunzel, “White Neurosis, Black Pathology: Constructing Out-of-Wedlock Pregnancy in the Wartime and Postwar United States,” in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in*

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<sup>9</sup> Kristin Luker, *Dubious Conceptions: The Politics of Teen Pregnancy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Harari and Vinovskis, "Adolescent Sexuality;" Deborah L. Rhode and Annette Lawson, introduction to *The Politics of Pregnancy*, ed. Lawson and Rhode, 1-19.

<sup>10</sup> Harari and Vinovskis, "Adolescent Sexuality."

<sup>11</sup> Deborah L. Rhode, "Adolescent Pregnancy and Public Policy," in *The Politics of Pregnancy*, ed. Lawson and Rhode, 301-335.

<sup>12</sup> Sue Ruddick, "The Politics of Aging: Globalization and the Restructuring of Youth and Childhood" *Antipode* 35, no. 2 (March 2003): 334-362.

<sup>13</sup> Lisa Arai, *Teenage Pregnancy: The Making and Unmaking of a Problem* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2009), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Diana M. Pearce, "'Children Having Children': Teenage Pregnancy and Public Policy from the Woman's Perspective," in *The Politics of Pregnancy*, ed. Lawson and Rhode, 46-58.

<sup>15</sup> Arai, *Teenage Pregnancy*; Luker, *Dubious Conceptions*; F.F. Furstenberg, Jr., "As the Pendulum Swings: Teenage Childbearing and Social Concern." *Family Relations*

40, no. 2 (1991): 127–138; Rhode, “Adolescent Pregnancy”; Pearce, “Children Having Children”; Ann Phoenix, “The Social Construction of Teenage Motherhood: A Black and White Issue?” in *The Politics of Pregnancy*, ed. Lawson and Rhode, 74-97; Melissa S. Kearney and Phillip B. Levine, “Why Is the Teen Birth Rate in the United States So High and Why Does It Matter?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 26, no. 2 (2012): 141-63; V. Joseph Hotz, V. Joseph, Susan Williams McElroy, and Seth G. Sanders, “Teenage Childbearing and Its Life Cycle Consequences.” *Journal Of Human Resources* 40, no. 3 (2005): 683-715.

<sup>16</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1-4.

<sup>17</sup> Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (1997, repr., Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Jamie Peck, *Workfare States* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001); Gwendolyn Mink, *Welfare’s End* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Anna Marie Smith, *Welfare Reform and Sexual Regulation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Clinton promised to “end welfare as we know it” in his 1992 election campaign, a promise that he fulfilled by signing the PRWORA into law in 1996. R. Kent Weaver, *Ending Welfare as We Know It* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2000), 2.

<sup>20</sup> Peck, *Welfare States*, 58.

<sup>21</sup> Mink. *Welfare’s End*, 65.

<sup>22</sup> The family cap rule permanently sets a family's welfare grant at the amount specified for the number of family members it had upon entering the rolls, regardless of subsequent childbirths. For an extensive discussion of this rule see: Smith, *Welfare Reform and Sexual Regulation*, 147-158.

<sup>23</sup> In her argument that "adoption is an ideal neoliberal solution to the problem of supporting impoverished children" she shows how the adoption reform bills passed in 1994, 1996, and 1997 that made it easier for wealthy white families to adopt poor children of color were a crucial aspect of the broader neoliberal project of welfare reform. Laura Briggs, *Somebody's Children: The Politics of Transracial and Transnational Adoption* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 124. The 1996 immigration reforms terminated welfare benefits for legal residents, made deportation easier, and made the process by which illegal aliens become legal resident next to impossible. Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subject: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 269; Eithne Luibhéid, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xvi. Timothy J. Randazzo outlines the aspects of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act that are "particularly harsh on lesbian, gay, and transgender asylum seekers." Timothy J. Randazzo, "Social and Legal Barriers: Sexual Orientation and Asylum in the United States." in *Queer Migrations: Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossings*, eds. Eithne Luibhéid and Lionel Cantú Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 48-51. M. Jacqui Alexander writes about the ways that the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and the PRWORA were two responses to a framing of heterosexuality as under threat. M. Jacqui Alexander,

*Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 227. The DOMA, she explains, perpetuates the violence of modernity in both denying nonnormative individuals' claims on federal benefits and sanctioning inequity (Ibid., 218).

<sup>24</sup> Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003); Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception*; Berlant, *The Queen of America*. Throughout this dissertation, I use the term "heteronormative" to denote the complex intersection of sexual, racial, gender, familial, and class norms that structure the normative form of heterosexuality. As queer theorists such as Siobhan Somerville and Cathy Cohen have argued, the hetero/homo binary is not useful for explaining the ways that nonnormative heterosexualities are denigrated and marginalized by discourses of normative heterosexuality. Siobhan B. Somerville, "Sexual Aliens and the Racialized State," in *Queer Migrations: Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossing*, eds. Eithne Luibhéid and Lionel Cantú Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 77; Cathy J. Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: the Radical Potential of Queer Politics," in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, eds. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 26.

<sup>25</sup> Berlant, *The Queen of America*. Intimate citizenship has been theorized by other scholars, led by Kenneth Plummer, to mean the proliferation of public discussions around intimate behavior. Plummer discusses the ways that traditional notions of citizenship define it in terms of the public realm, whereas the emergence a public sphere for hashing out the "troubles" and "choices" surrounding the intimate realm constitutes a

bridging of the personal and the political. Kenneth Plummer, *Intimate Citizenship: Private Decisions and Public Dialogues* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 2003, 15. Drawing on feminist critiques of the public/private dichotomy that structures notions of liberal citizenship, Plummer argues that intimate citizenship names the “aspects of life that appear to be personal, but are in effect connected to, structured by, or regulated through the public sphere.” Plummer, *Intimate Citizenship*, 70. While Plummer explicates the ways that questions of intimacy (family life, sexuality, reproduction, medical changes to the body, etc.) have increasingly become part of multiple public debates, Berlant’s theorization of intimate citizenship as a cultural framework of ideal citizenship that authorizes various forms of stigmatization and public disinvestment proves much more useful to this dissertation.

<sup>26</sup> Phillipe Ariés, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962).

<sup>27</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 105-112.

<sup>28</sup> Airés, *Centuries of Childhood*, 129

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 329-336.

<sup>30</sup> Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Sonya Michel, *Children’s Interests/Mothers’ Rights: The Shaping of American’s Child Care Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>31</sup> Rickie Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race before Roe v. Wade* (London: Routledge, 2000); Kunzel, “White Neurosis, Black Pathology”; Alice

O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>32</sup> Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable*.

<sup>33</sup> Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage*; Harari and Vinovskis, "Adolescent Sexuality"; Alex Lubin, *Romance and Rights: The Politics of Interracial Intimacy, 1945-1954* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie*; Kunzel, "White Neurosis, Black Pathology."

<sup>35</sup> Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage*; Anna McCarthy, *The Citizen Machine: Governing by Television in 1950s America* (New York: The New Press, 2010); Lubin, *Romance and Rights*.

<sup>36</sup> Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in *Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, eds. Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 3-44; Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Berlant, *The Queen of America*; Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, Or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke, 2009); James Kincaid, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1994); James Kincaid, *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

<sup>37</sup> Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, 5.

<sup>38</sup> Kerry H. Robinson, "'Difficult Citizenship': The Precarious Relationships Between Childhood, Sexuality and Access to Knowledge," *Sexualities* 15, no. 3/4 (2012): 257-276, 258.

<sup>39</sup> Ruddick, “The Politics of Aging.”

<sup>40</sup> Ange-Marie Hancock, *The Politics of Disgust: The Public Identity of the Welfare Queen*. New York: NYU Press, 2004, 4.

<sup>41</sup> For example, Nancy Cott outlines the ways that citizenship, from its inception, has rested on concepts of independence defined by the presence of wife and children as dependents. Nancy F. Cott, “Marriage and Women’s Citizenship in the United States, 1830–1934,” *American Historical Review* (1998): 1448 and 1452.

<sup>42</sup> As Bob Jessop writes, “[T]he absence of concerted opposition to the most radical forms of neoliberal workfare is no guarantee of its overall functionality for the capitalist economy, as opposed to its efficacy in destabilizing political opposition to the overall neoliberal project.” Bob Jessop, *The Future of the Capitalist State* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 169.

<sup>43</sup> David Harvey, “Is This Really the End of Neoliberalism? The Crisis and the Consolidation of Class Power,” *CounterPunch*, March 13-15, 2009, <http://www.counterpunch.org/2009/03/13/is-this-really-the-end-of-neoliberalism/>.

<sup>44</sup> H. Luke Schaefer, and Kathryn Edin. “Rising Extreme Poverty in the United States and the Response of Federal Means-Tested Programs,” National Poverty Center Working Papers Series #13-06, May 2013, <http://npc.umich.edu/publications/u/2013-06-npc-working-paper.pdf>.

<sup>45</sup> One Urban Institute report shows that, whereas 1 in 8 poor families received no income or government assistance before welfare reform, 1 in 5 was in that position as of 2008. Sheila Zedlewski, Pamela Loprest, and Erika Huber. “What Role is Welfare Playing in this Period of High Unemployment?” Urban Institute, Fact Sheet 3, August



2011, <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412378-Role-of-Welfare-in-this-Period-of-High-Unemployment.pdf>. A more recent National Poverty Center working paper argues that in the period from 1996 to 2011, the number families in “extreme poverty,” as defined by the World Bank, has increased significantly according to levels of cash income. Once tax credits and in-kind support services are taken into account, the rate of extreme poverty decreases, but remains higher than pre-welfare reform rates. The authors hypothesize that this is due to welfare reform and the Great Recession, but make no definitive claims about causation (Schaefer and Edin, “Rising Extreme Poverty in the United States”).

<sup>46</sup> Sandra K. Danziger, “The Decline of Cash Welfare and Implications for Social Policy and Poverty,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (2010):523-545, 541.

<sup>47</sup> Schaefer and Edin, “Rising Extreme Poverty in the United States”; Danziger, “The Decline of Cash Welfare,” 541.

<sup>48</sup> Schaefer and Edin, “Rising Extreme Poverty in the United States,” 3.

<sup>49</sup> For summaries of TANF teen parent rules, see Janellen Duffy and Jodie Levin-Epstein, “Add it Up: Teen Parents and Welfare...Undercounted, Oversanctioned, and Underserved,” *Center for Law and Social Policy*, April 2002, [www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/0090.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/0090.pdf); Smith, *Welfare Reform and Sexual Regulation*, 170-171. In chapter 1, I discuss the ways in which such rules were justified through a teen pregnancy prevention logic.

<sup>50</sup> Duffy and Levin-Epstein, “Add it Up.”

<sup>51</sup> Lingxin Hao and Andrew J. Cherlin. “Welfare Reform and Teenage Pregnancy, Childbirth, and School Dropout,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66, no. 1 (2004): 179-

194, 192.

<sup>52</sup> Liz Schott, "Policy Basics: An Introduction to TANF," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, last updated December 4, 2012, <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=936>.

<sup>53</sup> Teen pregnancy, birth, and abortion rates had been falling since the early 1990s. Jacqueline E. Darroch and Sasheela Singh. "Why is Teenage Pregnancy Declining? The Roles of Abstinence, Sexual Activity, and Contraceptive Use," The Alan Guttmacher Institute, Occasional Report No. 1, December 1999, [http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/or\\_teen\\_preg\\_decline.pdf](http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/or_teen_preg_decline.pdf). For a summary of studies on the effects of welfare reform on teen pregnancy rates, see Sandra K. Danziger, "Welfare Policy in the U.S.: Lessons from the 1996 Welfare Reform and the Great Recession" (prepared for Joint Conference WZB/Hertie School of Governance: Anti-poverty programs in global perspective: Lessons from rich and poor countries, Berlin, Germany, June 20-21, 2011), 23-24, [http://www.wzb.eu/sites/default/files/protected\\_downloads/blanck/4508de726d9d4fbd762a0229b647500a\\_1.pdf](http://www.wzb.eu/sites/default/files/protected_downloads/blanck/4508de726d9d4fbd762a0229b647500a_1.pdf).

<sup>54</sup> David Theo Goldberg, *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994); Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), 43-66; Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 128-134; Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) 24-32; James Kyung-Jin Lee, *Urban*

*Triage: Race and the Fictions of Multiculturalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

<sup>55</sup> Jodi Melamed, 2011. *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2011), 1-2, 41.

<sup>56</sup> Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 42.

<sup>57</sup> Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 42.

<sup>58</sup> David Harvey describes the difference between Keynesianism, or the “embedded liberalism” that prevailed in the U.S. and many European nations after World War II. “What all these various state forms had in common was an acceptance that the state should focus on full employment, economic growth, and the welfare of its citizens, and that state power should be freely deployed, alongside of or, if necessary, intervening in or even substituting for market processes to achieve these ends.” Harvey, “Is This Really the End of Neoliberalism,” 10. See also, Jessop, *The Future of the Capitalist State*, 234.

<sup>59</sup> Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001, 79-80). See also Robert A. Beauregard, “Planning in an Advanced Capitalist State,” in *Planning Theory: A Search for Future Directions*, eds. Robert W. Burchell and George Sternlieb (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 235-253.

<sup>60</sup> Jacob Hacker constructs a history of the “public-private welfare regime” in which private welfare benefits, facilitated by tax codes, credit subsidies, and other regulations and protections, have been a substantial part of the maintenance of public well-being in the United States since the Progressive Era. These private benefits are

primarily distributed to wealthier employed citizens, are less visible to the public, and tend to be more difficult to control and alter. Jacob Hacker, *The Divided Welfare State: The Battle over Public and Private Social Benefits in the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 23-25. George Lipsitz provides a history of policies and practices such as “urban renewal” in the 1950s and 1960s—done in the name of economic growth—that favored white and wealthy citizens at the expense of poor communities of color. George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 7.

<sup>61</sup> Examples of this would include the purchasing of consulting services by social programs aiming to increase their “marketability” with their target population, or the increased use of social media technologies operated by private Internet companies and funded by private advertising.

<sup>62</sup> Jessop, *The Future of the Capitalist State*, 236.

<sup>63</sup> Therese J. McGuire and David F. Merriman argue that social spending by states since welfare reform has not decreased, but rather spending on programs such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Supplemental Security Income, food stamps and Medicaid have increased. Therese J. McGuire and David F. Merriman, “Has Welfare Reform Changed State Expenditure Patterns?” National Poverty Center, Policy Brief #7, September 2006, [http://www.npc.umich.edu/publications/policy\\_briefs/brief7/brief07.pdf](http://www.npc.umich.edu/publications/policy_briefs/brief7/brief07.pdf). In Shaefer and Edin’s working paper on rates of extreme poverty since welfare reform, they show how Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps) benefits, the EITC, the Child Tax Credit, and housing subsidies (such as Section 8 and public housing)

have offset increases in poverty. They note that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act temporarily increased SNAP benefits, the EITC and the Child Tax Credit have also been expanded, as have Unemployment Insurance eligibility durations (although the authors note that low-wage workers have difficulty accessing UI benefits). These increases impact the working poor more than those less attached to the labor force (Schaefer and Edin, "Rising Extreme Poverty in the United States," 5-6). Also, the portion of public funds made on the federal, state, and local level for pregnancy prevention, job readiness, 2-parent family formation and maintenance, abstinence and sex education, and other projects related to welfare reform likely offset the declining expenditures on direct cash assistance to impoverished families. I have not been able to find studies comparing social spending (broadly defined as cash, food, and other assistance programs for low-income individuals and families) on the federal level between AFDC and TANF.

<sup>64</sup> For example, just as the figure of the pregnant and parenting teen helped to dismantle welfare entitlements, it has helped instantiate federal grant programs to private organizations working on values-based teen pregnancy prevention. This is further elucidated in primarily in chapters 1 and 4.

<sup>65</sup> There is neuroscience data that points to adolescence as a distinct period of brain development in which the prefrontal cortex, which controls impulses and judgment, is still maturing, and hormonal changes due to puberty influence brain function. While this research may point to a biological basis for certain axioms about adolescence, it is worth questioning how such axioms inform the production of neuroscience data about

adolescence, how the data is then taken up and utilized by society at large, and how the physical brain is affected and partly produced by the social.

It is useful to take an example of a neuroscientific study to explore how our understandings of adolescence can shape such studies. In their study of the adolescent brain, Casey, Jones, and Hare take increased “suboptimal” decision and actions during adolescence as the foundational assumption of their research (B.J. Casey, Rebecca M. Jones, and Todd A. Hare, "The Adolescent Brain," *Annals Of The New York Academy Of Sciences* 1124 (2008), 111-126). To substantiate this foundation, they cite statistics about substance abuse, injury and death, unintended pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections. Behaviors such as unprotected sex and substance abuse are labeled as “risky” and assumed to be an undesirable aspect of the developmental stage of adolescence that signals poor decision-making. The authors only minimally discuss the social circumstances that both condition the increased riskiness (during adolescence and in general) of these behaviors relative to other behaviors and help produce increased engagement in such behaviors during adolescence.

From this foundation, they suggest that the still-maturing prefrontal cortex cannot alone explain the inherent riskiness of adolescence, because younger children have less developed prefrontal cortexes, but are less prone to riskiness. Drawing on research that suggests that even when controlling for outside factors (such as adolescents’ increased access to automobiles, for instance) adolescence remains a riskier developmental stage, the authors suggest that a more mature limbic system overrides the impulse control functions of the brain during “heat-of-the-moment” decision-making. They utilize brain

imaging of humans and animals, as well as evolutionary theory to construct this argument.

This study provides a useful example of how systems of knowledge already in place inform the questions, methods, and findings of scientific inquiry. The large body of scientific and social scientific knowledge already constructed about the category of adolescence and definitions of riskiness, and the powerful narrative of evolutionary theory, shape the fundamental assumptions of this research. The imperative for scientific inquiry to be instrumental—in this case to explain the social problems perceived to be caused by poor decision-making in adolescence—drives the formulation of the study. Adolescence itself is a socially constructed category, making an objective study of it impossible. This is not to say that neuroscience that seeks to understand adolescence is thus invalidated, but that it should not be understood as fundamentally more factual than other ways of understanding the category.

Equally important when it comes to understanding the role of science in naturalizing our understandings of adolescence is the question of which parts of the scientific conclusions are emphasized in popular imagination. For instance, teenagers' apparent biological failure to control their impulses has become common sense; whereas their professed increased creative capacity to learn has not. As neuroscientist Sarah-Jayne Blakemore explains, adolescents are often stigmatized for precisely the characteristics that make their brains, "particularly adaptable and malleable. [Adolescence] is a fantastic opportunity for learning and creativity." Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, "The Mysterious Workings of the Adolescent Brain," TED Global, June 2012,

[http://www.ted.com/talks/sarah\\_jayne\\_blakemore\\_the\\_mysterious\\_workings\\_of\\_the\\_adolescent\\_brain.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_jayne_blakemore_the_mysterious_workings_of_the_adolescent_brain.html).

Finally, when considering the biological evidence for adolescence as a specific developmental stage that is accompanied by specific brain characteristics, it is also useful to consider how brains are constituted not just by genetic material, but also by social and historical context. French philosopher Catherine Malabou argues that the materiality of the brain is characterized by a plasticity that allows it to be shaped by its individual and social context. Paraphrasing Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, she writes that “neuronal functioning and social functioning interdetermine each other and mutually give each other form,” (Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?* (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008), 9). She goes to explain how this reality produces the “naturalization effect,” in which social and political organization appears substantiated by neuronal biology.

In sum, this dissertation is concerned with the ways that certain aspects of adolescence, whether based in a socially constituted biology or not, become useful in political and social projects that have much broader implications than the manipulation of individual teenagers’ behavior.

<sup>66</sup> Stuart Hall, ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 44.

<sup>67</sup> For example, as the work of scholars such as Anna McCarthy and Lauren Berlant have shown, popular culture, disseminated through largely private, mass-mediated networks, is an important site of analysis for understanding the confluence of elite interests around desired forms of citizenship and the conditions of possibility for



political debate and action. McCarthy, *The Citizen Machine*; Berlant, *The Queen of America*.

<sup>68</sup> Lynn Harris, "The Nation: When Teen Pregnancy is No Accident," *NPR*, May 27, 2010, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=127209931>.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> In fact, the *NPR* story discussed above makes a point to note the cross-class dynamics of reproductive coercion. Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 42.

<sup>73</sup> The PRWORA is still in effect and continues to mandate certain harsh penalties and regulation, but has been modified slightly. The incentive for states to lower teen pregnancy while not raising abortion rates, for example, has been eliminated. Although strict rules still aim to dictate the decisions of teen parents receiving welfare as a result of the PRWORA, as I will discuss further below, debates and policy surrounding teen pregnancy prevention in the 2000s no longer include discussions of economic carrots and sticks to influence behavior. Also, more recent measures, such as the Support for Pregnant and Parenting Teens and Women Initiative, which I discuss below, allot some grant money to increasing support services for teenage parents. Additionally, the 2010 PPACA, which I also discuss below, increases access to contraception.

<sup>74</sup> Jason DeParle, "House G.O.P. Proposes 'Tough Love' Welfare Requiring Recipients to Work," *New York Times*, November 11, 1993, fol. 4, box 24, News Clips, Domestic Policy Council, Bruce Reed, Welfare Reform (1993-2001) Subject File,

Systematic Processed Collections, William J. Clinton Presidential Library, Little Rock, Arkansas.

<sup>75</sup> Barbara Vobejda, “Welfare an Afterthought, Teen Mothers Say,” *Washington Post*, February 14, 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>76</sup> Examples: Talking points for the Clinton’s Welfare Reform Taskforce, drafted by Melissa Skolfield, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs in the Department of Health and Human Services, state “Charles Murray’s identification of the problem is right. Teen pregnancy and single-parent families are important problems which should be addressed. We agree on the fact that violence, crime, drug use, poverty and homelessness are all connected to the increasing number of births to young unwed mothers.” Melissa Skolfield, “Draft Talking Points,” fol. 3, box 24, News Clips, Domestic Policy Council, Bruce Reed, Welfare Reform (1993-2001) Subject File, Systematic Processed Collections, William J. Clinton Presidential Library, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Also, as Republican Representative Royce states, “Go into our inner cities and you will find a generation fed on food stamps but starved of nurturing and hope. You’ll meet young teens in their third pregnancy. You’ll meet fatherless children. You’ll talk to sixth-graders who don’t know how many inches are in a foot. And you’ll talk to first-graders who don’t know their ABC’s.” *Conference Report on H.R. 3734, Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*, 104<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>d</sup> sess., *Congressional Record* Vol. 142, No. 115 (July 31, 1996): H 9419.

Morton M. Kondracke cites the liberalization movements of the 1960s as culpable for “social decline” that can be solved by the “personal responsibility” philosophy of welfare reform, an “all-out campaign against teenage pregnancy” and other “family

policy.” Morton M. Kondracke, “Money or 'Values'? Clintons' Family Policy Needs Both,” *Roll Call*, April 1, 1993, <http://www.rollcall.com/>.

<sup>77</sup> Holloway Sparks, “Queens, Teens, and Model Mothers: Race, Gender, and the Discourse of Welfare Reform,” in *Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform*, eds. Sanford F. Schram, Joe Soss, and Richard C. Fording (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003) 180-181.

<sup>78</sup> Rubin, “Thinking Sex;” Edelman, *No Future*; Berlant, *The Queen of America*; Robinson, “‘Difficult Citizenship;’” Stockton, *The Queer Child*; Kincaid, *Child-Loving*; Kincaid, *Erotic Innocence*.

<sup>79</sup> Berlant, *The Queen of America*, 65-71.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas B. Edsall, “Hillary Clinton Stumps Before Grand Jury Date,” *Washington Post*, January 26, 1996, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>.

<sup>81</sup> Michael N. Castle, “Republicans Really Are a Pro-Education Party But Things Got Off to a Rocky Start, Writes Rep. Castle, With Proposals to Abolish, Eliminate, and Cut,” *Roll Call*, June 2, 1997, <http://www.rollcall.com/>.

<sup>82</sup> Donald P. Baker, “Perot Addresses Lifestyle Issues After Debate; On 'Larry King,' Candidate Calls For Less Federal Intrusion and Greater Individual Responsibility,” *Washington Post*, October 17, 1996, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>.

<sup>83</sup> Examples: “Teen Leaves Newborn in N.J. Bus Terminal Toilet,” *Washington Post*, July 15, 1997, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>; Katherine Boo and Leef Smith, “From Welfare, to Hope, to Tragedy; When a Child Dies a Terrible Death, a Woman's Success Story Ends,” *Washington Post*, August 5, 1998, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>; Barbara Vobejda and Hanna Rosin, “Sudden Infant

Death or Murder? Authorities Reviewing Files,” *Washington Post*, August 30, 1998, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>; William Branigin, “Murder-Suicide Reflects Rising Strain on Poor Hispanic Women; Isolated and Unable to Cope, Mother Shot Triplets and Herself,” *Washington Post*, September 22, 1998, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>.

<sup>84</sup> Katherine Boo, “Painful Choices; Denise Jordan Is Off Welfare and Loves Her Job. But What About Her Daughter?” *Washington Post*, October 19, 1997, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>.

<sup>85</sup> Examples: Kathryn Wexler, “California Cracks Down on Men To Curb Underage Pregnancies,” *Washington Post*, April 6, 1996, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>; Morton M. Kondracke, *Roll Call*, May 27, 1996, <http://www.rollcall.com/>; Howard Schneider, “Clarke Seeks To Put Down Tax-Cut Revolt; D.C. Council's Vote Reveals Growing Rift,” *Washington Post*, February 12, 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>; Barbara Vobejda, “Welfare an Afterthought, Teen Mothers Say.”

Other discussions paint teen and unwed pregnancy as solely an economic issue, rather than a moral issue. Tracy Thompson, “Unhitched but Hardly Independent; Having No Husband Complicates Escape From Welfare,” *Washington Post*, May 13, 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>.

<sup>86</sup> Charles Rangel, “Winning the War on Drugs Requires Education and Jobs: Addressing the Social and Economic Factors Related to Drug Abuse is Vtally Important to Finding a Solution, Rep. Charles Rangel,” *Roll Call*, June 10, 1996, <http://www.rollcall.com/>.

<sup>87</sup> William Booth, "School Fearful That 'Johnny Can't Eat'; Congress's School Lunch Debate Worries Some in Rural Mississippi," *Washington Post*, March 7, 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>88</sup> Outsourcing of jobs to Mexico is clearly implicated in the economic demise of the county as well, but the article leaves it up to the reader to decide whether this happened as a result of the lack of productive workers in the area, or vice versa.

<sup>89</sup> Judith Havemann and Helen Dewar, "Dole Courts Consensus On Welfare; Reform Plan Carries Tough Work Mandates," *Washington Post*, August 8, 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>90</sup> The theme of painting welfare mothers in general as motivated solely by economic incentives when deciding whether or not to bear children permeates welfare reform discourse, despite obvious flaws in the logic undergirding such dehumanizing portrayals. Smith, *Welfare Reform and Sexual Regulation*, 42.

<sup>91</sup> For a discussion of the racialization of juvenile delinquency, see Barry C. Feld, *Bad Kids: Race and the Transformation of the Juvenile Court* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

For discussions of the racialization of the language of welfare dependency, see Martin Gilens, "How the Poor Became Black: The Racialization of American Poverty in the Mass Media," in *Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform*, eds. Sanford F. Schram, Joe Soss and Richard C. Fording (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 101-130; Kenneth J. Neubeck and Noel A. Cazenave, *Welfare Racism: Playing the Race Card Against America's Poor* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Hancock, *The Politics of Disgust*.

For discussions of the racialization of teen pregnancy, see Sparks, “Queens, Teens, and Model Mothers”; Luker, *Dubious Conceptions*.

<sup>92</sup> William Ford, “Tech-Prep Education; It's a Program That Links the Last Two Years of High School With the First Two Years of Postsecondary. Tech-Prep Can Help Relieve the Technical Skills Shortages That Are Expected to Be the Labor Problem of the Future., By Rep. William Ford,” *Roll Call*, May 21, 1990, <http://www.rollcall.com/>.

<sup>93</sup> Examples: “No Legitimate Solution in Sight,” *Washington Post*, March 16, 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>; “Reformers Without a Clue,” *Washington Post*, January 24, 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>94</sup> Michael A. Fletcher “Immigrants' Growing Role in U.S. Poverty Cited; Advocacy Group Notes Family Size, Education Levels,” *Washington Post*, September 2, 1999, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>95</sup> Another article notes that Hispanics have the highest rates of teen pregnancy and that those born in the country actually have a higher rate than those who immigrate. In this way teenage pregnancy can be seen as a kind of infestation problem, in which immigrants come to the U.S., propagate and increasingly infiltrate. Barbara Vobejda and Pamela Constable, “Hispanic Teens Rank 1st in Birthrate; Blacks No Longer Have Highest Incidence,” *Washington Post*, February 13, 1998, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>96</sup> It is not my task in this project to establish causation, claiming that representations lead to policies or vice versa. Instead, a crucial aspect of this work is to explore both rhetorical renderings of teenage pregnancy and parents and legislative

treatments of them, viewing these together as forming a national political discourse that presents a particular understanding of and approach to the issue.

<sup>97</sup> Other initiatives included: HHS National Strategy (1997) and Second Chance Homes (a part of the National Strategy):

In response to a call by President Clinton and Congress, HHS announced a teen pregnancy prevention strategy in January of 1997 called the National Strategy to Prevent Out-of-Wedlock Teen Pregnancies. The purpose of the National Strategy is to ensure that at least 25% of communities in the United States have pregnancy prevention programs. (Annual reports were published for 1997-1998, 1998-1999, and 1999-2000.) An alternative initiative, which also forms part of the Strategy, encourages states to create Second Chance Homes with TANF and other funding. These homes are expected to provide teen parents, who might be at risk of abuse if they stayed at home, with guidance in parenting, child development, budgeting, health and nutrition; these skills are seen as a way to prevent repeat pregnancies.

Carmen Solomon-Fears, *Teenage Pregnancy Prevention: Statistics and Programs*, CRS Report RS20301 (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, April 27, 2007).

<sup>98</sup> For discussions of the PRWORA in general and its punitive effects, see Mink, *Welfare's End*; Smith, *Welfare Reform and Sexual Regulation*; Jamie Peck, *Workfare States* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001).

<sup>99</sup> Solomon-Fears, *Teen Pregnancy Prevention*; Smith, *Welfare Reform and Sexual Regulation*.

<sup>100</sup> Clay Shaw, "War on Poverty' Is Over. The Poor Lost. Rep. Clay Shaw: The House GOP Tries a New Approach With Its Welfare Reform Package," *Roll Call*, May 22, 1995, <http://www.rollcall.com>; Judith Havemann, "Massachusetts Urged to Halt Aid to Unwed Teen Mothers," *Washington Post*, October 15, 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>; Kathryn Wexler, "For the Fiscally Interactive,

California Offers Budgeting Via Internet,” *Washington Post*, June 17, 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>; Judith Havemann, “Gramm Proposes Tough Welfare Plan Designed to Appeal to GOP Conservatives,” *Washington Post*, July 21, 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>; Judith Havemann, “Senate Enters Welfare Debate With Grab Bag of Rival Plans,” *Washington Post*, August 7, 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>; “‘A Real Step Forward for Our Country, Our Values and for People’ on Welfare,” *Washington Post*, August 1, 1996, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>; Barbara Vobejda, “Abortions, Out-of-Wedlock Births Targeted; House Republicans Propose State Bonuses for Reductions,” *Washington Post*, March 1, 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>; David A. Vise and Sari Horwitz, “GOP Leaders Seek to Change Face of District; Gingrich Panel Targets Schools, Welfare, Taxes,” *Washington Post*, May 12, 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>; David A. Vise and Howard Schneider, “GOP Panel Offers Overhaul of D.C.; Foes Say Proposals Would Crush Home Rule,” *Washington Post*, July 28, 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>; John E. Yang, “The Speaker Comes to Boys Town; Youth Home Proves People Can ‘Reach Out . . . to Achieve Great Things,’” *Washington Post*, October 24, 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>; Richard Cohen “Dealing with Illegitimacy,” *Washington Post*, November 23, 1993, fol. 4, box 24, News Clips, Domestic Policy Council, Bruce Reed, Welfare Reform (1993-2001) Subject File, Systematic Processed Collections, William J. Clinton Presidential Library, Little Rock, Arkansas.



<sup>101</sup> Judith Havemann and Barbara Vobejda, “Senate Welfare Draft Splits With House; GOP Plan Scraps Some Limits on Teenage Mothers, Aid to Noncitizens,” *Washington Post*, April 13, 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>102</sup> The two hearings analyzed here are two of three that focused exclusively on teen pregnancy in the 1990s. The third, occurring after the passage of the PRWORA, also devotes significant attention to welfare reform, but begins to focus mostly on the abstinence-only funding written into the law. *Social and Economic Costs of Teen Pregnancy: Hearing before the House Subcommittee on Empowerment, Committee on Small Business*, 105<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d. sess. (July 16, 1998).

<sup>103</sup> *Teen Parents and Welfare Reform: Hearing before the Senate Committee on Finance*, 104<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess. (March 14, 1995), 1.

<sup>104</sup> *Preventing Teen Pregnancy: Coordinating Community Efforts: Hearing before the House Subcommittee on Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations, Committee on Government Reform and Oversight*, 104<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess. (April 30, 1996), 5.

<sup>105</sup> Another example: Representative Constance Morella states,

We were talking about welfare and welfare reform. And, obviously, whenever you are discussing welfare reform, you are looking at teenage pregnancy, and what the role should be of the Federal Government in terms of payments to teenagers who have children, or whether there should be a limitation, or whether or not by limiting you are going to help to prevent teen pregnancy.

*Ibid.*, 64. Here, she plainly states not only that teen pregnancy is a welfare issue and vice versa, but also that a major concern of the legislature is whether punitive policy will aid in teen pregnancy prevention efforts.

<sup>106</sup> Representative Nancy Johnson, for example, a panel member in the *Preventing Teen Pregnancy* hearing refers to the importance of turning teens into “productive workers instead of parents” in her discussion of a teen pregnancy prevention program that “puts the kids to work.” Here, as in much welfare reform rhetoric, “work” of any kind (even without a paycheck) is considered the antidote to problems of personal character. In this framing, teen parenthood is directly opposed to and can be thwarted by productive labor. *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>107</sup> O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, 283.

<sup>108</sup> *Preventing Teen Pregnancy*, 15.

<sup>109</sup> Similarly, Henry Foster Jr., Senior Advisor to the President and White House Liaison to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, states,

Now I talked to one of my very good friends with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. We went on a site visit. He is chairman of the department of psychiatry. He said, ‘Hank, if you have spent your entire life in urban slums or rural squalor and see nothing beyond that, it is good mental health to want to have a baby. That is a sound reaction.’ So it is incumbent upon us as a society to have something other than a pregnancy for a 13- or a 14-year-old to see as her future.

*Ibid.*, 57. Although he goes on to suggest ways in which to expose impoverished teens to the possibility of the American Dream, rather than to real accessible opportunities, his comments reference the lack of readily apparent opportunities for those youth.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>111</sup> *Teen Parents and Welfare Reform*, 54.

<sup>112</sup> Similarly, Kristin Moore, another witness in the *Teen Parents and Welfare Reform* hearing states that, “We know from studies conducted throughout the world that economic opportunity and educational opportunity are associated with postponing

childbearing.” Ibid., 10. Later in the hearing, she also notes that while the sexual revolution affected people of all socioeconomic classes, the “underclass” has “nothing to lose” and is therefore willing to engage in reckless sexual behavior. Ibid., 15.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 54. In addressing concerns about the results of cutting teens off of cash assistance, Besharov states that, “We would deny only the cash benefit until the mother turns 18. That will create financial hardship, but it is not going to create social catastrophe.” Ibid., 19.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>116</sup> The persistence of this strategy as part of proposed teen pregnancy prevention efforts is also evident in an exchange between Rebecca Maynard, Trustee Professor of Education and Social Policy at the University of Pennsylvania, Senator Packwood (chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance) and Senator Moynihan:

Dr. MAYNARD. There is no evidence that welfare itself is responsible for the higher teenage birthrate in the United States, relative to other countries. And I would call to your attention the fact that our welfare policies tend to be less generous than those of many of the other industrialized countries with which we compare our birthrates. Moreover, if you look within this country, we see no positive correlation between State welfare benefits and teenage birthrates. Indeed, the teenage birthrates had tended to move in the opposite direction from real welfare benefits in this country. The birthrates have gone up in periods when real welfare benefits have gone down, and vice versa.

The CHAIRMAN. Say that again. The vice versa, say that once more.

Dr. MAYNARD. In periods of time when the real welfare benefits have been rising, the teenage birthrate was falling. When real benefits were going up, the birthrate was falling, and vice versa.

The CHAIRMAN. Right. Then it was going down.

Dr. MAYNARD. We were going in opposite directions.

The CHAIRMAN. And this correlation, this is statistically solid evidence?

Dr. MAYNARD. It is just looking at time trends, just aggregate statistics, year to year.

Senator MOYNIHAN. It is here you want to cling to the proposition that correlation is not causation.

Dr. MAYNARD. That is right. Yes. Teenage birthrates are especially high among poverty populations, which are groups that fare relatively poorly in this country, whether or not they have children at a young age.

Ibid., 7-8. The need to carefully clarify the point that teen parenthood does not appear to be caused by welfare speaks to the proliferation of this belief amongst lawmakers and the general public.

<sup>117</sup> *Preventing Teen Pregnancy*, p. 67.

<sup>118</sup> *Teen Parents and Welfare Reform*, 9.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 10. Important to note in these discussions is the emphasis placed on statutory rape and holding the “older men” who have sex with adolescent girls responsible by enforcing child support measures. This is a crucial dimension of the construction of teenage pregnancy as a problem of adolescent vulnerability that requires disciplinary economic carrots and sticks.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>122</sup> Welfare reform framed teen pregnancy as primarily a problem of the inner city. This focus likely helped distinguish it as a Black and Latina problem, dovetailing with broader discussions of the urban underclass. As I am arguing here, such a focus references both racialized stereotypes of pathological urban neighborhoods and analyses

of the historical and economic forces that shaped de facto segregation in urban centers. The actual statistical breakdown of teen pregnancy rates according to geography reveals the relative arbitrariness of this focus. Structural factors such as the labor market and racial discrimination likely condition reproductive choices in both rural and urban environments. For readers interested in the rates of teen pregnancy according to metropolitan classification, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy reports that in 1990s, rates were somewhat higher for urban communities (70.4 per 1000 teenage births) compared to rural communities (68.2 per 1000 teen births), which were both higher than the rates for suburban communities. Since 1990, the teen birth rate has fallen much more steeply in suburban and urban communities than rural communities, making the rate now highest in rural areas. Alison Stewart Ng and Kaleen Kaye, "Science Says #47, Teen Childbearing in Rural America," National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, January 2013, [http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/ss/ss47\\_teenchildbearinginruralamerica.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/ss/ss47_teenchildbearinginruralamerica.pdf).

<sup>123</sup> *Teen Parents and Welfare Reform*, 21.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 24. Also, Senator Bob Graham notes the importance of improved vocational schools. *Teen Parents and Welfare Reform*, 22. Rebecca Maynard and Kristin Moore also both note the need for better school reform. *Ibid.*, 25. Senator Alfonse D'Amato agrees. *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>125</sup> *Preventing Teen Pregnancy*, 59.

<sup>126</sup> As Alyosha Goldstein argues, the economic logic behind the Marshall Plan was taken up as part of a broader set of understandings of poverty that shaped

international development policy in the 1950s and domestic policy in the 1960s.

Policymakers and social scientists applied the concept of underdevelopment to poor communities at home and abroad, identifying them as foreign and possessing of personal character flaws that prevented them from full incorporation into capitalist markets.

Alyosha Goldstein, *Poverty in Common: The Politics of Community Action During the American Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012) 81. As such, Foster's reference to a "domestic Marshall Plan" both confirms the status of teenage pregnancy as a structural economic issue and names the context of poverty in which teen pregnancy is purportedly rampant as foreign and deficient. In this way, teen pregnancy requires technical intervention as a result of both structural and personal factors.

<sup>127</sup> *Teen Parents and Welfare Reform*, 46. My emphasis.

<sup>128</sup> Some accounts do much more toward forwarding racist stereotypes than others, all but foreclosing any opportunity for analyses of power and inequality. For example, Representative Chris Shays refers repeatedly to "crack" mothers in his expressions of doubt about existing programs and the effectiveness of outputs of federal money, which I will discuss further below. *Preventing Teen Pregnancy*, 66-67.

<sup>129</sup> Other examples include: Douglas Besharov of the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, a witness in the *Teen Parents and Welfare Reform* hearing, mentions the rising rate of white "illegitimacy," but references Moynihan's 1960s research on African American families, and draws on heavily racialized imagery, citing the effects of "crack" on the "inner-cities" to describe what he sees as the causes of teen pregnancy. *Teen Parents and Welfare Reform*, 3. Again, race is presented as a factor

in the material circumstances that produce teen pregnancy, while the causes of those circumstances goes unexplained.

In discussing the importance of understanding teenage pregnancy as a problem stemming from “family breakdown” in communities of poverty, Patricia Funderburk Ware, former director of the Office for Adolescent Pregnancy Programs, states, “I find something akin to racism in attitudes that deny the ability of African Americans to embrace certain behaviors. These are the same behaviors that whites are suppose [sic] to be capable of adhering to, if they so choose. I have heard on too many occasions, in too many policy meetings, that ‘pre-marital abstinence is a white middle-class value, one that is in discord with the African Americans culture.’” *Preventing Teen Pregnancy*, 43. Here, she implies that the familial problems she is naming are especially prevalent in black households, while suggesting that accepting that would be a racist denial of African Americans’ abilities to achieve a white middle class norm. Her definition of “racism,” then, is to deny a group’s ability to achieve whiteness, rather than to accept and promote whiteness as the norm toward which everyone should strive.

<sup>130</sup> *Teen Pregnancy Prevention: Hearing before the House Subcommittee on Human Resources, Committee on Ways and Means, 107<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess. (November 15, 2001), 4.*

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>141</sup> As Bobby Jindal testifies, the “virginity pledge” has been shown to be successful in delaying sexual activity, although studies show that it also decreases the likelihood that the teen will use contraception. Ibid., 10. McIlhane also notes that the public pledging of virginity delays the “onset of sexual activity.” Ibid., 66. Both participants assume that delaying sexual activity is the key to solving the problem of teenage pregnancy.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 75-76.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 54. I discuss this set of strategies and some of its resulting media in depth in chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation.

<sup>147</sup> For example: Elayne Bennett, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Best Friends Foundation. Ibid., 39 and 44; and Representative Benjamin Cardin. Ibid., 79.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>149</sup> A statement submitted for the record, by William Wood of North Carolina, speaking on behalf only of himself, draws on a number of sources that he terms “social



science” to argue that fatherlessness is the root of many social problems, including “promiscuity” in women who grew up without fathers. Ibid., 128. Elayne Bennett states that, “Research has consistently shown that children growing up with a single mother are more likely to drop out of school, to give birth out of wedlock, to divorce or separate, and to be dependent on welfare (Garfinkel, I. and McLanahan, S.S., 1986). Seventy-two percent (72 percent) of America's adolescent murderers, 70 percent of long-term prison inmates and 60 percent of rapists come from fatherless homes.” Ibid., 41. Fatherlessness is therefore associated with violent crimes, criminality in general, and rape.

<sup>150</sup> Sarah Brown of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, for example, states that preventing teen pregnancy is a way of “making progress” on the issue of “responsible fatherhood.” Ibid., 89. And that curbing “premature” fatherhood will reduce a “host of other social problems.” Ibid., 51.

<sup>151</sup> *Preventing Teen Pregnancy*, 98. Pat Funderburk Ware also addresses fatherlessness, stating that it and its associated problems of multiple sexual partners and spreading STDs are prevalent in the African American community. She makes the argument that fatherlessness is a better indicator than race for things like teen pregnancy, poverty, crime, and welfare dependency. *Preventing Teen Pregnancy*, 41. In this way, she both acknowledges the racial dynamics of the discourses surrounding these problems at the time and refutes them. Whereas in the 2001 hearings, the racial dimensions of current or past discourses of teen pregnancy are generally left unacknowledged.

<sup>152</sup> This may be due in part to the sole focus on prevention, rather than on also regulating the lives of teens who are already parents, as was the case in the mid-1990s, but regulation *as* prevention through deterrence has disappeared from the debate entirely,

despite the continued existence of policy in part nominally geared toward that end.

<sup>153</sup> Sarah Brown, for example, states, “As many of you well know, reducing teen pregnancy is a highly effective way to make progress on a number of related social issues: child poverty, welfare dependency, out-of-wedlock childbearing and responsible fatherhood.” *Teen Pregnancy Prevention: Hearing*, 47. Likewise, McIlhaney states, “You probably know that one-third of pregnancies in America are born out-of-wedlock and that those drive much of the problems that we see in this country, poverty, child health, education, crime, much more that has been mentioned already.” *Ibid.*, 65-66.

<sup>154</sup> *Teen Parents and Welfare Reform*, 11.

<sup>155</sup> *Preventing Teen Pregnancy*, 58.

<sup>156</sup> *Teen Parents and Welfare Reform*, 11.

<sup>157</sup> Examples: *Teen Pregnancy Prevention: Hearing*, 40, 96, 109, 121.

<sup>158</sup> Examples: *Ibid.*, 13, 15, 18, 97, 125.

<sup>159</sup> Examples: *Ibid.*, 17-19,

<sup>160</sup> Examples: *Ibid.*, 6, 48.

<sup>161</sup> Examples: *Ibid.*, 48, 74.

<sup>162</sup> Examples: *Ibid.*, 7, 47, 91.

<sup>163</sup> Examples: *Ibid.*, 15, 19, 54, 74, 102.

<sup>164</sup> David Theo Goldberg, “Introduction: Multicultural Conditions,” in *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Theo Goldberg (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 7.

<sup>165</sup> Goldberg, “Introduction: Multicultural Conditions,” 7-9; Terence Turner, “Anthropology and Multiculturalism: What Is Anthropology that Multiculturalists Should

Be Mindful of It?” in *Multiculturalism, A Critical Reader*, ed. David Theo Goldberg (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 420.

<sup>166</sup> Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 156.

<sup>167</sup> Drawing on Rey Chow and Susan Koshy, Puar notes that multiculturalization and heterosexualization are “twin processes.” She goes on to explicate the ways that neoliberal multiculturalism, facilitating the “ascendancy of whiteness,” accommodates homonormative subjects (or subjects whose queerness reiterates and affirms heteronormativity) as part of the production of a sexual exceptionalism that justifies the racialized violence and exploitation of U.S. empire. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 24-32.

<sup>168</sup> Whereas most of the measures geared toward teen parents and preventing teen pregnancy in the PRWORA were built into the TANF program, affecting only those teens who would seek or be receiving welfare, the abstinence-only sex education funding that was part of both the PRWORA and its eventual reauthorization in the 2005 is geared toward a broader swath of teenagers. Although all of the other measures related to teen parents and teen pregnancy were also carried through in the reauthorization (except the measure to reward states for reducing teen pregnancy without increasing abortion rates), none of those measures was discussed in any depth during the 2001 *Teen Pregnancy Prevention* welfare reauthorization hearing.

<sup>169</sup> Anne E. Kornblut and Perry Bacon Jr, “Clinton Makeover Accents Her Midwestern Roots,” *Washington Post*, June 3, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>.

<sup>170</sup> Scott Wilson, “‘You Will Not Be Forgotten,’ Obama Promises Native American Leaders,” *Washington Post*, November 6, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>.

<sup>171</sup> Luker, *Dubious Conceptions*, 60-64; Arai, *Teenage Pregnancy*, 4.

<sup>172</sup> For mentions of teen pregnancy in these debates see: *Personal Responsibility, Work, and Family Promotion Act of 2002*, 107 Cong., 2d. Sess., *Congressional Record* Vol. 148, No. 63 (May 16, 2002): H 2517, 2548-2552, 2565, 2588, 2590; *Personal Responsibility, Work and Family Promotion Act of 2003*, 108<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* Vol. 149, No. 27 (February 13, 2003): H 465, 470, 484-486, 493, 497, 499; *Personal Responsibility and Individual Development for Everyone Act*, 108<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record* Vol. 150, No. 43 (March 31, 2004): S 3443-3444.

<sup>173</sup> Clare Daniel, “Rescuing the Ideal Citizen: Welfare Reform Rhetoric and the Innocent Child” (master’s thesis, University of New Mexico, 2008).

<sup>174</sup> For example, in a 2002 welfare reauthorization debate, Tauzin states that teen sex leads to diseases, infertility, and emotional problems, which can only be prevented by abstinence-only programs. Funding of these programs will continue a “commitment to our children,” and “help lift more families out of poverty and protect more teenagers from the dangers of sexual activity outside of marriage.” *Congressional Record* Vol. 149, No. 27: H 497.

<sup>175</sup> For example, during the CAA debate, Representative Barbara Lee applauds the defunding of abstinence-only programs, stating, “the health of our young teenage girls and boys” is at stake. *Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010*, 111th Cong. 1<sup>st</sup> sess., *Congressional Record* Vol. 155, No. 113 (July 24, 2009): H 8779.

<sup>176</sup> Susan Levine, “Teen Pregnancy, Birth Rates Plummet Across D.C. Region,” *Washington Post*, October 29, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>177</sup> Berlant, *The Queen of America*, 22. As I will discuss in chapter 3 and the conclusion of this dissertation, the imagined future children of would-be teen parents fill the strange role within post-welfare teen pregnancy prevention discourse of teaching their would-be parents about proper sex, reproduction, and intimate citizenship in the name of preventing their own very existence. In this way, they are portrayed as a decidedly non-innocent subset of future children, always either already ruined by their imagined parents' immorality or else successful in their teaching and in fact never born.

<sup>178</sup> Although this was an important part of 1990s welfare reform, as evidenced by the incentive to states to reduce teen parenthood while keeping abortion rates down, it was one of many concerns shaping the issue. In the next decade, however, teen pregnancy becomes solely about reproductive politics.

<sup>179</sup> *Congressional Record* Vol. 155, No. 113: H 8756

<sup>180</sup> This is exemplified by guidelines laid out by the CDC in which all such women are considered "pre-pregnant." January W. Payne, "Forever Pregnant," *Washington Post*, May 16, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>181</sup> *Senate*, 111<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d. sess., *Congressional Record* Vol. 156, No. 43 (March 21, 2010): H 1893.

<sup>182</sup> Laura Briggs argues that the degree to which a social group's children are perceived as adoptable is an important index of that group's relative social vulnerability. Briggs, *Somebody's Children*, 282. As I show in chapter 2, the contemporary teen pregnancy prevention discourse in popular culture encourages adoption for pregnant teens with a heavy hand.

<sup>183</sup> Kaptur is a Democrat from Ohio whose voting record can be considered aligned with an anti-abortion agenda.

<sup>184</sup> *Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010-Conference Report*, 111<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., *Congressional Record* Vol. 155, No. 185 (Dec. 10, 2009): S 12884.

<sup>185</sup> *Congressional Record* Vol. 155, No. 185: S 12884.

<sup>186</sup> *Service Members Home Ownership Tax Act of 2009*, 111<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., *Congressional Record* Vol. 155, No. 184 (Dec. 9, 2009): S 12762.

<sup>187</sup> *Congressional Record* Vol. 155, No. 184: S 12762.

<sup>188</sup> *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2010*, H.R. 3288, 111<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1<sup>st</sup> sess.

<sup>189</sup> *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*, H.R. 3590, 111<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2d. sess.

<sup>190</sup> The Support for Pregnant and Parenting Teens and Women section of the PPACA discussed above allots \$25 million per year to fund programs that assess needs, assess the ability of an eligible institution to meet those needs, provide referrals to entities that can meet needs, and establish programs to meet needs. Needs include things like maternity coverage, family housing, childcare, parenting classes, baby food, furniture, clothing, and post-partum counseling. Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Anne E. Kornblut and Juliet Eilperin, "Calculated Risk With Female Voters Is Suddenly Even Harder to Calculate," *Washington Post*, September 2, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>192</sup> Kevin Merida, "GOP's Northern Lights; With Their Governor at Center Stage, Alaskan Delegates Play a Supportive Role," *Washington Post*, September 4, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>; Keith Koffler, "GOP Base Appears Sturdy Amid

Revelations,” *Roll Call*, September 3, 2008, <http://www.rollcall.com>; Jose Antonio Vargas, “Blog Talk: Interview with Blogger Jill Stanek,” *Washington Post*, September 5, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>193</sup> Candie’s Foundation, “Videos,” Candie’s Foundation, accessed on August 20, 2012, <http://www.candiesfoundation.org/videos.html>.

<sup>194</sup> *Preventing Teen Pregnancy*, 66-67.

<sup>195</sup> In fact, teen pregnancy rates actually increased slightly in the mid-2000s. Rob Stein, “Teen Sex Rates Stop Falling, Data Show,” *Washington Post*, July 22, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>; Rob Stein, “Teen Birth Rate Rises in U.S., Reversing a 14-Year Decline,” *Washington Post*, December 6, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>; Rob Stein, “Abstinence Programs Face Rejection; More States Opt to Turn Down the Federal Money Attached to That Kind of Sex Ed,” *Washington Post*, December 16, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>; Rob Stein and Donna St. George, “[Teenage Birthrate Increases For Second Consecutive Year](#),” *Washington Post*, March 19, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>; Rob Stein, “[Decline in Teen Sex Levels Off, Survey Shows](#),” *Washington Post*, June 5, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>196</sup> National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, “Media,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, accessed December 20, 2013, <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/media/default.aspx>.

<sup>197</sup> In addition to the texts analyzed in depth in this chapter (*16 and Pregnant* [2009-], *The Pregnancy Pact* [2010], and *The Secret Life of the American Teenager* [2008-]), other popular shows and movies that either focus on or deal with teen

pregnancy in some way include: *Teen Mom* (2009-), *Teen Mom 2* (2011-), *High School Moms* (2012), *Bristol Palin: Life's a Tripp* (2012), *The Pregnancy Project* (2012), *Glee* (2009-2012), *Gossip Girl* (2007-2012), *Raising Hope* (2010-2012), *Friday Night Lights* (2006-2011), *Precious* (2009), *The Baby Borrowers* (2008), *90210* (2008-2012), *Juno* (2007), *Reba* (2001-2007), *Gilmore Girls* (2000-2007), *Mom at 16* (2005), *Saved!* (2004), *Mom at Sixteen* (2002), *Too Young to Be a Dad* (2002).

<sup>198</sup> Some examples of texts that deal extensively with it include the film *For Keeps?* (1988) and *Fifteen and Pregnant* (1998), both of which depict teen pregnancy through white girls whose lives are turned upside down by it. The film *Losing Isaiah* (1995), while not explicitly about teen pregnancy, depicts a story more typical of the racialized discourse of impoverished unwed motherhood in which an African American crack-addicted mother abandons her infant son and then takes the white middle class couple who adopted him to court for custody.

<sup>199</sup> Marina Khidekel, "Could Hollywood Trick You Into Getting Pregnant?" *Seventeen.com*, accessed July 25, 2012, <http://www.seventeen.com/health/tips/teen-pregnancy-stories-and-statistics#slide-1>; Kim Masters, "Teens, Sex and TV: A Risky Mix?" *NPR.org*, December 2, 2008, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97637718>;

<sup>200</sup> Cheryl Wetzstein, "Congress hopes to cut illegitimacy at any age; Clinton targets teen pregnancies," *The Washington Times* (Washington D.C.), January 14, 1997; "Funders," National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, accessed July 17, 2012, <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/about-us/funders.aspx>.



<sup>201</sup> For example, the National Campaign has provided witnesses at two of the three legislative hearings devoted exclusively to the issue of teen pregnancy between 1996 and 2010. *Teen Pregnancy Prevention: Hearing; Preventing Teen Pregnancy*. The third included a witness who had formerly served on a task force for the National Campaign, *Social and Economic Costs of Teen Pregnancy*.

<sup>202</sup> As Wanda Pillow notes, representatives from the National Campaign served as advisors on earlier shows, such as *Boston Public* (2000-2004), *Popular* (1999-2001), and *Dawson's Creek* (1998-2003), regarding teen pregnancy plotlines in which white girls are instructed on how to avoid their downfall. Wanda Pillow, *Unfit Subjects: Educational Policy and the Teen Mother* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 174. However, it was not until the last few years that their collaborations with shows and films exclusively devoted to teen pregnancy gained popularity.

<sup>203</sup> While these shows and movies do not necessarily benefit from the funding set aside in the teen pregnancy prevention legislation discussed in chapter 1 for “innovative” strategies developed by governmental and community-based organizations, they form a core part of a response to broader calls for innovation, efficiency, and privatization in prevention approaches, which I discuss further in chapter 3. Moreover, The National Campaign bills these texts as educational tools for pregnancy prevention and, in the case of *16 and Pregnant*, provides organizations and schools with DVD's and study guides with which to teach children and teens how to avoid pregnancy. In this way, and in the production of qualitative data confirming the effectiveness of *16 and Pregnant* as a prevention tool (which I discuss further in chapter 3) the National Campaign works to justify its involvement in these productions and to disseminate them to local

communities. Bill Albert, "Is Media Glamorizing Teen Pregnancy?: New Research of Teens Suggests the Answer is No." National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, October, 4, 2010. <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/press/press-release.aspx?releaseID=200>.

<sup>204</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume One* (1978, repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1990); Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976* (New York: Picador, 2003).

<sup>205</sup> Joe Piazza, "What are the Most Dangerous Shows Your Kids are Watching Without You," *FoxNews.com*, December 5, 2011, <http://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2011/12/05/what-are-most-dangerous-shows-your-kids-are-watching-without/>; Patrick Jonsson, "A Force Behind the Lower Teen Birth Rate: MTV's '16 and Pregnant,'" *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 21, 2010, <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2010/1221/A-force-behind-the-lower-teen-birthrate-MTV-s-16-and-Pregnant.>; Morgan J. Freeman (producer), *16 and Pregnant*, (USA: MTV Networks) first broadcast in 2009.

<sup>206</sup> Goldberg, "Introduction: Multicultural Conditions;" Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality*, 43-66; Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 128-134; Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 24-32.

<sup>207</sup> Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic*, 10-17.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>209</sup> Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 42.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 42; Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic*, 10-17; Lee, *Urban Triage*, xxvii.

<sup>211</sup> Sarah Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>212</sup> Asa Hawks, "VIDEO 16 and Pregnant Season 4 Trailer," *Starcasm.net*, February 12, 2012, <http://starcasm.net/archives/145011>; Sarah Seltzer, "MTV's 16 and Pregnant Exploits Teen Moms but Addresses Abortion with Dignity," *Washington Post*, December 30, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/30/AR2010123001953.html>.

<sup>213</sup> Laurie Oullette and James Hay, *Better Living Through Reality TV* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 12-14.

<sup>214</sup> This is the language used by the National Campaign to discuss its agenda before the House Subcommittee on Human Resources in 2001. *Teen Pregnancy Prevention: Hearing*, 90. The MTV shows appear to be the most well-known endeavor of this sort to date. The National Campaign has participated in numerous television shows and films, including a nine-part webseries called 9ine, which is available for free online and is accompanied by discussion guides. Allen Sowell, *9ine, One Economy Corporation*, 2011, accessed December 20, 2013, <http://pic.tv/9ine/>.

<sup>215</sup> Celebrity physician and addiction specialist, Dr. Drew, enjoys a large following resulting from his participation in the long-running radio series *Loveline*, in which he gives advice on sexual and relationship health. He is also known for *Celebrity Rehab with Dr. Drew* on VH1, and *Dr. Drew* on HLN (a CNN spin-off), as well as many other regular appearances on popular shows. He generally provides what is billed as expert opinion about a wide variety of personal issues.

<sup>216</sup> For example, Republican Senator Phil Gramm is quoted as saying, “It is a ‘national policy of suicide,’ . . . to continue the system under which a 16 year old can escape her mother by simply having a child and setting up an independent household with taxpayers' money.” Judith Havemann and Helen Dewar, “Dole Courts Consensus On Welfare; Reform Plan Carries Tough Work Mandates,” *Washington Post*, August 8, 1995.

<sup>217</sup> Teenage pregnancy rates have fallen, then risen, then fallen again in the years since welfare reform, with no determined correlation to welfare reform. *Teen Pregnancy Prevention: Hearing*, 5; Lingxin Hao and Andrew J. Cherlin, “Welfare Reform and Teenage Pregnancy, Childbirth, and School Dropout,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66:1 (February 01, 2004): 179-194; Gregory Acs and Heather L. Koball, “TANF and the Status of Teen Mothers under Age 18,” *Urban Institute*, June 2, 2003, <http://www.urban.org/publications/310796.html>; Janelen Duffy and Jodie Levin-Epstein, “Add it Up: Teen Parents and Welfare . . . Undercounted, Oversanctioned, and Underserved,” *Center for Law and Social Policy*, April 2002, [www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/0090.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/0090.pdf). Also, whether welfare reform has alleviated or exacerbated poverty in its various forms has also not clearly been determined. Danziger, Sandra K. “The Decline of Cash Welfare and Implications for Social Policy and Poverty,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (2010):523-545.

<sup>218</sup> The fan culture represented online, however, does sometimes refer to the stereotype of the irresponsible welfare queen/teenage mother. For example, Lindsey is accused of utilizing public funds for her medical expenses and to raise her child, but she denies the accusations. Darren O, “16 and Pregnant’s Lindsey Harrison Defends Herself

Against Negative Attacks, *Starcasm.net*, April 20, 2010,

<http://starcasm.net/archives/151385>.

<sup>219</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 4, Episode 2.

<sup>220</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 4, Episode 5.

<sup>221</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, Episode 14; *Ibid.*, Season 3, “Where Are They Now Special.”

<sup>222</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 1, “Life After Labor Finale Special.”

<sup>223</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, “Where Are They Now Special.”

<sup>224</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 4, “Where Are They Now Special.” However, according to *Hollywood Life*, Kianna was arrested and charged with aggravated robbery in August of 2011. Lindsey DiMattina, “16 and Pregnant Mom Kianna Randall Charged with Aggravated Robbery!” *HollywoodLife.com*, October 19, 2011, <http://www.hollywoodlife.com/2011/10/19/16-pregnant-kianna-randall-armed-robbery/>.

Similarly, while not portrayed in the show, Ebony and Josh apparently were arrested on drug-related and child endangerment charges in 2011. Carolyn Robertson, “16 and Pregnant Stars Charged with Child Endangerment,” *BabyCenter Blog*, September 19, 2011, <http://blogs.babycenter.com/celebrities/16-pregnant-stars-charged-with-child-endangerment/>.

<sup>225</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 4, “Where Are They Now Special;” *16 and Pregnant*, Season 4, “Life After Labor Finale Special.” Myranda’s mother is also depicted as having issues with drug and alcohol addiction. *16 and Pregnant*, Season 4, Episode 7.

<sup>226</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 4, “Where Are They Now Special;” *16 and Pregnant*, Season 3, Episode 2.

<sup>227</sup> Emphasis added in accordance with the speaker’s emphasis.

<sup>228</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, “Unseen Moments Special.” Similarly, Ebony says pregnancy is “getting in the way” of things like prom in her episode. *16 and Pregnant*, Season 1, Episode 4.

<sup>229</sup> Amber’s boyfriend buys a playstation and then later agrees to take it back to the store. *16 and Pregnant*, Season 1, Episode 3. Felicia’s boyfriend buys expensive shoes just when she cannot afford the new stroller her baby needs. *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, Episode 12. Christinna’s boyfriend buys new speakers for his car instead of things for the baby. *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, Episode 16.

<sup>230</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 1, Episode 2. *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, Episodes 1, 8, 9, 11. *16 and Pregnant*, Season 3, Episodes 1, 4, 6, 7, 8. *16 and Pregnant*, Seasons 4, Episode 4.

<sup>231</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 4, Episode 1.

<sup>232</sup> For example, at the end of her episode, Kailynn says that the hardest thing about being a teen mom is “the fact that you have to give up your youth, your social life—it’s non-existent.” *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, Episode 10. Also, many of them discuss the stares, gossip, and losing friends as a result of being a pregnant and mothering teenager. *16 and Pregnant*, Season 1, Episode 2. *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, Episode 11, “Life After Labor Finale Special” April 20, 2010.

<sup>233</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 4, Episode 2.

<sup>234</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, Episode 17.

<sup>235</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, Episode 17.

<sup>236</sup> Scholars trace the emergence and popularization of theories of cultural pathology to describe “black family structure,” “single motherhood,” and “long-term dependency.” O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*; Michael Katz, “The Urban ‘Underclass’ as a Metaphor of Social Transformation,” in *The “Underclass” Debate: Views From History*, ed. Michael B. Katz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 3-23; Neubeck and Cazenave, *Welfare Racism*, 152-154. All of these came to be increasingly associated with and attributed to teenage pregnancy in the 1980s and 1990s. Luker, *Dubious Conceptions*, 81-108; Pillow, *Unfit Subjects*, 37-39.

<sup>237</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, Episode 17.

<sup>238</sup> Pillow, *Unfit Subjects*, 1.

<sup>239</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, Episode 17.

<sup>240</sup> Arai, *Teenage Pregnancy*, 115-116; Kathleen Sylvester, *Second-Chance Homes, Breaking the Cycle of Teen Pregnancy* (Washington D.C.: Progressive Policy Institute, 1995); Cynthia A. Hudley, “Issues of Race and Gender in the Educational Achievement of African American Children,” in *Gender, Equity, and Schooling: Policy and Practice*, eds. Barbara J. Bank and Peter M. Hall (New York: Routledge, 1997), 115.

<sup>241</sup> Melissa Skolfield, “Draft Talking Points,” fol. 3, box 24, News Clips, Domestic Policy Council, Bruce Reed, Welfare Reform (1993-2001) Subject File, Systematic Processed Collections, William J. Clinton Presidential Library, Little Rock, Arkansas.

<sup>242</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 1, Episode 6.

<sup>243</sup> Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 42.

<sup>244</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 1, Episode 6.

<sup>245</sup> Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 33.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>247</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 1, “Life After Labor Finale Special.” This is similar to an episode of *Dr. Phil* (another television talk show hosted by a popular psychologist) in which he questions whether the Indian Child Welfare Act should affect the adoption of a Native American child by a white middle class couple. Responding to an attorney and tribal judge advocating for the legitimacy of the ICWA, Dr. Phil states “What I hear you saying is what’s best for the tribe, not what’s best for the child.” In this way he artificially separates the child’s interests from those of the birth parents and tribe, suggesting that a white middle class family automatically provides the best upbringing for the child. Harpo Productions, “Adoption Controversy- Battle over Baby Veronica,” Dr. Phil, June 6, 2013, <http://www.drphil.com/shows/show/1895>.

<sup>248</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 1, Episode 6.

<sup>249</sup> Although the first two seasons include a significant amount of focus on curtailed options for consumption and education—things that could be considered related to a life of poverty—evidence of serious financial hardship, real concern for survival or dependence on social welfare, rarely appear. Instead, as noted above, financial concerns revolve mostly around sacrifices of luxury, recreation, and independence from parents.

<sup>250</sup> Interestingly, Lori and Ashley, the other two pregnant teens in seasons one and two who choose adoption for their babies, are both products of teen mothers as well. Lori’s birth mother could be said to have preempted Lori’s potential poverty by giving her up for adoption and Lori does the same for her baby. *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2,



Episode 5. Ashley's mother appears to have escaped the fate of poverty that teen moms have been said to inflict on themselves and their children and has also managed to help Ashley foreclose that possibility for her daughter. *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, Episode 19. In this way, the discourse that linked generational poverty, welfare dependence, and teen pregnancy together so tightly is even further unraveled.

<sup>251</sup> Briggs, *Somebody's Children*, 32.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 145-146.

<sup>254</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, "Life After Labor Finale Special," April 20, 2009.

<sup>255</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 4, "Life After Labor Finale Special."

<sup>256</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, "Life After Labor Finale Special," December 28, 2009.

<sup>257</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 4, "Life After Labor Finale Special."

<sup>258</sup> *16 and Pregnant*, Season 2, Episode 16.

<sup>259</sup> Mike Reynolds, "Lifetime's 'Pregnancy Pact' is Cable's Most-Watched Film Among Women 18-34 Since 1994," *MultiChannel News*, January 25, 2010,

<http://www.multichannel.com/article/445871->

[Lifetime s Pregnancy Pact Is Cable s Most Watched Film Among Women 18 34](http://www.multichannel.com/article/445871-)

[Since 1994.php](http://www.multichannel.com/article/445871-); "The Pregnancy Pact," *MyLifetime.com*, accessed July 26, 2012,

<http://www.mylifetime.com/movies/the-pregnancy-pact/>; Amanda Kondoloyj, "'The

Secret Life of the American Teenager' is Cables #1 Program at 8 O'Clock in Target 12-34s," *TV by the Numbers*, June 19, 2012,

<http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/2012/06/19/the-secret-life-of-the-american-teenager-is-cables-1-program-at-8-oclock-in-target-12-34s/138770/>.

<sup>260</sup> In some ways, this trend harks back to an earlier era of panic over teen pregnancy. As Wanda Pillow explains, the teen pregnancy discourse of the 1960s and 1970s painted the typical teen mother as “one of us,” in part as an effort to prevent services for unwed mothers from being cut in a climate of racist concerns over the desegregation of public service and the over-reproduction of black women. Pillow, *Unfit Subjects*, 30-31. However, the representations of young, white girls’ mistakes today appear to have very different aims.

<sup>261</sup> Chow, *The Protestant Ethic*, 14.

<sup>262</sup> Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 13.

<sup>263</sup> This strategy, as I discuss in chapter 3, is used regularly within National Campaign rhetoric to create the appearance of its efforts as a commonsense approach to teen pregnancy that gets beyond the entanglements of partisan politics.

<sup>264</sup> “About Lifetime,” *MyLifetime.com*, accessed July 27, 2012, <http://www.mylifetime.com/about-us/about-lifetime>.

<sup>265</sup> Although pundits in the 1990s cautioned that white teen birth rates were catching up with those of Black and Latina teenagers, white middleclass girls were not considered the at-risk population. For example: *The Economist*, “Babies Making Babies,” December 11, 1993, p. 27, fol. 4, box 24, News Clips Domestic Policy Council, Bruce Reed, Welfare Reform (1993-2001) Subject File, Systematic Processed Collections, William J. Clinton Presidential Library, Little Rock, Arkansas.

<sup>266</sup> Rosemary Rodriguez (director), *The Pregnancy Pact* (USA: Lifetime), first broadcast in 2010.

<sup>267</sup> No actual pregnancy pact in Gloucester, MA was ever confirmed, although 17 girls at the same school became pregnant in one year. The film was heavily criticized by school officials and community members from Gloucester. Matthew Gilbert, “Sex, Lies, and Sensationalism in ‘The Pregnancy Pact,’” *The Boston Globe*, January 22, 2010, [http://www.boston.com/ae/tv/articles/2010/01/22/sex\\_lies\\_and\\_sensationalism\\_in\\_pregnancy\\_pact/](http://www.boston.com/ae/tv/articles/2010/01/22/sex_lies_and_sensationalism_in_pregnancy_pact/); Dorothy Rabinowitz, “Sex and the Schoolgirl,” *The Wall Street Journal*, January 22, 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703699204575017022962642694.html>.

<sup>268</sup> The superiority of her choice is clear because, by the time Sydney’s story is revealed, the film has already established the complete irrationality of teen girls who believe that mothering as a teenager will be good and fun.

<sup>269</sup> Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 14.

<sup>270</sup> Critics of comprehensive sex education often argue that teenagers require a “single, unambiguous message” of abstinence until marriage. Solomon-Fears, *Teenage Pregnancy Prevention*, 11.

<sup>271</sup> Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 147-148.

<sup>272</sup> *Glee*’s teen mom is Quinn Fabray, the blonde and beautiful captain of the cheerleading squad and celibacy club, who lies to her boyfriend about the baby being his (when it is really the local bad boy’s), gives the baby up for adoption, plots to get the baby back, then realizes the baby is better off with the adoptive mother. In *Gossip Girl*, rich, white Blair Waldorff gets pregnant and then has a miscarriage after a car accident.

In the Lifetime original movie *Mom at Sixteen*, Jacey Jeffries has a baby and her mother pretends it is hers so that Jacey can act like a “normal” teenager, but after everyone finds out the baby is hers she eventually gives him up for adoption. In *Saved!* Mary Cummings becomes pregnant in order to rescue her boyfriend from his proclaimed homosexuality, counting on Jesus to restore her virginity and the movie ends with the baby’s birth. *Juno* portrays a young white girl’s relatively carefree journey through pregnancy and adoption.

There are a few recent examples of poor white girls getting pregnant, but their teen motherhood (like some of their wealthier counterparts) is foreclosed by abortion, adoption, and even death. For example, Becky Sproles gets pregnant in *Friday Night Lights*. Her mother was a teenager when she had Becky and currently works as a waitress. Becky has an abortion, breaking “the pattern of poverty and powerlessness” in which she is embroiled, according to a Washington Post critic. Gloria Feldt, “On ‘Friday Night Lights,’ A Brave and Honest Abortion Story,” *Washington Post*, July 25, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/07/23/AR2010072302432.html?sid=ST2010123003034>. In *Raising Hope*, a working class teen dad, himself the son of teen parents, raises his daughter after her mother, with whom he had a one-night stand, is executed for being a serial killer.

As Wanda Pillow points out, examples of shows that briefly dealt with the issue of teen pregnancy in a slightly earlier period, including *Boston Public* (2000-2004), *Popular* (1999-2001), and *Dawson’s Creek* (1998-2003), portrayed wealthy or middleclass white girls either getting pregnant and having an abortion (*Boston Public*) or merely having a “pregnancy scare” that turned out to not be an actual pregnancy. Pillow,

*Unfit Subjects*, 114-115. The image of the middleclass white girl getting pregnant and handling it by having an abortion or disappearing and giving the baby up for adoption has a long history in the popular imagination.

Not so common until now, is the sustained focus on white, middleclass girls carrying their pregnancies to term and parenting in full public view. Besides the texts analyzed in this chapter, *Gilmore Girls* (2000-2007) chronicles a former teen mom in her adulthood as she parents her own teenage daughter, and *Reba* (2001-2007) follows the antics of a woman and her family, which includes her teenage daughter who got pregnant and 17 and married the father of her baby. One of the few popular examples of this from the 1990s is Andrea Zuckerman's pregnancy and motherhood in season 4 and 5 of *Beverly Hills, 90210* (1990-2000), before Zuckerman is eliminated as a regular character as the series continues through five more seasons. The dominant discourse about teen pregnancy and motherhood in the 1990s came less from popular entertainment, and more from the news media and political discourse discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation.

An important exception to the current trend of depicting teen mothers as white and middleclass is the 2009 independent film *Precious*, which chronicles the unfortunate life of a 1980s Black teenager who suffers physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, lives in a household of poverty and welfare fraud, and gives birth to two children by her own father who has raped her. After learning that she has contracted AIDS from her father and watching her mother intentionally drop her baby on his head, she ultimately severs herself from her pathological childhood home to raise her second son (the first one has Down's syndrome and lives with her grandmother) on her own while she works at

finishing her GED. The film received a very positive reception with the exception of some who saw it as a celebration of stereotypes of black familial pathology and an unrealistic self-improvement story.

As noted above, I focus in this chapter on those texts that both devote their entirety to representing teen pregnancy and motherhood, and are explicitly part of a new set of prevention strategies spearheaded by the National Campaign. While I identify these strategies as new because of their participation in the consolidation of a dominant discourse resulting from a large network of state and private resources, these texts are reminiscent of the approach taken by a few episodes of teen-oriented after-school programming from the 1980s (for example, *ABC Afterschool Specials*, Season 9, Episode 2, “Schoolboy Father,” 1980; and *CBS Schoolbreak Special*, Season 3, Episode 3, “Babies Having Babies,” 1986.)

<sup>273</sup> Amy’s mother is played by Molly Ringwald, best known for her roles as a wide-eyed, well-intentioned teen in movies like *Sixteen Candles* (1984), *The Breakfast Club* (1985), *Pretty In Pink* (1986), but she also played a pregnant teen in *For Keeps* (1988), a movie which delves more into an older discourse of teen pregnancy and poverty, focusing attention on the young couple’s run-down apartment and inability to pay the bills.

<sup>274</sup> Brenda Hampton (creator), *The Secret Life of the American Teenager* (USA: ABC Family) first broadcast in 2008, Season 1, Episode 23.

<sup>275</sup> *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, Season 1, Episode 22.

<sup>276</sup> *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, Season 1, Episode 1.

<sup>277</sup> *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, Season 1, Episode 23.

<sup>278</sup> In the third season, however, another teen pregnancy occurs, this time with a slight mix-up of the original scheme. Adrian, a Latina who is portrayed as promiscuous as a result of her own familial breakdown, becomes pregnant when she has sex with Ben in order to get back at Ricky for kissing Amy. The show thus suggests that nice young white men can be the victims of bad girls too. Adrian's pregnancy ends in a miscarriage.

<sup>279</sup> National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, "Why Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice?" National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, accessed December 19, 2013,

<http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/fostercare/why.aspx>.

<sup>280</sup> *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, Season 1, Episode 22.

<sup>281</sup> David Theo Goldberg discusses the multiple iterations and consequences of multicultural politics. Goldberg, "Introduction: Multicultural Conditions," 7.

<sup>282</sup> *Personal Responsibility, Work Opportunity, and Medicaid Restructuring Act of 1996*, 104<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>d</sup> sess., *Congressional Record* Vol. 142, No. 108 (July 22, 1996): S 8397 and 8398. *Conference Report on H.R. 3734, Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*, 104<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>d</sup> sess., *Congressional Record* Vol. 142, No. 115 (July 31, 1996): H 9406, 9412, and 9421. Ben Wattenberg, "Moynihan's Message," *New York Post*, January 14, 1994, fol. 4, box 24, News Clips, Domestic Policy Council, Bruce Reed, Welfare Reform (1993-2001) Subject File, Systematic Processed Collections, William J. Clinton Presidential Library, Little Rock, Arkansas.

<sup>283</sup> In her analysis of a recent "explosion" of portrayals of pregnancy in Hollywood films, Kelly Oliver suggests that proper pregnancy is conveyed as the purview of the successful adult career woman. The pregnant bodies of these women in

what Oliver refers to as “momcoms” are frequently shown as grotesque, abject, and embarrassing. This abjectness, however, rather than being the sign of perverse too early pregnancy as in the case of televised teen pregnancy prevention, is part of the comic relief in a touching narrative about the consolidation of heteronormative love. Kelly Oliver, *Knock Me Up, Knock Me Down: Images of Pregnancy in Hollywood Films* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 9-10.

<sup>284</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Teen Pregnancy and Social Media.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed January 24, 2013, <http://www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy/socialmedia/>.

<sup>285</sup> By “abstract equality” I am referring to a discourse that presents all individuals as fundamentally equal under the law and able to access a basic set of constitutional rights. Within neoliberalism, this version of equality comes to be understood primarily as the right to participate in markets, which are upheld as the rightful mechanism of inclusion and multiculturalism (Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 139). This version of equality renders the presence of gross material inequality invisible and irrelevant, implicitly blaming subjugated people for their inability to fully take advantage of their right.

<sup>286</sup> Mink, *Welfare's End*; Jamie Peck, *Workfare States* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001); Smith, *Welfare Reform and Sexual Regulation*.

<sup>287</sup> John Krinsky, *Free Labor: Workfare and the Contested Language of Neoliberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Frank Ridzi, *Selling Welfare Reform: Work-First and the New Common Sense of Employment* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).



<sup>288</sup> Berlant, *The Queen of America*; Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception*; Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*.

<sup>289</sup> Lisa Nakamura, *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Robert W. Gehl, "Distributed Centralization: Web 2.0 as a Portal into Users' Lives." *Lateral* 1 (Spring 2012).

<http://lateral.culturalstudiesassociation.org/issue1/gehl.html>.

<sup>290</sup> William Jefferson Clinton, "State of the Union Address," U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, January 23, 1996, <http://clinton2.nara.gov/WH/New/other/sotu.html>.

<sup>291</sup> "Volunteerism a good way to plug the holes in the safety net," Copley News Service, April 28, 1997, <http://lexisnexis.com>.

<sup>292</sup> National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, "990 Form filed for the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy," National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2011, accessed January 25, 2012, <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/about-us/PDF/990.pdf>; National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, "Audited Financial Statements," National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, December 31, 2011, <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/about-us/PDF/2011-audited-financial-statements.pdf>.

<sup>293</sup> These include representatives from Child Trends, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Center for Equal Opportunity, Columbia University, George Washington University, and the Center for American Progress, among others. National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, "Board of Directors," National Campaign to

Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, accessed January 25, 2013,

<http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/about-us/board.aspx>.

<sup>294</sup> National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, “Our Mission,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, accessed January 25, 2013, <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/about-us/our-mission.aspx>.

Although the mission does not explicitly name marriage as the appropriate confines for childbearing, as I discuss below, marriage is explicitly upheld as preferable to all other contexts in National Campaign literature. Likewise, a college education prior to children is touted as an important step toward “success.”

<sup>295</sup> This tradition finds its roots in 1940s liberal poverty knowledge, such as Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma*, which explained racialized poverty in terms of culture rather than biology. Through the 1960s, social scientific research into poverty worked to substantiate the “culture of poverty” thesis and forward racial assimilationism. O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, 10. However, this research also involved a structural analysis implicating macroeconomic policy in the persistence of poverty and assuming the importance of a broad social base. In response to the radical social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the rise of the New Right and neoliberalism has led to professionalized poverty research that centers personal responsibility and family values at the expense of any substantive discussion of economic policy. O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, 10-11.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>298</sup> Ron Haskins and Isabel Sawhill, “Policy Brief: Welfare Reform and Beyond #28: Work and Marriage, the Way to End Poverty and Welfare,” The Brookings

Institution, September 2003,

[https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:Y4YOyXHtjf8J:www.brookings.edu/es/wrb/publications/pb/pb28.pdf+&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESgA9055eE3M3ixavm18cXbza2K344LCp4iKAVqYCaveD8hCcIuJ1A3sMuQsIs5t\\_oV\\_QUVRFzBjbJcFcNq8ZAv1\\_82y3WFhmG2Ar6X0QPAAb4uVmNh5gtMNgMtV4HHLmcM6bLQWf&sig=AHIEtbT4oIhGxJoaaVaMI17p8rXHdv65Fg](https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:Y4YOyXHtjf8J:www.brookings.edu/es/wrb/publications/pb/pb28.pdf+&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESgA9055eE3M3ixavm18cXbza2K344LCp4iKAVqYCaveD8hCcIuJ1A3sMuQsIs5t_oV_QUVRFzBjbJcFcNq8ZAv1_82y3WFhmG2Ar6X0QPAAb4uVmNh5gtMNgMtV4HHLmcM6bLQWf&sig=AHIEtbT4oIhGxJoaaVaMI17p8rXHdv65Fg).

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>301</sup> National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, “The Talk: It’s More than Just Sex,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, accessed August 26, 2012,

<http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/parents/relationships.aspx>.

<sup>302</sup> “Institute of Medicine of the National Academies,” Institute of Medicine, accessed November 3, 2012, <http://www.iom.edu/>.

<sup>303</sup> This argument dovetails conveniently with pro-choice arguments about the importance of the wantedness of a pregnancy, contributing to the broader goal, which I discuss below, of creating an appearance of bipartisanship and neutrality within National Campaign politics.

<sup>304</sup> Sarah S. Brown and Leon Eisenberg, eds., *The Best Intentions: Unintended Pregnancy and the Well-Being of Children and Families* (Washington D. C.: National Academy Press, 1995), 1-2.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>307</sup> Luker, *Dubious Conceptions*, 152.

<sup>308</sup> National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, “What Makes us Unique,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned pregnancy, accessed August 8, 2012, <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/about-us/unique.aspx>.

<sup>309</sup> National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, “Putting What Works to Work,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned pregnancy, accessed August 7, 2012, <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/works/PWWTWreports.aspx>.

<sup>310</sup> Katherine Suellentrop, Jane Brown and Rebecca Ortiz, “Science Says #45: Evaluating the Impact of MTV’s *16 and Pregnant* on Teen Viewers Attitudes about Teen Pregnancy,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2010, accessed September 26, 2012, [http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/SS/SS45\\_16andPregnant.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/SS/SS45_16andPregnant.pdf).

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>313</sup> I was not able to locate the full study on which this brief is based on the National Campaign website nor elsewhere online. Given that the full study is not readily available and that this brief is meant to translate it to the general public, my interest here lies in how social scientific knowledge is presented to construct certain truths without so much as a reasonable explanation of how the data reflects those truths.

<sup>314</sup> Suellentrop, et al., “Science Says #45,” 2.

<sup>315</sup> A different study recently argued that *16 and Pregnant* can be held responsible for a 5.7% reduction (one third of the overall reduction) in teen births in the 18 months

following the show's introduction. Using data about geographic variation in viewership and birth rates, as well as statistics documenting changes in Google searches and tweets (on the social media website Twitter), they show that teens in geographic areas where viewership is high pursued and found more information about sex and contraception immediately following the airing of *16 and Pregnant* episodes. They conclude that the majority of the reduction in teen pregnancy following the introduction of the show was due to labor market reduction and *16 and Pregnant*. Melissa S. Kearney and Philip B. Levine, "Media Influences on Social Outcomes: The Impact of MTV's *16 and Pregnant* on Teen Childbearing," *National Bureau of Economic Research*, January 13, 2014. The authors of this study, Melissa S. Kearney and Philip Levine, also recently authored a paper arguing that rather than causing poverty, teen pregnancy is in part a result of poverty. Kearney and Levine, "Why Is the Teen Birth Rate in the United States So High." Melissa S. Kearney is a Brookings Institution Senior Fellow and her work with Philip Levine appears to suggest that teen pregnancy is a complex issue arising from both personal and structural factors.

<sup>316</sup> Sarah Brown, "Is Contraception a Code Word," *Washington Post*, March 26, 2011, [http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/press/PDF/2011/WashPost\\_3.26.11.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/press/PDF/2011/WashPost_3.26.11.pdf).

<sup>317</sup> Sarah Brown, "Abortion-Contraception Arguments are Really about Teen Sex," *Washington Post*, January 26, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/guest-voices/post-abortion-contraception-arguments-are-really-about-teen-sex/2012/01/26/gIQALXLrTQ\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/guest-voices/post-abortion-contraception-arguments-are-really-about-teen-sex/2012/01/26/gIQALXLrTQ_blog.html).

<sup>318</sup> Brown, "Is Contraception a Code Word," 1.

<sup>319</sup> U.S. Congress, House, *Reducing the Need for Abortion and Supporting Parents Act*, HR 6067, 109<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d. sess., *Congressional Record* 152, no. 113, daily ed. (Jan. 3, 2006): H 6534.

<sup>320</sup> Boonstra, Heather, “The Heart of the Matter: Public Funding of Abortion for Poor Women in the United States,” *Guttmacher Policy Review* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2007) <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/gpr/10/1/gpr100112.html>.

<sup>321</sup> “National Campaign Applauds Legislation to Prevent Unintended Pregnancies, Reduce the Need for Abortion and Support Parents,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (June 2009) [http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/policymakers/PDF/RyanDeLauro\\_statement.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/policymakers/PDF/RyanDeLauro_statement.pdf).

<sup>322</sup> Sarah Brown, “Why Aren’t Faith Leaders Top Advocates for Birth Control?” *Washington Post*, March 4, 2011, [http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/press/PDF/2011/WashPost\\_3.4.11.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/press/PDF/2011/WashPost_3.4.11.pdf).

<sup>323</sup> Brown, “Why Aren’t Faith Leaders Top Advocates for Birth Control?” 1.

<sup>324</sup> *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): Hearings before the Senate Committee on Finance*, 107<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d. sess., March 12, April 10 and May 16, 2002, 317. We saw this strategy reflected in the film *Pregnancy Pact*, discussed in chapter 2, as part of the organization’s efforts to, as Sawhill puts in her testimony, “work in concert with the entertainment industry to change the messages embedded in popular culture.” *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families*, 319. The Candie’s Foundation, by choosing self-proclaimed abstainer-from-sex Bristol Palin as a spokesperson, as well as presenting “abstinence,” and “waiting” as two different options amongst the contraceptive methods, similarly presents pro-abstinence position.

<sup>325</sup> *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families*, 317.

<sup>326</sup> Brown, “Abortion-Contraception Arguments are Really about Teen Sex.”

<sup>327</sup> *Preventing Teen Pregnancy*, 33; M.A.J. McKenna, “Focus on TEEN

PREGNANCY Its board members include former Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young, actress; Whoopi Goldberg, publisher Katherine Graham and former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop. Its chairman is Thomas Kean, former governor of New Jersey.; It is the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, and its goal is to reduce teenage pregnancies by one-third in a decade.; Group digs at root of problem; Campaign brings in 'new voices' to answer why U.S. rate is so high,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, March 26, 1996, <http://lexisnexis.com>.

<sup>328</sup> Neda Ulaby, “TV Writers Script Safe Sex Product Placement,” *All Things Considered*, *NPR News*, September 6, 2012.

<sup>329</sup> Laura Lloyd, “How is the National Campaign Using Social Media?” presented at National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy Conference, Taming the Media Monster, Washington DC, June 26, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqqO34leqoo>.

<sup>330</sup> These four examples are reprinted in *Unfit Subjects*. Pillow, *Unfit Subjects*, 187-190. I found other examples on various blogs and websites (for example: Tumblr, “Teen Pregnancy,” <http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/teen-pregnancy?before=1337377995>) (accessed September 16, 2012). When I contacted the National Campaign for digital copies, I was told that they were not available. Jessica Sheets Pika, email message to author, August 23, 2012.

<sup>331</sup> “National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy Director Sarah Brown Discuss the Use of Provocative New As Campaign to Convey Important Messages to Teens About Consequences of Sex,” *ABC NEWS*, October 17, 2000, <http://lexisnexis.com>.

<sup>332</sup> Shaun McCormack, “Edgy Ads Seek to Grab Teens’ Attention,” *Direct Marketing News*, October 20, 2000, <http://www.dmnews.com/edgy-ads-seek-to-grab-teens-attention/article/69079/>.

<sup>333</sup> Pro bono work may result from an agency helping out a top client’s pet cause. It is also often part of an effort to showcase an agency’s abilities and raise it’s reputation. It is also considered an in-kind donation for reporting purposes.

<sup>334</sup> They are partners in the sense that each organization’s website links to the other’s, they both participate in the National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (an event started by the National Campaign) and share some of the same funding streams, including Candie’s Inc.

<sup>335</sup> Candie’s Foundation, “About Us,” Candie’s Foundation, accessed August 24, 2012, <http://www.candiesfoundation.org/us.html>.

<sup>336</sup> Their work has been referred to as a “public service advertising campaign.” “The Candie’s Foundation,” *PR Newswire*, May 2, 2001, <http://lexisnexis.com>.

Also, they utilize the nonprofit advertising agency Serve Marketing, which aims to bring causes that aren’t “sexy” or “hot” into public consciousness. “The Candie’s Foundation New TV and Print PSA with Bristol Palin,” PRWeb, April 7, 2012, <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2010/04/prweb3843904.htm>; Serve, “About,” Serve Marketing, September 18, 2012, <http://servemarketing.org/about/>.



<sup>337</sup> Candie's Foundation, "Videos," Candie's Foundation, accessed August 20, 2012, <http://www.candiesfoundation.org/videos.html>.

<sup>338</sup> Candie's Foundation, "Campaigns," Candie's Foundation, accessed August 20, 2012, <http://www.candiesfoundation.org/campaigns.html>.

<sup>339</sup> Currently, Lea Michele, from the cast of the Fox show *Glee* (which features a National Campaign-influenced teen pregnancy storyline in which a blonde cheerleader gives her baby up for adoption to a woman who had given up her daughter [Lea Michele's character] as a teenager) is the spokesmodel for the latest Candie's, Inc. fashion line and subject of the foundation's print ad, "Don't Be a Statistic," in which she sports a Candie's, Inc. floral hair clip "The Candie's Foundation," Candie's Foundation, accessed August 20, 2012, <http://www.candiesfoundation.org/index.html>.

<sup>340</sup> Candie's Foundation, "Videos."

<sup>341</sup> Candie's Foundation, "Videos."

<sup>342</sup> Briggs, *Somebody's Children*, 12.

<sup>343</sup> "Brokenhearted" by Karmin apparently includes these lyrics: "sippin' on Patron;" "Honestly I'll do anything you want to, so can we finish what we started, don't you leave me brokenhearted tonight;" "I know you want it, so come and get it." Metrolyrics, "Brokenhearted Lyrics Karmin," Metrolyrics, accessed November 14, 2012, <http://www.metrolyrics.com/broken-hearted-lyrics-karmin.html>. "I Like it like that," by Hot Chelle Rae apparently states, "Let's get it on;" "Everybody drinks on me. I bought out the bar just to feel like I'm a star;" "Sun so hot, make the girls take it all off;" "I'm gonna want a girl that I know I can take home;" "I be filmin' her friends too, yeah I'm back on that, Double D chicks huggin', I got racks and racks." AZLyrics, "Hot

Chelle Rae Lyrics ‘I Like it Like That,’” AZLyrics, accessed November 14, 2012, <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/hotchellerae/ilikeitlikethat.html>.

<sup>344</sup> Alexi Knock, “Bethpage High Teen Wins Hot Chelle Rae, Karmin Concert,” *Newsday*, Long Island, NY, May 22, 2012, <http://www.newsday.com/long-island/towns/long-island-now-1.1732330/bethpage-high-teen-wins-hot-chelle-rae-karmin-concert-1.3732959?qr=1>.

<sup>345</sup> The Pew Research Center reports that the percentage of total adult Internet users (defined as 18 and older) who use social networking sites has gone up from 8% in 2005 to 72% in 2013. Joanna Brenner, “Pew Internet: Social Networking (Full Detail),” Pew Internet and American Life Project, August 5, 2013, <http://pewinternet.org/Commentary/2012/March/Pew-Internet-Social-Networking-full-detail.aspx>. The percentage of teen Internet users (ages 12-17) who use social networking sites has gone up from 55% in 2006 to 81% in 2012. Mary Madden, Amanda Lenhart, Sandra Cortesi, Urs Gasser, Maeve Duggan, Aaron Smith, Meredith Beaton, “Teens, Social Media, and Privacy,” Pew Internet and American Life Project, May 21, 2013, <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Teens-Social-Media-And-Privacy/Main-Report/Part-1.aspx>.

<sup>346</sup> Gehl, “Distributed Centralization.”

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>348</sup> For example, Stayteen.org is currently holding a survey asking teens for their opinions of the website, offering a \$25 gift card to Amazon.com. StayTeen.org, “Tell Us,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, accessed November 1, 2012, <http://www.stayteen.org/frontpanel>.

<sup>349</sup> StayTeen.org, “Stay Teen: How Do You Stay Teen?” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, accessed November 1, 2012, <http://www.stayteen.org/how-do-you-stay-teen>.

<sup>350</sup> The other 4 main sections are “Stay Informed,” containing information and statistics about pregnancy and sex; “Features,” which includes to latest polls, videos, or other content; “Stay Tuned,” detailing the recent plot developments in *16 and Pregnant* and *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*; and “Videos,” which features short videos, some appearing professional and other amateur, on the topics of teenage sex and relationships.

<sup>351</sup> StayTeen.org, “Fun and Games: Latest Poll,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, accessed November 1, 2012, [http://www.stayteen.org/poll\\_archive](http://www.stayteen.org/poll_archive).

<sup>352</sup> StayTeen.org, “Fun and Games: Would You Consider Dating Someone if You Knew They Believed in Abstinence Until Marriage?” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, accessed November 2, 2012, <http://www.stayteen.org/polls/would-you-consider-dating-someone-if-you-knew-they-believed-abstinence-until-marriage>.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> Nick Dyer-Witherford and Greig de Peuter, *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), xix.

<sup>356</sup> Classic examples this style include Nintendo's *Super Mario Bros.* and *Donkey Kong*. Stayteen.org, *Crush!* National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, accessed December 6, 2013, <http://www.stayteen.org/crush>.

<sup>357</sup> The first level occurs in an indoor setting with Michael, an apparently white adolescent boy, who sometimes wants to just “get it over with” and have sex, because of all the pressure he feels. The second level occurs outdoors with Lin/Mae (she appears to be named Lin at the beginning of the level and Mae at the end), presumably Asian, who enjoys outside activities and sports, but experiences pressure from her teammates. The third level deals with avoiding pressure experienced via the Internet. Byron, an apparently Black character who “is constantly online and updating his Facebook” needs to avoid the pressure created by seeing his friend post rumors online.

Another compelling example of the multicultural politics of teen pregnancy prevention in the National Campaign's browser games is *My Paper Girlfriend/Boyfriend*. This game, meant to instruct players on healthy relationship behavior, requires players to construct their “ideal” girlfriend/boyfriend by choosing skin tone, hair style and color, and outfit. After constructing the boyfriend/girlfriend, the player clicks on “start dating” and proceeds to answer a series of multiple choice questions about how to handle specific “challenging” relationship situations. The player is assigned points in the categories of respect, communication, and trust, according to which answer s/he chooses. *My Paper Boyfriend/Girlfriend* turns conventionally defined racial characteristics—players choose from a spectrum of skin tones from light to dark, as well as hairdos such as “Afro” and “Buzz” (for boys) and “Bob” (for girls)—into superficial and interchangeable consumer-esque options, signaling simultaneously a

valorization of inclusion of difference and the ultimate insignificance of such difference (racial characteristics are attributed as much importance as the ideal boyfriend/girlfriend's outfit). Stayteen.org, *My Paper Girlfriend*, National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, accessed December 6, 2013, <http://www.stayteen.org/my-paper-girlfriend>; Stayteen.org, *My Paper Boyfriend*, National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, accessed December 6, 2013, <http://www.stayteen.org/my-paper-boyfriend>. This example also forwards a politics of multiracialism in which perceived present and future racial mixture (evidenced by interchangeable phenotypical features) and interracial sexuality (between the user and his/her racially customized lover avatar) signal the achievement of a multiracial democracy, while depoliticizing and dehistoricizing racial difference, and promoting heronormative sexuality. Jared Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes: Antiblackness and the Critique of Multiracialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) 1-5.

<sup>358</sup> I am a complete video game novice and it took me ten minutes to master.

<sup>359</sup> Dan Melton, "'How Can We Reach Youth Using Social Media?' Video Transcript: Highlights from Dan Melton's Presentation at the 'Taming the Media Monster' Conference, June 26, 2009" National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, [http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/media09/Melton\\_video\\_transcript.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/media09/Melton_video_transcript.pdf).

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>362</sup> Local control was promoted in welfare reform legislative debate as a method for increasing local accountability and customized, culturally appropriate services. For

example, Republican Senator William V. Roth Jr. states, “The reason the States will succeed in welfare reform where Washington has failed is because State and local officials see the faces of their neighbors, while Washington only sees caseload numbers. The bureaucracy of Washington is too detached, too removed, too far out of touch to reform the welfare system.” *Personal Responsibility, Work Opportunity, and Medicaid Restructuring Act of 1996*, 104<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>d</sup> sess., *Congressional Record* Vol. 142, No. 106 (July 18, 1996) S 8073.

<sup>363</sup> Katherine Suellentrop, Dan Melton, and Laura Lloyd, “‘Panel 2 Q and A: Using Social Media’ Video Transcript: Highlights from Session 2 Q and Q at the ‘Taming the Media Monster’ Conference, June 26, 2009,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 1, [http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/media09/Session\\_2\\_Q&A\\_video\\_transcript.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/media09/Session_2_Q&A_video_transcript.pdf).

<sup>364</sup> Although studies show that most teenagers do use the Internet, the rates at which they do so vary according to race and income. Pew Research Center, “Millennials, A Portrait of Generation Next: Teen and Young Adult Internet Use,” Pew Research Center, accessed November 4, 2012, <http://pewresearch.org/millennials/teen-internet-use-graphic.php>. Lisa Nakamura argues that a binary model for understanding Internet access (access versus no access) is no longer useful in an era in which race, class, and gender permit varying degrees of access. Nakamura, *Digitizing Race*, 15-16, 18.

<sup>365</sup> Teen pregnancy prevention discourse tends to construct girls as in need of tools to avoid sex and boys as in need of tools to have safe sex, in keeping with the adage “boys will be boys.” For instance, in the Candie’s Foundation video “Bristol Palin and

‘the Situation,.’” Bristol Palin and *Jersey Shore*’s “the Situation” discuss her commitment to “avoiding” sex (despite being a teen mom, herself) and his commitment to “practicing” safe sex “a whole lot.” Candie’s Foundation, “Videos.”

<sup>366</sup> Candie’s Foundation, “Cry Baby App,” Candie’s Foundation, accessed November 5, 2012, <http://www.candiesfoundation.org/crybabyapp.html>.

<sup>367</sup> iTunes Preview, “Candie’s Cry Baby,” Apple, Inc., accessed November 7, 2012, <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/candies-cry-baby/id365804744?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4>.

<sup>368</sup> Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA), like The Candie’s Foundation, both partners with the National Campaign on its teen pregnancy prevention efforts, and has launched its own social media teen pregnancy-related work. Although PPFA differs in important ways from the National Campaign and The Candie’s Foundation (it is a massive provider of actual health services and also takes explicit anti-abstinence-only education and pro-abortion rights stances), it produces teen pregnancy prevention work that is directly linked to those organizations and participates in the kinds of internet-based biopolitics I have been describing. For example, in conjunction with the National Campaign’s National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, PPFA launched a Tumblr site (at the time of this writing Tumblr is a popular micro-blogging website) devoted to circulating “accurate information about contraception, pregnancy prevention, and staying healthy in general,” as well as soliciting anonymous questions from viewers about these topics and providing answers with “no judgments.” Planned Parenthood. “About Us: Teens are Using and Growing Number of Online and Mobile Tools to Learn About Sexual Health and Avoid Unintended Pregnancy,” Planned Parenthood Federation of

America, accessed November 5, 2012, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/newsroom/press-releases/teens-using-growing-number-online-mobile-tools-learn-about-sexual-health-avoid-unintended-pregn-39255.htm>; and Planned Parenthood Tumblr, “Ask Us Anything. No Judgements.” Planned Parenthood Federation of America, accessed November 6, 2012, <http://plannedparenthood.tumblr.com/>. The press release introducing the Tumblr site relays statistics about the negative consequences of teenage pregnancy and provides numerous mentions of the National Campaign and links to its materials. Planned Parenthood. “About Us: Teens are Using and Growing.”

Many of the Tumblr entries include an image with a short instructional caption and/or a link to the PPFA “Info for Teens” website for more information. For instance, a picture of a smiling, apparently Latino boy wearing a pressed, button-down, collared shirt, lying on a large wood-framed bed, in a sunlight-filled room, holding an iPod with earbuds in his ears is accompanied by the caption, “Not ready to have sex yet? You’re not alone. The average age when people start having sex is 17.” Planned Parenthood Tumblr, “Not Ready to Have Sex Yet?” Planned Parenthood Federation of America, accessed November 6, 2012, <http://plannedparenthood.tumblr.com/post/34517407052/read-more-facts-and-myths-about-sex>. A link is provided for the “Myths and Facts About Sex” page on “Info for Teens.” Planned Parenthood, “Info for Teens: Myths and Facts About Sex,” Planned Parenthood Federation of America, accessed November 6, 2012, [http://www.plannedparenthood.org/info-for-teens/sex-masturbation/myths-facts-about-sex-33825.htm?utm\\_source=Tumblr&utm\\_medium=post&utm\\_term=ageoffirstseximage&utm\\_content=sexmythfacts&utm\\_campaign=healthtumblr](http://www.plannedparenthood.org/info-for-teens/sex-masturbation/myths-facts-about-sex-33825.htm?utm_source=Tumblr&utm_medium=post&utm_term=ageoffirstseximage&utm_content=sexmythfacts&utm_campaign=healthtumblr). This picture presents this



middle- to upper-class Latino teen as an average, happy, virginal-but-cool boy who can help teenagers both feel comfortable with their virginity and access the “facts” about sex. Viewers can comment on it, “re-blog” it on Tumblr, “like” it, or “share” the entry on Facebook and Twitter. Some other entries give viewers direct orders, such as the 2012 Halloween-related posts that command viewers to wear condoms. For example: Planned Parenthood Tumblr, “No Matter How You’re Dressed This Halloween... Wear a Condom,” Planned Parenthood Federation of America, accessed November 6, 2012, <http://plannedparenthood.tumblr.com/post/34666164575>. While PPFA concerns itself much more substantially than the National Campaign with providing and advocating for equal access to medical and counseling services, comprehensive sex education, contraception, and abortion, and also focuses its sex- and relationship-affirming messages on queer youth as well as heterosexual teens, it also actively participates in the multicultural disciplinary politics of contemporary teen pregnancy prevention. Although searches for “LGBT” and “queer” returned no results on the PPFA Tumblr site (as of November 14, 2012), a search for “transgender” returned four, one about trans voting rights, one providing a link to the “Trans\* Identities” page on the PPFA website, one to the Scarleteen trans health guide, and one called “The Genderbread” person that describes transgender and cisgender identities. Planned Parenthood Tumblr, “Searching For: Transgender,” Planned Parenthood Federation of America, accessed November 14, 2012, <http://plannedparenthood.tumblr.com/search/transgender>. Some other examples of PPFA’s participation in this discourse are as follows. PPFA Vice President Vanessa Cullins is on the National Campaign’s board of directors. PPFA President Cecile Richards contributed an essay to the National Campaign’s interactive online project and

book *Rethinking Responsibility*, in which she talked about the particular riskiness of adolescence and the responsibilities of both parents and teenagers in preventing teenage pregnancy. Cecile Richards, “Back and Forth Responsibility,” in *Rethinking Responsibility: Reflections of Sex and Accountability* (Washington D.C.: National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2009), <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/responsibility/essays/richards.aspx>.

<sup>369</sup> National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, “One-Third of Pregnancies in America Are Unwanted,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, May 9, 2007, <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/media/press-release.aspx?releaseID=8>.

<sup>370</sup> Sarah Brown, “Aunt Sarah’s List: Things We All Need to Say to Teens and Young Adults,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and unplanned Pregnancy, accessed November 16, 2012, [http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/Aunt\\_Sarah.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/Aunt_Sarah.pdf).

<sup>371</sup> Brown, “Aunt Sarah’s List.”

<sup>372</sup> For example: National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, “Briefly...Unplanned Pregnancy Among 20-Somethings: The Full Story,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (May 2008), <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/briefly-unplanned-pregnancy-among-20somethings-the-full-story.pdf>.

<sup>373</sup> Willam A. Galston, “The Changing Twenties,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (2008), i and 1, [http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/pubs/changing\\_20s.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/pubs/changing_20s.pdf).

<sup>374</sup> Galston, “The Changing Twenties,” 3-9.

<sup>375</sup> Galston provides evidence that the median age of marriage has increased (Galston, “The Changing Twenties,” 9) and the percentage of births to unmarried women who cohabit has risen as a portion of births to unmarried women in general (Ibid., 10). He goes on to show that cohabitating couples are more likely to be broken up than married couples by the time their first child is 2 years old (Ibid., 11). He presents this as evidence that cohabitating is less desirable than marriage as an arrangement between parents. He also shows that the percentage of women who have had their first child by the age of 25 has greatly declined (Ibid., 12). Curiously, none of these statistics nor any combination of them proves that people in their 20s are more in danger of having a child out-of-wedlock, but they are listed as part of the larger picture of why 20-somethings should be targeted by pregnancy prevention efforts.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid., 21

<sup>377</sup> Ibid., i.

<sup>378</sup> Phillipe Ariés, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 329-336.

<sup>379</sup> Galston, “The Changing Twenties,” 21.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>381</sup> Sharon Jayson, “Abstinence Message Goes Beyond Teens,” *USAToday*, October 31, 2006, [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/washington/2006-10-30-abstinence-message\\_x.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/washington/2006-10-30-abstinence-message_x.htm).

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. “Tips for

Working with Media,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, January 2009. [http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/monster/MM\\_tips.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/monster/MM_tips.pdf).

<sup>385</sup> Rebecca Roybal, “Teen Birth Rates Dip Slightly,” *Albuquerque Journal*, January 30, 2002.

<sup>386</sup> New Mexico tends to hover somewhere within the bottom five states for teen pregnancy rates. The most recent thorough data on teen pregnancy rates comes from a Guttmacher Institute study of the year 2008, during which New Mexico apparently ranked 50<sup>th</sup>. National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, “50-State and National Comparisons: Teen Pregnancy Rate,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, accessed April 3, 2013, <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/state-data/state-comparisons.asp?id=3&sID=18#source>. As there is more current data for the teen birth rate (number of babies born to teenagers, rather than number of pregnancies, which includes pregnancies that did not result in a birth), we also know that New Mexico ranked 49<sup>th</sup> in 2010 for rate of teen births, with Mississippi as the 50th. National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, “50-State and National Comparisons: Teen Birth Rate,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, accessed April 3, 2013, <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/state-data/state-comparisons.asp?id=4&sID=44>. See also: Stephanie Pappas, “State with the Highest Teen Pregnancy Rate Is...” *FoxNews.com*, February 26, 2013, <http://www.foxnews.com/health/2013/02/26/state-with-highest-teen-pregnancy-rate-is/>.

<sup>387</sup> “Most Children Younger Than Age 1 are Minorities, Census Bureau Reports,”  
*United States Census Bureau*, May 17, 2012,  
<http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-90.html>.

<sup>388</sup> Ann Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Boston: South End Press, 2005); Laura Briggs *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>389</sup> Pablo Mitchell, *Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 10-11; Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: University of Harvard Press, 2006), 18-19.

<sup>390</sup> James Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 33-40; Mitchell, *Coyote Nation*, 10; Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 18-24.

<sup>391</sup> Brooks, *Captives and Cousins*, 40.

<sup>392</sup> Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 46.

<sup>393</sup> Laura Gomez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); John Nieto-Philips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1880s-1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004).

<sup>394</sup> Mitchell, *Coyote Nation*, 5; Sarah Deutsch also highlights the role of women and changing gender roles in the interactions and relationships between and among Anglo

settlers and New Mexicans. Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refugee: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>395</sup> Maria Montoya, *Translating Property The Maxwell Land Grant and the Conflict over Land in the American West, 1840-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>396</sup> Montoya, *Translating Property*, 14.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>398</sup> Jake Kosek, *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 7.

<sup>399</sup> Joseph Masco, *The Nuclear Borderlands: The Manhattan Project in Post-Cold War New Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 36; Kosek, *Understories: The Political Life*, 20.

<sup>400</sup> Masco, *The Nuclear Borderlands*, 185-187; Kosek, *Understories: The Political Life*, 18-20.

<sup>401</sup> Goldstein, *Poverty in Common*, 91-93.

<sup>402</sup> Lena McQuade, *Troubling Reproduction: Sexuality, Race, and Colonialism in New Mexico, 1919-1945*, PhD Dissertation, University of New Mexico, Ann Arbor: Proquest/UMI, 2008 (Publication No: 3329461), 1-31.

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>404</sup> Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 23-34.

<sup>405</sup> David Correia, “‘Rousers of the Rabble’ in the New Mexico Land Grant War: *La Alianza Federal de Mercedes* and the Violence of the State” *Antipode* 40, no. 4 (2008): 562.

<sup>406</sup> McQuade, *Troubling Reproduction*, 27.

<sup>407</sup> New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, “990 form filed for the New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition,” New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, 2011.

<sup>408</sup> New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, “New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition,” New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, accessed 4/18/13, <http://www.nmtpc.org/index.html>.

<sup>409</sup> New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, “New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition,”

<sup>410</sup> New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, “About Us,” New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, accessed April 18, 2013, <http://www.nmtpc.org/about.htm>.

<sup>411</sup> Although the National Campaign does have a “Latino Initiative,” it is arguably much less central to its overall mission than the work that NMTPC does to target Spanish-speaking youth in New Mexico. As I will discuss, however, NMTPC’s discourse surrounding teen pregnancy in the “Hispanic” population often empties race and ethnicity of their situated materiality in ways similar to the National Campaign’s multicultural politics.

<sup>412</sup> New Mexico’s Family Planning Program, “Family Planning Program 2013 Fact Sheet,” New Mexico Department of Health, April 2013.

<sup>413</sup> New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, “New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition: Pregnancy, Parenting,” Brochure, New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, 2009, [http://www.nmtpc.org/pubs/NMTPC\\_Brochure\\_11-09.pdf](http://www.nmtpc.org/pubs/NMTPC_Brochure_11-09.pdf).

<sup>414</sup> For general info on Title X of the 1970 Public Health Service Act, see: Office of Population Affairs, “Title X Family Planning,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, accessed April 18, 2013, <http://www.hhs.gov/opa/title-x-family-planning/>.

<sup>415</sup> Family Planning Program, “Welcome to the New Mexico Department of Health Family Planning Program,” New Mexico Department of Health, accessed April 18, 2013, <http://nmhealth.org/PHD/FP/index.shtml>.

<sup>416</sup> Valerie Fisher (Educational Program Officer for NMDOH-FP) telephone conversation with author, April 18, 2013; Family and Youth Services Bureau, “2013 State Personal Responsibility Education Program Grant Awards,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, accessed April 18, 2013, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/prep-2013>. The New Mexico Department of Health received \$356,560 in PREP funds for the year 2013.

<sup>417</sup> Family Planning Program, “Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program,” New Mexico Department of Health, accessed April 18, 2013, [http://nmhealth.org/PHD/FP/teen\\_pregnancy.shtml](http://nmhealth.org/PHD/FP/teen_pregnancy.shtml).

<sup>418</sup> Family Planning Program, “Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program.” I inquired about the origins of this graphic with the NMDOH-FP and no one was able to tell me exactly where it came from. I was told, “We got it off the web somewhere.” When I asked if it might be from the National Campaign, it was speculated that it probably came from there. Fisher, telephone conversation. It appears that the original graphic was a print



ad created by Lindsey Schutte who won a 2006 contest held in Washington County, MD in which teens competed to create the best teen pregnancy prevention media. Bob Maginnis, “Teen Pregnancy Must Be a Talking Point,” *Herald-Mail.com*, May 6, 2007 [http://articles.herald-mail.com/2007-05-06/news/25092510\\_1\\_teen-pregnancy-30-second-spot-pregnant-woman](http://articles.herald-mail.com/2007-05-06/news/25092510_1_teen-pregnancy-30-second-spot-pregnant-woman).

<sup>419</sup> New Mexico GRADS, “New Mexico GRADS,” New Mexico GRADS, accessed April 19, 2013, <http://nmgrads.org/>.

<sup>420</sup> Jennifer Archibeque, “Taking on Teen Pregnancy,” *Albuquerque Journal*, May 18, 2000; Rebecca Roybal, “Fighting to Save Teen Parents,” *Albuquerque Journal*, February 18, 1999.

<sup>421</sup> Roybal, “Fighting to Save Teen Parents.”

<sup>422</sup> Amy Webber, “School Programs Help Teen-Agers Balance Education and Parenting,” *Albuquerque Journal*, November 3, 2001.

<sup>423</sup> For example, NM GRADS was part of a coalition of organizations, including YWU, that presented in front of the New Mexico Legislative Education Study Committee advocating for excused absences for pregnant and parenting students and other rights and humane treatment for young parents. Legislative Education Study Committee, “Minutes, LESC Meeting, November 13-16, 2012,” State of New Mexico, 2012, <http://www.nmlegis.gov/lcs/minutes/ALESCminNov16.12.pdf>.

<sup>424</sup> Young Women United’s Facebook Page, accessed May 6, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Young-Women-United/115921231790158?id=115921231790158&sk=info>.

<sup>425</sup> Micaela Cadena (Policy Director at YWU), in-person discussion with the author, April 19, 2013.

<sup>426</sup> Debra Dominguez, “Teens & Sex,” *Albuquerque Journal*, May 2, 2005.

<sup>427</sup> New Mexico GRADS, “New Mexico Governor Signs Legislation to Improve High School Graduation Rates of Pregnancy and Parenting Students,” Wordpress, April 5, 2013, <http://nmgrads.wordpress.com/2013/04/05/new-mexico-governor-signs-legislation-to-improve-high-school-graduation-rates-of-pregnant-and-parenting-students/>.

<sup>428</sup> Some of YWU’s and NM GRADS partners in their efforts to advocate for young parents include the American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico, Strong Families New Mexico, and the Media Literacy Project, which produced a short documentary on young parents in 2012. Garcia, Diana and Georgia West, “Recognition: Young Parents in New Mexico,” Media Literacy Project, YouTube, October 26, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgyT3KOJq8Q>.

<sup>429</sup> Milan Simonich, “New law allows additional absences for pregnant girls and young parents” *Las Cruces Sun-News*, April 5, 2013.

<sup>430</sup> New Mexico Legislature. *School Excused Absences for Pregnancy*, House Bill 300, New Mexico Legislature, 51<sup>st</sup> Legislature, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2013, <http://www.sos.state.nm.us/uploads/files/HB300.pdf>.

<sup>431</sup> Jane B. Wishner, Letter to Brenda Destro at the Office of Public Health and Science, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, from Southwest Women’s Law Center, September 24, 2008, <http://www.swwomenslaw.org/pdfs/%5BDenialofHealthcareServices%5DSWWLCPublicCommentsHHSReg.pdf>; New Mexico Human Services Department, “Family Planning

Waiver FAQs,” New Mexico Human Services Department, accessed April 22, 2013, <http://www.hsd.state.nm.us/mad/faqs/familyplanningwaiver.html>. Rhode Island Department of Human Services, “Medical Assistant and Child Care Assistance Program 2013 Federal Poverty Level Guidelines by Family Size,” Rhode Island Department of Human Services, accessed October 31, 2013, <http://www.dhs.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Public/General%20DHS/FPL.pdf>.

<sup>432</sup> Insure New Mexico! Solutions, “NewMexiKids and NewMexiTeens,” New Mexico Human Services Department, accessed September 22, 2013, [“http://www.insurenemexico.state.nm.us/NewMexiKidsandTeens.htm](http://www.insurenemexico.state.nm.us/NewMexiKidsandTeens.htm).

<sup>433</sup> Dr. Mary Shephard at the New Mexico Department of Health provided an estimate at my request, based on a “population-based sample of women with a recent live birth,” which comes from a New Mexico PRAMS survey (<http://nmhealth.org/phd/prams/>), using New Mexico’s Indicator-Based Information System (<https://ibis.health.state.nm.us/query>). Mary Shephard, New Mexico Department of Health, email message to author, October 31, 2013.

<sup>434</sup> In New Mexico, Medicaid covers emergency medical services for undocumented people who do not otherwise meet the qualifying criteria. New Mexico Human Services Department, “Emergency Medical Services for Aliens,” Medical Assistance Division, accessed November 15, 2013, <http://www.hsd.state.nm.us/mad/EMSA.html>.

<sup>435</sup> Guttmacher Institute, “State Facts About Title X and Family Planning: New Mexico,” Guttmacher Institute, accessed April 22, 2013, <http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/title-X/NM.html>.

<sup>436</sup> I learned this through a search the archives of legislation on the New Mexico Legislature website using the search terms “teen parents,” “parenting teens,” and “parenting teenagers” between the years 2004 and 2013. New Mexico Legislature, “Keyword Search,” New Mexico Legislature, April 22, 2013, <http://www.nmlegis.gov/lcs/keyword.aspx>.

<sup>437</sup> New Mexico Human Services Department, “New Mexico Works: New Mexico’s Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) State Plan, January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2014,” New Mexico Human Services Department, <http://www.hsd.state.nm.us/pdf/isd/TANF%20State%20Plan%202012-2014.pdf>.

<sup>438</sup> Liz Schott, “Policy Basics: An Introduction to TANF,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, last updated December 4, 2012, <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=936>.

<sup>439</sup> New Mexico Human Services Department, “Temporary Assistant to Needy Families (TANF) Fact Sheet,” New Mexico Human Services Department, January 3, 2013, <http://www.hsd.state.nm.us/pdf/LegislativeSession/2013/TANF%20NMW%20Fact%20Sheet%201-3-13.pdf>. This fact sheet lists NMTPC, NMDOH FPP, and NM GRADS as organizations qualifying for MOE funds in FY2012. NM GRADS presumably receives MOE funds for its role in meeting the other two goals of TANF: providing assistance to needy families and ending families’ dependence on government assistance by improving educational, job outcomes, and marriage (although NM GRADS does not claim to have anything to do with marriage promotion and does not appear to either); New Mexico Human Services Department, “New Mexico Works.” This document explains that

NMDOH FPP does family planning and teen pregnancy prevention in context of a discussion of MOE funds.

<sup>440</sup> Family Youth and Services Bureau, “Title V Abstinence Education Grant Program Awards,” Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, October 1, 2012, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/2012-title-v-awards>. New Mexico received \$470,182 in FY 2012.

<sup>441</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Teen Pregnancy Prevention and Personal Responsibility Education Program Grants by State,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, accessed May 6, 2013, [http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2010pres/09/teenpregnancy\\_statebystate.html](http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2010pres/09/teenpregnancy_statebystate.html). Both organizations were awarded funds for FY 2010-2014.

<sup>442</sup> Capacity Builders, “Navajo Youth Builders Program,” Capacity Builders, accessed April 22, 2013, <http://capacitybuildersinc.com/initiatives/navajo-youth-builders-program/>.

<sup>443</sup> National Indian Youth Leadership Project, “Mission and Vision Statements,” National Indian Youth Leadership Project, accessed April 22, 2013, <http://www.niylp.org/mission-vision.htm>.

<sup>444</sup> National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnant, “Key Information about New Mexico,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, accessed April 22, 2013, <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/policymakers/statefiles/NewMexico.pdf>.

<sup>445</sup> Office of Adolescent Health, “Grant Program: Pregnancy Assistance Fund, Grantees by State,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, accessed May 6, 2013, <http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/paf/paf-grantees.pdf>.

<sup>446</sup> New Mexico GRADS, “New Mexico GRADS.”

<sup>447</sup> National Campaign, “Key Information about New Mexico.”

<sup>448</sup> Some amount of private funding from national organizations funnels into New Mexico for projects that may have some impact on pregnant and parenting teens. For instance, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation provides funding to a number of groups working on increasing the health outcomes of New Mexico children, including \$300,000 to the Birthing Project, USA, based in Albuquerque, to “maximize the health and well-being of children while building leadership and capacity by expanding the Birthing Project model of supporting pregnant/parenting teens and women.” W.K. Kellogg Foundation. “Birthing Project USA.” W.K. Kellogg Foundation, accessed October 31, 2013, <http://www.wkkf.org/shared/grants/grant/2013/01/the-underground-railroad-for-new-life-p3023014.aspx>.

<sup>449</sup> Archibeque, “Taking on Teen Pregnancy”; Roybal, “Teen Birth Rates Dip Slightly”; Mike Alberti, “More than Cookies,” *Albuquerque Journal*, July 18, 2004.

<sup>450</sup> *New Mexico in Focus*, “Teen Pregnancy- Interview with Sarah Brown,” New Mexico PBS, accessed May 6, 2013, <http://www.newmexicoinfocus.org/inFocus/archives/2017>.

<sup>451</sup> *New Mexico in Focus*, “Teen Pregnancy- Interview with Sarah Brown.”

<sup>452</sup> Some data does exist to suggest that in-school childcare services do increase graduation rates for parenting high school students. Hugh F, Crean, Hightower A.D, and

Allan Marjorie J. "School-Based Child Care for Children of Teen Parents: Evaluation of an Urban Program Designed to Keep Young Mothers in School." *Evaluation And Program Planning* 24, (n.d.): 267-275. *ScienceDirect*, accessed October 31, 2013, EBSCOhost.

<sup>453</sup> New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, "10 Teen Pregnancy Facts," New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, accessed May 6, 2013, <http://www.health.state.nm.us/phd/fp/Forms/NMTPC%2010TeenPregFacts.pdf>.

<sup>454</sup> NMTPC, "10 Teen Pregnancy Facts." The "costs to taxpayers" that this handout uses is taken from National Campaign data on the cost of teen childbearing to taxpayers in each state. This data is calculated by taking into account projected costs of incarcerating the children of teen parents, as well as accounting for the lower taxes paid by teen mothers who earn lower wages, among other absurd measures that assume a causal relationship between the age of the mother at the birth of a child and variety of other outcomes.

<sup>455</sup> NMTPC, "10 Teen Pregnancy Facts."

<sup>456</sup> Luker, *Dubious Conceptions*; more recently and from an economic disciplinary perspective: Melissa S. Kearney and Phillip B. Levine, "Why Is the Teen Birth Rate in the United States So High and Why Does It Matter?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 26, no. 2 (2012): 141-63

<sup>457</sup> Rebecca Roybal, "Experts: Families Key to Prevention," *Albuquerque Journal*, May 31, 1999.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid.

<sup>459</sup> Julie Grenko, "Parents: Talk with Your Kids about Sex," *Las Cruces Sun-News*, September 5, 2006.

<sup>460</sup> "Teen Pregnancy Can Be Reduced," *Albuquerque Journal*, September 6, 2006.

<sup>461</sup> Katherine Suellentrop and Molly Sugrue, "Science Says #35: Acculturation and Sexual Behavior Among Latinos," National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2008,  
[http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/SS/SS35\\_Acculturation.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/SS/SS35_Acculturation.pdf).

<sup>462</sup> McQuade, *Troubling Reproduction*, 13-14.

<sup>463</sup> Ruben Gonzales, "Torrance Reduces Births by Teens," *Albuquerque Journal* June 24, 2004.

<sup>464</sup> Roybal, "Teen Birth Rates Dip Slightly."

<sup>465</sup> Some examples include: Andrea Schoellkopf, "Fighting Chance," *Albuquerque Journal*, November 11, 2002. This article includes a young man discussing problems facing Latinos, who is quoted saying that, unlike the parents of other youth, his parents valued education and therefore he avoided teen pregnancy and substance abuse; Dominguez, "Teens & Sex." In this 2005 article, a YWU leader explains that she thinks rates are high among Hispanics because of religious opposition to abortion and taboo against talking about sex for parents; Helen Gaussoin, "'Strong, Smart & Bold' - Girls Inc. Inspires Youths to Reach Their Potential, Reach Their Goals and Reach out to One Another," *Albuquerque Journal*, January 11, 2006. This article includes a discussion of Hispanic families as "traditional" and suggests that Hispanic girls need help understanding that there can be more to life than teen pregnancy; Olivier Uyttebrouck, "Unmarried with Children - Single Women Gave Birth to Over Half the State's Babies in



2005,” *Albuquerque Journal*, December 2, 2007. In this article, high rates in New Mexico are attributed to high rates of Hispanic and Native American populations, which supposedly have cultural issues such as not talking about sex, not approving of abortion, and high rates of teen pregnancy, which is characterized as a vicious cycle in which kids don’t learn appropriate relationship roles and are doomed to poverty.

<sup>466</sup> Another recent example, which I discuss in the conclusion of this dissertation, of this kind of coded racism within teen pregnancy discourse on the state level is New York City’s 2013 poster campaign, which has been heavily criticized for its politics of shame and its creation of stigma around young teen moms of color. Margot Adler, “NYC Mayor’s Campaign Against Teen Pregnancy Widely Criticized,” *NPR*, March 20, 2013 <http://www.npr.org/2013/03/20/174867735/nyc-mayors-campaign-against-teen-pregnancy-widely-criticized>.

<sup>467</sup> Debra Dominguez-Lund, “Fragile Motherhood - Teen Pregnancy: Rates in New Mexico are Highest among Hispanics,” *Albuquerque Journal*, March 12, 2006.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid* .

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid* .

<sup>470</sup> Legislative Health and Human Services Committee, “Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the Legislative Health and Human Services Committee,” State of New Mexico, November 30-December 1, 2011, <http://www.nmlegis.gov/lcs/minutes/LHHSminDec1.11.pdf>; Sylvia Ruiz, “Adolescent Births and Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention in New Mexico,” New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, Presented at Legislative Health and Human Services Committee Sixth Meeting, November 30, 2011, Slide 5,

<http://www.nmlegis.gov/lcs/handouts/LHHS%20120111%20New%20Mexico%20Teen%20Pregnancy%20Coalition.pdf>.

<sup>471</sup> Ruiz, “Adolescent Births,” Slide 9.

<sup>472</sup> McQuade, *Troubling Reproduction*, 27.

<sup>473</sup> Toni Berg (Nurse at New Futures High School), in-person discussion, March 1, 2013. Berg explained to me what New Futures, Inc. was and when it dissolved.

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>475</sup> Linda Barr and Catherine Monserrat, *Teenage Pregnancy: A New Beginning*, Eighth Revision (Albuquerque: New Futures, Inc., 2006), 7.

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>477</sup> Cadena, in-person discussion, 2013.

<sup>478</sup> Cadena, in-person discussion, 2013.

<sup>479</sup> Denicia Cadena and Micaela Cadena, “What’s Wrong with Blaming Teen Parents,” *Blog of Rights*, New York: American Civil Liberties Union, accessed April 26, 2013, <http://www.aclu.org/blog/womens-rights/whats-wrong-blaming-teen-parents>.

<sup>480</sup> New Mexico Senate, “Senate Memorial 25: Contributions of Young Parents in New Mexico,” New Mexico Legislature, 50<sup>th</sup> Legislature, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 2012, <http://www.sos.state.nm.us/uploads/files/Bills2012/Memorials/SM25.pdf>.

<sup>481</sup> Simonich, “New Law Allows Additional Absences.”

<sup>482</sup> For example, YWU has taken the lead in the recent “Respect ABQ Women” campaign, which is a direct response to current anti-abortion initiatives in the state. National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, “Latinas Stand with New Mexico

Women,” National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, October 18, 2013,  
<http://latinainstitute.org/media/releases/Latinas-Stand-with-New-Mexico-Women>.

<sup>483</sup> Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro. “DeLauro Touts Inclusion of ‘Reducing the Need for Abortions Initiative’ in Labor-HHS Appropriations Bill,” U.S. House of Representatives, accessed November 31, 2013,  
[http://delauro.house.gov/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=342:delauro-touts-inclusion-of-reducing-the-need-for-abortions-initiative-in-labor-hhs-appropriations-bill&catid=9:2009-press-releases&Itemid=25](http://delauro.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=342:delauro-touts-inclusion-of-reducing-the-need-for-abortions-initiative-in-labor-hhs-appropriations-bill&catid=9:2009-press-releases&Itemid=25).

<sup>484</sup> James Monteleone, “House Approves Excused Absences for Teen Parents,” *Albuquerque Journal*, February 23, 2013.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid.

<sup>486</sup> Legislative Education Study Committee, “Minutes, LESC Meeting, November 13-16, 2012,” 18.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>488</sup> Ibid., 19

<sup>489</sup> Hancock, *The Politics of Disgust*, 23-64; While welfare retrenchment was partly a response to the welfare rights movement, it is important to note that anti-welfare sentiment predated the welfare rights movement. Felicia Kornbluh, *The Battle of Welfare Rights: Politics and Poverty in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 89-90.

<sup>490</sup> Sparks, “Queens, Teens, and Model Mothers,” 171-172 and 184. Sparks writes, “Of nearly 600 witnesses...only 17 were welfare recipients.” (Ibid., 184).

<sup>491</sup> Hancock, *The Politics of Disgust*, 4-5.

<sup>492</sup> New Mexico GRADS, “February 6! Today! NM GRADS Day and Young Parents Day of Action at the New Mexico Legislature!” Wordpress, February 6, 2013, <http://nmgrads.wordpress.com/2013/02/06/february-6-today-nm-grads-day-and-young-parents-day-of-action-at-the-new-mexico-legislature/>; New Mexico Grads, “Voices of Young Parents in New Mexico Heard at the State Capitol Today!” Wordpress, February 7, 2013, <http://nmgrads.wordpress.com/2013/02/07/voices-of-young-parents-in-new-mexico-heard-at-the-state-capitol-today/>.

<sup>493</sup> “Maternity Leave Proposed for NM Students,” *KOAT Action 7 News*, Albuquerque, March 11, 2013, <http://www.koat.com/news/new-mexico/albuquerque/Maternity-leave-proposed-for-NM-students/-/9153728/19275900/-/qywe7dz/-/index.html>.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid.

<sup>496</sup> Gadi Schwartz, “State Has Highest Teen Pregnancy Rate in Country,” *KOB Eyewitness News 4*, February 26, 2013, <http://www.kob.com/article/stories/s2945114.shtml#.UTE4qgAins4.facebook>.

<sup>497</sup> Nikki Ibarra, “Bill to Give Maternity Leave for Middle Schoolers Makes its Way through Legislature,” *KOB Eyewitness News 4*, March 10, 2013, <http://www.kob.com/article/stories/S2958594.shtml?cat=0>.

<sup>498</sup> For example, in a teen pregnancy-focused episode of *Public Square*, a New Mexico PBS program aired in 2011, teen parents are interviewed extensively and given the opportunity to debate policy decisions with Republican state senator Mark Boitano: “Teen Pregnancy,” *Public Square*, New Mexico PBS, October 27, 2011,

<http://www.newmexicopbs.org/productions/publicsquare/teen-pregnancy/>. Other examples include the NM GRADS Wordpress blog and the social media sites of YWU and the ACLU.

<sup>499</sup> Maia Szalavitz, “Why New York’s Latest Campaign to Lower Teen Pregnancy Could Backfire,” *Time*, March 28, 2013, <http://healthland.time.com/2013/03/28/why-new-yorks-latest-campaign-to-lower-teen-pregnancy-could-backfire/>; Miriam Pérez, “NYC Teen Pregnancy Campaign Brings Shaming to Bus Shelters and Cell Phones,” *RH Reality Check*, March 5, 2013, <http://rhrealitycheck.org/article/2013/03/05/nyc-teen-pregnancy-campaign-brings-shaming-to-bus-shelters-and-cell-phones/>; Miriam Pérez, “Backlash Against Teen Pregnancy Campaign Brings Tweaks but the Message Remains the Same,” *RH Reality Check*, March 19, 2013, <http://rhrealitycheck.org/article/2013/03/19/backlash-against-teen-pregnancy-campaign-brings-tweaks-but-the-message-remains-the-same/>; “New NYC Teen Pregnancy Subway Advertising Campaign Not the Answer,” Planned Parenthood of New York City, Inc., March 6, 2013, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/nyc/3-6-13-41037.htm>; Even the National Campaign’s website Stay Teen has a piece about the shamefulness of shaming teen parents like the NYC campaign: Jennifer V., “Brokering the Politics of Shame in NYC’s Newest Public Health Campaign,” Stayteen.org, National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, March 23, 2013, <http://www.stayteen.org/article/brokering-politics-shame-nyc%E2%80%99s-newest-public-health-campaign>.

<sup>500</sup> In fact, as I discuss in the conclusion to this dissertation, New Mexico’s YWU is a leading group within a trans-state alliance of organizations working on these issues.

<sup>501</sup> The City of New York Office of the Mayor, “Mayor Bloomberg, Deputy Mayor Gibbs, and Human Resources Administration Commissioner Doar Announce New Campaign to Further Reduce Pregnancy,” March 3, 2013, Press Release No. 82, 2, [http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/downloads/pdf/press\\_releases/2013/pr\\_march\\_2013/teen\\_pregnancy\\_press\\_release.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/downloads/pdf/press_releases/2013/pr_march_2013/teen_pregnancy_press_release.pdf).

<sup>502</sup> Human Resources Administration, “Think Being a Teen Parent Won’t Cost You?” Department of Social Services, New York, NY, accessed July 2, 2013, [http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/html/programs/teen\\_pregnancy\\_campaign.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/html/programs/teen_pregnancy_campaign.shtml).

<sup>503</sup> Ruth Marcus, “Truth-Telling on Teen Pregnancy,” *Washington Post*, March 22, 2013 <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/press/PDF/2013/WashPost3-22-13.pdf>; Pérez, Miriam. “NYC Teen Pregnancy Campaign Brings Shaming to Bus Shelters and Cell Phones,” *RH Reality Check*, March 5, 2013, <http://rhrealitycheck.org/article/2013/03/05/nyc-teen-pregnancy-campaign-brings-shaming-to-bus-shelters-and-cell-phones/>.

<sup>504</sup> The sources used for the posters included studies by the Brookings Institution (including one by Isabel Sawhill and Ron Haskins), Child Trends, the United States Department of Agriculture’s Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, and the Urban Institute. Office of Communications and Marketing, “Teen Pregnancy Campaign, OER Notes,” Human Resources Administration, Department of Social Services, New York, NY, accessed July 1, 2013, [http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/downloads/pdf/teen%20pregnancy/Teen\\_PregnancyAds\\_Citations\\_and\\_Notes.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/downloads/pdf/teen%20pregnancy/Teen_PregnancyAds_Citations_and_Notes.pdf).

<sup>505</sup> The City of New York Office of the Mayor, “Mayor Bloomberg,” 2.

<sup>506</sup> Human Resources Administration, “NYC Human Resources Administration Teen Pregnancy Prevention Campaign,” YouTube, May 3, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSy-3W-7XE8&feature=youtu.be>.

<sup>507</sup> The City of New York Office of the Mayor, “Mayor Bloomberg,” 2.

<sup>508</sup> “Kids Having Kids,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 18, 2013, <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/press/PDF/2013/ChicagoTrib3-18-13.pdf>.

<sup>509</sup> The City of New York Office of the Mayor, “Mayor Bloomberg,” 1.

<sup>510</sup> Pérez. “NYC Teen Pregnancy Campaign.”

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>512</sup> For instance, in a 1993 *U.S. News and World Report* editorial, Michael Ruby argues that eliminating welfare altogether might be a solution to “irresponsible behavior.” He writes,

That a crisis exists and deepens every day is beyond dispute. In an area of public policy suffering from numbing statistical overkill, a handful of numbers do nicely. The problems for many children begin early. About 375,000 babies, or 9 percent of births each year, are exposed to illegal drugs in the womb. Nearly 1 of every 3 births is out of wedlock. Two out of 3 African American babies are born to single mothers, up from 1 in 4 when Daniel Patrick Moynihan first wrote about the disintegration of the black family nearly 30 years ago; the figure for white babies is 22 percent.

Black or white, these women—and many are that only biologically, given their youth—tend to be ill educated and unable to provide for themselves or their offspring.

Michael Ruby, “The Children’s Crusade,” *U.S. News and World Report*, December 13, 1993, 112, fol. 4, box 24, News Clips, Domestic Policy Council, Bruce Reed, Welfare Reform (1993-2001) Subject File, Systematic Processed Collections,

William J. Clinton Presidential Library, Little Rock, Arkansas. Similarly, Richard Cohen writes in the *Washington Post* in 1993,

When it comes to illegitimacy, there's finally good news: The white rate is rising. That's an odd kind of "good news" I bring you, but it's [*sic*] import is unmistakable: in a little while, both the problem of illegitimacy and the term "underclass" will no longer be associated just with poor African Americans. Maybe then we'll be able to talk about these problems without charges of racism—some of them well-founded—muddying the debate.

He goes on to reference Charles Murray's recent article titled "The Coming of the White Underclass" in the *Wall Street Journal*, the proposal to make Norplant a part of welfare policy, and the need to "come to terms" with teen sexuality. Richard Cohen "Dealing with Illegitimacy," *Washington Post*, November 23, 1993, fol. 4, box 24, News Clips, Domestic Policy Council, Bruce Reed, Welfare Reform (1993-2001) Subject File, Systematic Processed Collections, William J. Clinton Presidential Library, Little Rock, Arkansas.

<sup>513</sup> The campaign video, for example, features one black teen dad and one black teen mom giving testimonials as to how hard teen parenthood is and then a black man explains further, followed by a white woman asking viewers to text "NOTNOW" to 877877. In this way, the video suggests that teen pregnancy is primarily a black issue.

Human Resources Administration, "NYC Human Resources Administration Teen Pregnancy Prevention Campaign," YouTube, May 3, 2013,

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSy-3W-7XE8>.

<sup>514</sup> Melissa Jeltsen, "Teen Pregnancy Campaign Ripped by Melissa Harris-Perry," *Huffington Post*, March 9, 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/09/teen-pregnancy-campaign\\_n\\_2845144.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/09/teen-pregnancy-campaign_n_2845144.html).



<sup>515</sup> Planned Parenthood of New York, “New NYC Teen Pregnancy Subway Advertising Campaign is Not the Answer,” Press Release, March 6, 2013 <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/nyc/3-6-13-41037.htm>; In fact, even Stay Teen (the teen-oriented website run by the National Campaign) featured a blog post written by a teenage contributor who sharply critiques the campaign in this fashion: Jennifer V. “Brokering the Politics of Shame.”

<sup>516</sup> Marcus, “Truth-Telling on Teen Pregnancy;” Keli Goff, “Why Liberals are Wrong on Teen Pregnancy,” *The Root*, March 12, 2013, <http://www.theroot.com/blogs/why-liberals-are-wrong-teen-pregnancy>.

<sup>517</sup> Richard V. Reeves, “Shame and Teen Pregnancy,” *UpFront*, The Brookings Institution, March 18, 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/03/18-shame-social-function-reeves>.

<sup>518</sup> Interestingly, the link he provides to prove his “factual” claim has apparently been broken since he posted the article. After checking the link myself on June 27, 2013, I noticed that a commenter from “3 months ago” took note of the broken link then. Reeves, “Shame and Teen Pregnancy.”

<sup>519</sup> Reeves actually puts the “liberal” in quotations himself, likely as an attempt to suggest that not all “liberals” find fault with conservative social politics. Reeves, “Shame and Teen Pregnancy.”

<sup>520</sup> Reeves, “Shame and Teen Pregnancy.”

<sup>521</sup> Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and Ethics of Queer Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>522</sup> Berlant, *The Queen of America*, 6; Lee Edelman, *No Future*, 11.

<sup>523</sup> Berlant, *The Queen of America*, 6.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-59, 75-77.

<sup>525</sup> Jeltsen, “Teen Pregnancy Campaign Ripped by Melissa Harris-Perry.”

<sup>526</sup> I discuss other feminist and grassroots responses below.

<sup>527</sup> Kelli Goff, blogging for *The Root*, for example, argues that Bloomberg is simply telling teens “in poor communities” the important information they need about timing child birth, rather than assuming from a privileged position (like that of Planned Parenthood’s leaders) that teen parents do not deserve to be shamed. Goff, “Why Liberals are Wrong on Teen Pregnancy.” As of the time of this writing, July 1, 2013, the campaign is still in full effect.

<sup>528</sup> “No Teen Shame,” National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, New York, NY, accessed July 2, 2013, <http://latinainstitute.org/No-Teen-Shame>; “NYC4RJ Launches the ‘No Stigma! No Shame!’ Campaign,” New York Coalition For Reproductive Justice, New York, NY, March 12, 2013, <http://nyc4rj.tumblr.com/post/45204967521/nyc4rj-launches-the-no-stigma-no-shame-campaign>; Strong Families, “Young Parents,” Forward Together, Oakland, CA, accessed July 2, 2013, <http://strongfamiliesmovement.org/young-parents>; Young Women United is both active in Strong Families and participates online in forums discussion young parents and the Bloomberg campaign. Nia King, “Can New York Shame Teens Out of Getting Pregnant: Reader Forum,” *Colorlines*, March 11, 2013 [http://colorlines.com/archives/2013/03/are\\_these\\_anti-teen\\_pregnancy\\_ads\\_racist\\_reader\\_forum.html](http://colorlines.com/archives/2013/03/are_these_anti-teen_pregnancy_ads_racist_reader_forum.html).

<sup>529</sup> Posted on May 29, 2013, the online petition for a meeting with Cole, as of July 1, 2013, has 802 signatures by people from across the United States. Natasha Vianna, “Candie’s Foundation: Stop Shaming Young Parents,” Change.org, May 29, 2013, <http://www.change.org/petitions/candie-s-foundation-stop-shaming-young-parents-2>.

<sup>530</sup> Roderick Ferguson explains that capitalism’s demand for cheap labor has historically produced the proliferation of nonnormativity, which both fulfills and exceeds capital’s demands. Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004). The social problem of teen pregnancy has become an important tool in managing this contradiction in the neoliberal era of multiculturalism, intimate citizenship, and welfare retrenchment.

<sup>531</sup> Even prior to the rise of social citizenship in the twentieth century, according to T.H. Marshall, the modern nation-state engaged in a minimal amount of poverty alleviation in order to maintain the system of social inequality that fueled the political and economic order. T.H. Marshall, “Citizenship and Social Class,” in *Inequality and Society*, eds. Jeff Manza and Michael Souder (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2009), 153.

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