

SHAME AND BLAME CAMPAIGN:
THE USE OF SHAME IN TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION CAMPAIGNS

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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In recent decades, teen pregnancy prevention campaigns have become a political and cultural omnipresence, with celebrities and politicians joining the plea to stop teen girls from becoming teen moms. But in their messaging and rhetoric, these campaigns send powerful messages about why teen motherhood is immoral, how teen mothers have irrevocably ruined their lives, and why teen female sexuality is itself shameful. I will conduct a rhetorical analysis on three teen pregnancy prevention campaigns -- New York City Human Resources teen pregnancy prevention campaign, the Stay Teen campaign, and the Candie's Foundation -- in order to trace both the use of shame and how shame is employed. My findings demonstrate these three campaigns shame teen mothers, framing them as immoral, lascivious, irresponsible agents, and blames them as responsible broader social ills like poverty and crime, rather than the governmental policies that politicians enact. Ultimately, I argue for a shift away from teen pregnancy prevention as a construct and in its place, a comprehensive campaign to prevent *all* unplanned and unwanted pregnancies, one based in feminist understanding of bodily autonomy and access to the full spectrum of reproductive healthcare services.

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Introduction

Teen pregnancy in the United States has been described as “an epidemic” (NARAL), “a tragedy” (Connor 1), “risky” and “devastating” (Sisson 1); the consensus is clear: in the United States, teen pregnancy is considered a societal ill that needs to be eradicated. Teen pregnancy is framed in public awareness campaigns as a crisis that needs to be stemmed, a problem that needs to be fixed, and it “operates as a uniquely effective symbol of the failure to act responsibly” (Geronimus 405). And yet, the solutions proposed and the messages sent are often directed solely at teenage girls, have little in the way of accessible educational information, and are overtly shaming in nature. Teen pregnancy is framed as the fault of teenage girls, and it is teenage girls are who deemed the irresponsible sole cause of their own pregnancy.

It is within this context that in March of 2013, the New York City Human Resources Administration, a division of the City’s Department of Social Services, launched their new public information campaign “aimed at further reducing teen pregnancy,” they said. Predominantly in print, the campaign featured infants speaking to their (potential) teen parents, mostly teen mothers, sharing facts with them about teen pregnancy, and imploring them to reconsider the prospect of becoming a teen parent. But far from maintaining a neutral educational stance, the NYC HRA’s latest teen pregnancy prevention campaign is part of a larger narrative around teen pregnancy prevention. Instead of providing simple facts about contraception and pregnancy, this campaign polices young women’s sexuality (and as we shall see, racially) and reinforces the stigma

around teen and young motherhood through shame, a psychological tool with incredible power.

Unfortunately, the NYC HRA's campaign is not alone. The narratives of shame and stigma underlie much of the discourse around teen pregnancy prevention in the United States, with many campaigns openly admitting to shaming teen mothers, preaching the value of that shame in preventing teen pregnancy, and creating boundaries of what is acceptable behavior (Reeves).

But why focus shame in particular on teen mothers? What does that shame actually do? And what does it say about how American society sees teenage pregnancy, teen sexuality, and, in particular, teenage mothers?

The NYC HRA's teen pregnancy prevention campaign fits a larger framework within which teen pregnancy prevention campaigns in the United States work. By comparing the NYC HRA's campaign with two other prominent national teen pregnancy prevention campaigns, I aim to interrogate how teenage mothers are shamed, what that shame is trying to do, and what the specific shaming tactics employed by these campaigns are. In doing so, we can begin to see the larger patterns in teen pregnancy prevention campaigns and understand that, by and large, these campaigns are not about educating or empowering teenagers to make safe and responsible sexual choices; they are used to police the boundaries of what is acceptable sexual behavior for teenage girls, to reify conjugal, marital heterosexuality as the emblem of "normal" sexuality, and to stigmatize anyone who does not adhere to those boundaries.

The NYC HRA's teen pregnancy prevention campaign is not alone in its tone or content. By rhetorically and structurally comparing the NYC HRA's teen pregnancy prevention campaign with two other major teen pregnancy prevention campaigns, it becomes possible to understand how we have constructed teen pregnancy and what the campaigns design to prevent it actually do. The other two teen pregnancy prevention campaigns studied are the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy's sister campaign Stay Teen, and the Candie's Foundation campaign. In fact, these campaigns sometimes work in tandem with one another, actively promoting each other and their respective messages.

While these two are national campaigns and the NYC HRA's is not, New York City is revered as a major epicenter of American media culture, their campaign has national implications, and has garnered significant national attention. When looking at these three major campaigns together, it becomes possible to trace the use of shaming language and shaming imagery in the larger national discourse around teen pregnancy, and we can begin to tease out who the targets of that shame are and why. Integral to this effort is an analysis of who is behind these campaigns (such as board members and campaign financiers) and how these three campaigns work within the larger political framework, media representation, and social narrative of teen mothers.

Drawing on rhetorical theory, I will ask and attempt to answer a series of questions about the three teen pregnancy prevention campaigns that will guide my project:

1. What do we see in the advertisements? Who do we see and not see?

2. Who are these ads addressing? Who are they implying?
3. What is the relationship between the images used and the language employed?
4. How do the visual and verbal rhetoric employed encourage the audience to perceive the problem in a certain way?

Through a series of rhetorical analyses, I will analyze all three campaigns with each other while observing and comparing the similarities and differences. I will analyze the images and rhetoric that each campaign uses, and by using a psychoanalytic understanding of shame as well as an understanding and contextualization of its political uses and power, I will analyze the visual and verbal rhetoric in the three campaigns. I will trace the use of political and psychological shame in each campaign and the ways in which it unites the three campaigns, and I will interrogate who and what the shaming devices used in the campaigns serve. All three campaigns share a similar framework and rely on similar rhetoric in the emotional ways they try to appeal to teen girls. All claim to be focused on reducing teen pregnancy rates, first and foremost.

I will highlight the ways in which these campaigns employ both varying and similar tactics in their attempt to achieve their goal of reaching and ultimately shaming teen girls, and I will analyze the emotional messages they each send to teen girls about sex, pregnancy, and what makes a valuable life. I will also contextualize what these shaming campaigns truly aim to do, and who they truly aim to benefit. I will include and analyze the board members and/or creators of each campaign, contextualizing the political connections and financial power that back these campaign efforts. As Michael Warner said, "Shame works as a means to power,; and when used in public awareness

campaigns like the ones studied in this project, knowing who is shaming and what that shame serves is crucial to understanding these campaigns (Warner 18).

Ultimately, I will show to varying degrees that all three campaigns shame and blame teen mothers and teen girls. In fact, shame is the guiding undercurrent that drives these campaigns. Rather than reshape teen pregnancy prevention campaigns or refocus them, I instead hope to offer a call to abandon them entirely. In their place, we would see a more broad political and social move to prevent *all* unplanned and unwanted pregnancies, a campaign based not in shame and stigma, but in empowerment, access to a full line of reproductive and sexual healthcare (including abortion care), and increased assistance for those who are already teen parents themselves.

In Chapter One, I trace the construction of unwed mothers from the 19th century and how it informed the construction of the “teenage mother” in the second half of the 20th century. I explore how the dual categories of the deserving, “able-to-be-rehabilitated,” white young mother contrasts with the undeserving, irresponsible, unworthy black young mother are reflected in our current understanding of teen pregnancy, and the ways in which the institution of the welfare system in the 1930s reified that dichotomy. Through an exploration of welfare institution, attacks on welfare, and ultimate welfare reform, I show that teen pregnancy as a construction is inherently linked to welfare and to notions of personal responsibility. I also show how the images that we see of teen pregnancy and teen motherhood in the media reflect our narrow, dichotomous understanding of deserving, rescuable white girls and undeserving, lascivious, irresponsible black girls.

Chapter Two explores the psychological process of shame and how it works as an internal police form to determine boundaries of what is acceptable, moral, proper behavior and what is not. Relying on Dr. Andrew Morrison's extensive work on shame, I trace how shame is something that we both experience and learn externally, then process and reify internally. I also explore how shame, especially shame that is sexual in nature, is used to reify boundaries of who is a moral, socially acceptable agent and who is not. Shame can be used as a political force to solidify power structures and place blame on the marginalized through a subtle internalization of what society seemingly deems naturalized, but which is actually constructed.

Chapter Three is an analysis of the New York City Human Resources Administration's 2013 teen pregnancy prevention campaign. I analyze the verbal and visual rhetoric employed in the print advertisements and explore the gendered and racial undercurrents present in them. The agency behind the campaign is noted, as well as what political events and personalities underwrote the implementation of the campaign, in order to show what political motives may be present for employing a shame-based campaign. I also explore the interactive features of the campaign, specifically the text message service that allows you to play a “game” about teen pregnancy and teen relationships.

Chapter Four is an analysis of the Stay Teen campaign, which is a sister campaign of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. I analyze website content, video PSAs, and interactive features like games on the website, to decipher to what extent the visual and verbal rhetoric employed shames teen mothers. While Stay

Teen proves to be less of an overtly shame-based campaign than the NYC HRA's campaign, I ultimately show that Stay Teen relies on many of the same gendered notions about why teen motherhood is bad and responsible for broader social ills.

Chapter Five is an analysis of The Candie's Foundation, a private teen pregnancy prevention campaign started by Iconix Brand CEO Neil Cole. This chapter includes an analysis of print and video PSAs, focusing on how the visual and verbal rhetoric combine into messages of shame and blame that target teen mothers. I also analyze website content and the stylistic choices employed to show how this campaign frames teen motherhood as a social crisis in need of stemming and ultimately blames broad social ills on teen mothers.

Chapter Six ties the three campaigns analyzed in previous chapters together and looks at them in a holistic way to decipher the overall messages that these teen pregnancy prevention campaigns send about teen motherhood and teen sexuality. I argue that these campaigns reiterate the notion that teen mothers are irresponsible, lascivious, shameful girls who are to blame for systemic issues like poverty, crime, and poor education. This chapter takes a look at the people behind the three prevention campaigns, including board members and agency employees, and it situates their social and political position outside of the campaign within the messages employed inside the campaign. I also explore and problematize the extent to which mainstream feminist organizations reiterate and employ the very same shame-based rhetoric around teen pregnancy as a way to advocate for expanded sex education, access to contraception, and more. In the end, I advocate for a shift away from teen pregnancy prevention as a framework and instead, encourage a

feminist focus on preventing *all* unwanted pregnancies, a campaign based in empowerment and education, not shame and blame.

“Teen pregnancy” is a recent political and social phenomenon, one informed by social anxieties around women’s burgeoning sexual freedom and a conservative distaste for welfare provisions to single mothers. Often, the media depictions of teen mothers and teen pregnancy were underwritten by shaming and stigmatizing rhetoric, especially when linking teen motherhood to welfare exploitation.

Through a series of rhetorical analyses, I will interrogate the extent to which three major teen pregnancy prevention campaigns, the New York City Human Resources Administration’s campaign, the Stay Teen campaign, and the Candie’s Foundation, shame teen mothers and blame them for broader social ills. I will observe gendered rhetoric and the way in which images and language are used to reinforce teen motherhood and teen pregnancy as shameful and immoral. Ultimately, I will offer what I hope is a shift in how we understand and frame teen pregnancy prevention, one that embraces information and empowerment, not shaming and blaming.

Chapter One: What *is* Teen Pregnancy?

Today's teenagers, the ones targeted in the teen pregnancy prevention campaigns featured in this project, have never known a cultural landscape in which "teen moms" are not a shamed and stigmatized group. The media and political portrayals of teen mothers directly inform how today's teenagers feel about teen mothers, and as we shall see, those undercurrents are readily utilized in the three campaigns studied here. While what we understand as a "teen mom" is a fairly modern construction. It is informed by a much older narrative of othering and ostracizing teenage girls, and all women for that matter, who fail to abide by a strict set of conjugal, marital, heteronormative expectations. To fully understand today's "teen mom" and the political and cultural implications upon which today's teen pregnancy prevention campaigns often rely, we have to follow the historical construction of teen and unwed mothers back to its American origin.

"Teen Mothers:" A Historic Construction

Teen pregnancy prevention campaigns did not simply emerge out of nowhere, but rather are the product of particular social constructions and political narratives around teenage pregnancy and teen mothers, often using them as neoliberal props to roll back the welfare state and to reinforce pervasive stigmas around sexually active, unmarried teenage girls and women (Geronimus 407). Though teen pregnancy prevention campaigns are a fairly recent phenomenon (approximately 30 years old), the shaming and demonization of teen girls' sexuality, reproduction, and parenthood has a long history in the United States.

What we now know of as “teen mothers” is only a 40-year old construction, but it is informed by the history of the 19th century “unwed mother,” the fear of out-of-control female sexuality, social anxieties around changing sexual mores, efforts to end welfare assistance, and a continual reinforcement of the importance of heterosexual, conjugal marriage. As we shall see, teen mothers are often invoked as a political tool to reinforce a traditional narrative of marriage and reprimand all sexual expressions and reproductive choices that exist outside of that norm.

As it replaced “unwed mother” in the 1970s, “teen pregnancy” became a sort of coded language for an unwed teen mother, and the stigmatization against unwed and teenage mothers lays the groundwork for our current construction of teen motherhood. To fully understand current teen pregnancy prevention campaigns, we must contextualize them within the history and evolution of teen pregnancy and teen mothers as social ills in America, a history with roots that connect classist, racist, sexist, and moralist fears into a simple, yet lastingly shameful image.

Before “teen mothers” were ever a social construction, there was the “unwed mother.” When homes for unwed mothers began to proliferate, such as the Florence Crittenton Homes for Unwed Mothers, founded in 1883, unwed mothers were framed as “victims” or “fallen women,” “females who found themselves in dire circumstances, often for reasons beyond their control or due to their own mistaken judgment of a male” (Pillow 20-26). The unwed mothers that the F.C. Homes served were paternalistically framed as victims of no-good men or poor economic circumstances from which they needed to be saved. These unwed mothers were cast as worthy of pity and

charity, rather than outright shameful, lascivious, irresponsible women, and were perceived as in desperate need of help and rehabilitation.

And yet, this framework of the pitiable unwed mother did not extend to all. By racially segregating white and black women, the F.C. Homes delineated between deserving and undeserving unwed mothers along racial lines (Pillow 23). White unwed mothers were cast as redeemable and “worthy of rehabilitation,” and were thus subject to far greater treatment and services than their black counterparts (Pillow 23). Racist stereotypes of lascivious, immoral, and irredeemable black women plagued their treatment and framed them in a distinctly different light than white unwed mothers. According to the white supremacist framework that underwrote American political life, white women could potentially be saved, but black women were already doomed.

Visual representations of unwed mothers and their children were racialized, as well, in ways that foreshadowed the form teenage pregnancy prevention campaigns that emerged a century later. As Wanda Pillow notes, “Caucasian babies were repeatedly used in advertising campaigns to change societal attitudes toward and garnish support for the plight of unwed mothers and their children,” both playing upon and reinforcing compassion and concern for white, deserving children and their unfortunate mothers. (Pillow 24). White unwed mothers in F. C. Homes not only experienced superior treatment and services than their black counterparts, but they avoided the kind of sexual stigma and stain of immorality with which black unwed mothers were branded.

With the turn of the 20th century and the beginning of the Progressive Era (approximately 1880-1920), the focus on unwed mothers shifted from concern about

them to concern about their children, reflecting a shift in what role the public believed the government should have in the everyday lives of its citizens (Luker 21). As Kristin Luker highlights,

“Reformers and policymakers believed that healthy children in healthy families were an essential ingredient in a long-range reform strategy that would eliminate poverty, delinquency, overcrowded living conditions, and other social ills. They worried that children, especially poor and immigrant children, if left unattended by society, would grow up to create such dire social problems that the republic itself would be imperiled.” (Luker 21)

Concerns for the well-being of children of unwed and illegitimate mothers were grounded in a desire to eradicate social ills and improve society as a whole, which, as we shall see, reflects much of the rhetoric used in many teen pregnancy prevention campaigns today.

In the aftermath of this shift, the American welfare state, so to speak, was founded during Franklin D. Roosevelt’s tenure. The creation of the Social Security Act of 1935, which included the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program that provided assistance to widows, deserted mothers, and a fraction of mothers who were never married, was the first attempt to implement government-based protection for single mothers (Luker 21-22). Eventually, in 1939, the Social Security program and the Aid to Dependent Children program were split into two separate programs, solidifying the dichotomy between “deserving” and “undeserving” single mothers respectively. Social Security continued to support widows, provided higher benefits, and included no forced inspections of recipients’ homes or personal spaces, while the ADC, which later became known as the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), provided low benefits to single mothers who were subject to unscheduled home raids and could be disqualified if their homes were found “unsuitable” (Daniels). The institutionalization of the American

welfare state went hand in hand with the reframing of unwed mothers and who deserves and doesn't deserve governmental assistance, and it also reflected the shifting public perception about unwed mothers, their children, and the responsibility of the government to assist them.

In the post-war era now known as the "Baby Boom," American marriage was heralded as an emblem of success, a central part of the American dream. In what is colloquially known as "the 50s," the period from 1947 until the early 1960s, America's "baby boom" was also a "marriage boom." Those who were not married by their mid-twenties were viewed as "sick" or "immoral," as the standard white, middle-class marriage of a breadwinning husband and a homemaking wife all but washed away the memory of women working in factories during World War II (Coontz 230-231).

The political and social crisis of the "unwed mother" dominated until it became replaced with the "teenage mother" from the late 1960s into the 1970s (Geronimus 882), a time of great social and generational upheaval in the United States with the emergence of the New Left and radicalized youth subcultures and political movements. Interestingly, the rates of teenage pregnancy were beginning to decline in the 1970s, as more middle- and upper-class women postponed marriage and childrearing (Douglas and Michaels 191). However, the shift from unwed to teenage mother occurred concurrently with the largest population of teenagers the country had ever seen, due to the baby boom generation reaching adolescence (Pillow 26).

Underwriting social anxieties about American (white) youth experimenting with sex and drugs was the emergent image and political framework of the teenage mother.

The “teen mom” was seemingly born out of an older, more conservative generation that lamented what they saw as the irresponsibility and immorality of a (white) youth generation gone mad, one in need of rescue. Many of the political frameworks around teen motherhood stressed the importance of “protecting youth,” which served as a subtext for an older, more conservative generation’s “fears of sexuality and the upholding of male-led marriages and families” (Sisson 4).

The rhetoric of “protecting youth” also carried an inherent assumption that the youth worth protecting split along racial lines. The racialized disparity between deserving and undeserving unwed mothers of the 19th century reemerged with the new image of ‘teen mothers,’ as the media and politicians portrayed “our girls,” meaning white, unwed teenage mothers, as sympathetic subjects who were “at risk” (Pillow 30). The paternalism that underwrote the emerging ideologies and ultimate policies around teenage motherhood played on and perpetuated lingering cultural assumptions of lascivious black female sexuality and pure, innocent white female sexuality.

Teen pregnancy emerged at a time when the U.S. Women’s Liberation movement was gaining ground and winning legislative and legal battles. In 1973, the landmark case *Roe v. Wade* asserted that women had a constitutional right to safe and legal abortion (*Roe v. Wade*), and the passage of Title IX in 1972 introduced a dramatic overhaul in the educational rights for all women, as well as teen mothers specifically, prohibiting discrimination against pregnant students in schools (Fershee 283-284). Teen pregnancy made its official entrance into the lexicon of social crises in 1975, with Senator Edward

Kennedy's introduction of the "National School-Age Mother and Child Health Act," a bill which ultimately failed, during Congress' first hearing on teen pregnancy (Pillow 31).

Teen Pregnancy: Campaigning on a Crisis

Against the backdrop of the vast cultural shifts that America and American youth were experiencing, the American welfare state expanded during the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s, and peaked during the 1970s, the same time that the political shift from unwed to teenage mothers was taking place. On the heels of this shift, the welfare state began to recede in the 1980s under the neoliberal rollback of the welfare state (Hirshmann 141), until it was radically restructured under 1996's Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (Geronimus 405). When PRWORA essentially dismantled the American welfare system, it reflected a shift in public conception of single mothers, much like the implementation of welfare in the 1930s. With the PRWORA, the shift was, more or less, from single mothers who were down-on-their-luck to teen girls who were sexually lascivious and out of control.

Welfare reform is inherently linked to the construction of teen pregnancy and teen pregnancy prevention campaigns. As the "epidemic" of teen pregnancy arose in the 1980s, it coincided with concerns about declining white birthrates and what appeared to be rising black birthrates, which solidified teen pregnancy as a major cause of poverty (Pillow 38). Teen pregnancy became synonymous with poverty and a dramatic expense for the taxpayer. Teen pregnancy played a vital role in providing momentum and a framework of "personal responsibility" to efforts to reform and rollback the welfare state from the 1980s until welfare's dramatic restructuring in 1996.

1988's Family Support Act "allowed states to require that the minor teen parent live with her parent(s) in order to receive AFDC" welfare funding (Pillow 40). Teen *mothers* were forced to live with their parent(s) to receive funding, reinforcing a paternalistic notion that teen girls are irresponsible and incapable of making their own independent life choices. The framework of the teen pregnancy "crisis" conveniently evades the reality that teens only account for approximately 5 percent of the welfare caseload (Boonstra 8).

Conservatives often stated that welfare seemed to be an "incentive program" for teen mothers. In their 1994 Contract with America, the Republican Party suggested that teen girls become pregnant because they know they will be able to live off the government, despite a lack of any categorical evidence to defend that assertion (Luker 170-171). The Contract stated:

Currently, the federal government provides young girls with the following deal: Have an illegitimate baby and the taxpayers will guarantee you cash, food stamps, and medical care, plus a host of other benefits...It's time to change the incentives and make responsible parenthood the norm and not the exception. (Gillespie and Schellhas 75).

Teen pregnancy was a focal point around which the Republican party sought to and ultimately succeeded at dismantling AFDC. The Republicans linked teen pregnancy and teen motherhood with laziness and irresponsibility, claiming that teen girls got pregnant in order to essentially mooch off of the government, despite the fact that women's reproductive and marital decisions "have a great deal to do with feelings, values, beliefs, and commitments," (Luker 171).

In 1994, the Clinton administration proposed a welfare reform bill to the 103rd Congress that highlighted teenage pregnancy prevention as an issue, specifically noting the need for a national campaign to prevent teenage pregnancy (Luker 177). Though this specific effort was not successful, teen pregnancy became a focal point in the welfare reform discussions and an important aspect of the ultimate bill that was signed into law in 1996. This law prohibited states from providing assistance to teen parents or their children if the parents fail to meet the strict requirements imposed by the PRWORA, and it specifically called for the implementation of “programs aimed at teenage pregnancy prevention,” (Geronimus 408). What we know of as the modern teen pregnancy prevention campaign was born out of the neoliberal dismantling the American welfare state and the enforcement of “personal responsibility,” rather than assistance entitlement.

It cannot be overestimated how important the media has been in both constructing and perpetuating what we now conceive of as “teen pregnancy.” Even before formal teen pregnancy prevention campaigns, like the one introduced by President Clinton’s administration in their 1994 proposal, the media played a critical role in how the American public understood teen pregnancy, teenage mothers, and who was in need of assistance. As we shall see, with reality television shows like *16 & Pregnant* and *Teen Mom*, teen pregnancy and teen motherhood still occupy a privileged place in American media discourse.

Susan J. Douglas and Meredith M. Michaels trace the policing of American motherhood and highlight how docu-news programs in the 1980s and 1990s like CBS’ *48 Hours* helped to contribute to the stereotype of welfare recipients and young, unwed

mothers as lazy, irresponsible, and unfit to be mothers (Douglas and Michaels 195-197). Shows like these helped cement in the public consciousness a link between welfare and teen mothers, while playing up and perpetuating the discourse of teen pregnancy as a crisis that needed to be prevented, a tidal wave that needed to be stopped. An undercurrent of shame and stigma fueled the ways in which these shows covered teen mothers, as if they were a cautionary tale to female viewers of what could happen if you had out-of-wedlock sex as a teenager.

Phrases such as “children having children” and “babies having babies” became the normative lexicon around teenage pregnancy, with both docu-news programs and mainstream journalistic publications covering this newly constructed epidemic. As Jenna Vinson points out, a December 1985 issue of *Time* magazine contained an article entitled “Children Having Children: Teen Pregnancy in America” and featured “a very youthful-looking, visibly pregnant white girl standing sideways,” purposefully playing on the social anxieties around the decline of white female sexual prudence (Vinson 151).

In fact, since its emergence, the “teen mom” dominating media coverage remains a white, middle-class teen girl, whom Wanda Pillow notes “is used specifically to draw attention to teen pregnancy as a policy issue in order to garnish funding and support for policies, specifically policy initiatives that provide services to teen mothers,” (Pillow 33). White, middle-class teen girls are the focus of teen pregnancy prevention campaigns and public policy around teen pregnancy because of the long racialized lineage of deserving and undeserving unwed mothers. In a society where whiteness is still regarded as the norm and white women are often framed as passive victims, teen pregnancy prevention

campaigns are able to play into those racialized stereotypes to garner funding and increase their political power.

What's more, the representation of teen pregnancy in the media, including docu-news, news magazines, and reality television shows, often displays white teen mothers or cover models as a means of displaying the potential of teens to rise above this social ill (Vinson 151-152). On the flip side of this latent reference is the assumption that teenagers of color, especially black teen girls, are more prone to teen pregnancy because of racist assertions that they are inherently more lascivious and irresponsible, and are therefore beyond reaching or rescuing with these campaigns. Black teen mothers are still framed as incapable of saving, as more prone to teen motherhood, and therefore undeserving of nuanced representation.

Teen Pregnancy: A Response to Sexual Anxieties

Formal teen pregnancy prevention campaigns came about at a time when political forces were responding to deep social anxieties about sex, sexualities, and what many saw as the abandonment of traditional, conjugal, marital heterosexuality. The nuclear family serves as the social unit of the nation, determining one's citizenship and place in society. The increased political awareness of "unwed" and "teen mothers," women who outright defy the traditional nuclear norm of the family, fueled a wave of paranoia and anxiety about how the nation was shaped and who would belong to it.

It is no coincidence that as the teen pregnancy prevention campaigns emerged at the same time as the political push for abstinence-only and the passage of Defense of Marriage Act of 1996. This year seemed to be a sort of political nexus of sexual anxiety,

and to properly understand what teen pregnancy prevention campaigns are and what they do, we must contextualize their emergence with the other legislation and political posturing around matters of sexuality at the same time.

The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was created in 1996 as a preemptive response to an attempt to legalize same-sex marriage in Hawaii (Alexander 213). It defined marriage as “only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife” and barred the federal government from providing marital benefits to same-sex couples, even if they were legally married in their own respective states (United States Congress House of Representatives). At a time when same-sex marriage made its first foray into legalization, the federal government responded with a firm declaration that any other sexuality or sexual expression besides marital heterosexuality was unacceptable.

Notably, the congressional Committee on the Judiciary specified that House Resolution 3396 (which ultimately became DOMA), was meant to both defend traditional, heterosexual marriage as an institution and defend a “traditional notion of morality,” reinforcing the link between conjugal, marital heterosexuality and what is considered moral (Alexander 214). Heterosexual marriage was heralded as the backbone of civilization, as the foundation of society. Because heterosexual sex can result in the propagation of the species, it was then used by the congressional committee as a means of solidifying heterosexual sex as the one true reflection of nature, as inherently more natural, and therefore more moral (Alexander 216-217). The link between heterosexuality and morality was literally enshrined into United States law.

At the same time that DOMA was brought to the table, abstinence-only education began to gain political traction. During the 1996 congressional hearings on the need to prevent teen pregnancy, many Congressmen and Congresswomen openly railed against teen pregnancy as representative of “the breakdown of the American family” and emblematic of the evils of sex outside of heterosexual marriage (Pillow 178). Abstinence-only education was heralded by many as the solution to the teen pregnancy problem, despite no evidence to support that theory.

The 1996 Abstinence Education Law established eight federal guidelines for abstinence education, utilizing similar rhetoric that would come to dominate teen pregnancy prevention campaigns in the ensuing years. According to the law, “abstaining from sexual activity has social, psychological, and health gains,” and most notably, “A mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual activity,” (Pillow 178-179). There could not be a more clear statement of what these laws and campaigns are about: controlling (white) sexualities that deviate from conjugal, marital heterosexuality and continuing to privilege heterosexual marriage.

1996 was a noteworthy legislative year for political and social anxieties around sex, and lines were redrawn and intensified between what was acceptable, *moral*, behavior, and what was deviant and therefore shameful. Rhetoric like “natural” and “the breakdown of the traditional family” stoked American cultural fears about the changing gender and sexual norms, and helped reinforce conjugal, marital heterosexuality as the only acceptable sexual expression in which anyone could respectfully engage. What we

know of as teen pregnancy prevention campaigns are a product of that time of deep social anxiety and the bolstering of sexual stigma, and the prevention campaigns of today are no exception.

Teen pregnancy prevention serves as a constructed crisis through which social anxieties about deviant sexuality can play out in a politically popular way. Teen pregnancy prevention campaigns emerged at the same political time as the Defense of Marriage Act, abstinence-only education, the Prison Litigation Act of 1995 (actually passed in 1996) which made it harder for prisoners to file lawsuits in federal court (American Civil Liberties Union), as well as the PRWORA, a relative cluster of laws that reflected American anxieties around any sexual expression and citizenship that did not strictly adhere to white, conjugal, marital heterosexuality. The shame and stigma around pre-marital sex, out-of-wedlock sex, homosexual sex, queer sex, and any other “deviant” sex, were not only perpetuated by these series of laws, but they were, in fact, written into these laws. These laws were designed to institutionalize shame around deviant sexuality, and the emergence of teen pregnancy prevention campaigns were simply an extension of that effort.

Teen Pregnancy Today: A Media Obsession

It has been less than two decades since teen pregnancy prevention campaigns became a staple of the American political landscape, and yet it is almost hard to remember a time in our collective historical consciousness in which teen pregnancy wasn't considered a crisis to be addressed. That is due not only to the omnipresence and sheer volume of teen pregnancy prevention campaigns (including federal, state, and

privately funded campaigns), but also the continual media presence and portrayal of teen pregnancy and teen mothers.

Debuting in June of 2009, MTV's reality television program *16 and Pregnant* was a major media moment in the trajectory of teen pregnancy prevention. Each hour-long episode followed a pregnant teen girl for approximately 5-7 months (MTV's *16 and Pregnant*) through her pregnancy and beyond, neatly portraying the ups and downs of what teen girls experience when faced with pregnancy.

Worth noting, every featured pregnant teenager on the show has chosen to give birth, and though one couple opted to give their baby up for adoption, the vast majority of teen girls featured on the reality show give birth to and keep their babies (Pozner). While the pregnant teens and eventual teen moms are shown navigating their situations, these shows are often hyper-edited, condensing 5-7 months of actions, emotions, and struggles into an hour long program.

16 and Pregnant and its spin-off show *Teen Mom* reflect a larger media narrative of featuring predominantly white pregnant teens or teen mothers. This visual representation, reflected in the 2007 hit movie *Juno* about a quirky, white pregnant teenager who gives her baby up for adoption and ABC Family's teen drama *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, featuring a pregnant white teen, reinforces teen pregnancy with whiteness (Vinson 156-157). This perpetrates the same racialized disparity that has existed since the "unwed mothers" of the 19th century, delineating between moral, deserving white unwed mothers and lascivious, undeserving black unwed mothers. Teen

pregnancy prevention is coded as a white issue, justifying the political crisis around the deviancy of white female sexuality.

MTV's *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* are also tools employed by many teen pregnancy prevention campaigns, like the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and its sub-campaign Stay Teen, to appear hip and fresh. Keeping up with these shows and using social media to engage with viewers about them allows teen pregnancy prevention campaigns to seemingly operate as reflections of what teens want, rather than imposing a set of sexual norms to which they are expected to adhere. Stay Teen has specific features on its website and through its social media campaigns that watch, track, and respond to each new episode of both reality shows, so it is clear that the MTV programs serve more than just entertainment value. They are often used as another branch of teen pregnancy prevention campaigns in and of themselves, partnering with campaigns like Stay Teen, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, and the Candie's Foundation.

Conclusion

Teen pregnancy as we understand it today relies on the 19th century trope of the unwed mother. The racial delineations of deserving and undeserving mothers from that time period were reified in the American welfare system and pervade in our modern understanding of teen motherhood. The teen mother of today is a reflection of that historical evolution, a marker of our inability to escape our past.

What's more, teen pregnancy also serves as a site of deep social anxieties around shifting sexual norms, and even as marriage equality and gay rights gain political and

legislative steam, teen mothers remain a politically safe target for playing out these fears. From the unwed mother to the welfare system, from welfare reform to teen pregnancy prevention campaigns, from docu-news programs to *16 and Pregnant*, our obsession with and anxiety around teen pregnancy pervades.

Chapter Two: Shame: A Psychological and Political Force

Shame is not uncommon in American politics, and it has resided and continues to reside comfortably within sexual politics. From the Victorian era of repressed sexuality and the hysterical woman to anti-abortion advocacy and anti-sodomy laws, shame, particularly around issues pertaining to sexuality and reproduction, has a distinct history of wielding real political and social power. Because of the intensely personal and internal workings of shame, and the internalized policing that accompanies it, shame can be used as a political tool to reify certain boundaries of power and delineate between deserving and undeserving citizens, as well as moral and immoral behavior.

Shame is such a potent political force because it seemingly works an individual level, to the point where it is often hard to discern from where the shame was acquired. The political use of shame remains so enduring because of the way that the psychological processes of shame work, and to understand the political implications of shame, we must explore and understand both the psychological roots of shame and its political expressions. Shame works as a political weapon because it is both an internal and external process, often with both occurring simultaneously. There is the act of being shamed and the feeling of shame from within, and both are imperative to understand how shame works in teen pregnancy prevention campaigns like the three being studied in this effort.

We begin with what shame is and a psychoanalytic exploration of how it works.

Shame: An Internal Police Force

What is shame, exactly? What is the definition of shame with which this project is working? According to psychoanalyst Dr. Andrew Morrison, shame is defined as:

fundamentally a feeling of loathing about *ourselves*, a hateful vision of ourselves through our own eyes--although this vision may be determined by how we expect or believe other people are experiencing us. Generally speaking, this self-vision is accompanied by self-consciousness, and by a conviction of important *failure* that often generates a wish to hide or conceal. (Morrison 13-14).

Shame, therefore, is an internal process, a belief system based on self-loathing that functions within each of us who experience shame. It is often the product of how we believe others perceive or experience us, almost a reflection of how we understand ourselves through the eyes of others. Shame serves as a sort of dysmorphic mirror through which we judge and loathe ourselves, measuring ourselves against the external standards of propriety and morality. It is first and foremost about what we believe others see, and that in turn becomes what we ourselves see.

What's more, shame isn't a one-time process, but can be a recurring emotional response. What is deemed moral and what is therefore immoral are social constructions, and they serve as a sort of cultural guideline as to which behaviors are acceptable and unacceptable in any given social situation. Dr. Morrison argues that shame can be viewed as an "instrument of conscience," because the *threat* of shame can function as a barometer against which we determine our own self-image (Morrison 14).

When we feel shame, we often feel an all-encompassing sense of unworthiness, a stinging sense of failure to live up to what we perceive is valued or expected from the society and cultural landscape in which we live (Morrison 12). Cultural norms determine what behaviors or even which people are considered acceptable and moral, and anything

that deviates from those cultural norms is subject to shame. Our feelings of shame often come from the recognition, whether justified or not, that we do not match the norms that society has established. When we fail to live up to those norms, in our eyes and in the eyes of society as a whole, whether they are attainable or even realistic, we feel shame.

How Do We Learn Shame?

The psychoanalytic concept of *internalization* is useful to our understanding of the way shame works. It posits that we take in the qualities we see reflected to us in our caretakers, mentors, or authority figures when we are infants or children. The judgments and values that we inherit become our conscience and “serve as the source of many of our ideals” (Morrison 13). Those who raise us, who interact with us as children, and those who shape our existences as children in other ways, help to define the boundaries of morality and socially permissible behavior. We learn from the social values that we see reflected back to us, and we then internalize those values.

Because shame is feeling of failure, there must then be a standard up to which someone experiencing shame feels they must live. Standards from family members, from friends, or the ever-pervasive cultural norms in which we grow and live our lives all influence what we perceive as shameful. While shame is, as Dr. Morrison says, “a hateful vision of ourselves through our own eyes,” that vision does not exist in a vacuum, but is informed by any number of outside factors, including cultural norms, familial dynamics, social expectations, etc (Morrison 15). We learn and internalize which standards society deems as moral, and when we fail to live up to that standard, we perceive ourselves as unworthy and immoral; anything deviant is shameful.

What enshrines shame within us is the fact that after we have identified and internalized the qualities reflected around us as children, we no longer need an actual “shamer” or authority figure to tell us what to do and not to do because we have internalized those figures, qualities, values, and judgments into ourselves. They have become an internal part of who we are and how we navigate ourselves in the world. What’s more, they become our own voice; we learn shame and in the process of internalizing it, we forget that we ever learned it. Once this happens, we are no longer able to discern that “the judgements we make or the ideals we espouse come from anyone but ourselves,” reifying what we deem shameful as natural, innate, and inescapable (Morrison 16). The only way to challenge that naturalized shame is to become conscious of and actively unlearn the shame that we have already internalized. Shame becomes our own internal mechanism for self-policing our own social boundaries, giving external forces, particularly positions of authority, enormous power in dictating which behaviors and people are considered socially acceptable and which are not.

The Language of Shame

Shame functions as an internal police force because we have internalized those outward expressions of shame, and it then serves to delineate and maintain what is deemed appropriate and inappropriate (shameful) within all of us. The threat of shame from an outside source or even the internalized understanding that certain behaviors are in and of themselves shameful, both serve to help us gauge what is a moral level of behavior. This image then serves as a guide, an idealized portrait that determines which behavior(s) to which we must adhere in order to maintain a positive self-image for

ourselves and for the world. Dr. Andrew Morrison asserts that shame can “serve as an instrument of conscience” in that we internalize the boundaries of morality that are shown to us (Morrison 14-15). These boundaries become naturalized within us, to the point where we assume they are immutable, normal, and natural.

In addition to this internalized image, expressions of shame also have the potential to solidify what we have already internalized as moral and immoral. Shaming language serves as an additional image, an external judge, who also determines whether we are adhering to the guidelines of morality and propriety. In fact, expressions of shame seemingly strip the agency from those being shamed; it is the external judge who wields the power to announce our dictated deviancy to the world, and those being shamed internalize and naturalize that verdict (Morrison 24). Expressions of shame thus can serve as the means of reinforcing and maintaining our own internal shaming police force. They are a reminder of the idealized image of morality and social acceptability, created by the process of internalization and our own internal naturalization of those expressions of shame. As a result, those expressions of shame become echoed back to us in our own voice. They seemingly become our own thoughts, our own perceptions. Shaming language serves as our own form of self-condemnation.

Sexual Shame and Gendered Shame

Sexuality contains within it its own host of politics, power dynamics, and cultural assumptions. In her groundbreaking work “Thinking Sex,” Gayle Rubin states

As with other aspects of human behavior, the concrete institutional forms of sexuality at any given time and place are products of human activity. They are imbued with conflicts of interest and political maneuvering, both deliberate and incidental. In that sense, sex is always political. (Rubin 2).

As with any other domain of human interaction, sexuality can serve as a site for political posturing and the assertion of power. Especially in the United States, a country which has a history of stifling, repressing, and demonizing what it perceives as deviant sexualities or sexual expressions, sexuality becomes an incredibly powerful place within which to legislate morality and perpetuate power structures. As Michael Warner notes, “the United States is the land of sexual shame,” (Warner 21).

Sexual shame serves as a means of reifying the hierarchies of sex that have been created to benefit a certain, narrow type of sexuality. The social stigma attached to certain forms of “deviant” sexualities and sexual expressions helps to maintain that hierarchy of sexual privilege, and a fundamental aspect of those stigmas is internalized shame or fear of shame from outside sources. As Michael Warner highlights, “hierarchies of sex sometimes serve no real purpose except to prevent sexual variance,” (Warner 25). In turn, these hierarchies demonize those who deviate from the accepted sexual norms, namely conjugal, marital heterosexuality, and help to reinforce the boundaries of who and what is considered sexually appropriate or not. Those who seek to reinforce conjugal, marital heterosexuality claim that it is rooted in tradition, that it has come to represent the backbone of functioning society, and those who deviate from that norm risk undermining the entire structure of civilization as we know it (Alexander 216-217). Therefore, conjugal, marital heterosexuality becomes what we conceive of as a natural and immutable aspect of functioning, healthy, moral civilized society. This is what Gayle Rubin refers to as “sexual essentialism,” or the idea that sex is a natural, innate force that existed before formal society (Rubin 9). By this reasoning sex informs institutions, not

the other way around, and therefore, those who are sexually deviant are shameful because they violate nature.

Sexual shame is projected onto and internalized by those who deviate from social sexual norms and becomes a means of branding them as different and immoral agents. What we label as perversion is all that follows outside of our social conceptions of healthy, natural, traditional sexuality, and those who are marked as perverts wear it as a social identity from which they are unable to escape (Warner 28). The stigma around sexual deviancy serves as a scarlet letter of difference, and pregnant teen girls wear the literal embodiment of that sexual deviancy on their own bodies. Pregnant teen boys are not marked in the same way as teen girls, and teen girls' pregnant bellies serve as the focal point of their deviancy. Michael Warner also notes that "public sex" is considered shameful in our society (Warner 166-167), and the visible bellies of pregnant teen girls, as well as the babies that teen mothers carry around, aren't just a visible illustration of their sexual deviancy, but make them sexual agents in public spheres. They are doubly marked as sexually shameful.

Sexual difference and gender norms are also reified and affected by sexual shame. It is thought that shame works in gendered ways, reflecting our social gender binary and gendered expectations. Women often experience different sources of shame, or feel shame for different reasons than men. Dr. Morrison notes that for his female clients, expressions of shame often center around feelings of weakness regarding their own interpersonal relationships (Morrison 26). Women often feel that if they aren't living up to social standards of independence and autonomy, that they are unworthy, weak, and

valueless. For women, feelings of unworthiness are compounded by the sexist social messages that pervade their daily lives. “Sexism...breeds shame,” notes Dr. Morrison (28), and he emphasizes that the feelings of weakness and inferiority that accompany the female experience in a patriarchal society make simply being a woman shameful. As we shall see, teen girls are often scolded in teen pregnancy prevention campaigns that a baby won’t make their boyfriend stay with them, subtly shaming them for wanting to be in a romantic partnership and assuming that they would have a child for the express purpose of keeping a partner, rather than being independent.

The Power of Political Shame

There is immense political power in shame. It’s a tool that, as we have seen, has enormous ramifications for psychological control and perpetuating boundaries of what is and is not considered “normal.” In the political arena, especially, every instance of shame and shaming tactics is based on social and cultural assumptions, but also what that shame can ultimately do for the one doing the shaming. Shame solidifies the positions of those in power, exonerates them their own failures, and polices the marginalized in internalized and covert ways that help perpetuate levels of inequality.

Because shame serves as an internal police force, it can serve as a covert and naturalized means of perpetuating the domination or oppression of any given social group. We experience shame at what we perceive to be our own difference, whatever difference that may be. Cultural norms dictate what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior, but they also perpetuate a hierarchy of privileged identities. Our cultural norms reflect the identities and groups that occupy those privileged spaces, and in a society that

privileges whiteness, heterosexuality, and maleness, those who fall outside of those privileged identities are inherently coded as less-than, a position that often results in shame. Disenfranchised and oppressed groups, particularly groups that occupy identities that are not privileged by our social structure, often experience a “sense of difference and inferiority imposed by the dominant culture [which] leads to internalization or that judgment by the affected group,” (Morrison 35). Shame becomes a means of reifying existing power structures and casting out those who vary from or outright defy the identities that those structures serve.

Those in power also use shame as a political tool to blame the marginalized by suggesting an internalized competition, a permanent state of war within oneself, in trying to be better than or even on the same level as those in power. But there is always an opponent more powerful, more successful (Morrison 30-31), and the dominant group always gets to be victorious since it sets the standard of morality and propriety around its own behavior and likeness. “Whenever power is an issue, where some are viewed as strong and others as weak, shame (over decreased power) is likely to be present,” says Dr. Morrison” (96). Lack of power breeds shame, and those in power are able to control who maintains that power (the shamer position) and those whom power eludes (the shamed). Shame serves as a buffer for those in power, helping those in power from ever losing it and ensuring that the marginalized not only blame themselves for their status, but remain in a perpetually futile competition with themselves.

Shame also serves as a useful tool in encouraging and discouraging certain social behaviors within public policy and politics in general. The relationship between political

culture and public policy is complex, which each influencing and driving the other in various ways. But shame can be a means of driving the social conversation about what is appropriate and moral behavior, and this language, these boundaries of morality, are reflected in public policy. Kai Wright notes that whether or not shame is a driver of individual behavior, shame drives a larger societal conversation about what is appropriate and inappropriate” (Kennedy), about who belongs and who doesn’t belong. Therefore, intent to shame matters less than the results, and the shaming messages that underwrite many political positions and social standards.

Who Shames and Why Do They Do It?

The act of shaming is one of power and control; it gives the shamer a sense of superiority, righteousness, and morality (Warner 18). The act of shaming is predicated on a power dynamic, and on reinforcing the power within the shamer. The judgments made in political campaigns and public service campaigns may hold more political weight because they come from institutions that are already well-respected and viewed as legitimate by society at large. Teen pregnancy prevention campaigns that are sponsored by governmental bodies or renowned organizations already have a sense of legitimacy, and they therefore assume a dominant position over the marginalized group (teen mothers) to whom they are speaking. What Dr. Morrison notes is the “sense of difference and inferiority” (Morrison 33) that the dominant culture imposes on the marginalized group is perfectly represented here because teen pregnancy prevention campaigns, whether created by a governmental body or a private corporate CEO, represent those who set the dominant culture in motion; they determine who belongs and who doesn’t.

Marginalized groups internalize the judgements from the dominant culture, in this case, teen mothers/teen girls and teen pregnancy prevention campaigns, and therefore perpetuate those judgements within themselves (Morrison 35).

Especially with regards to sexual shame, moralism is the basis for the perpetuation of shame and stigma around certain sexual practices and expressions, and this positions the shamer as morally superior and righteous in their condemnation of the person or group they are shaming. As Michael Warner notes, “the ones who pay are the ones who stand out in some way. They become a lightening rod not only for the hatred of difference, of the abnormal, but also for the more general loathing of sex,” (Warner 23). It is easy to specify who has deviated from the conjugal, marital norm when there is a physical marker that delineates their difference. Pregnant teenagers stand out in a glaringly apparent way physically, and their pregnant bellies serve as a mark of their sexual aberrance. Already physically marked as different, pregnant teenagers are a relatively easy target for sexual shame and for the posturing of moral purity by those who do the shaming.

Who Does the Shaming and How Does it Benefit Them?

Shame can reify power dynamics by legitimizing the moral position of those doing the shaming while exonerating them for their own social failures. In political areas like sexuality and reproduction, those who violate sexual norms are subject to political shame often in the name of protecting children and maintaining propriety for them. Gayle Rubin notes how for over a century in American politics, “the appeal to protect the children” has been used to whip up social hysteria regarding supposed sexual deviancy

and to shame those who are labeled deviants (Rubin 6). This has played out in the issue of teen pregnancy, as well. The phrases “children having children” or “babies having babies” (Luker 85) infantilized those who became pregnant as teenagers (a reminder that they have less power) by simultaneously painting them as victims of their own poor judgment and yet as shamefully promiscuous and reckless. The phrases also whipped up social hysteria about the supposedly terrible circumstances into which children of teen parents were brought and the tragic state of American youth, despite the fact that most babies born out of wedlock weren’t born to teenage parents (Luker 85-86).

In the politics of teen pregnancy, politicians sometimes use teen pregnancy as an excuse for broader social ills like systemic poverty, despite evidence that poverty itself causes teen pregnancy (Luker 106). By using shaming rhetoric and images, teen pregnancy prevention campaigns are able to instill in teen mothers the idea that they are to blame for their own misfortune and the potential misfortune of their children. Teen mothers become the scapegoat for broad social ills that have not been eradicated, absolving those in power who make those policies (Luker 85). The use of shame in political campaigns therefore serves as an internal police force for the (often marginalized) group that is being shamed, and it also serves as a buffer against criticism for those who are doing the shaming, most often those from privileged groups, especially those in power.

Conclusion

We internalize the messages of morality and propriety from those around us, creating boundaries of what is acceptable behavior or who is an acceptable person and

what or whom is not. Shame works as an internal way of policing our own behaviors and exhibitions, forcing us to judge ourselves against the imagined emblem of morality. It has enormous psychological power in that it becomes naturalized; we forget that we ever learned it and instead accept those judgements as innate truth.

When used by those in power, shame serves political purposes, as well. It serves to reify power dynamics and perpetuate the marginalized status of those being shamed while exonerating those in power of culpability for their own actions or for the repercussions of policies they put in place. As we shall see, teen pregnancy prevention campaigns shame teen mothers in both overt and subtle ways, continually reifying that teen motherhood is inherently bad and teen mothers cause their own misfortune as well as the failure of society at large. By blaming and shaming teen mothers, these campaigns both excuse teen boys and teen fathers from responsibility, but they also exonerate those in power whose policies are failing society.

Chapter Three: The New York City Human Resources Administration

In March of 2013, in the face of mounting criticism over the New York City Human Resources Administration's newest teen pregnancy prevention campaign, Mayor Michael Bloomberg defended the campaign, stating that "In the days of so much media hitting everybody, if you want to stand out you got to really do something different, dramatic. You've got to get through the clutter" (Campbell). Deflecting criticism that this latest campaign shamed and blamed teen mothers, Mayor Bloomberg remained resolute that this campaign was designed to "reduce teen pregnancy" and inform teenagers about "the costs" of teen pregnancy, not shame teen mothers.

I will conduct a rhetorical analysis on NYC HRA's main website, its individual print advertisements, and public statements made by the NYC HRA or by New York City public officials on behalf of the NYC HRA. A reminder of the questions I will be asking, informing my rhetorical analysis:

1. What do we see in the advertisements? Who do we see and not see?
2. Who are these ads addressing? Who are they implying?
3. What is the relationship between the images used and the language employed?
4. How do the visual and verbal rhetoric employed encourage the audience to perceive the problem in a certain way?

NYC HRA's Teen Pregnancy Prevention Campaign Website

The NYC HRA's teen pregnancy campaign website is fairly simple and straightforward, containing a green headline of "Teen Pregnancy Prevention" with

embedded campaign videos, links to campaign advertisements and infographics, and a list of additional links on the left hand menu bar.

Featuring a short introductory blurb on its home page, the NYC HRA boasts that its new campaign “shows the high costs teen pregnancy can have for both teen parents and their children,” (“Teen Pregnancy Prevention”). With gender-neutral pronouns and the use of “teen parents” instead of “teen mothers,” the NYC HRA appears to position its latest campaign as one that is not driven by a gendered focus, but rather, a gender-inclusive framework, though a deeper interrogation ultimately troubles that claim. The blurb goes on to detail that the advertisements will be featured on public transportation around the city and that the campaign features an “interactive texting program” where teen residents can text ‘NOTNOW’ to 877877 for “the real cost of teen pregnancy,” (“Teen Pregnancy Prevention”).

Additionally, the website features links to articles written about the campaign, though it conveniently avoids the numerous negative articles that claim the campaign is shaming and cruel. It also features press releases and access to other NYC HRA sites and services.

NYC HRA Print Advertisements

All five print advertisements of the NYC HRA’s teen pregnancy prevention campaign feature an infant or infants speaking directly to their potential teen parent. Four of the advertisements feature one infant speaking directly to a particular parent (the gender made apparent by descriptors in the ad), and one advertisement features a small photograph of each infant next to a teen pregnancy statistic. At the bottom right hand

corner of each print advertisement, the viewer is told to text ‘NOTNOW’ to 877877 “for the real price of teen pregnancy,” just like the banner on the webpage (“Teen Pregnancy Prevention”). This print is smaller than the thought blurb that the infant child is sending to his/her potential teen parents and smaller than the yellow banner that displays a “fact” about teen pregnancy.

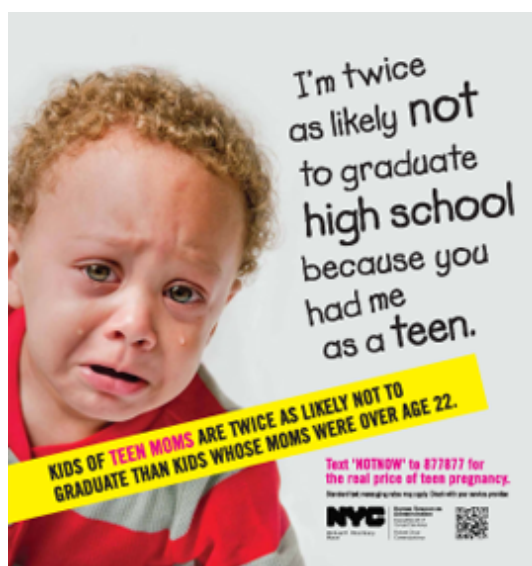


Image 3.1



Image 3.2

Images 3.1 and 3.2 are both directed at prospective teen mothers, either delineated directly within the thought blurb, as in the case of Image 3.2, or within the bright yellow fact banner, like Image 3.1. Both of these advertisements directly address teen mothers, and both of them use emotionally manipulative and shaming language.

What do we see in Image 3.1? It features a crying infant of unclear racial/ethnic origin, peering directly into the camera and at his would-be teen parents. The grimace and the tears running down his face signal that this infant is in emotional distress. He is dressed in a brightly colored red and gray shirt, with a bright yellow banner displayed

over part of his body but leaving his emotionally pained face completely unobstructed. The image of the infant is itself half of the entire advertisement.

As far as who the advertisement is addressing or implying, on the surface, there are potential mixed messages taking place in Image 3.1. A little over a third of the space leftover from the infant's image is dedicated to what is meant to be a thought blurb from the infant to his parents, stating "I'm twice as likely not to graduate high school because you had me as a teen." The thought blurb does not specify to which parent the infant is speaking, giving the perception that his statement is gender-neutral. But the thought blurb is complemented by a yellow banner that cuts across the infant's body, visually reminiscent of a message that comes from his heart. This banner informs the public as to who this thought blurb is targeting: "Kids of **teen moms** are twice as likely not to graduate than kids whose moms were over age 22." It becomes clear that the thought blurb and this entire advertisement are not gender-neutral, but are directed at teen mothers and potential teen mothers, particularly with the neon pink "teen moms" juxtaposed against the black font of the rest of the message.

Notice the phrasing: the banner specifies that kids of teen *mothers* are twice as likely not to graduate, rather than kids of teen *parents*. This advertisement blatantly states that teen mothers are directly responsible for the impoverished circumstances and unfortunate lives of their children. "Teen moms" is highlighted in neon pink, inferring that teen mothers are at fault for their children's inability to graduate high school.

The relationship between the image and the language in this advertisement is an imperative part of understanding what the advertisement is saying and to whom it is

saying it. The yellow banner, which reveals that the advertisement is targeting teen mothers or potential teen mothers, protrudes from the infant's chest and connects with his thought blurb, visually portraying this "fact" as representative of his emotional pain. The agony in the infant's face and in his statement that he is twice as likely not to graduate from high school are informed by the yellow banner that attributes this pain to teen mothers. This child is in pain *because* of the choice that his mother made as a teenager.

What's more, the audience is meant to read that teen mothers are to blame for not only for the infant's pain, but for the failure of this child and others to graduate from high school. Poverty nor racism are factors in this indictment; it is teen mothers who bear the responsibility for the harshness their children encounter and the social ills that result from that. The infant speaks directly to his teen mother, letting her know that any failure he experiences are, at the root, caused by her. By blaming teen mothers for the failure of their children to graduate high school, it alleviates any interrogation of the role that other social factors play. The NYC HRA blames teen mothers for the social failures that plague the city, rather than interrogating their own responsibility. The audience is meant to follow this trajectory and blame teen mothers, rather than the failure of their government.

As for what we see in Image 3.2, it features the identical layout employed in Image 3.1, yet with a notable change. This advertisement features a young black girl, as opposed to the racially ambiguous boy featured in 3.1. Rather than being in pain, like the boy in Image 3.1, the little girl featured in Image 3.2 seems is posed with her finger on her lips, as if deep in thought. The thought blurb that accompanies her states "Honestly Mom...chances are he won't stay with you. What happens to me?"

This young girl is speaking directly to her mother, so there is no ambiguity about which gender this message is meant to target. It's noteworthy that a dark-skinned black girl is the one who is telling her teen mother that her father likely won't be in the picture, almost as if it reflecting back to coded fears about promiscuous black women and undeserving black teen mothers (Pillow 23). It also displays that this young girl foresees her own future as a teen mom because of her own mother's poor choices.

Though the thought blurb makes it entirely evident to whom this advertisement is speaking, the yellow banner seeks to reinforce the gender-neutrality that this campaign claims to have. It asks "Are you ready to raise a child by yourself? 90% of teen parents don't marry each other," with "teen parents" in bright, neon pink, as opposed to the black type of the rest of the message.

This language reflects what Dr. Andrew Morrison highlights in that for women, "expressions of weakness leading to shame tend to reflect concerns about relationships, attachment, and dependence," (Morrison 26). This advertisement reflects the shame that women feel due to their sexual choices and infers that because teen mothers often do not remain with the fathers of their children, they are to blame for their children's future failures.

It's a double-edged sword here: teen mothers are expected to take responsibility for their actions, thus reflecting an ideal of autonomy, but simultaneously, they are to blame for the fact that the fathers of their children won't remain in a relationship with them. This advertisement subtly reflects the notion that teen mothers are lascivious, that the fathers of their children won't stay with them, and that they may seek out additional partners. By emphasizing that most teen father don't remain with the mothers of their

children, this advertisement interjects shame over the number of sexual partners potential teen-mothers will have and reprimands them by inferring that they are weak, irresponsible, and sexually lascivious.

The yellow banner of Image 3.2 reads “Are you ready to raise a child by yourself? 90% of **teen parents** don’t marry each other.” This advertisement reflects the privileged position of heterosexual marriage and a latent understanding that raising a child outside the confines of heterosexual marriage is shameful and harmful to the child. “What happens to me?” asks the young girl. The answer is that she is raised by a single teen mother. No other fact exists on this advertisement, as the fact that teen mothers rarely marry the fathers of their children is supposedly damning enough.

What’s more, when we juxtapose Image 3.2 with Image 3.1, which states that “Kids of **teen moms** are twice as likely not to graduate than kids whose moms were over age 22,” it becomes clear that being raised by a single teen mother is a shameful path to poverty and social failure. When put side-by-side, we can see the larger campaign strategy of demonizing teen mothers and reinforcing that heterosexual marriage is the only way to acceptably and morally raise a child.



Image 3.3



Image 3.4

Images 3.3 and 3.4 both feature the line “Think being a **teen parent** won’t cost you?” in the yellow banner, while only Image 3.3 specifically speaks to potential teen fathers. While on the surface it may appear that the NYC HRA’s campaign is being gender neutral in featuring campaign advertisements that speak to both teen mothers and teen fathers, a closer examination of the language and message within Images 3.3 and 3.4 reveal an adherence to and reflection of traditional gender roles regarding caregiving and financial support, as well as reiterating racial stereotypes about financial stability.

Image 3.3 is the only advertisement of the entire campaign that directly addresses teen fathers, seemingly complementing Image 3.2 that spoke directly to teen mothers. This advertisement features what appears to be a white boy who presents stereotypical white features: curly blonde hair and blue eyes. While this advertisement is clearly speaking to teen fathers, it is also including teen mothers in a subtle but notable way. The child is wearing a blue shirt that features two cuddly polar bears and a phrase, beginning with “Mommy’s,” of which the rest is cut off. This is a subtle clue that this child belongs

to his mother, that his mother is the source of care and love. His father, however, is reminded of his role in the thought blurb: “Dad, you’ll be paying to support me for the next 20 years.”

Like the two advertisements that preceded it, half of Image 3.3 is dedicated to the image of a forlorn-looking child, with another third dedicated to the thought blurb that reminds his teen father how costly he is. As we’ve seen in the other two advertisements, the yellow banner that cuts across the chest of the infant and ties the child to the thought blurb usually is of great importance. The yellow banner of Image 3.3 states “Think being a teen parent won’t cost you? NY state law requires a parent to pay child support until a child is 21.”

For the most-likely white teen father to whom this advertisement is directed, it is a reminder that teen parenthood will cost him financially for the next 20 years, perhaps undermining other plans, while the child mother’s will be the one to have the caring and personal relationship, as evidenced by the image on the boy’s shirt. Daddy gets the financial burden, Mommy gets the caregiving burden in this subtle but effective reiteration of traditional gender-roles. This advertisement reinforces the patriarchal gendered division of labor that men are the financial providers while women are the caregivers, and it reflects a racial understanding that good fathers are the white fathers who provide financial aid.

Image 3.4 follows the same format as the other three advertisements, though on the surface it is the only advertisement that does not directly address either gender at any point in the advertisement itself. However, given the way that we have traced the gendered nature of the three other campaign advertisements thus far, gender is still a

factor, and because this advertisement features what appears to be a multi-racial young girl, there are racial dynamics at play, as well.

If we place this advertisement side-by-side with Image 3.3, which also mentions finances, we see a larger pattern. The infant girl in Image 3.4 asks her potential parents, “Got a good job? I cost thousands of dollars each year.” In all previous advertisements in the campaign, it is only in the advertisements directly speaking to teen girls and potential teen mothers that emotionally manipulative language around relationships and sexuality is employed. When gender neutral or directed at potential teen fathers, the message becomes about the possible financial costs. Teen fathers are implored to think about how much a child might cost, rather than to reflect on their responsibility for their child’s impoverished circumstances or failure to graduate high school. Only teen mothers receive that chastisement. Teen fathers are framed as the check-payer, the job-holder, the source of financial support. He is solely responsible for providing for the child financially; he is not held responsible for any potential societal failures that his child may endure.

Additionally, the yellow banner in Image 3.4, protruding from the chest of the seemingly multi-racial young girl, reflects a racialized understanding of financial stability. The banner states “Think being a teen parent won’t cost you? Expect to spend more than \$10,000 a year to raise a child.” While the white child in Image 3.3 was reminding his father that he will be saddled with the financial burden for the next twenty years, the multi-racial girl in Image 3.4 is warning her possibly ethnic parents about how difficult it will be for them to afford to pay \$10,000 a year to care for her. The audience can read Image 3.4 as not only a reminder of how expensive it is to raise a child, but how

impossible it is for racial minorities, which reiterates the divide between deserving and undeserving teen mothers based on race.



Image 3.5

Image 3.5 displays smaller pictures of all four children that were featured in the four previous advertisements, stacked vertically, yet these images on take up a fraction of the space that the single image did in the other four advertisements. The vast majority of the advertisement is dedicated to the copy that reads “If you finish high school, get a job, and get married before having children, you have a 98% chance of not being in poverty.”

While the NYC HRA claims that this campaign is about education and preventing teen pregnancy, accessing that information is far more difficult than accessing the emotionally manipulative messages and images. In order to access any real information about *how* to prevent teen pregnancy in Images 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4, you have to dig all the way to the small, bottom-right corner of the advertisements, which then tells you to “Text ‘NOTNOW’ to 877877 for the real price of teen pregnancy” in what is a notably

smaller font than the rest of the text in the advertisements. It's even harder to discern in Image 3.5, where it is in noticeably smaller font, relegated to the bottom left corner. In order to finally get a message informing me that I can "call 311 for sexual health care services and contraception near you," one must have a cell phone plan, which may prove elusive to low-income teenagers, and be willing to incur messaging and data charges. The advertisements, which feature no information about how to obtain contraception or sexual health care services, are displayed for free on subway lines and bus shelters. To access information that could actually prevent teen pregnancy, you must have a cell phone and an appropriate data plan. To encounter the shaming rhetoric and images used in the campaign's advertisements, all you have to do is walk out your front door.

But, assuming that one has a cell phone and appropriate data plan, what actually happens when you text "NOTNOW" to 877877? Does this text service really provide you with information that will help you avoid teen pregnancy? Unfortunately, the results of my text exchange with the NYC HRA's account reveal that this service is less about dispensing information and more about shaming teen girls.

The first text I received informed me thanked me for signing up and notified me to "stay tuned for info, games & quizzes." The NYC HRA account then asked for me to reply with my first name as a way of notifying it that I was ready to proceed, which I did. I was then informed that I could call 311 for information about sexual health care services and contraception, but instead of sharing that information in the text conversation, it simply told me to "Reply 'game.'" The following are a series of texts from the NYC HRA's service, as well as my responses. The NYC HRA's texts are in grey and my texts are in green. Both of the text exchanges are featured in Images 3.6 and 3.7.

I was given the option to follow either “Anaya” or “Louis,” and for the first round of tests, I chose Anaya, who is meant to be a teen girl. This particular exchange is featured in Image 3.6. Immediately, I received a response that because Louis and Anaya are now pregnant, Anaya is immediately concerned with how huge she will look in her prom dress. I was then given the option of determining whether or not Anaya went to the prom, and when I chose yes, I was met with the response that her “BFF called me a ‘loser’ at prom.”

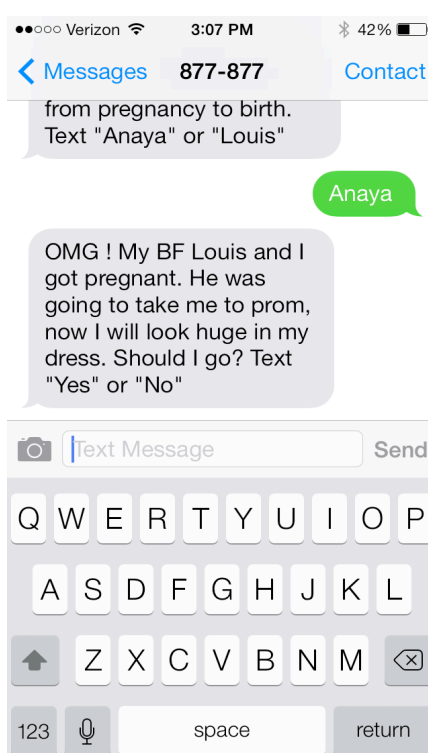


Image 3.6

This statement in Image 3.6 alone is incredibly shaming -- it is directly telling teen girls that being a teen mother or a pregnant teen means that your best friends will desert you and you will become a “loser.” This texting game is simply another way to reinforce the shaming statements that have been made in the advertisements that scold teen girls for their sexuality and label them as lascivious and irresponsible. But what’s

also interesting about this response is that it is an edited version of an earlier one. When Miriam Pérez of *RH Reality Check* texted the service back in March 2013, chose Anaya, and replied “yes” to attending the prom, she was met with this response: “My BFF called me a ‘fat loser’ at prom,” (Pérez). While Pérez received a message that Anaya had been called a “fat loser,” I received a message that Anaya had simply been called a “loser.” Clearly, some editing has taken place at the NYC HRA, which perhaps shows that they have been responding to the wave of criticism that was leveled at them, albeit in a very small way. Despite the minor change, the message is still the same -- teen motherhood is a shameful experience.

Because I argue that this campaign is gendered and meant to shame a specific gender, I retook the game and the second time around, I chose Louis. Image 3.7 displays the responses I received. When asked if he should skip prom to stay home with Anaya or go anyway, I chose to skip prom and was met with the response that Louis needs “more time with my boys!” In the five questions that constituted the game surrounding what Louis would do, four were dedicated to whether or not Louis should blow off or break up with Anaya. While one of them subtly infers Anaya as the cause of Louis’ unhappiness, claiming that they “fight all the time” and Louise needs “my own chill time,” another outright blames her: “All I do is work & school - but Anaya is always on my case!”

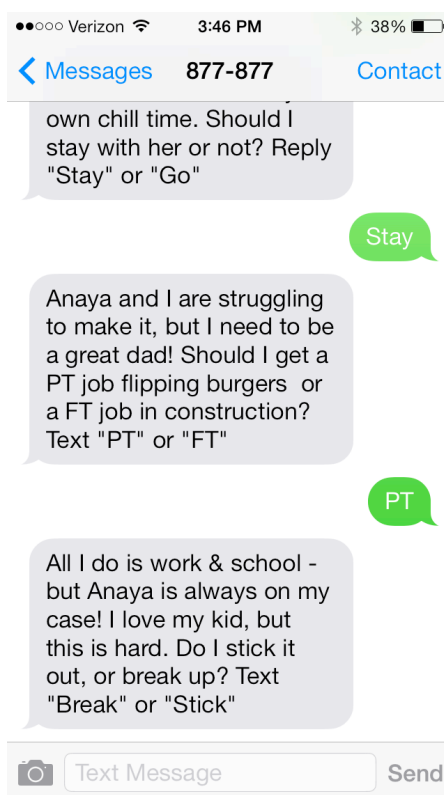


Image 3.7

These statements frame Anaya as the responsible party for Louis' unhappiness and the failure of their relationship to last. When supplemented by the statistic that 9 out of 10 teen fathers don't marry the teen mothers of their children, the NYC HRA is able to subtly reinforce that teen girls bear the responsibility for teen pregnancy and for their failure to conform to the normative conjugal, marital heterosexual behavior that is expected of them. Anaya grates on Louis and drives him to emotional unhappiness as well as financial trouble.

Rather than accepting culpability for his role in the unwanted pregnancy, Louis is essentially exonerated by these text messages and instead, Anaya becomes the source of trouble and is the reason Louis is unable to pursue what makes him happy. Because Anaya is incapable of being independent and responsible, Louis suffers. This reflects

what Dr. Morrison notes as a common source of shame for women: expressions of weakness regarding relationships, attachments, and dependence. Dr. Morrison writes:

“An ideal of autonomy and independence may cause a woman to criticize her need for an choice of partners...This equation of dependence with weakness concerning feelings of attachment ad intimacy is part and parcel of the shame experience for many women,” (Morrison 26).

Who/What Does the Shame Serve?

The NYC HRA's teen pregnancy website also features an infographic display of 2011 facts about teen pregnancy in New York City, both general and broken down by borough. This infographic clearly displays a steady decrease in teen pregnancy rates in the last decade, both city-wide and national, with New York City's teen pregnancy rate falling at a faster rate than the national rate, though the city rate does remain higher than the national rate overall, (“New York City Human Resources Administration: Teen Pregnancy By the Numbers”). Teen pregnancy rates have steadily fallen in New York City over the past decade, a fact which Mayor Bloomberg and his administration have publicly boasted (Taylor), yet this campaign is only now being released. This begs the question: if teen pregnancy rates are steadily declining, a fact Mayor Bloomberg and his administration have noted publicly, what other purpose does this campaign serve, rather than to reduce teen pregnancy rates? Is there perhaps another reason that this campaign was created? Since the use of shame in this campaign has been shown through the previous rhetorical analysis, *why* is the NYC HRA shaming teen mothers and how does this support the other goals that this campaign may have?

The use of shame in the NYC HRA's teen pregnancy prevention campaign has been established, but shame also serves a purpose. The campaign shames teen mothers as lascivious and irresponsible, blaming them as the cause for their own impoverished

circumstances and the potential future failures of their children. But why? In shaming teen mothers and laying blame for social ills at their feet, who is exonerated, and who assumes the power position?

The language in Image 3.5 is telling: “If you finish high school, get a job, and get married before having children, you have a 98% chance of not being in poverty.” This statement frames poverty as the individual fault of teen parents, seemingly absolving the administration. If poverty is caused by teen parents, then the administration holds no responsibility for it. This framework, the reinforcement of individualism in why poverty pervades, reflects the neoliberal dismantling of welfare that helped fuel the first teen pregnancy prevention campaign in 1996. What’s more, for an administration that faces an increasing poverty rate poverty of 21.2 percent in 2012 (Roberts), blaming teen parents (and predominantly teen mothers, as has been shown) both absolves the administration of responsibility for creating or perpetuating the stubbornly high poverty rates and therefore eradicates any responsibility for dealing with that issue. Poverty becomes the fault of lazy, lascivious teen parents who refuse to get educated, get a job, and get married, rather than a result of this particular administration’s particular policies.

The infographic featuring facts from 2011 about teen pregnancy in New York City that the NYC HRA displays on its website also plays upon the established link between teen pregnancy and welfare. The infographic dedicates an entire section to “Cost to Medicaid Program,” highlighting that teen mothers are a burden on public assistance programs, both in the cost of having the child and in raising the child. According to the infographic, the cost to Medicaid of a single birth to a teen mother is \$10-20,000,” and Medicaid provides \$4,100 in care benefits to teen parents and one child per year (“New

York City Human Resources Administration: Teen Pregnancy By the Numbers”). It also cites that 4,700 teen parents and pregnant teens, age 19 and under, receive some form of public assistance, including SNAP, Medicaid, or other benefits. This framework subtly positions teen mothers and teen pregnancy as the cause of draining public funds and a wasteful burden on the public’s tax dollars. Teen pregnancy becomes the placeholder for budgetary woes and the neoliberal framework of out-of-control governmental spending in place of personal responsibility.

This campaign, whether targeting those who aren’t yet teen parents or not, sends a distinct message to teen mothers. Following the psychological process detailed by Dr. Morrison, teen mothers likely will internalize the emotionally manipulative and shaming rhetoric of the campaign advertisements. They will see that, if they are in poverty, it is not the fault of the city administration or even the national government, but their own. They are to blame for their own misfortune, for the impoverished circumstances in which they find themselves and their child(ren). This not only alleviates any responsibility from the Bloomberg administration for solving the social problem of poverty, but it reifies that teen mothers are responsible for perpetuating poverty through generations. It also ensures that because they likely will internalize the shaming messages of the campaign and blame themselves for their impoverished circumstances, they are far less likely to demand policy changes from the Bloomberg administration or even the national government. When teen mothers internalize messages that they are lazy, irresponsible, lascivious, and the cause of their own problems and larger social problems like poverty, they believe it and are far less likely to demand policy changes and likely necessary governmental assistance, thereby trapping them further in the cycle of poverty.

Blaming teen mothers for poverty is a common theme in teen pregnancy prevention campaigns, and it obviously occurs in the NYC HRA's teen pregnancy campaign, as well. But the facts upon which the NYC HRA's campaign relies aren't actually straightforward facts, but statistical manipulations, either through fudging numbers or rhetorical framing,

Image 3.1 states that “Kids of **teen moms** are twice as likely not to graduate than kids whose moms were over age 22” (“New York City Human Resources Administration: Teen Pregnancy By the Numbers”). The language of this statistic alone is a manipulation: Teen fathers are not held responsible for the failure of their children to graduate high school. That fault falls specifically on the shoulders of teen mothers, according to this statement. The rhetoric used within this seemingly static and straightforward fact actually serves to solidify and perpetuate the notion that it is teen mothers who are responsible for poorly educated youth, that to be born to a teen mom is to be twice as likely not to graduate. Teen fathers are absolved from responsibility in this statement.

Statistical Manipulation

The NYC HRA includes a link to campaign citations and notes, which features the sources of each statistic they cite. This page makes clear the statistical manipulation used by the campaign to further certain messages. The NYC HRA explains their reasoning and source behind the statistic that “Kids of **teen moms** are twice as likely not to graduate than kids whose moms were over age 22: “43% of children of a teen mom (age 17 or under) fail to graduate high school by age 19 compared to 20% who fail if their mother was over age 22 when she gave birth,” (Manlove, Terry-Humen, Minicieli, Moore 169).

When displaying the actual statistic side-by-side with the fact cited in the campaign advertisement, the NYC HRA's statement becomes highly problematic. The NYC HRA claims that kids of teen moms are "half" as likely not to graduate, but the actual statistic is 43%, and that only applies to children of teen mothers age 17 or under. What's more, 20% of those whose mothers were over the age of 22 fail to graduate high school, as well. Not only does the NYC HRA blatantly misrepresent the actual numerical statistic, but it also links all teenage mothers to the teen mothers age 17 and under cited in the specific statistic upon which they based their facts.

The fact featured in Image 3.2 is a product of similar manipulation. The yellow fact banner reads: "Are you ready to raise a child by yourself? 90% of teen parents don't marry each other." But the NYC HRA citation notes, according to the Child Trends study upon which they are relying, "that less than 8% of teen mothers marry their baby's father within a year of the birth," (Teen Pregnancy Campaign OER Notes). The NYC HRA's statement leads to a false narrative that 10% of teen mothers never wed the fathers of their babies, which is not what the statistic upon which that statement is based actually says.

While these conflations may seem small, it is important to highlight and understand these manipulations. NYC HRA claims to be providing "an honest look at some of the realities of parenthood they may not have considered," ("MAYOR BLOOMBERG, DEPUTY MAYOR GIBBS...") and yet they are using statistical estimates and general conflations to produce the image that teenage mothers are sexually lascivious and responsible for the impending unfortunate futures of their children. The NYC HRA manipulates statistical findings to naturalize the privileging of marital

heterosexuality and thus, shame teen girls who are sexually active outside of the confines of heterosexual marriage. Furthermore, by continually reframing the statistical findings in terms of “teen mothers,” the NYC HRA normalizes the stigmatization of teen mothers, one based off of shame, in an effort to control teen girls’ sexuality, or, at the very least to ensure that they are ostracized for their sexual deviances.

Conclusion

The NYC HRA teen pregnancy prevention campaign clearly uses shaming language and images to frame teen pregnancy as something to be avoided, the fault of lazy, lascivious, irresponsible teen mothers, and the cause of various other larger social ills. The campaign uses emotionally shaming words and visuals in order to stigmatize teen mothers. Both campaigns speak directly to teen fathers and potential teen fathers, but notably, both frame those impositions around the child support payments. Teen fathers are framed in both campaigns as removed from caregiving and instead, are solely responsible for financially funding the resulting child. Teen mothers, however, are shamefully framed as at fault for their children failing to graduate high school and resulting lives in poverty. Teen mothers are directly addressed in the two most potently shaming advertisements of the NYC HRA’s campaign, Images 3.1 and 3.2 This serves to reify the common framework within both teen pregnancy prevention campaigns that it is teen mothers who are responsible for their pregnancies and for the ill societal fates of their children.

The NYC HRA uses emotionally shaming words and visuals in order to stigmatize teen mothers. The campaign speak directly to teen fathers and potential teen fathers, but notably, it frames those impositions around the child support payments. Teen

fathers are framed in both campaigns as removed from caregiving and instead, are solely responsible for financially funding the resulting child. Teen mothers, however, are shamefully framed as at fault for their children failing to graduate high school and resulting lives in poverty. Teen mothers are directly addressed in the two most potently shaming advertisements of the NYC HRA's campaign, Images 3.1 and 3.2. This serves to reify the common framework within both teen pregnancy prevention campaigns that it is teen mothers who are responsible for their pregnancies and for the ill societal fates of their children.

Despite the wave of criticism the campaign has received and the minor changes made to the text messaging service responses, the campaign is going strong. Print advertisements are currently running on New York City subway lines and is featured at New York City bus stops. Though the campaign may be one of the most vivid examples of shame-and-blame campaigns and is one of the few teen pregnancy prevention campaigns to have a chorus of criticism, it is far from the only campaign to do so. Shaming teen mothers through teen pregnancy prevention campaigns is the norm, not the exception, as we shall see in the next two campaign examples.

Chapter Four: The Stay Teen Campaign

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy began as the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, a result of President Bill Clinton's call on "parents and leaders" nationwide to come together and create a campaign against teen pregnancy in his 1995 State of the Union address (Clinton). Part of a larger neoliberal effort to restructure welfare, teen pregnancy prevention actually became a central part of President Bill Clinton's reelection effort and ultimate success in passing welfare reform.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy still operates as an individual campaign, but in recent years, they have also splintered off into sister campaigns, including Bedsider (a site that provides information about contraception and sexual health), Pregnant Pause (a blog that features contributions about teen and unwanted pregnancy), and Stay Teen. Stay Teen is the National Campaign's attempt at appealing to teenagers with bright colors, hip language, and seemingly focusing on the positive aspects of being a teenager in order to encourage teens to delay pregnancy.

The Stay Teen campaign boasts a bright website and sizable social media presence, with over 5,000 twitter followers and nearly 4,000 likes on facebook. The campaign has partnered with popular television shows that depict teenage pregnancy, including MTV's *Teen Mom* and ABC Family's *The Secret of the American Teenager*, running advertisements during the shows and using the shows' popularity among teens to draw interest in the Stay Teen campaign online. In contrast to the NYC HRA's teen pregnancy prevention campaign, Stay Teen's operation is much more online-based, containing interactive games, social media services, scores of videos, and its own blog.

I will continue my rhetorical analysis on the Stay Teen campaign, focusing on their website, social media messages, as well as campaign images and videos. As a reminder, the questions that guide my analysis are:

1. What do we see in the advertisements/on the website? Who do we see and not see?
2. Who are these ads/messages addressing? Who are they implying?
3. What is the relationship between the images used and the language employed?
4. How do the visual and verbal rhetoric employed encourage the audience to perceive the problem in a certain way?

Stay Teen's Website

Stay Teen's website uses bright colors -- turquoise, red, and yellow -- in tandem with pictures of happy-go-lucky teenagers in order to project an image that teen pregnancy is a stark contrast from the joviality of teen life. The website features many interactive features, including games, links to social media, fact sheets, videos, message boards, and more.

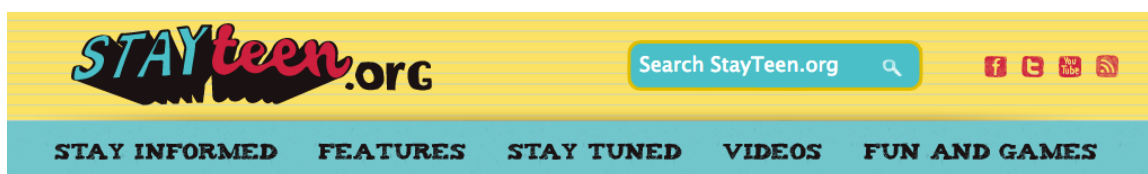


Image 4.1

In contrast to the NYC HRA's campaign, which encourages those seeking information to use a text messaging services or click on a single link, hidden in the right hand corner of the page, Stay Teen's front page brightly highlights pages teen pregnancy, birth control, safe sex, and intimate partner violence, among other things, that exist within their own website. The front page of the website features a "Find a Health Center"

widget that allows you to enter your zip code and find a health center or health care provider near you. Contrary to the NYC HRA's website, Stay Teen's website does offer links to accessible information about sexual and reproductive health, including domestic violence, contraception, clinic locations, and more, though conspicuously absent from the website is any explicit reference or link to abortion services.

At first glance on the front page of the website, the eye is drawn to the rotating board at the top of the page, alternating between various interactive features including posts about birth control, healthy relationships, and a game called "My Paper Boyfriend" that allows you to construct your own ideal boyfriend. The front page also contains an embedded tweet widget on the right hand side, making it easy to follow the messages that the Stay Teen campaign tweets, as well as an interactive poll that varies week to week.



Image 4.2

From the home page of the Stay Teen website, it instantly becomes clear to whom this campaign is speaking. In addition to the "My Paper Boyfriend" game, featured in the rotating board at the top of the home page of the website, is a campaign video entitled "Stay Out Loud: What is the biggest mistake guys make in relationships?" Though both

teenage girls and boys are featured, the headline of the video suggests that the campaign is speaking to teen girls. Additionally, the content of the video is entirely based on teen boys and girls discussing what teenage boys do wrong in *heterosexual* relationships. There is both a “My Paper Girlfriend” game and a “My Paper Boyfriend” game, only the “My Paper Boyfriend” game is featured on the rotating bar on the front page. This subtly reinforces that this campaign is targeting teen girls, rather than being gender neutral, and that it also employs a heteronormative assumption about the sexuality of the teen girls to whom it is speaking. It is simply a given that teen girls are sexually interested in teen boys, from the standpoint of the Stay Teen campaign.

On Stay Teen’s “Stay Informed: Teen Pregnancy” webpage, they include varied statistics about teen pregnancy (some that are either similar or reiterated in the NYC HRA’s campaign), ways to protect yourself from unwanted pregnancy, recommendations on how to get involved in the issue, and a short message to those who are already teen parents. The webpage boasts the same bright colors and sleek graphics that the rest of the website features, and uses a casual, teen-friendly rhetorical style, with phrases like “there are a million things you’d rather be doing than changing a diaper, right?”

Similarly, we see Stay Teen’s statement, clearly addressing teen girls in that every time it mentions teen fathers, it uses the pronoun “they” instead of “you.” And while this statement encourages teen girls to reconsider the assumption that teen dads will stay with them after they become pregnant and give birth, much like the NYC HRA, it also avoids directly shaming rhetoric like “What happens to me?” Stay Teen’s statement uses the statistic that 8 out of 10 teen parents don’t marry each other to state that for their audience member, it is quite unlikely that they will marry their partner. This reveals that,

underwriting the Stay Teen campaign, is the notion that heterosexual marriage is the normative emblem, one to which all teen girls should and do aspire.

What's more, Stay Teen avoids tying this reality to the envisioned unfortunate and impoverished life of a child, like NYC HRA's Image 3.2 does, and instead, asks the teen girl to reflect on the statistical reality that they may not remain together. In Stay Teen's rhetorical world, an unmarried teen mother, though not ideal, is not equated with causing the downfall of their child. Instead, it is equated with the downfall of the teen. Teen motherhood means the end of a fun and worthy life, so the logic follows. Teen motherhood also likely means the end of romance or a relationship, as reflected by Stay Teen's use of the "8 out of 10" statistic.

Video Spots

In addition to videos that discuss healthy relationships and sexual health, the website features ten videos of teens doing "teen-like" activities. Some only feature teen girls and have a teen girl as the voiceover announcer, some only feature teen boys and have a teen boy as the voiceover announcer, and some have both teen boys and girls, with either a teen girl or teen boy as the voiceover announcer. All videos have upbeat music and graphics that complement the videos of "real teens."

One such video entitled "Whipped Cream" features two girls eating whipped cream out of a can and squirting it into each other's mouths, laughing and lightly teasing each other. A still-shot of "Whipped Cream" is featured in Image 4.3. In the video, we see a dog playfully licking the whipped cream off of one girl's face as they both laugh. In the last few seconds of the video, we see bright blue graphics in a whimsical font that state "Stay delicious Stay whipped Stayteen.org" as we hear a female voiceover state: "I love

my life. I'm not going to mess it up with a pregnancy," a tagline the campaign uses frequently. Interestingly, while we see two teen girls acting silly and even a dog makes an appearance, we don't see a teen boy. He is conspicuously absent from this video, which makes the tag line used at the end even more meaningful.



Image 4.3

According to the tagline, teen pregnancy will “mess up” a teen girl’s life, a statement that says that being a teen mother means that your life is essentially ruined. The potentially ruined lives of these teen girls are represented by silliness and literal fluffiness of the whipped cream, implying that fun and whimsy defines the life of a teen girl, as opposed to other, more serious endeavors. What’s more, this video reflects the notion that your life as a teen girl is ruined by a pregnancy that you yourself caused. If we juxtapose the message of the video with the images within it, we see no mention or even physical representation of a teen boy or another party in the resulting teen pregnancy that would ruin a teen girl’s life. Instead, this video contains only teen girls (and even a dog rather than featuring a teen boy), subtly reinforcing that their lives are ruined and that they are

the parties responsible for that. Teen fathers are visually and rhetorically exonerated in this video, while teen mothers' supposed irresponsibility ruined their own lives with a pregnancy they seemingly created themselves.

Another female-centered video, aptly titled "Silly Girls," reiterates the same themes contained in "Whipped Cream." We see two teen girls of color sitting next to each other on a stoop engaged in a playful engage, making silly faces and noises back and forth to each other until the last four seconds of the 17 second spot when we hear the usual voiceover and bright blue graphics. As the female voiceover announcer says "I love my life. I'm not going to mess it up with a pregnancy," we see the bright blue graphic state "Stay silly Stay scary Stayteen.org."

Yet again, in a video that highlights silliness, lightness, and fun, we only see teen girls. Not only does this signal that the video targets teen girls, but it further reveals how the Stay Teen campaign perceives teen girls: as frivolous, light-hearted, and, as this video's own title tells us, silly. While all Stay Teen videos, even ones that are male-centered or feature both teen boys and teen girls, focus on the joy of being a teen (an experience that also reveals the privileged perspective that Stay Teen has on what a teen experience looks like), the female-centered videos employ visual and rhetorical cues that tell us that being a teen girl means first and foremost being silly and flighty. This reifies notions that teen mothers are lazy, irresponsible, and incapable, a stereotype employed in political frameworks of teen pregnancy that helped directly contribute to the neoliberal dismantling of the welfare state (Geronimus 406-407).

In contrast to the two female-centered video, a video entitled “Sports” features a dozen different teen boys playing various sports, including basketball, soccer, and skateboarding. Conspicuously absent from this video are any teen girls -- the sports-focused video is comprised solely of teen boys. In contrast to the literal and figurative fluffiness of the female-dominated “Whipped Cream” video, this video shows teen boys doing traditionally masculine activities, both alone and in groups. The video unfolds as a montage of different teen boys playing their respective sports, all with upbeat and fast paced music in the background.

In the last four seconds of the 17 second video, we hear the voice of a teen boy say the Stay Teen tagline: “I love my life. I’m not going to mess it up with a pregnancy” as graphics appear on the screen that state “Stay active. Stay cool. Stayteen.org.”



Image 4.4

This particular ad, of which a still-shot is displayed in Image 4.4, is clearly speaking to teen boys, evidenced by the all-male cast in the video and the male voiceover at the end.

The bright, cheerful tone of both the music and the graphics plays off of the serious message that teen pregnancy is inherently bad, reminding teen boys' that not only will teen pregnancy eradicate the joy in their lives that they find in activities like sports, but it will also ruin their lives.

When we juxtapose the message with the images in the video, we see that teen pregnancy will ruin teen boys' lives by prohibiting them from partaking in the physical, masculine-coded activities that they love. Teen pregnancy will keep them from riding their bikes and asserting their physical dominance. While teen girls' sense of fun and fluffiness are ruined by teen pregnancy, teen boys' sense of physicality and strength will be compromised by having a child as a teenager. Teen boys' lives are ruined because they are no longer able to freely participate in masculine enterprises like sports, while teen girls' lives are ruined because they can no longer spray whipped cream into their mouths or make silly noises to one another.

What's more, in both the female-centered video and the male-centered video, teen pregnancy is framed as the antithesis of fun and freedom, a plague that won't just radically uproot your life, but blatantly ruin it and your hopes of a future. There is no room for nuance, for exploration of how teen parenthood shifts lives in negative and positive ways. Instead, teen pregnancy is only negative, reflecting neoliberal assertions that teen pregnancy is a social ill that begets other, more structural social ills like poverty (Geronimus 405, 408).

Stay Teen Interactive Features

Stay Teen is a user-friendly and interactive campaign, one that uses social media, games, and pop culture to appeal directly to teenagers. The campaign and website are set up as a hip alternative to the “boring corporate website” that belongs to their parent campaign, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (“How Do You Stay Teen?”). However, even though Stay Teen may appear more visually and linguistically hip than its parent campaign, it still employs similar rhetoric and frameworks that often shame teen mothers, as evidenced in their online games.

As mentioned before, Stay Teen features interactive online games called “My Paper Boyfriend” and “My Paper Girlfriend,” which allow users to literally construct their ideal mate, both physically and mentally. We will examine, analyze, and compare both games.

“My Paper Boyfriend” is featured prominently at the top of Stay Teen’s front page in the rotating bulletin board, while interestingly, “My Paper Girlfriend” is not. This highlights that the site is generally geared towards teen girls, as the heteronormative games are meant to be played by a person of the opposite gender. Since the game that is meant to be played by teen girls is the only game to be featured on the front page, we know that Stay Teen is speaking first and foremost to teen girls.

Before you begin the game, it states: “Think you’ve got what it takes to build a health relationship? Create your ideal boyfriend and see how you respond to some challenging situations in your relationship” (“My Paper Boyfriend”). Once you begin the game, you are asked to name your guy and then you choose his skin tone, hair style/color, and outfit, before you actually begin the quiz portion of the game. To be clear, these are

the only way to construct your partner; physical attributes and characteristics that describe his outfits, such as “athletic” and “geek,” are the sole means of determining who your ideal boyfriend is.

You then click “Start Dating” and are led to a series of questions about how your imagined relationship will be. The questions inquire as to what you would do in specific situations with him, like “You have two tickets to see your favorite band, but Justin wants to go to the big homecoming party instead. What do you do?” You are then given three answers, ranging from “Ditch the concert” to “Guilt him into going.” For each answer, you are given points on Trust, Communication, and Respect as you move through each month of the relationship, which varies depending on how high your answers are ranked. My relationship with “Justin” ended at the fifth month and I was told that “trust, communication, and respect are all important, and if any of them are missing it’s probably not a great idea to stick around,” (“My Paper Boyfriend”).

“My Paper Girlfriend” is identical in set-up to “My Paper Boyfriend,” and though the differences are small, they are notable. When choosing an outfit, there are no word descriptors like “Preppy” and “Geek” as there were for the ideal boyfriend’s outfit. Though the styles range, as they did in “My Paper Boyfriend,” the absence of the word descriptors signals that this may be less about who she is than literally how she looks.

Once I began the game, I was given the similar scenarios like those in “My Paper Boyfriend,” but the subtle reinforcement of gender roles became apparent in the very first question. The question states: “It’s your first real date and the plan is to pick Isabella up at her house and go see a movie. Then she tells you her dad would like to meet you

beforehand. What do you do?” The assumption that a teenage boy is picking her up for a date and that her father wants to meet him reflects traditional gender norms about who maintains a dominant position in a heterosexual relationship and how they navigate those norms. My relationship with Isabella, the girlfriend I constructed in the game, lasted three months and once again, I was told that “trust, communication, and respect are all important, and if any of them are missing it’s probably not a great idea to stick around (“My Paper Girlfriend”).

Fact Sheets - Rhetorical Manipulation through Statistics

Stay Teen claims to be a campaign based on science and knowledge, one that aims to empower teens with information and facts. Much like the NYC HRA’s website, Stay Teen’s website relies heavily on statistics to reveal the reality of teen pregnancy, which they position as unbiased and objective. But if we delve deeper into the rhetoric employed in the facts stated, we begin to see a trend of shaming teen mothers and exonerating teen fathers.

Facts and information are presented under the banner of “Stay Informed,” which is broken down into the following subgroups: “Teen Pregnancy,” “Relationships,” “Waiting,” “Birth Control,” “STIs,” “Dating Abuse,” “Questions,” and “Myths.” After selecting Teen Pregnancy, the headline “Know The Facts” breaks down into three sub-categories: “School comes second,” “A baby won’t make him stay,” and “It’s hardest on the kids.”

By simply observing the rhetoric used in the headlines, we see that the only gender-based reference is in the second headline, “A baby won’t make him stay.” This line implies that teen girls get pregnant in order to rope teen boys into staying in a

romantic relationship with them, an assertion that frames the choice of teen pregnancy as the sole responsibility of teen girls. Teen pregnancy is framed here as teen girls choosing to get pregnant in order to manipulate their male partners into remaining in a romantic relationship with them, rather than an unwanted pregnancy in which both the teen girl and teen boy are responsible. This subtle rhetoric framing tells us that not only is Stay Teen targeting teen girls with their messaging, but that teen pregnancy is their fault and they should feel ashamed of it.

While the facts and statistics that Stay Teen features are presented as straightforward, objective facts, as is the NYC HRA's statistics, they are presented without citation, allowing for exaggeration or outright deceit. Additionally, the rhetoric used by Stay Teen in presenting the seemingly objective facts reveals the framework under which this campaign is structured. For instance, under the sub-category "School comes second," the Stay Teen campaign presents a similar fact to the NYC HRA regarding the performance of kids of teen parents: "Children of teen mothers do worse in school than those born to older parents--they are 50% more likely to repeat a grade, are less likely to complete high school than the children of older mothers, and have lower performance on standardized tests," (StayTeen.org).

It is worth noting that this statement emphasizes that children of teen *mothers*, not teen parents, do worse in school. The responsibility for the child's poor performance in school falls on the teen mother, rather than the teen father or both teen parents. The onus of responsibility for broad social ills like lack of education and resulting poverty are thus thrust onto the shoulders of teen mothers. Additionally, the juxtaposition of "children of teen mothers" with "those born to older parents" is telling. Children of teen *mothers* are

failures, while children of older *parents* succeed. The gendered nature of the attack along with the gender-neutral nature of the positive message shows that Stay Teen operates from a place of blaming teen mothers as the sole, individual parties responsible for teen pregnancy and larger social ills. It also seems to be a subtle glorification of the normative staple of two-parent households, as it praises older parents in a deliberately plural fashion, while teen mothers are demonized as single entities. Whats more, this reflects the dominant gendered assumption that mothers provide the care and fathers provide the financial support, and therefore, teen mothers are solely responsible for the fate of their children.

The facts presented under the sub-category “It’s hardest on the kids” also reveal to whom this campaign is targeted (teen girls), the neoliberal framework that underwrites this campaign, and that teen mothers should feel about shameful about themselves and their choices: “More than half of all mothers on welfare had their first child as a teenager. In fact, two-thirds of families begun by a young, unmarried mother are poor, (“Teen Pregnancy”).”

Like all other “facts” on this page, this one is presented without citation, which renders the claims made in this statement even more egregious. Like many others in the Stay Teen campaign, this statement is clearly gendered, speaking solely to teen *mothers*. Teen fathers are once again exonerated from responsibility for burdening the welfare system and from the impoverished lives their children lead. The phrasing of the second sentence alone tells us that Stay Teen blames teen mothers: “families begun by a young, unmarried mother,” as if teen mothers single-handedly impregnate themselves and begin a family, all by themselves. Teen mothers are shamed for being irresponsible enough to

have children by themselves, and they are doubly blamed in this statement by the assumption that they had a child simply to keep their male partner in a romantic relationship, yet another feat at which they fail, according to this statement. This reductive notion that teen girls are incapable of being independent reflects what Dr. Morrison highlighted in that women feel shame for their interpersonal relationships and for seemingly not be autonomous enough, as shown in the NYC HRA's campaign, as well (Morrison 26).

What's more, this statement reflects the classic neoliberal argument of blaming teen mothers for overwhelming welfare programs, thus playing directly into the hands of the neoliberal efforts to dismantle the welfare state. There is little support for this conjecture, even before the Aid for Families of Dependent Children program was transformed in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program in 1996, as teens only accounted for approximately five percent of the welfare caseload at that time (Boonstra 8-9).

Another factoid in the "It's hardest on the kids" section states "The sons of teen mothers are twice as likely to end up in prison." Yet again, the language employed shows that teen *mothers* are responsible, not teen fathers. In addition to being framed as the cause of system poverty, poor education, and the overwhelming of welfare programs, teen mothers are also blamed for crime and the crowding of prisons. When reading statements like this, readers are taught to see teen mothers as the cause of grave social ills like crime and poverty, and readers simultaneously exonerate and omit teen fathers from responsibility. This statement also fails to contain any nuance as to why those children of

teen parents might be more likely to end up in prison, like drug-policies that target people of color.

Media Partnerships

In addition to producing their own content, the Stay Teen campaign uses popular culture references and media representations of teen mothers and teen pregnancy to both connect with teens and to further their own messages. On the webpage entitled “Stay Tuned,” Stay Teen follows along with MTV’s popular reality television show *16 and Pregnant* and the ABC Family teen drama *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, which features a teen mother as a central character.

These shows serve as a point of entry for Stay Teen into attracting teens to their campaign, reflecting that this campaign is different, younger, and more hip to popular culture and what issues affect today’s youth. Both shows have their own featured pages on the Stay Teen website, with episode recaps, video clips, and blog posts written about the shows. What’s more, each episode of the show has its own “discussion guide” created by the Stay Teen campaign, which has a basic overview of the events of the episode, as well as facts and additional resources. I have randomly selected one discussion guide from each series to analyze.

The discussion guide for Season 4, Episode 12 of *16 and Pregnant*’s, entitled “Kristina,” summarizes the events of the episode and then offers discussion points regarding issues raised in the episode. The events of this episode are particularly tragic, as Kristina’s boyfriend and the father of her baby, died in a tragedy just weeks after they find out she’s pregnant. Kristina and the fetus also experienced medical problems that jeopardized the health of the mother and fetus during the pregnancy (*16 and Pregnant*,

season 4, episode 12: Kristina). After the brief recap, the guide has a section entitled “Stuff to Think About and Discuss,” with points from the episode and open-ended questions. The first point states “Kristina’s pregnancy wasn’t easy -- it began with the tragedy of Todd’s death and ended with lots of medical complications...It’s great that she has her aunt and uncle to support her but she knows it’s going to be difficult for her in the future as a single mother. How is Kristina’s situation different from teen mothers who aren’t in relationships? How is it similar?” From this framing alone, we see Stay Teen immediately undermine the reality of Kristina’s experiences, one that, despite significant emotional and medical trouble, has been coupled with support and love from her extended family. By immediately juxtaposing Kristina’s supportive experience with the phrase “but she knows it’s going to be difficult for her in the future as a single mother” and then immediately asking how her situation is *different* from other teen mothers, Stay Teen is able to use even the positive aspects of Kristina’s pregnancy and delivery against her.

Stay Teen is able to frame the support from Kristina’s family as an aberration and instead focus on the fact that Kristina’s boyfriend passed away with their own provided answer to the discussion question they themselves posed: “Kristina isn’t the only teen mother parenting without her child’s father. Most teen couples don’t stay together after the birth of a child, but Kristina’s grief makes everything more complicated and difficult.”

While Kristina lost the father of her baby in a tragic accident, she becomes subsumed into Stay Teen’s broader point that most teen couples don’t stay together. The unlikely circumstances surrounding Kristina’s pregnancy and the birth of her child are

rhetorically swept away as she is used as evidence that teen couples rarely stay together, reinforcing the fact presented on Stay Teen's "Stay Informed" webpage that "8 out of 10 fathers don't marry the mother of their child," ("Stay Informed - Teen Pregnancy").

In their discussion guides for episodes of *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, Stay Teen has two sections, one directed at teens and the other directed at their parents. In the guide for Season 2, Episode 1, entitled "The Big One," Stay Teen supplements points about the episode with "facts" about teen pregnancy. For instance, in the second point, the guide notes that Amy, the teen mother character on the show, "is struggling with motherhood (lack of sleep, frustration with a crying baby, the mess, etc.) -- plus all the usual teen stuff too (dad thinking her clothes are too sexy, bickering with mom, school work, boy drama, etc.). The guide then asks a series of questions, including "Do you know any parenting teenagers?" and "How would your life change if you got pregnant?" Immediately after the series of open-ended questions, the guide then pivots to a fact, which presents itself visually as almost an answer to the questions. This fact reads:

Less than half of teen moms graduate from high school -- and parenthood is a leading reason why. Also, many teen moms say they lose their pre-pregnancy friends after the baby comes because of the difference in priorities, activities and time and the fact that being a parent is a full time job. If you had a friend who had a baby, how would you relate to her? What would it take to keep the friendship going? ("The Secret Life of the American Teenager: Season 2, Episode 1, 'The Big One'")

Notice that this point starts as a "fact," one given without citation, and then moves to additional questions. What's more, the gendered pronoun used in the second to last question highlights that Stay Teen assumes that the reader's teen friend who has a baby is a teen girl. Yet again, this campaign subtly reinforces the notion that teen pregnancy is a problem for teen girls and that teen mothers end up alone and unhappy, without the father

of their baby (as stated before) and deserted by their friends for more excitement, as evidenced in this statement.

Stay Teen also has sponsored public service announcements that run during airings of *The Secret Life of the American Teenager* featuring actors from the show itself. In one such video, actor Shailene Woodley (who plays teen mom Amy Juergens on the show) speaks into the camera, addressing teens and their parents. The video is gender neutral in terms of who it addresses (no specific references to teen moms or teen dads), and it encourages teens and parents to “start talking” because “teen pregnancy is 100% preventable,” (“Stay Teen PSA with The Secret Life of the American Teenager’s Shailene Woodley”). Woodley then directs viewers to Stay Teen’s website and ABC Family’s website for “more information.” The Stay Teen campaign and the *Secret Life* television show are linked, prominently featuring both websites in a dual partnership to prevent teen pregnancy.

Conclusion

Stay Teen and their sister campaign, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, claim that they are “the science and research people” who “strive to be factual, unbiased, and open to a variety of viewpoints on these very sensitive issues” (“How Do You Stay Teen?”). Stay Teen positions itself as a hip, young, cool campaign, one that talks with teens about sensitive issues rather than lecturing them or “telling you how to live your life.” The use of bright colors, upbeat music, and hip slang reflect Stay Teen’s attempt to be hip and modern, rather than preachy and stuffy.

However, Stay Teen still employs the same shaming framework of teen pregnancy that underwrites the NYC HRA’s campaign. With a tagline like “I love my life. I’m not

going to mess it up with a pregnancy,” it’s clear that Stay Teen frames teen pregnancy as inherently bad. Stay Teen continually references teen mothers in statements that cite teen pregnancy as a cause of grave social ills like poverty and crime, and the website itself rhetorically speaks to heterosexual teen girls. In fact, through the entire website, the gender-neutral “teens” are mentioned 35 times, teen girls/teen mothers/teen moms are referenced 30 times, but teen guys/teen fathers are mentioned a paltry five times. When the mentions are skewed so overtly towards teen girls/teen mothers as opposed to teen guys/teen fathers, the use of the gender neutral “teens” could be read as a simple placeholder for teen girls. Plus, Stay Teen refers to female teenagers as “teen girls” while referring to male teenagers as “teen guys,” rather than “teen boys,” and because guy is a word that can be used for any age, it reflects a paternalistic understanding of female sexuality.

Through their continual references to teen mothers, particularly in seemingly objective statements like “facts about teen pregnancy,” it becomes apparent that Stay Teen frames teen mothers as inherently bad, as well. While the rhetoric and images may not be as overt as those used in the NYC HRA’s campaign, the message remains the same in Stay Teen: teen mothers are bad and you never want to be one.

Chapter Five: The Candie's Foundation

Started in June 2001 by Neil Cole, the head of the Candie's fashion brand, the Candie's Foundation is a teen pregnancy prevention campaign that relies heavily on celebrity endorsements in order to spread their message. The Candie's Foundation is a non-profit organization that uses celebrity images and stark language to "shape the way youth in America think about teen pregnancy and parenthood," ("About Us - Mission"). In their mission statement, the Candie's Foundation makes clear that their goal isn't just to prevent teen pregnancy, but "to influence teen culture," ("About Us"). What's more, the Candie's Foundation often partners with the Stay Teen campaign and its parent campaign, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, displaying how linked these campaigns are and how uniform the messages they send often are, as well.

Featuring a simple color palette of bright pink, black, and white, the Candie's Foundation website appears slick and cool, with many images of celebrities prominently featured on the homepage. Their multi-faceted campaign, which includes print and video PSAs, online interactive features, and a vast social media presence, including facebook, twitter, and instagram.

I will continue my rhetorical analysis on the Candie's Foundation, focusing on their website, interactive features, and print and video celebrity PSAs. As a reminder, the questions that guide my analysis are:

1. What do we see in the advertisements/on the website? Who do we see and not see?
2. Who are these ads/messages addressing? Who are they implying?

3. What is the relationship between the images used and the language employed?
4. How do the visual and verbal rhetoric employed encourage the audience to perceive the problem in a certain way?

Website

Upon first visiting the site, the homepage of the Candie's Foundation website is a melange of bright pink set against stark white and dark black. This use of pink, a color coded as feminine and female, juxtaposed against the harsh contrast of black and white signals that this is a campaign that not only speaks to teen girls, but frames teen motherhood as an epidemic and social crisis. Time and again, the Candie's Foundation frames teen motherhood as the problem, not teen pregnancy.



Image 5.1

Dominating nearly half of the homepage is a rotation of two images that switch every seven seconds. The first features famous singer Carly Rae Jepsen glancing over her shoulder, with the text “You’re supposed to be changing the world...Not changing diapers” in big, bold, black print. Underneath in smaller, bright pink font, the text reads “Nearly 750,000 teenage girls will become pregnant this year,” followed by smaller font in dark gray that reads “Change it! #NoTeenPreg,” (“Default”). The second image is the top half of a large milk bottle on the left, complemented on the right by similar text that

reads “Nearly 750,000 teenage girls will become pregnant this year. Change it! #NoTeenPreg.”



Image 5.2

Image 5.2 displays a well-known celebrity, Carly Rae Jepsen, reflecting the Candie's Foundation's commitment to using celebrity endorsements to attract teen attention and influence teen culture. She is half of the large image in the center of the home page, and she is undoubtedly what draws the viewer's attention first. The use of an image of a high-profile female celebrity along with rhetoric that highlights how many teen girls will become pregnant, with absolutely no attempt at gender neutrality or even mention of teen boys, reveals that this campaign targets and is speaking to teen girls.

What's more, the Candie's Foundation seemingly embraces the negative connotations and shameful rhetoric that it employs. Within their own mission statement,

they proudly claim that their campaigns are making a difference *because* teen girls think teen pregnancy is bad. They state:

Research has shown that teen girls who have been exposed to the foundation and its messages are more likely to view teen pregnancy and parenthood as stressful and negative, and they are more likely to be skeptical of the media's portrayal of teen pregnancy and parenting. They also think teens should wait longer to have sex than girls who are not aware of the foundation and its messages. ("About Us")

The Candie's Foundation frames success as making teen girls believe that teen pregnancy and parenthood are inherently negative, rather than framing success as teaching both teen girls *and* boys about safe sex, access to contraception, and healthy relationships. For the Candie's Foundation, success is all about shame and stigma; this statement reveals that they care far less about the actual results of their campaign on teen pregnancy rates and sexual health than increasing the shame and stigma around teen pregnancy.

Print PSAs

While her picture is featured on the home page of the website, Carly Rae Jepsen is also featured in a stand-alone print PSA, referred to as Image 5.2. Her image, the same one used on the home page, takes up the entire left half of the advertisement, with her almost seductively looking over her shoulder, wearing a pink sleeveless dress with a heart cutout on the back. It is an image that could easily be featured in a fashion magazine, rather than a teen pregnancy prevention campaign. Notably, the black-white-pink color scheme carries over in this advertisement: Jepsen is featured in color wearing a pink dress, the baby's crib is a cream-white, and the text on the top right half of the PSA is in bold black. The continual use of this color palette, in this PSA and others, reinforces that the Candie's Foundation is a slick, stylish, celebrity-endorsed campaign, one with messages that teens should take seriously.

On the top right half of the advertisement, black text in all-capital letters reads “You’re supposed to be changing the world...Not changing diapers,” just like the image featured on the homepage. But differing from the homepage image, this advertisement features a cream-colored crib beneath the black text, and small, bright pink text underneath that reiterates the same message as the homepage image, stating that 750,000 teenage girls becoming pregnant this year.

Referring back to the questions that guide my rhetorical analysis, who we see in this advertisement is clearly a female celebrity, one who is young, thin, traditionally attractive, and presenting in a feminine manner. Absent from this PSA is any reference, visual or written, to teen boys or teen fathers. Instead, coupled with the image of a young female celebrity, the rhetoric we see focuses solely on teen girls in the bright pink text.

The rhetoric in the bold, black text is even more telling. “You’re supposed to be changing the world...Not changing diapers.” This PSA frames Carly Rae Jepsen, a pop singer and wealthy celebrity, as the embodiment of changing the world, juxtaposed with teen mothers, who are stuck changing diapers. The way that phrase is structured positions changing the world and changing diapers as two separate, mutually exclusive actions, reiterating the notion that being a teen mother is a shameful waste of your life and abilities. The Candie’s Foundation positions teen motherhood as the antithesis of positivity, of social justice, of a worthy life and frames teen mothers almost as sad slaves to their children.

In another print celebrity PSA, labeled Image 5.3, the Candie’s Foundation features actress and singer Lea Michelle, whose black-and-white image comprises the

entire left half of the advertisement. On the right side, we see the top-half of a baby's milk bottle with text superimposed over it that reads "Did you know nearly 750,000 teenage girls will become pregnant this year?" The entire text is in bright pink except for "750,000 teenage girls," which is in black, as a way of highlighting that statistic within the text. In a bright pink ribbon that runs at the bottom of the PSA, the right side lists the Candie's Foundation's website, while the right side reads "Don't be a statistic!"



Image 5.3

It's clear to whom this advertising is speaking: Don't be a statistic, the PSA claims, after the statistic it cites only references teen girls. Yet again, this print PSA only refers to teenage girls and features a young, thin, traditionally attractive, feminine-appearing female celebrity. Visually, we see Lea Michele on one side, the emblem of female success, while on the other side, the 750,000 girls who become pregnant each year are represented by nothing more than a baby's milk bottle. To be a teen mother means to become both a statistic and have your humanity stripped from you; you no longer get to

have your likeness shown, but are replaced by the inanimate objects that serve as a visual reminder that your life is over and you have failed.

This print PSA, like all other PSAs in the Candie's Foundation campaign, features no information on how to actually *prevent* an unwanted teen pregnancy. It doesn't cite any information regarding safe sex, contraceptive care, or abortion care, nor does it include any reference to other campaigns that could provide such information. Instead, the PSA is dominated by the images of Lea Michelle and a baby's milk bottle. In the upper right hand corner, in such small font that it's nearly impossible to read, bright pink text features links to the facebook and twitter accounts of the Candie's Foundation and a message that "May is National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month #NoTeenPreg," the last part being a twitter hashtag that encourages twitter users to discuss ending teen pregnancy. Both are evidence that the Candie's Foundation is more interested in appealing to teens in a superficial, social media way and being an emblem of popular culture, rather than educating teens on how to prevent unwanted pregnancy.

Of the 10 print celebrity PSAs featured on the Candie's Foundation website, eight feature female celebrities, five of whom are white. The two print PSAs that do feature male celebrities, singer-songwriter Teddy Geiger and all-male band Fall Out Boy, are carbon copies of each other, except for the celebrities featured on the left-hand side.



Image 5.4

In the two male-featured print PSAs, including Image 5.4 with singer Teddy Geiger, the images of the celebrities take up the entire left half of the advertisement, while on the right side, there is text in big, bold, all-capital lettered font that reads “NOT WHAT YOU HAD IN MIND FOR YOUR FIRST SET OF WHEELS, HUH?” The first half of the text, up until the word “for,” is in bright pink, and the last half of the statement is in white, juxtaposed against the black backdrop. Underneath the text, we see a baby’s crib, reinforcing that having a baby as a teenager isn’t cool or fun. In small, white print underneath the bold statement about your set of wheels, text reads: “You were probably picturing a hot ride that could take you and your friends anywhere; but you got pregnant and now you’re stuck pushing a stroller around while your friends are kickin’ it without you.”

While this advertisement appears gender neutral, it also uses the phrase “but you got pregnant,” hinting that this message is also directed at teen girls, just like the other

PSAs. Teen girls are the ones who get pregnant, not teen boys, and according to this statement, the fun and joy in their lives is now over because they are essentially a slave to their baby's crib. The PSA also uses hip slang to appear trendy and cool, with phrases like "hot ride" and "kickin'," meant to reinforce that this campaign is speaking to teenagers but also trying to be a part of their culture, to interject this point of view that teen motherhood is inherently bad into the larger culture of teen life.

Video PSAs

The Candie's Foundation also has video public service announcements that feature celebrities. Two of the seven videos they have on their website feature their spokesperson and former teen mom Bristol Palin, daughter of former Republican Vice-Presidential nominee Sarah Palin, and only one of the seven videos doesn't feature a celebrity at all.

One of Bristol Palin's three featured spots on the website is a video PSA entitled "Wouldn't Be Pretty," and it features her and her son Tripp, to whom she gave birth when she was a teenager. The video features nursery-style music that underwrites the entire 30 second spot, and Bristol holds her son while speaking directly into the camera. When the spot begins, as shown in Image 5.5, Bristol is dressed sharply in a nice white and black jacket (reminiscent of the Candie's Foundation color scheme) and she is surrounded by a warm and inviting home with comfortable furnishings.

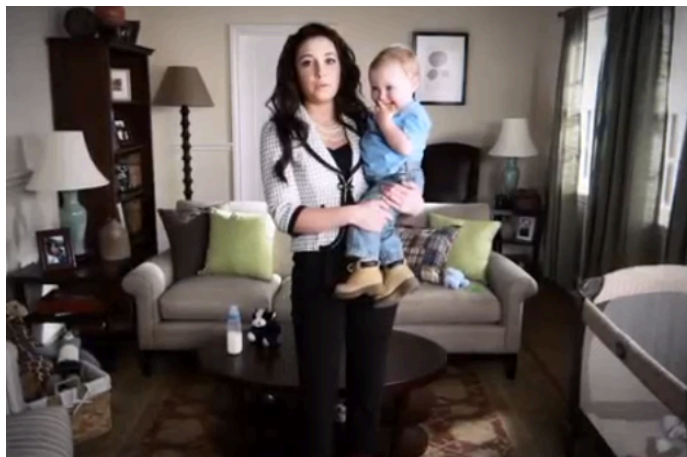


Image 5.5

As she speaks, sentence by sentence, her appearance and surroundings become more disheveled and her son Tripp is excised from the scene. Bristol says: “What if I didn’t come from a famous family? What if I didn’t have all their support? What if I couldn’t finish my education? What if I didn’t have all these opportunities? Believe me, it wouldn’t be pretty. Pause before you play,” (PSA Videos: Wouldn’t Be Pretty”).

By the end of the video, as shown in Image 5.6, Bristol is standing in a stark white tee-shirt and blue jeans, with only a couch (all other furniture has been stripped away) as Tripp stands behind her on the floor. Her expression is solemn, sad, hopeless.



Image 5.6

As the camera slowly pans out from Bristol's new tragic scene, white text in all capital letters becomes superimposed overtop. It reads: "BEING A TEEN MOTHER CAN BE A ROUGH ROAD," as can be seen in Image 5.7. Immediately after that, the camera zooms into a close-up of Bristol Palin's face as she says "Pause before you play," followed by their black, white, and hot pink graphic that displays that statement.



Image 5.7

Aurally, the nursery-style music has an almost eery quality, like that of a horror film, giving the foreboding sense that teen motherhood is terrifying and bad. This horror-film style is coupled with the gradual deterioration of Bristol Palin's appearance and surroundings, ending with the frame of her and Tripp, alone, sad, and seemingly hopeless. The deterioration of Bristol's appearance suggests that teen mothers aren't beautiful or attractive, that motherhood strips away their beauty and therefore, their worth.

Yet again, as is often the case in the Candie's Foundation, teen dads garner not a single mention in this video, which is perhaps even more odd given that the father of Bristol Palin's baby, Levi Johnston, was also propelled into the spotlight when featured

with the Palin family at the Republican National Convention in 2008. The father of Bristol's baby is no secret, and has gone onto a life in the public eye, as it were, even starring in his own reality television show (Finn). Instead, Bristol Palin is the sole focus of this PSA, even with her infant son in her arms. We watch as Bristol loses everything around her, loses her composure, loses her attractiveness. The message isn't just that teen motherhood can be a rough road -- it states that teen motherhood is a destructive road, a fearful road, a worthless road.

Famous singer Ciara is featured in a video PSA entitled "Crib," of which a still frame is displayed in Image 5.8. The video is cinematic in style and shot in black-and-white, with the only pop of color being the Candie's Foundation's bright pink "pause sign" which comes at the very end of the spot. The video features upbeat music, reminiscent of a fashion runway show, and features quick, stylized shots.

The scene opens with a white teen couple kissing intimately in bed until four seconds in, as the teen girl climbs on top of the teen boy, and then the screen flashes with the negative of image. The camera lands on the teen girl alone, lying in her bedroom. The camera zooms in on her confused face as the back wall literally crashes to the ground, while the music grows ominous. She nervously scurries off of her bed and out of the shot as the entire set of her bedroom flips into a single baby's crib. As the crib lands in the shot, the sound of a locked jail cell plays, as if the crib is itself a sentence. As the teen girl slowly walks over to the crib, we hear a baby crying. With the image of the teen girl nervously peering into the crib in the background, Ciara walks into the right side of the frame and says into the camera "Not really the way you pictured your first crib, huh?" As

she begins to walk out of frame, the camera zooms in on the teen peering into the crib while Ciara's voiceover states "Sex *can* change everything. Pause before you play."



Image 5.8

Unlike other spots in this campaign, this video actually features a teen boy. But the way that they employ him speaks volumes. He is featured very briefly at the beginning and is gone by the four second mark. We see him in bed with the girl, kissing, until she moves into a position on top of him, which obscures him from view. This blocking frames the teen girl as the instigator, as the responsible party for the pregnancy with which she must deal for the rest of the video and her life. She took control of the sexual encounter and has therefore sealed her fate. The teen boy magically vanishes from the video and is thus exonerated of any responsibility for the pregnancy that results.

The tag line of "Pause before you play," used in all of their campaign videos, reveals that the Candie's Foundation is more interested in preventing sexual intercourse

than in preventing unwanted teen pregnancies. There is no mention in this spot of using condoms before you play, taking a birth control pill before you play; instead, sex is framed as the cause of a life sentence, with the crib serving as a symbol of imprisonment. This sends the message to teen mothers that their promiscuity and incapability of “pausing” or being responsible means that their life is now futile, pointless, and the dreams and aspirations that they had for their life will never come to fruition. “Not really the way you pictured your first crib, huh?” asks Ciara, inferring that whatever teen moms dreamed of before they had their children has now been ruined by their own poor judgment and behavior.

Of the seven videos featured on the website, the only video that doesn’t have a celebrity endorser also lacks any actual human beings. The video entitled “Consider Your Options” is a 55 second graphic display of “facts” and “statistics” about teen pregnancy, all in the Candie’s Foundation color scheme of black, white, and hot pink. We hear dramatic music and the cry of a baby as the first graphic pops up, which reads in white and hot pink all-caps “85 TEENS GET PREGNANT EACH YEAR,” (“PSA Video: Choose Your Options”). The baby’s cry ends quickly, but the dramatic music carries on throughout the entire video, without any announcer voiceover, creating the sense that teen motherhood is a dramatic and tense crisis.

At the five second mark, we see the all-capital lettered text “85 TEENS GET PREGNANT EVERY HOUR” fade into a hot pink clock as the sound of a rapid tick-tock plays in the background. White and complementary pink text appear against a black screen that read “2,000 GIRLS A DAY,” which immediately segues into a fullscreen of

hot pink women symbols, like those on public restroom doors. The camera pans out slowly, as more and more women symbols appear, with text then superimposed over the figures that reads “ALMOST 750,000 GIRLS A YEAR.” Teen pregnancy is framed as an epidemic, something that afflicts nearly a million teen girls a year. This framing is quite misleading, as the U.S. teen pregnancy rate actually fell to a 70 year low in 2009 (Stobbe), and rates have steadily declined since the 1970s (Ventura).



Image 5.9

The screen stays black as white and hot pink text then read “IT ONLY TAKES ONE TIME,” segueing through “one time,” “1st time,” “in love time,” and resulting in the statements “ONE TIME = THE REST OF YOUR LIFE!” and “THINK IT CAN’T BE YOU? THINK AGAIN. 3 OUT OF 10 TEEN GIRLS BECOMES PREGNANT!” as the hot pink women symbols proliferate on the screen. A still shot of that frame can be seen in Image 5.9. The use of exclamation marks to complement this seemingly neutral fact helps create a sense of panic and hysteria around teen pregnancy, informing teen girls that they are this close to having their lives ruined.

The final graphic says in big, bold, all-capital letters that fill the screen “CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS” as a short series of options pops up on the bottom. The

first option? “WAITING.” Waiting is the first option presented by this campaign video. It is then shifts in this order: “CONDOMS,” “BIRTH CONTROL,” “CONDOMS,” “ABSTINENCE,” “BIRTH CONTROL,” and “WAITING,” then finally ending on “THINK ABOUT YOUR FUTURE.” While birth control and condoms are offered as options in this video, the video then ends with a link to the Candie’s Foundation website, which, as a whole, includes no real way to learn any more information about birth control or condoms. While they are presented as options, if there is no information about how to access or use them, it ends up being mostly empty rhetoric than a means of empowering sexual health among teenagers. What’s more, once again absent from this entire video is a single mention of teen fathers. The gender neutral term “teens” appears once at the beginning, while “teen girls” is specifically referenced three times, in addition to the two graphics that feature the conventional symbol for female.

Rhetoric Instead of Resources

While Stay Teen’s website features links to information not just about teen pregnancy but also dating abuse, STIs, and birth control, under the banner of “Resources,” the Candie’s Foundation features next to nothing in they way of information about sexual health. Instead, the website offers the following options: “The Facts,” “Teen Mom Diaries,” “Crying Baby App,” “Partners,” and “Research.”

The first page titled “The Facts,” is a single, bold, full page graphic of varying facts about teen pregnancy and it continues with the Candie’s Foundation’s color scheme of black, white, and hot pink. Not a single fact on the entire page talks about contraception, condoms, or any other preventative measures or sexual health-related

issues. Instead, the page is dominated by references to “teen girls” or “teen mothers,” which together are referenced nine times on the page. “Teen fathers” are mentioned once, and the gender-neutral term “teens” is used twice (“The Facts”). In fact, the only time “teen fathers” are explicitly mentioned is in the fact about how few of them marry the mothers of their children. We see 10 male figures (like those frequently used on public restroom doors), with eight figures in hot pink and two in black. Underneath, the all-capital lettered text reads “8 out of 10 fathers don’t marry the mother of their child,” (“The Facts”). Interestingly, this fact doesn’t even state *teen* fathers or *teen* mothers; it simply says fathers and mothers. This kind of statistical manipulation, the conflation of one fact with another, is a way for campaigns like the Candie’s Foundation and the NYC HRA to legitimize their rhetoric and shaming tactics.

This fact sheet also contains statements that outright blame teen mothers for broader social ills, a tactic used in both the NYC HRA’s campaign and in the Stay Teen campaign. Just like the Stay Teen campaign, the Candie’s Foundation fact sheet states “Sons of teen mothers are *twice* as likely to end up in prison” (“The Facts”). The bright, slick appearance of the graphic, along with the title “The Facts,” reinforces that this statement, devoid of any nuance, explanation, or reference to teen fathers, is immutable fact. Teen mothers are the cause of crime, of imprisonment, of the terrible futures that await their children. According to this statement, being a teen mother means you will likely give birth to a criminal.

It is no wonder that the Candie’s Foundation uses similar rhetoric and “facts” as Stay Teen; they are partnered campaigns. In fact, at the bottom of the fact sheet, the

Candie's Foundation provides links to both the Stay Teen campaign (which it designates for teens) and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (which it designates for parents). The text reads:

TEENS: The only 100% way to avoid pregnancy is to not have sex. If you do have sex, you need to use protection every time. Visit our friends at www.stayteen.org for more information.

PARENTS: For tips on how to talk to your kids about sex and pregnancy, visit our partner, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

The Candie's Foundation, Stay Teen, and its parent, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, all use similar messages and often nearly identical frameworks, which serve to legitimize each campaign. If these campaigns are citing the same facts and using the same language, and the National Campaign was created by a Democratic president, it becomes harder to challenge the messages that the campaigns send. Instead, they are seen as naturalized facts, and the rhetoric they use becomes the only rhetoric we know of when speaking of teen pregnancy. Their partnership serves to inculcate that teen pregnancy is shameful and teen mothers are responsible for a whole host of social ills.

The Candie's Foundation website also has a page titled "Diary of a Teen Mom," which features stories about teen pregnancy and teen motherhood from ten teen moms ("Diary of a Teen Mom"). Notably, not a single teen mom featured on the website is black. The "diaries" are actually just interviews with pre-set questions, asking if they ever thought they might become pregnant and how their friends and family reacted. The lack of diversity in the featured teen mothers is troubling, and once again, teen fathers are entirely absent from this narrative. There is no "Diary of a Teen Parent," nor is there a

featured teen father. While it is commendable that the Candie's Foundation features the voices and perspectives of actual teen mothers on their website, the absence of teen fathers subtly reinforces that teen pregnancy is an issue that pertains to teen girls first and foremost.

Also under the header of "Resources" is a page entitled "Cry Baby App," which has a link to a download of a smartphone application that features a crying infant. This is the only smartphone application highlighted on the Candie's Foundation website; there is no additional application that includes information about contraception, nearby clinics, sexual health, etc. The text on the webpage reads:

A turn off for when you're turned on... Get an insta-dose of parenthood with the "Crying 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 teen pregnancy. Spread the message and download the app today!

To the right of the text is a mock-up of the application which allows users to try it out. When you press play, you are first shown the image of a black baby mid-cry, before the screen fades and gives you the option of choosing one of four babies of varying ethnicities: a black baby, white baby, Asian baby, and Latino baby. The video automatically selects the white baby, whose crying image dominates the screen for the next 20 seconds as we hear the baby's cries. At the end of the app's video, the Candie's Foundation's graphic and trademark phrase, "Pause Before You Play" pops up, along with a link to the campaign's website.

This is what passes for prevention and empowerment in the Candie's Foundation. Rather than feature any information about how to use a condom, how to access contraception, or where your closest healthcare clinic is located, the Candie's Foundation

features an application meant for teenagers, in the throes of passion, to literally stop what they're doing, open their phone, and listen to an imaginary infant's cries as deterrent for having sex. From the framework of this application, that's really what this is about: preventing sex between teenagers, not about preventing pregnancy. Phrases like "a turn off for when you're turned on" let us know that the Candie's Foundation wants to discourage teens from having sex rather than empowering them to have healthy, consensual sex. The crying of an infant is negative reinforcement to discourage teens from having sex and a reminder of what awaits teen girls if they refuse to stand strong, as they are the target of the rest of the campaign's messages.

Conclusion

The Candie's Foundation openly admits that its goal is "to influence teen culture," and they claim that their campaign is successful because teen girls who view the campaign are more likely to view "teen pregnancy and parenthood as stressful and negative," ("About Us - Mission"). This is how the Candie's Foundation defines success: by delineating teen pregnancy and parenthood as shameful. Their continual reference to teen girls and teen moms, with barely a single mention of teen fathers on the entire website and in the entire campaign as a whole, reveals that the Candie's Foundation believes teen girls are to be held responsible for teen pregnancy, something they have already deemed shameful. The Candie's Foundation openly shames teen girls for their sexuality, framing their sexual promiscuity as the cause of teen pregnancy, and then celebrates that shaming as "prevention."

In the meantime, teen moms and their advocates have led a social media campaign to combat the Candie's Foundation's shaming rhetoric and what advocates feel is an offensive twitter hashtag -- #NoTeenPreg -- with their own hashtag, #NoTeenShame (Malone). A change.org petition started by teen mom Natasha Vianna asks that the Candie's Foundation "stop shaming young parents" and specifies that advocates request a meeting with the Candie's Foundation founder Neil Cole to discuss how the campaign makes them feel and how to adjust the campaign to stop shaming young parents (Vianna). As of January 6, 2014, the petition has 868 signatures. Neil Cole has ignored their requests, even writing an op-ed for *The Huffington Post* defending the campaign against claims that it shames teen moms. In it, he claims that the campaign is simply trying to "break through all the media clutter and make teens understand that having a child is difficult and will change your life forever" (Cole). In a roundabout way, he references the #NoTeenShame campaign by defending the Candie's Foundation against those claims, but tellingly, he won't refer to any of the activists or even the campaign by its name. To Neil Cole, it seems that teen moms' voices do no matter.

Chapter Six: Moving Beyond Shame and Blame in Teen Pregnancy

Teen pregnancy is a public policy issue that is generally agreed upon as bad. Both parties feature politicians and pundits espousing the values of personal responsibility, whether by promoting abstinence or contraception, but there is no major political disagreement about whether or not teen pregnancy is considered acceptable. And while teen pregnancy rates have steadily declined in recent decades, the effort to curb teen pregnancy has not.

As we have seen, the three major teen pregnancy prevention campaign studied, two of which are national campaigns and one of which is a local campaign for the largest city in the United States, all shame and blame teen mothers. All use shame, often overtly, to frame teen mothers as irresponsible, lascivious, government moochers, depraved women, and valueless. All three campaigns use manipulative framing and rhetoric in their “facts” that blame teen mothers as solely responsible not only for their own misfortune, but for the poor futures of their children and broad social ills like poverty, crime, and poor education. Time and again in these campaigns, the onus is placed solely on teen girls to prevent teen pregnancy, often with little or no access to sexual health information that could actually help them do it. Instead, they and their sexual lasciviousness are framed as the sole cause of their own pregnancies, which they are continually reminded are shameful, immoral, and the cause of great social unrest.

Teen pregnancy prevention campaigns begin from a place of stigma, from the belief that teen pregnancy and teen parenthood are inherently bad for society and as such, they must be actively prevented. These campaigns feed into the false construction of a teen pregnancy epidemic, often employing fear-mongering frameworks (as in the

Candie's Foundation) by simply framing teen pregnancy as a pox on society. The three campaigns analyzed here -- the New York City Human Resources Administration's campaign, the Stay Teen campaign, and the Candie's Foundation -- all shame and blame teen mothers in their own ways, and they often provide more rhetoric about preventing sex than about access to preventative resources like condoms, contraception, abortion, and sexual healthcare more broadly.

Shame: A Constant Undercurrent

In the three teen pregnancy prevention campaigns studied here, the NYC HRA's campaign, the Stay Teen campaign, and the Candie's Foundation, the use of shame directed at teen girls and in particular, teen mothers, has been established. While these campaigns vary in their style and occasionally in their rhetorical choices, the same frameworks of teen pregnancy and social conceptions about morality underwrite all three.

The images and rhetoric used in both the NYC HRA and the Candie's Foundation are overtly emotionally manipulative. The former complements images of infants in distress with rhetoric that directly addresses teen parents (most often, teen mothers) in emotionally charged, shaming ways. The latter uses celebrity endorsements as a backdrop for their fear-mongering, highly stylized campaign videos and advertisements that frame teen pregnancy and parenthood as a jail sentence, of sorts. They also frame teen mothers as the cause of the bereft futures of their children as well as the impetus for greater social ills. Not all of the rhetoric and images in the Stay Teen campaign are as overt as those in the other two campaigns, but their central tagline, "I love my life; I'm not gonna mess it up with a pregnancy" frames teen pregnancy and parenthood as the end of your life.

When we take a critical look at the message the three campaigns are sending, all three overwhelmingly target and blame teen girls and teen mothers.

All three campaigns reference teen girls or teen mothers far more than they do teen guys/boys or teen fathers. While all three campaigns reference gender-neutral terms like “teens” or “teen parents” regularly, even beating the references to teen moms/girls in the Stay Teen campaign and the NYC HRA’s campaign, the overwhelming pattern of referencing teen girls and/or teen mothers rather than teen boys and/or teen fathers tells us that this seemingly gender-neutral stance isn’t so gender neutral. “Teens” and “teen parents” become place-holder phrases for teen moms and teen girls, since the majority of gendered references are female in nature.

The NYC HRA’s campaign and the Candie’s Foundation feature little in the way of information about sexual healthcare or ways of actually preventing teen pregnancy. Stay Teen features webpages dedicated to “Birth Control,” “STIs,” and even “Dating Abuse,” all which feature detailed information about what kinds of preventative measures you can take and include links to clinics and testing centers near you. But neither the NYC HRA’s campaign website or the Candie’s Foundation’s website prominently feature information about contraception or safe sex. The Candie’s Foundation does feature links to other campaigns with which they partner, including Stay Teen, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, and Sex, Etc. (which aims to improve teen sexual health), but none of their campaign videos or advertisements inform teens about how to access this information. Neither does the NYC HRA, which has at the bottom right of their home page, in tiny font, a link to the NYC HRA’s page about Sexual Health

& Pregnancy (“Teen Pregnancy Prevention”). Unless you search extensively, you are unlikely to find it.

The information that could actually prevent unwanted teen pregnancies is nearly impossible to find on two of the three campaigns featured here. That tells us that these campaigns are less interested in preventing unwanted pregnancies among teenagers and more interested in contributing to and perpetuating certain cultural and social narratives about teen pregnancy and teen parenthood. And, since the campaigns are clearly gendered in their focus, these campaigns are peddling those narratives mostly about teen motherhood. Teen pregnancy prevention campaigns serve as a way to shame teen mothers for deviating from social sexual norms, for violating conjugal, marital heterosexuality as the normative emblem.

These campaigns also reify power dynamics between the powerful and the marginalized by blaming teen mothers for broad, systemic social issues like poor education and poverty and exonerate those in power in the process. The idea that teen pregnancy and teen parenthood cause poverty has been sufficiently and continuously dispelled, even at the time that teen pregnancy prevention campaigns came onto the political scene in the mid-1990s. The Alan Guttmacher Institute reported in 1994 that more than 80 percent of teen mothers were living in poverty or near-poverty long before they ever became pregnant (Alan Guttmacher Institute). The myth pervades that teen mothers cause poverty, though, because teen pregnancy prevention campaigns cite “facts” like the NYC HRA’s statement that “If you finish high school, get a job, and get married before having children, you have a 98% chance of not being in poverty.” The NYC HRA even acknowledges on their citation page that they manipulated this fact, which actually

says that those who finish high school, work full-time, and get married before having children” are 98% likely to not be in poverty (“Teen Pregnancy Campaign OER Notes”). Teen pregnancy prevention campaigns conflate facts about how likely people are to remain out of poverty given W-X-Y-Z with being less likely to be in poverty if you’re not a teen parent. The conflation remains, as does the myth that teen moms cause poverty.

This also serves a greater political purpose of exonerating those in power of responsibility for these social ills. If crime, poverty, poor job prospects, and poor education are the fault of lazy, irresponsible, lascivious teen mothers, then the relative intransigence of unemployment numbers in New York City, which hovered at 8.9% as of October 2013 (“Teen Pregnancy Campaign OER Notes”), isn’t so much the fault of the Bloomberg administration. Instead, with the creation of this new teen pregnancy prevention campaign through the NYC HRA, the Bloomberg administration could deflect responsibility for social ills that pervade in the city onto teen mothers by using conflated and often faulty statistics. And because teen mothers lack powerful advocates, teen pregnancy prevention campaigns can openly shame and blame them, often with very few consequences.

Creators/Board of campaigns : What they have in common

Shame as a political tool reifies power dynamics and solidifies boundaries of who is moral/acceptable and who is not. It has been established that the three teen pregnancy prevention campaigns studied here shame and blame teen mothers, but who is behind that shaming? Whom does that shaming serve? In order to understand this, we need to take a look at the members behind these campaigns, the people who are in positions of power, and what role they play. In individual campaigns like this, the Board of Directors and

agency members behind the campaigns speak volumes about why teen moms are being shamed and what purpose that shame serves.

The Candie's Foundation has their own board of directors and Stay Teen campaign operates under the umbrella of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, so the National Campaign's Board of Directors therefore has jurisdiction over Stay Teen. Though the NYC HRA teen pregnancy prevention campaign is the product of a governmental agency and therefore doesn't have a board of directors, but the individual members of the agency play a similar role to board members for the private campaigns.

The Candie's Foundation is a private campaign founded by Neil Cole, who still serves on the Board of Directors. Mr. Cole has a long, storied history with private companies and corporations, and he has served as the President and the CEO of Iconix Brand Group since 1993 ("Neil Cole"), which owns a diversified group of fashion and home brands, including the shoe company Candie's ("Iconix Brand Group, Inc"). As such, Mr. Cole is in charge of a diverse group of brands that appeal directly to teens and profit off of trends set. What's more, according to *Forbes.com*, his total compensation for the year 2011 was over \$37 million. Mr. Cole and fellow board member Jennifer D'Loren, senior manager of Ernst and Young, an international professional services organization, are employees of corporations that represent the wealthiest one percent.

In addition to Mr. Cole, the Candie's Board of Directors is made up entirely of white people. Board members include actress Jenny McCarthy, who's views on vaccines as the cause of autism has caused significant controversy for their lack of scientific basis (Kane), James Mischka, one half of the fashion designing brand Badgley Mischka, and

Atoosa Rubenstein, Editor-in-Chief of Seventeen Magazine. The presence of these three members tells us that the Candie's Foundation has a central focus on pop culture and trendiness within their campaign; the campaign aims to appear hip and current, fashionable and cool, and this fits with their highly stylized advertisements and rhetoric of wanting to influence culture.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy's Board of Directors is comprised of a diverse group of people; from the CEO of the NFL to a senior correspondent for PBS' "The News Hour," the National Campaigns' Board represents a far deeper gamut of members than the Candie's Foundation. The National Campaign's board contains entertainment professionals, health and public policy experts, and two medical doctors, one of whom is Vanessa Cullins, M.D., M.P.H., M.B.A., who is the Vice President of Medical Affairs for Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc ("About Us: Board of Directors"). This shows the link between mainstream reproductive rights organizations and teen pregnancy prevention -- they often serve on each others' boards and work together to advocate for contraception by using teen pregnancy as a cautionary tale. Their board features prominent public policy figures (like Isabel V. Sawhill of the Brookings Institution) and media personalities (like Judy Woodruff of PBS), revealing that many of those on the board are members of an economic and political elite class.

The NYC HRA's campaign was created by a governmental agency, so it does not have a board of directors. Under the tenure of Mayor Bloomberg, however, the agency operated under his direction and guidance. Along with Mayor Bloomberg, the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda I. Gibbs and Human Resources Administration Commission Robert Doar were the three central figures promoting the

HRA's new teen pregnancy prevention campaign. HRA Commissioner Robert Doar has been the focus of HIV-activist protests for budget cuts and a drug screening policy he helped put in place for the HIV/Aids Services Administration's clients, a policy that was laid out in Mayor Bloomberg's 2012 budget (Levin). Commissioner Doar was also accused of demoting a black official in the HRA in retaliation for her complaints about the agency's contracting practices, a case that resulted in New York City agreeing to pay \$750,000 to that official (Levin).

Mayor Bloomberg appointed Linda I. Gibbs to Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, a job which oversees multiple agencies, including the Human Resources Administration. She was also the Commissioner of the Department of Homeless Services, and has come under fire by some for the Bloomberg administration's policies on homelessness, including canceling a rent subsidy program in 2011 that many attribute to the dramatic increase in the city's shelter population (Saul).

In the last few years of Mayor Bloomberg's tenure, the rates of poverty in New York City have been rising. From 20.1 percent in 2010 to 21.2 percent in 2012, 1.7 million New Yorkers fell into poverty during those years (Roberts), this in stunning contrast to Mayor Bloomberg's net worth of \$31 billion ("Michael Bloomberg"). When running for Mayor, Bill de Blasio ran on a platform of ending the rampant inequality that dominated during the Bloomberg years and advocated for progressive policies. The pervasiveness of poverty in New York City is widely associated with Mayor Bloomberg, which makes the continual references to teen mothers and poverty in the NYC HRA's campaign even more telling.

While we cannot possibly know to what extent these board members and governmental figures intentionally or consciously shame teen mothers for a specific purpose, it is clear that those who make the decisions to employ shaming tactics in these campaigns are overwhelmingly in positions of power and often, are incredibly wealthy. The neoliberal narratives that often accompany the shaming rhetoric featured in these campaigns serves to exonerate those who enact policies that may perpetuate poverty and perhaps even advocate for tax breaks for their own income-class. What *is* clear is that there are very specific power dynamics at play here, with those on the boards and within the agencies that enact these campaigns belonging to a powerful, elite class, and teen mothers far below.

Moving Towards a Feminist Revision of Teen Pregnancy Prevention

Teen mothers are fairly low on society's totem pole, with little in the way of powerful advocates or political allies. Precisely because of their marginalized status, teen pregnancy prevention campaigns are able to proceed with shaming and blaming tactics while going relatively unchecked. Teen pregnancy prevention campaigns were born out of and remain centered around the idea that teen mothers are to blame, not just for their own pregnancies, but for a whole host of broader social ills. Teen mothers aren't just deemed unimportant; they serve as a political scapegoat.

Even mainstream feminist and reproductive rights organizations sign on to teen pregnancy prevention campaigns that shame and blame teen mothers. For instance, NARAL Pro-choice America, a reproductive rights advocacy organization that endorses pro-choice candidates (most often Democratic candidates,) label teen pregnancy "a preventable epidemic" in an effort to increase support for comprehensive sex education

(“Teen Pregnancy: A Preventable Epidemic”). Planned Parenthood also advocates for comprehensive sex education as well as increased access to contraceptive care by sharing “serious” facts about teen pregnancy, including a classically neoliberal talking point: “Teenage pregnancy causes a substantial financial burden to society, estimated at \$10.9 billion annually lost in tax revenues, public assistance, child health care, foster care, and involvement with the criminal justice system,” (Weiss).

While feminist organizations like Planned Parenthood and the NARAL Pro-Choice America advocate for a wide array of reproductive and women’s rights, they also employ the same framework that teen pregnancy is a social ill that needs to be cured and frequently cite language that is incredibly problematic for feminists to use. Often, feminist and reproductive rights organizations use teen pregnancy as a wedge issue to drum up support for other issues like contraception, increased access to reproductive healthcare, and sex education. While organizations like these may need to position themselves as politically moderate on a broadly supported issue like teen pregnancy prevention in order to attract support for more liberal issues like abortion rights and comprehensive sex education, they nevertheless end up reinforcing the same patterns of shaming and blaming teen mothers that teen pregnancy prevention campaigns rely on, and frame teen mothers as utter failures.

Feminists who champion teen pregnancy prevention may feel that they are encouraging teen girls to wait until adulthood to have children and therefore empower themselves, bucking patriarchal norms and ultimately shattering glass ceilings. But this kind of narrow understanding of success not only shames those who are already teen

mothers; it conveniently avoids a deeper understanding of the ways in which various policies and ideologies work to both create and prevent teen and unwanted pregnancy.

While there is little in the way of mainstream organizations advocating for teen mothers against the shaming tactics in teen pregnancy prevention campaigns, there has been some push back against the shaming nature of two of the campaigns studied here. The NYC HRA's teen pregnancy prevention campaign and the Candie's Foundation have both found themselves at the center of some controversy and both have inspired counter-campaigns to combat the shame-and-blame rhetoric in each.

The Pushback is an effort from the Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy, and its goal is to create "a space to push back against all the ignorance, bitterness, and prejudice and show what young parenthood really looks like" by featuring the voices and perspectives of actual teen parents ("About The Pushback"). The Pushback asserts that teen parents "can be caring and fabulous role models for their children...We know young families can be successful." Rather than follow a narrow script, like the pre-scripted interviews present in the Candie's Foundation, the Pushback gives teen parents a chance to write free-form on the blog about their insights, experiences, and feelings. It serves as a safe, open, honest space where teen parents themselves can dispel the very myths that teen pregnancy prevention campaigns like the three studied here perpetuate on a daily basis.

The NYC HRA's teen pregnancy prevention campaign came under fire from activists and local politicians, as well as local organizations, evidence that there are, at least to some degree, advocates willing to speak up for teen mothers. Planned Parenthood of New York City publicly blasted the campaign, saying that it "creates stigma, hostility

and negative public opinions about teen pregnancy and parenthood rather than offering alternative aspirations for young people,” (Boyette). There has also been a grassroots effort, including the emergence of the No Stigma! No Shame! campaign from the New York Coalition for Reproductive Justice, launched in direct response to the NYC HRA’s campaign. The No Stigma! No Shame! campaign asserts that “teen parents need support, not shame,” and demands a public acknowledgement and apology from the NYC HRA, removal of all campaign posters, and the creation of a Teen Parent Council within the HRA, composed of teen parents and their advocates (The New York Coalition for Reproductive Justice). As of January 2014, none of these requests have been granted.

Beyond Teen Pregnancy Prevention

It is time to build off of these small, concentrated, grassroots efforts and form a larger coalition of feminists, progressives, and reproductive justice advocates who not only defend teen mothers against the shame and blame that takes places in these campaigns, but shifts the entire dialogue around teen pregnancy. In fact, I argue it’s time to abandon teen pregnancy prevention altogether.

Rather than focusing solely on teen pregnancy and parenthood, particularly in ways that reify teen girls’ sexuality as shameful and deviant, it is time to shift the framework to preventing all unwanted pregnancies, whether teen or adult. As has been shown, teen pregnancy prevention campaigns shame and blame teen mothers in an effort to reify conjugal, marital heterosexuality and exonerate policymakers. These campaigns often commodify teen mothers as shameful objects of social scorn and frame them as responsible for larger, systemic social problems like poverty, crime, and lack of education. Teen pregnancy prevention campaigns were founded under neoliberal efforts

to dismantle the welfare state and teen mothers are still used as props in the ongoing effort to frame welfare recipients as lazy and undeserving.

Feminist activists and feminist organizations should play a central role in this restructuring. Rather than using teen pregnancy as a means of drumming up support for contraception and sex education, feminists should shift towards supporting a comprehensive campaign to prevent all unwanted pregnancies, regardless of age, as well as advocate for the rights of teen mothers.

Feminist researcher Anna Marie Smith encourages feminists to use utopian mapping to outline what a truly feminist welfare system would look like, one that is just, fair, and truly based on ideals of equality and compassion. Though she notes that utopian theory is often dismissed as frivolous, she makes a compelling case for utopian mapping as an intersectional tool: “Utopian mapping can help us to appreciate the fact that we cannot fulfill the potential inherent in every single reform envisioned by the welfare mothers’ movement unless that measure is introduced in tandem with many other,” (Smith 207).

Smith’s vision of utopian mapping is useful in framing what a feminist understanding of teen pregnancy would look like. A feminist vision of teen pregnancy would, in my estimation, mean leaving behind the notion that teen pregnancy is a social ill to be prevented and instead, shift towards a discourse of preventing unwanted pregnancies while advocating for the rights of teen mothers politically and socially. The assumption that teen pregnancy as something to be prevented relies on problematic,

privileged notions of what are the best choices girls and women should make and reiterates the notion that teen mothers are failures.

It's time that we abandon teen pregnancy prevention and in its place, create comprehensive, resource- and information-based campaigns to prevent unwanted pregnancy. In shifting to preventing unwanted pregnancy, we can abandon the underlying sexist fear of female sexuality that dominates so many teen pregnancy prevention campaigns. Instead of pushing abstinence, we offer a full spectrum options on how to prevent unwanted pregnancy. A campaign to prevent unwanted pregnancy would center around empowerment and information, not stigma and fear.

Beyond that, we must also cultivate necessary coalitions to demand policy changes. Having the choice to take birth control, use condoms, or have an abortion means nothing if those choices are rendered inaccessible. A comprehensive campaign to prevent unwanted pregnancy must include policy demands for affordable access to the full spectrum of sexual and reproductive healthcare for *everyone*, regardless of age, race, gender, sexuality, gender identity, or relationship status. This would mean partnering with reproductive justice organizations that advocate for a broader range of reproductive rights, including the right to bear children. Teens have the same right to bodily autonomy and to determine their own reproductive fate as adults, and they therefore have the right to bear children, if they so choose.

What's more, in focusing on preventing unwanted teen pregnancies, we must also complement that effort with real and systemic support for pregnant and parenting teens. Rather than shame teen mothers, we should focus on policies that empower them, offer them support, and provide access to healthcare, daycare, and education. Instead of

myopically focusing on preventing teen pregnancy, let's expand our focus and advocate for the rights of teens who are already parents.

Conclusion

What is clear from the Candie's Foundation, the Stay Teen campaign, and the NYC HRA's campaign is that teen pregnancy prevention campaigns aren't merely interested in preventing unwanted teen pregnancy. They also create and perpetuate certain narratives about teen pregnancy and specifically teen motherhood, often reinforcing social stigma around teen mothers. All three of these campaigns are gender-specific, rarely, if ever, referring to teen fathers. The Candie's Foundation and the NYC HRA specifically use emotionally manipulative language to signal that teen motherhood is immoral and teen mothers are irresponsible and lascivious. While the Stay Teen campaign does offer more in the way of information regarding sexual and reproductive healthcare, they too reify teen motherhood as terrible and life-ruining.

Teen pregnancy prevention campaigns emerged under the neoliberal dismantling of the welfare state in the 1990s, and it is clear that they are still perpetuating the same myths and narratives about poverty and social funding that dominated neoliberal talking points that fueled the end of the Aid for Families of Dependent Children welfare program in 1996. These campaigns are still perpetuating harmful myths and shameful stereotypes, and it is time to move beyond them.

Teen mothers are not cautionary tales. They are not political props to be used in an effort to end entitlement programs. They are not horror stories of lives ruined. They are women. They are mothers. They are human beings. It's time that we end shame-and-

blame campaigns and instead, offer support, compassion, and humanity. It's time to end teen pregnancy prevention campaigns. It's time to end the shame.

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