

Bristol Palin: the pedagogical media spectacle of a sexual abstinence ambassador

Thuy DaoJensen*

Department of Teacher Education, University of Southern Indiana, Evansville, IN 47712, USA

(Received 20 August 2012; final version received 22 April 2013)

This paper explores the public political media spectacle of Bristol Palin's teenage pregnancy and her status as a single mother through the lens of a critical feminist discourse analysis. The author explores how cultural anxieties over teenage sexuality and unintended pregnancy in America are constructed when the pregnant teen is the daughter of an ambitious politician who is White, upper-middle class, and holds evangelical Christian beliefs. From pregnant teen thrust into the media spotlight by her politically ambitious mother to ambassador of sexual abstinence, the pedagogical media spectacle of Bristol Palin promoting abstinence is unique and can be understood as part of a broader postfeminist media culture in which the articulation of feminist empowerment principles, such as female agency and reproductive choice, is subverted within the neoliberal discourse of personal responsibility and financial independence.

Keywords: teen pregnancy; single motherhood; abstinence-only; postfeminism; neoliberalism

Introduction

In the 2008 US presidential campaign, Republican candidate Senator John McCain chose Alaskan governor Sarah Palin as his vice-presidential running mate. Palin had been governor of Alaska for less than two years, but her evangelical Christian background was needed to woo favour with social conservatives within the Republican Party (Goldstein and Shear 2008). As part of her gubernatorial campaign in 2006, Sarah Palin had expressed an unyielding support for abstinence-only sex education programmes in Alaska (Mehta 2008).

By appropriating the logic of Second Wave feminism's rallying cry of the early 1970s, 'the personal is political', Gov. Palin would repeatedly use her decision not to have an abortion and give birth to a baby boy with Down Syndrome to assert her conservative Christian 'family values' in political speeches during the presidential campaign (Rosin 2008). However, a few days after Sarah Palin accepted the vice-presidential nomination, she announced that her unmarried, then 17-year-old daughter, Bristol Palin, was five months pregnant (Seelye 2008). At the Republican National Convention, Gov. Palin brought out her husband, their three daughters, and infant son. A visibly pregnant Bristol Palin and her boyfriend, Levi Johnston, were also in attendance.

*Email: tdaoensen@usi.edu

Bristol and her boyfriend never spoke publicly to the media about her pregnancy during the presidential campaign. Gov. Sarah Palin's high profile in the presidential campaign and the mediated imagery of Bristol Palin's teen pregnancy precipitated public debate regarding the causes and consequences of teen pregnancy (Bute and Russell 2012). During President George W. Bush's administration, social conservatives in Congress increased federal government funding with matching state grants for abstinence-only sex education to exceed \$1 billion even as medical health professionals concluded the approach was ineffective in reducing teen pregnancy rates (Boonstra 2009). The hypervisibility of Bristol Palin's pregnancy rekindled debates surrounding the ineffectiveness of abstinence-only sex education and the re-positioning of teen pregnancy as a social problem with negative consequences for women's reproductive health, ideal family forms, and expected life course (Bute and Russell 2012).

In this article, I explore the pedagogical media spectacle of Bristol Palin's teenage pregnancy and her status as a single mother. Kellner (2005, 2) notes that media culture in the new millennium serves as a 'force of socialization, providing models of masculinity and femininity, socially approved and disapproved behaviours . . . and appropriate role models'. Kellner (2005) defines media spectacles as 'those phenomena of media culture that embody contemporary society's basic values, serve to initiate individuals into its way of life, and dramatize its controversies and struggles' (2). Analysing Bristol Palin's pregnancy as a text to be read critically and framed as a public political pedagogy positioning her as a role model advocating sexual abstinence stands in stark contrast to the images of non-White impoverished teen mothers in American culture. How did a pregnant teen from a White, upper-middle class, evangelical Christian family become the ambassador for sexual abstinence? From her initial public appearance as the pregnant daughter of a charismatic vice-presidential candidate to publicly talking about her experiences in becoming a single mother, the pedagogical media spectacle of Bristol Palin had the potential to engage the American public in critiquing the cultural anxieties and stigmatisation often reproduced in popular culture and public discourses surrounding teen pregnancy and single motherhood (Luker 1996; Kelly 2000; Luttrell 2003; Pillow 2004). As I will argue, the pedagogical media spectacle of Bristol Palin can be understood to perpetuate regressive, postfeminist, and neoliberal discourses.

Discourses surrounding teen pregnancy and single motherhood

Teenage pregnancy emerged as a problematic social construction during the 1970s in the USA (Luker 1996). Public concerns over a declining economy coupled with the expansion of reproductive rights for women such as the legalisation of abortion and increased federal funding for reproductive healthcare and birth control services for all women led to cultural anxieties over female sexuality, teen pregnancy, and the negative impact of feminism in transforming gender roles in American society (Pillow 2004).

Cultural anxieties and negative attitudes over teenage pregnancy are evident in the public discourses that continually position it as a stigmatised status (Kelly 1996). Discourses are institutionalised ways of understanding and communicating, typically through texts and talk, in which social power, dominance, and social inequality are constructed, reproduced, contested, and challenged (Van Dijk 1993). Discourses are not neutral as they are created and shaped by the medical, educational, religious, legal, and media institutions in society and influence the ways in which we perceive and

interpret relationships and events as common sense. When a discourse becomes part of the common sense way of understanding any subject, such as teenage pregnancy, it is commonly referred to as a hegemonic discourse (Van Dijk 2001).

Kelly (1996) identified four public discourses about teen pregnancy and single motherhood. The dominant discourse surrounding teenage pregnancy is the 'wrong-girl' perspective that presumes that all young women should complete their education, get a job, get married to a man, and have children. The 'wrong-girl' stigmatises non-conformist young women as deviants, blaming them for 'bad choices' in which their respectability and moral fitness as a parent become suspect, both signs of 'middle-class-ness' in American public discourse (Luttrell 2009, 2011, 296).

The second discourse, or the 'wrong-family' perspective, is often embraced by economic, social, and religious conservatives who ardently believe teen pregnancy should always be stigmatised in order to maintain moral order and economic stability through traditional patriarchal family structures (Kelly 1996). The 'wrong-family' discourse assumes that moral and financial responsibilities should reside within families, not through government funded programmes. Social anxieties over income inequity and increasing privatisation efforts of the public sphere (of what once was viewed as part of the public trust) intertwine with attendant racist and class-based assumptions which are then played out on the bodies of pregnant teenagers (particularly Black and Latino teenagers). Pregnant teens are in turn positioned as the root cause of poverty.

The final two discourses of teenage pregnancy reflect alternative perspectives in aiming to reduce the stigma of teen pregnancy (Kelly 1996). The 'stigma is wrong' perspective reflects teen mothers' rejection of the marginalisation and stigmatisation effects embedded in both the 'wrong-girl' and 'wrong-family' discourses and discursive practices. In many studies, teen mothers often emphasised self-empowerment as they rejected negative depictions of them as lacking maturity, as victims, as welfare abusers, or morally corrupt (Kelly 1996, 2000; Luttrell 2003, 2011; Pillow 2004). The fourth discourse: the 'wrong-society' perspective offers a feminist analysis, recognising race and social class as directly shaping a teenager's decisions. Access to birth control and abortion demonstrates the objective conditions reproducing social inequality through race, class, and gender relations. In contrast to these last two discourses, the first two public discourses surrounding teen mothers often distort rather than illuminate nuanced understandings of teen mothers' subjectivities.

Wendy Luttrell (2003, 2011) writes that the concept of teenage pregnancy must be understood as both a public discourse and as an individual experience. As a pregnancy is physical evidence of sexual activity, pregnant teens often have to deal with the double standard that sexual activity signifies maturity and masculinity for young men but immorality and promiscuity for young women (Tolman 2005). Once the baby is born, teen mothers are very conscious of their stigmatised status and often attempt to distance themselves from the negative stereotypes in the discourses that frame teen mothers as immature, irresponsible, and promiscuous (Kulkarni 2007). Anachronistic gendered concepts of idealised femininity often prompt teen mothers to express sentiments of romance, love, and commitment to the father of their baby 'even in the face of infidelity, emotional neglect, economic hardship, and violence' (Kulkarni 2007, 16). In contrast to negative depictions of teen mothers as being irresponsible, studies focusing on the individual experiences and perspectives of teen mothers highlight that taking responsibility for children is a major concern for teen mothers (Rains, Davies, and McKinnon 1998; Kelly 2000; Luttrell 2003; Pillow 2004; Rolfe 2008).

Historically, overcoming the marginalisation and stigmatisation of the discourses surrounding teen pregnancy and single motherhood was and still remains easier for White, middle class teen mothers than it is for teen mothers of colour and/or from working class backgrounds (Kelly 2000; Leadbeater and Way 2001; Rolfe 2008; Luttrell 2011). From 1945 to the mid-1970s in the USA, the dominant racialised 'wrong-girl' discourse surrounding single motherhood characterised unwed White mothers as individuals caught in unfortunate life circumstances whose lives could be reformed with the right institutional guidance, yet unwed mothers of colour were considered inherently flawed and unworthy of support (Solinger 2000). By the early 1970s, the women's rights movement for gender equality, access to birth control options, the legalisation of abortion, as well as less restrictive attitudes towards female sexuality outside of marriage combined to provide White women with choices in delaying motherhood to pursue higher education and careers (D'Emilio and Freedman 1998; Solinger 2000). The stigmatisation of 'teenage pregnancy' and the moral panic over the teen mother arose 'out of concern about the increase in unwed sexual activity, pregnancies, unwed births, and unwed teen pregnancy among *white* women' [emphasis mine] (Pillow 2004, 28). In contrast, women of colour did not benefit from increased access to birth control options that White women did. Racialised fears that White women were delaying motherhood and having less children than women of colour contributed to the perceived 'problem' of teen pregnancy (Nathanson 1991; Pillow 2004).

Pillow (2004, 35) identified certain discursive practices that emerged in the 1980s that constructed the pregnant teenager as 'other'. These practices included: framing teen pregnancy as an 'epidemic', linking teen pregnancy with poverty and welfare dependency, the racialised representation of the teen mother as a 'black welfare mother', and the positioning of teen mothers as 'children having children' who were the result of lenient social policy and the decline of traditional family unit. From the mid-1980s to present day, the 'wrong-family' discourse of teenage pregnancy became racially coded to refer to young, Black or Latino, working class, single mothers having babies to get access to government assistance. As Martin Gilens (1999) notes, many White Americans continue to hold negative racial stereotypes of Blacks as lazy and lacking a strong work ethic.

Critical feminist researchers have sought to offer counter narratives that challenge the hegemonic discourses stigmatising teen pregnancy and single teen motherhood by focusing on the voices of teen mothers, their heterogeneous personal experiences, and positive outcomes in becoming mothers (Phoenix 1991; Phoenix and Woollett 1991; Kelly 1996, 2000; Schultz 2001; Pillow 2004; Luttrell 2009). However, Kelly (2000) cautions that there is 'danger in seeing the experiences of teen mothers as somehow more authentic and able to transcend the dominant discourse to a new point of clarity' as 'the stories are always representations'.

In making sense of their experiences, teen mothers, like all of us, inevitably draw on existing ideologies. Therefore, rather than accepting their accounts at face value, we need to 'examine collectively the central role social and historical practices play in shaping and producing these narratives'. (Fuss 1989, 118, quoted in Kelly 2000, 163)

Still, the dilemma of accurately representing teen mothers' experiences without necessarily reproducing the stigmatising discourses persists. Pillow (2004, 5) asks, 'What is a representative story of a teen mother?' Struggling against stereotypical portrayals of teen mothers, Pillow notes that even narratives that portray teen mothers as having

agency and resiliency in adverse situations or narratives that disrupt the hegemonic discourse are also subject to discourse categorisation as either ‘feminist victim (teen mother as victim of her circumstances) or feminist victory (teen mother who overcame against all odds)’. She notes that, ‘paradoxically it is the hypervisibility of the teen mother in social welfare debates and diagnoses of sexual immorality in the USA that reproduces stereotypical knowledge about teen mothers and masks other potential knowings’ (Pillow 2004, 5). Moreover, Pillow argues that the discursive tensions surrounding teen pregnancy as well as how to represent the teen mother are ‘a reinstatement of control over female sexuality and the reminder that women are ultimately responsible for not only their own sexual purity but societal sexual morality as well’ (Pillow 2004, 6).

More recently, media scholars have observed a notable shift away from depictions of unplanned teen pregnancy as a shameful and immoral status in popular culture films released prior to Bristol Palin’s teen pregnancy (Hoerl and Kelly 2010). In their analysis of *Juno*, a movie about a White, middle class, pregnant teenager who decides to give up her baby for adoption, Hoerl and Kelly (2010, 361) argue that women’s reproductive agency has become depoliticised within a postfeminist discourse in that the ‘meaning of choice is inverted such that even a woman’s decision to reclaim her traditional gender roles is coded as a feminist expression of agency’. Luttrell (2011, 298) asserts that the pregnant teen in *Juno*, who makes the ‘good choice’ to carry out her teen pregnancy and complete high school, is the ‘quintessential neo-liberal subject’ whose White privilege and rational decision making contributes to her worthiness and deserving of the audiences’ sympathies (Hoerl and Kelly 2010). While *Juno* was a fictional movie character, the media coverage of Bristol Palin’s real life teen pregnancy and single motherhood status followed a similar narrative in which the postfeminist, neoliberal subject reiterates discourses of individual choice and personal responsibility, with minimal attention to how these specifically gendered experiences are contingent on age, race, and socio-economic class of the teen mother. In examining the pedagogical media spectacle of Bristol Palin, I rely on Gill’s (2007a) concept of postfeminism as a ‘distinctive sensibility’ in which contradictory discourses of feminism and anti-feminist themes are intertwined, with no single definitive version of feminism as a standard point of comparison. She asserts that postfeminism is neither an epistemological perspective nor an analytic perspective and maintains that postfeminist media culture is the object of critical analysis. Gill (2007a, 149) describes the elements of this postfeminist sensibility include the articulation of inter-related themes of femininity as a bodily project, the shift from objectification to subjectification, a focus on self-discipline, individualism, choice, and empowerment, the dominance of a makeover paradigm, and an emphasis on consumerism of difference.

McRobbie (2004, 255) observes that postfeminism is ‘an active process by which feminist gains of the 1970s and 80s come to be undermined’ in that feminism is invoked and repudiated at the same time. For example, McRobbie (2004) cites the co-existence of neoliberal logic of individual freedom and choice with neo-conservative values in relation to gender, sexuality, and family life such as increasing federal support for abstinence-only policies of President George W. Bush. Neoliberalism denotes a political ideology that proposes that individual freedom can be best promoted and achieved within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and the role of government is minimised (Harvey 2005). Neoliberal values of individual autonomy, personal responsibility, and choice also permeate cultural attitudes towards gender identity and female sexuality. In postfeminist discourse,

there is a presumption that equality has already been achieved and that all choices are freely chosen, without attention to how women's choices are heavily circumscribed by age, race, and class. Lazar (2009, 340) asserts that postfeminism 'speaks the language of feminism, but without investment in feminist activism, collectivism, social justice and transformation of prevailing gender orders'. Postfeminism draws upon feminist ideals of personal empowerment, autonomy, and gender equality of Second Wave feminism but also renders it as 'past' (Lazar 2009).

Gill (2008, 443) argues that there is a strong relationship between postfeminism and neoliberalism in that 'both appear to be structured by a current of individualism that has almost entirely replaced notions of the social or political, or any idea of the individual as subject to pressures, constraints, or influence from outside themselves. Secondly, it is clear that the autonomous, calculating, self-regulating subject of neoliberalism bears a strong resemblance to the active, freely choosing, self-reinventing subject of postfeminism'. Moreover, Gill observes that within the context of a postfeminist media culture, it is women, not men, who are expected to engage in this work of self-discipline and self-reinvention in ways that appear as if all their actions stem from their own volition.

A postfeminist sensibility is crucial to understanding the pedagogical media spectacle of Bristol Palin from a pregnant teenager who engages in the process of self-discipline and self-reinvention as she became a 'sexual abstinence ambassador' in an image makeover. I employ a critical feminist discourse analysis of specific mainstream American postfeminist media texts chronicling Palin's teen pregnancy and subsequent single motherhood status. According to Van Dijk (1993, 2001), a critical discourse analysis serves to illuminate how the discursive practices of social, economic, and political power are initiated, maintained, reproduced, and transformed to promote particular versions of reality. Critiquing forms of social inequality such as race, class, and gender inequality require a diligent focus on 'the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance' (Van Dijk 1993, 249). In merging a critical discourse analysis with feminist studies, Lazer (2007, 141) asserts that a critical feminist discourse analysis 'aims to advance a rich and nuanced understanding of power and ideology in discourse in sustaining (hierarchically) gendered social arrangements'. In addition, discourses of patriarchy often work in conjunction with corporatist and consumerist ideologies (Lazar 2007).

The sensational media spectacle of Bristol Palin as a pregnant teen officially started off with a silent public appearance at the Republican National Convention. I selected the media coverage of it as conducted by *The Daily Show* to highlight the overlapping multiple discourses about teen pregnancy as a social stigma and the ambivalence of using the word 'choice' to describe her decision to have the baby with plans to marry her boyfriend. Bristol Palin first spoke publicly of her experiences in an exclusive interview with Greta Van Susteren of *Fox News*. As I will elaborate later in this article, the interview had the potential to disrupt the discourses stigmatising teen pregnancy, but instead reconfigured the postfeminist narrative of motherhood as a feminist expression of agency.

After Palin became a single mother, the Candie's Foundation hired her as an 'abstinence ambassador'. In choosing to analyse Palin's public appearances, the public service announcements created by the Candie's Foundation, and an interview transcript with the CEO of Candie's corporation, I am also problematising what Gill (2008, 436) refers to as 're-valorisation of the autonomous subject' within the postfeminist and neoliberal discourses that views individuals as rational and self-regulating. Citing the study of working class young women in the UK by Walkerdine, Lucy, and Melody (2001),

Gill (2008, 436) notes that ‘the neoliberal subject is required to bear full responsibility for their life biography no matter how severe the constraints upon their action’. According to this logic, Bristol Palin is the neoliberal subject who bears full responsibility for becoming a single teen mother, with minimal attention to how her class privilege or evangelical Christian upbringing has been decontextualised from the narrative. The pedagogical media spectacle of Bristol Palin is part of a broader postfeminist media culture in which the articulation of feminist empowerment principles, such as female agency and reproductive choice, is subverted within the neoliberal discourse of personal responsibility and financial independence.

Bristol Palin and the decision

In September 2008, correspondent Samantha Bee of *The Daily Show* (2008) travelled to the Republican National Convention. While there, Bee interviewed delegates to get their perspectives about Sarah Palin as a viable vice-presidential candidate as well as their thoughts on Bristol Palin’s teen pregnancy. *The Daily Show* is an American television programme that satirises politicians and national headline news stories as they draw out the absurdity of what is often portrayed as serious news in journalism. Baym (2010, 102) writes that *The Daily Show* has reinvented political journalism by combining satire and parody of political events in ways that encourage the viewing audience to critically examine and critique what is being reported as newsworthy, thus coming ‘far closer to the ideal of critical publicity that theorists have long suggested democracy demands’. Transgressing the boundaries of traditional journalism, Baym (2010, 104) describes *The Daily Show* as a programme that ‘thoroughly effaces the boundaries between information and entertainment, drawing equally from traditions of network news and late-night talk to produce a powerful, discursively integrated kind of public affairs programming – a comedy show that has become one of the best sources of news and the most critical voice on contemporary television’. Unlike traditional journalism, *The Daily Show* refers to itself as a ‘fake news’ programme that utilises the mock serious tone of traditional journalists in one-on-one interviews with people to elicit candid responses to newsworthy events.

Admittedly, *The Daily Show* is not a conventional news programme and readings of it cannot be analysed in the same way as traditional news. Brewer and Marquardt (2007) note that *The Daily Show* has the potential to educate citizens about politics and policy issues by encouraging its audience members to think critically – or perhaps cynically – about traditional news coverage. As the electoral conventions in American politics are usually heavily scripted with media focus on the candidates, Samantha Bee’s interview of Republican delegates’ views of Gov. Sarah Palin and her pregnant teenage daughter allow the *Show*’s audiences to hear the unrehearsed responses of ordinary citizens within the Republican party engaged in discourses surrounding teen pregnancy, particularly when the policy issue is focused on women’s reproductive agency. When Samantha Bee asked the Republican delegates about Sarah Palin’s qualifications as a vice-presidential candidate, the delegates were unequivocally enthusiastic. However, one male delegate at the Convention complained that it was ‘very inappropriate that the Democrats have seized on the issue of Bristol’s pregnancy’. Ironically, one Republican female supporter proclaimed that ‘politics should stay out of people’s business!’ In her defense of Gov. Palin and her pregnant teenage daughter, this Republican female delegate had inadvertently embraced the pro-choice position. While Bristol Palin’s decision to continue with her unintended

pregnancy is certainly aligned with the Republican Party's official pro-life platform, her orchestrated appearance with her 'fiancé' (Levi Johnston) at the Republican National Convention was also a nod to historically contingent expectations that a pregnant teen from a White, middle-class family should be quickly ushered into a 'shotgun marriage' as soon as possible.

As Bee continued to press other Republican delegates at the convention to tell her what they thought about Bristol Palin's unintended teen pregnancy, many of the Republican supporters were often hesitant to verbalise the word 'choice' in describing Bristol Palin's decision to go through with her pregnancy. For avid viewers of *The Daily Show*, the irony of Samantha Bee questioning Republican delegates on their thoughts regarding women's reproductive rights was that her own real life pregnancies had become part of her media persona, a take charge female feminist (fake) news correspondent whose mission was to draw out the absurdity and contradictions of anti-feminist viewpoints.

Piecing together a montage of these interviews, Samantha Bee highlights the ambivalence of many social conservatives when a young woman exercises her reproductive rights.

Samantha Bee interviewing older White male: *She made the ... I'm sorry. What is ... the decision ... the decision? There's another word I'm looking for ...*

Samantha Bee interviewing older White female, blue hat: *It rhymes with ... I think it rhymes with 'voice ...'*

Samantha Bee interviewing White female, middle-aged, short blonde hair: *Every family and every woman should have the right to ... I'm sorry. What's the word I'm looking for?*

Samantha Bee interviewing White female, brown hair: *It's her family, it's her ... God! What is the word? What is the word I'm looking for? It's like an alternative ... or if you have two things ...*

Samantha Bee interviewing older White female, brown hair: *It's like when you have a lot of options and you select one. What's the word I'm looking for? What is the word?*

White female, brown hair: *Adoption is one ... umm ...*

Samantha Bee interviewing older White female, brown hair: *No, there's a specific word I'm looking for ...*

Young woman, brown hair: *I'm sure the family will be willing to make the best decision for them.*

Samantha Bee interviewing young White female, brown hair: *They'll have the freedom to make that decision.*

Young woman, brown hair: (silence, head nods)

Samantha Bee interviewing White male in glasses, red/white/blue hat: *It's like, you know when you have an alternative? What's the word I'm looking for? Alternative ...*

White male in glasses: *A different choice?*

Samantha Bee interviewing White male in glasses: *CHOICE! Yes, exactly! Every family, every person, should have a CHOICE to decide what's best for them!*

White male, brown hair: *You know, the Left ... umm ... clamors for choice. We wanna make a choice. We want choice. And Sarah Palin's daughter has made a choice.*

As many of the delegates hesitated in their responses, they may have been deflecting attention away from vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin and her daughter Bristol, whose teen pregnancy precipitated many cultural anxieties over premarital sexual activity among young, White, upper middle class, evangelical Christian women. When further questioned by Samantha Bee, the female delegate who proclaimed that 'politics should stay out of people's business', invoking the neoliberal laissez-faire notion that government should not be involved in telling women what to do with their bodies, also tried to argue that *having* freedom of choice should not be characterised as *being* pro-choice.

White female, middle-aged: *Freedom of choice? That's different from being pro-choice.*
 Samantha Bee: *She's able to make the choice that she doesn't really want other people to have. Right? Does that make sense?*

As Bee interrogated this delegate's words with a mixture of seriousness and irony, she is also deliberately confronting the pro-life position within the Republican Party platform and its underlying anti-feminist intent to severely limit other women's reproductive choices but still reserve reproductive choices for themselves. The political side-stepping and circumscribing around Bristol's 'decision' to have the baby and to refrain from using the word 'choice' in describing it, reveals flaws in the pro-life platform within the Republican Party, which often conflates the pro-choice position as synonymous with being pro-abortion. As Gill (2008) notes, postfeminist media texts are commonly characterised by a tendency to entangle feminist and anti-feminist discourses. The delegates' effusive support for Bristol's teen pregnancy relies on this postfeminist sensibility whereby feminist ideas of individual choice are invoked in order to repudiate feminist gains in reproductive rights. If abortion was not legal in the USA, there would be no choice and the 'decision' to give birth would have already been made for women in Bristol Palin's situation.

Similar to *The Daily Show's* montage of delegate interviews at the Convention, mainstream news organisations reported delegates being overwhelmingly supportive of Bristol Palin's teen pregnancy. One Republican delegate expressed empathy for the Palins, 'Like so many American families who are in this same situation, I think it's great that she instilled in her daughter the values to have the child and not to sneak off someplace and have an abortion' (Talbot 2008). Implicit in this assumption is that Bristol Palin made a morally 'good choice' in not getting an abortion. As Hoerl and Kelly (2010, 361) note, mainstream media discourses covering Bristol Palin's unplanned pregnancy obfuscated the politics of women's reproductive agency by framing her decision in terms of her ability to *make the right choice*. Kelly (2000, 48) critiques the individualistic 'good choices' discourse surrounding teen pregnancy as a 'fashionable, flawed attempt to avoid stigma' while simultaneously creating 'the illusion of rising above moral debates and conflicting beliefs and values to the realms of 'facts' and the weighing of costs and benefits'. In this sense, the good choices discourse appears to be ideologically neutral but obscures the context of race, class, and gender. Often working within the 'wrong-girl' discourse, the 'good choices' discourse frames teen mothers as individuals who are held personally responsible for their choices and therefore blameworthy if they make the wrong choice. Kelly notes that what determines whether a choice is good or bad is largely filtered by ideological lenses of social conservatives or social liberals. The logic embedded in the 'good choices' discourse posits that all teen mothers have the choice to have premarital sex, the choice to use contraception, the choice to have an abortion, the choice to marry, and the choice to keep the baby instead of giving it up for adoption. For example, the 'good choices' discourse has kept pro-life social conservatives from emphasising adoption for fear that they might push young women toward abortion instead (Kelly 2000). Compliance with patriarchal discourses that uphold the female role of motherhood as women's imperative is more valued than exercising reproductive choice. By framing the process of obtaining an abortion as a shameful act to be performed in secrecy and away from the public surveillance of women's bodies, social conservatives reinforce expectations and perpetuate the patriarchal attitudes that dictate abstinence for young women, a discourse that neither recognises nor supports women's agency and reproductive rights.

For all the gains of Second Wave feminism with reproductive rights, Page (2006) argues that the socially conservative, evangelical Christian-based, pro-life movement in America is more than just an anti-abortion movement. Rather, the agenda within the contemporary pro-life movement is to fundamentally change the way women live their lives by restricting access to contraception and convincing young women to be sexually abstinent before marriage. After abortion was legalised in 1973, women's reproductive choices in dealing with an unplanned pregnancy were no longer limited to adoption or abortion. Solinger (2005, 212) asserts that the rise of single motherhood is a direct consequence of *Roe v. Wade* as many American women reasoned: 'If I can decide for myself whether or not to stay pregnant, surely I can decide whether or not to be the mother of the child I will give birth to'. Even as the stigmatisation of single motherhood has decreased in more recent times, single teen motherhood continues to be framed within the 'wrong-girl' perspective in which a pregnant teen is blamed for making 'bad choices', such as getting pregnant in high school, not waiting to have sex until marriage, and not being married before having a baby remains an enduring discourse in American culture (Luttrell 2011).

Post election: new baby and renewed calls for abstinence

In November 2008, Barack Obama became the first elected African-American president as the Republican candidate John McCain and his vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin lost the presidential election. However, this was not the end of media attention for Bristol Palin. In December 2008, Bristol gave birth to a baby boy, Tripp.

Two months later, Bristol spoke publicly for the first time, in an exclusive interview with Greta Van Susteren (2009) of *Fox News*. According to the national media watch group, FAIR, *Fox News* was founded in 1996 by a former Republican political operative in American politics (Ackerman 2001). The financially successful news channel is dedicated to promoting socially conservative viewpoints. Bristol Palin's exclusive interview with Van Susteren on *Fox News* had the potential to counter the stigmatising discourses surrounding teenage pregnancy but inevitably perpetuated its regressive, class-based ideologies.

Van Susteren: *Teen pregnancy – what's your thought on that?*

Bristol Palin: *I think everyone should just wait 10 years.*

Van Susteren: *That's just – why?*

Bristol Palin: *Just because it's so much easier if you're married and if you have a house and a career and – it's just so much easier.*

Van Susteren: *What do your parents say about teen pregnancy?*

Bristol Palin: *It's not something to strive for, I guess. It's just – I don't know. I'm not the first person that it's happened to and I'm not going to be the last. But I don't know. I'd love for – to be an advocate to prevent teen pregnancy because it's not, like, a situation that you want to strive for, I guess.*

Bristol Palin's interview as a media spectacle relies on what Gill (2008) refers to as the 're-valorisation of the autonomous subject' which is often found in postfeminist and neoliberal discourses that view the female individual as rational and self-regulating. Far from disrupting stigmatising discourses about teen pregnancy and single motherhood, Bristol Palin's response that 'everyone should just wait 10 years' utilises the 'wrong-girl' discourse that normalises the culturally constructed White, middle-class norm of delaying motherhood before marriage and career. In a latter part of the interview,

Bristol reiterates this point, 'I wished it would have happened in, like, ten years so I could have a job and an education and be, like, prepared and have my own house and stuff. But he brings so much joy, I don't regret it at all. I just wish it would have happened in ten years, rather than right now'. As a neoliberal subject within a postfeminist media culture, Palin must bear full personal responsibility for making a choice in becoming a single teen mother. In order to overcome her stigmatised status as a single teen mother, Palin must submit to a mediated image makeover in which she re-invents herself as a responsible woman with moral autonomy and self-discipline by expressing a desire to transform herself into an advocate to prevent teen pregnancy'. However, when questioned by Van Susteren about her views on contraception, Palin provided vague and contradictory answers about promoting sexual abstinence to youth.

Van Susteren: *I don't want to pry too personally, but I mean, actually, contraception is an issue here. Is that something that you were just lazy about or not interested, or do you have a philosophical or religious opposition to it or ...*

Bristol Palin: *No. I don't want to get into detail about that. But I think abstinence is, like – I don't know how to put it – like, the main – everyone should be abstinent or whatever, but it's not realistic at all.*

Van Susteren: *Why?*

Bristol Palin: *Because – I don't want to get into details on this.*

Van Susteren: *Well, no, I don't mean personally, just big picture, not – not necessarily about you, but ...*

Bristol Palin: *Because it's more and more accepted now.*

Van Susteren: *Among your classmates and kids your age?*

Bristol Palin: *Among – yes, among kids my age.*

Van Susteren: *How do you change that?*

Bristol Palin: *To see stories like this and to see other stories of teen moms and just – it's something that's – I don't know, just – you should just wait ten years and it'd just be so much easier.*

Palin's assertion that young people are ignoring the abstinence-only messages in sex education presented a contemplative space for exploring the complex relationship between cultural anxieties and youth subjectivity. Insofar as Bristol Palin was acknowledging that young people do engage in premarital sex and rejecting the messages of abstinence-only as 'not realistic', she also did not advocate for more comprehensive sex education about contraception. Furthermore, there was a lack of analysis of how stigmatising discourses related to teen pregnancy and the teen mother contribute to obscuring the effectiveness of comprehensive sex education in reducing teen pregnancy rates with reactionary calls to reiterate the abstinence-only message to youth. In expressing the subjective feelings associated with her new motherhood status, Bristol Palin's words also reveal a subtle hegemonic White, middle-class logic that privileges women who have access to a college education and have established a well-paying career as more *deserving* of motherhood status. The tacit assumptions of a postfeminist media culture are that middle-class lifestyle aspirations are commonly shared and universally accessible and are often erroneously based on the notion that the feminist ideal of full economic freedom has been achieved for all women regardless of their race and socioeconomic status (Tasker and Negra 2007). The limitations of economic disparities, unequal educational opportunities, and social class stratification among women are rarely problematised in a postfeminist media culture. Solinger (2005, 217) notes that:

As women have gained reproductive rights, they have also gained social status. But ironically, since *Roe*, many women have wanted to associate their new rights and new status with their own individual *righteousness*. That is, now that pregnancy has become a 'choice', many middle-class women, most politicians, and others define the good choice maker as the woman who has *earned the right* to exercise choice properly by having enough money to be a legitimate and proper mother. In the minds of many Americans, legitimate pregnancy now has less to do with having a husband and more to do with 'having enough money'.

With regard to Bristol Palin's single teen mother status, her racial and class privilege allows her to escape the stigma often directed at single teen mothers from working class backgrounds. In combination with the 'wrong-girl' discourse, this version of the 'wrong-family' discourse conceals the underlying classism that blames single teen mothers for making the 'wrong choice' of keeping their baby and becoming dependent on government assistance. The updated, neoliberal version of these combined discourses frames single teen mothers as having to prove their fitness as a parent in order to justify dependency on government assistance by showing evidence of school enrolment or waged employment (Weinberg 2004). But does being a young, White woman with class privilege and with no need for government assistance provide an escape from the stigmatising discourses surrounding teen pregnancy?

Several months before Bristol Palin's teen pregnancy became part of the political and popular cultural consciousness in the USA, the teen pregnancy of 16-year-old actress and minor celebrity Jamie Lynn Spears (younger sister of Britney) was the focus of media attention. *The New York Times* had an article discussing the discomfort of many parents in talking (or not wanting to talk) with their daughters about the teen pregnancy of Jamie Lynn Spears (Rimer 2007). On the Nickelodeon TV show, *Zoey 101*, Jamie Lynn's character was a smart, responsible, 'good girl' who did not have a sexualised image. As one father said, 'She (Jamie Lynn) was supposed to be one of the good, clean actresses for girls to follow after. I think it just sends an awful message for the young girls'.

Breese (2010, 352) writes that celebrities are more than just valuable commodities of a capitalist society, they also serve as a 'locus of collective meaning-making and negotiation in the contemporary USA' in which 'moral boundaries and expectations of the collective are narrated and negotiated by interpreting and judging the actions of celebrities as portrayed in the media'. Jamie Lynn Spear's celebrity status, as well as her racial and class privilege, clearly did not allow her to circumvent the stigmatising discourses of teen pregnancy. In later months, media coverage of Bristol Palin's teen pregnancy often made comparisons to that of actress Jamie Lynn Spears (Breese 2010). However, unlike Jamie Lynn, who eventually retreated to her rural hometown to raise her baby away from the media spotlight (Shanker 2011), Bristol would continue to seek out media attention by using her new single motherhood status coupled with her second-generation celebrity status for personal financial gain.

The abstinence ambassador in the hypersexualised world of *Candie's*

By May 2009, Bristol Palin renounced her previous opinion that teaching abstinence to young people was 'not realistic', just days after the Candie's Foundation announced that Bristol Palin would be working as their new 'abstinence ambassador' in a campaign to prevent teen pregnancy. In this position, Bristol Palin would promote abstinence for a privately funded event, National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, in a series of town hall meetings and media interviews. On its website, the Candie's

Foundation (Iconix Brand Group 2011) touts its mission is 'to educate America's youth about the devastating consequences of teenage pregnancy' by using celebrities in their public service announcements. As Bristol Palin remarked, 'I feel that I could be a living example of the consequences of teen pregnancy. If I can prevent even one girl from getting pregnant, I will feel a sense of accomplishment' (CNN 2011).

In a study of teenage mothers as school sex educators in the UK, Judi Kidger (2005) found the majority of young mothers genuinely believed they were doing something valuable by telling their personal stories of teen pregnancy and single motherhood in order to assist other young people in making 'informed choices' in the prevention of teenage pregnancy. Similar to the USA, negative stereotypes and stigmatising discourses in the UK position teenage mothers as 'problematic citizens, a danger to society in terms of the moral, health, social, and economic risks that they represent' (Kidger 2005, 489). More importantly, Kidger found the narratives the teen mothers told often colluded with, rather than challenged or disrupted the dominant discourse of negative stories with regard to teenage sexual behaviour, pregnancy, and single motherhood. Kidger (2005, 490–492) characterised the teen mothers' stories as 'stories of redemption' in that the young mothers could now distance themselves from these 'morally problematic identities' constructed for young mothers through public discourses by fashioning 'new identities for themselves, not only as 'good' individuals, but also as 'good' citizens, as they ensured that the dominant value system remained in place'. As the teen mothers told familiar, normalised discourses framing youthful sexual activity as dangerous and in need of control and repression, students were 'potentially being misled about the nature of the stories they were hearing' (Kidger 2005, 493). In contrast, the teen mothers actually told positive stories of teen motherhood such as a route to female adulthood as well as pleasure and fulfilment in watching their children mature.

The potential for hearing the subjective, somewhat empowering experiences of teen motherhood as well as an understanding that teen motherhood is context-dependent were silenced as a result of the teen mothers shaping their narratives to fit the hegemonic discourse expectations (Kidger 2005). Similarly, Bristol Palin's newfound role as 'abstinence ambassador' failed to provide new critical insights into the subjective experiences of teen mothers as she willingly submitted to the stigmatising discourses that she was a 'living example of the consequences of teen pregnancy'. In Bristol's unique case, the consequence of teen pregnancy and single motherhood is a lucrative annual salary of \$262,500 to promote abstinence (Fang 2011; Tienabeso 2011). By perpetuating the discourses that devalue teen pregnancy and single motherhood, Bristol is attempting to shed her stigmatised status through a public display of moral redemption that privileges and upholds White, middle-class virginity and femininity.

The hypocrisy of Bristol Palin promoting the abstinence-only message was not lost on the young people in the audience. At one town hall meeting, a critical 17-year-old told *ABC News* (James 2009), 'I don't think it's her real opinion. She's just trying to help her mother. She said it herself that abstinence education doesn't work. I looked it up'. Bristol Palin's new role in promoting abstinence, as well as declaring that she would remain abstinent until marriage, was critically viewed with suspicion in that she was still being exploited for her mother's political gain just as she had been during the presidential campaign. Other youths responded with the critique that Bristol Palin had a credibility problem as she sounded like a 'hypocrite' and that her 'celebrity status' put her out of touch with the majority of teen mothers who do not have a wealthy family to support them.

The ultimate objective of abstinence-only sex education and policy is to ‘curb female autonomy and individual sexuality by building on the social construction of teenagers as a class of people in need of protection or control and on traditional concepts of gender differences that cast female sexuality as a problem to be addressed’ (Doan and Williams 2008, 69). The abstinence-only message in sex education has been deemed an abject failure in lowering teen pregnancy rates (US House of Representatives 2004; Brückner and Bearman 2005; Santelli et al. 2006). Moreover, young people who take ‘virginity pledges’, often used in abstinence-only curriculum, are just as likely as other teens to engage in sexual activity but fail to use condoms or any form of contraception (Rosenbaum 2006, 2009). In spite of what the research shows, the Candie’s Foundation continues to pay celebrities, or a second-generation celebrity like Bristol Palin, to promote the abstinence-only message.

The Candie’s Foundation is funded by its corporate parent, Candie’s, a corporation which markets and sells sexually provocative clothing and high heeled shoes to young women. Cavuto (2002) of *Fox News* interviewed Neil Cole, the CEO of Candie’s Foundation, about the contradictory messages of commodifying female sexuality in its clothing merchandise and its mission of trying to reduce teen pregnancy:

Cole (CEO of Candie’s Foundation): *Unfortunately or fortunately, sex sells. And we, you know, as a heritage, we’ve always tried to have a little sexiness to our product, although lately we’ve really championed the course of the prevention of teen pregnancy. And . . .*

Cavuto (Fox News interviewer): *Yes, but your shoes are sexy.*

Cole: *It’s OK to be sexy as long as you don’t have sex at a young age.*

Cavuto: *Yes, but it’s a conflict, right? I mean, you have these sexy shoes that make women look hot. And then you’re saying, well, don’t go too far.*

Cole: *Yet we’re also saying when you are young, you shouldn’t have – you should be responsible and you should understand the risks and consequences of having sex. It’s a dilemma for a young woman, her sexuality and making sure she doesn’t ruin her life. So while it’s OK to be sexy, it doesn’t mean you should ruin your life and have sex, let alone unprotected sex.*

While this interview with Candie’s CEO Cole occurred many years before Bristol Palin was an abstinence ambassador for the Candie’s Foundation, it highlights how neoliberal corporatist ideology harnesses the logic of postfeminism by fetishising female power and desire while consistently placing these within firm limits (Negra 2009): for example, Cole’s remark that ‘it’s OK to be sexy as long as you don’t have sex at a young age’. Candie’s advertising relies on postfeminist sensibilities that a ‘sexy body’ is integral to a young woman’s identity. In response to feminist critiques of the past, today’s postfeminist media culture has moved away from representations of women as passive objects under the patriarchal male gaze to a woman typically portrayed as a sexually autonomous subject who is conscious of her sexual power. Gill (2007a, 151–152) describes this postfeminist turn in advertising as representing a crucial ‘shift in the way power operates: from an external male judging gaze to a self-policing, narcissistic gaze’ one in which ‘power is not imposed from above or the outside, but constructs our very subjectivity’. Ironically, this narcissistic gaze of self-fashioning actually negates female agency as it perpetuates the missing discourse of female sexual desire (Fine 1988). Gill (2007b, 95) observes that corporations will strategically use feminism ‘to sell products in precisely the way that women’s bodies have long been used – as advertisers try (when it suits their interests) to recuperate feminism and articulate it to the product they are aiming to sell’. Even as the Candie’s corporation reaps profits from creating hypersexualised images of young women’s bodies,

the Candie's Foundation fails to take responsibility in educating youth of the unequal power dynamics and sexual coercion that many girls and women experience in heterosexual relationships (Tolman et al. 2003). The onus is still on young women to perform the self-defeating tasks of simultaneously projecting an image of sexual availability and refraining from sexual activity. In one of the many Candie's Foundation (2010) 'public service announcements' featuring Bristol Palin, she attempts to acknowledge the positions of the majority of young, single mothers from less privileged socioeconomic status backgrounds. One particular PSA featured Bristol in a tailored suit jacket and a pearl necklace, holding her baby son while standing in a well-furnished living room. The images slowly devolve to an image of Bristol in a white T-shirt and jeans standing in an undecorated plain room, with her baby son on the ground.

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.

Funded and created by the Candie's Foundation, Bristol Palin's PSA reduces female agency and single motherhood to a fashion aesthetic and offers only pessimistic disdain towards single mothers lacking class privilege and financial resources that they have not earned the right(eousness) to be a mother.

The public pedagogy of the Candie's Foundation in misinforming youth about teen pregnancy must be analysed at the nexus of Christian Right fundamentalism, neoliberal discourse, and a political economy of consumption. As Giroux asserts:

Under neoliberalism, pedagogy has become thoroughly reactionary as it constructs knowledge, values, and identities through a variety of educational sites and forms of pedagogical address that have largely become the handmaiden of corporate power, religious fundamentalism, and neo-conservative ideology. These new sites of public pedagogy, which have become the organizing force of neo-liberal ideology, are not restricted to schools . . . Such sites operate within a wide variety of social institutions and formats including sports and entertainment media, cable television networks, churches, and channels of elite and popular culture, such as advertising. (2004, 497)

In merging the neoliberal discourse of individual choice with the moral redemption narrative of evangelical Christianity, a White, upper middle class, single mother like Bristol Palin becomes a false embodiment of virtue, female empowerment, and personal responsibility. Within the postfeminist context of neoliberalism, Bristol Palin's employment with the Candie's Foundation signals to single teen mothers that they must engage in a makeover paradigm of self-reinvention, not by challenging and disrupting prevailing stigmatising discourses surrounding teen pregnancy, but by reiterating the highly ineffective 'choose abstinence until marriage' slogan. Unlike Bristol Palin, many single teen mothers are dependent on government assistance. The neoliberal cultural politics of 'choosing abstinence' serves as a public pedagogy for individuals to self-regulate their lives by striving for financial self-sufficiency as government assistance and other publicly subsidised programmes for childcare and healthcare will be subject to privatisation and the rules of a market economy.

Conclusion

In exploring the pedagogical media spectacle of Bristol Palin, I think it is important to note that she did not initially seek fame as the pregnant teen daughter of a Republican vice presidential candidate. Thrust into the media spotlight, Bristol Palin's teen pregnancy was characterised within the 'wrong-girl' discourse for failing to conform to the culturally constructed life trajectory for a White middle-class woman. As one of many public discourses stigmatising teen pregnancy in American culture, these discourses mediate our perceptions of what a teen mother looks like yet they also distort our understanding of single teen mothers' subjectivities, which is highly contingent on the teen mother's race and class status. Bristol's privileged class status notwithstanding, people who were generally supportive of her continued to rely on the stigmatising discourses in framing Bristol Palin's teen pregnancy within a 'wrong-girl' discourse, as she made the 'good choice' of not getting an abortion and would eventually marry her boyfriend. The marriage never materialised (Benet 2009).

Ironically, the appointment of teen mother Bristol Palin as an abstinence-only ambassador by the Candie's Foundation operates simultaneously to sensationalise and stigmatise teen pregnancy. As Luttrell (2011, 302) argues, 'Public pedagogies that sensationalise, celebrate, or stigmatise the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy contribute to mask the force of social class'. As the majority of teen mothers who come from working class backgrounds will never be offered a lucrative salary to publicly speak about the hardships of single motherhood, the celebration of Bristol Palin's personal experiences as a teen mother tacitly elevates the superiority of White, middle class mothers.

It remains dubious as to whether Palin's role as abstinence ambassador and storytelling of single mother hardships would have any substantial impact on lowering the rates of teen pregnancy in the USA. Yet the pedagogical media spectacle of Bristol Palin positioning herself as a cautionary tale of teen pregnancy is unequivocally anti-feminist for its framing of Bristol's teen pregnancy/mothering status as a mistake to be avoided. More than just a failed attempt to restore neo-conservative evangelical Christian values of White femininity and virginity, the pedagogical media spectacle of Bristol Palin normalised the postfeminist and neoliberal discourses of individual choice, financial self-sufficiency, and personal responsibility by decontextualising how race, class, and religious affiliation influence young women's subjectivities and their decision making process.

Does Bristol Palin's story of becoming a single mother exemplify female agency and resiliency? I would argue that it does not as the stigmatising discourses and discursive tensions surrounding teen pregnancy continue to discipline White women with class privilege for disrupting patriarchal expectations that link societal morality with female purity. Unfortunately, Bristol Palin's role in promoting abstinence is a continuation of postfeminist attempts to depoliticise female agency and reproductive choices into trivialised forms of passive material consumption and profit making opportunities for herself and the Candie's corporation.

References

- Ackerman, S. 2001. "The Most Biased Name in News: Fox News Channel's Extraordinary Right-wing Tilt." *Fair and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)*, July/August. Accessed June 4, 2012. <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=1067>.
- Baym, G. 2010. *From Cronkite to Colbert: The Evolution of Broadcast News*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

- Benet, L. 2009. "Bristol Palin and Fiancé Split." *People*, March 11. <http://www.people.com/people/article/0,,20264935,00.html>.
- Boonstra, H. 2009. "Advocates Call for a New Approach after the Era of Abstinence-only Sex Education." *Guttmacher Policy Review* 12 (1): 6–11.
- Breese, E. B. 2010. "Meaning, Celebrity, and the Underage Pregnancy of Jamie Lynn Spears." *Cultural Sociology* 4 (3): 337–355.
- Brewer, P., and E. Marquardt. 2007. "Mock News and Democracy: Analyzing *the Daily Show*." *Atlantic Journal of Communication* 15 (4): 249–267.
- Brückner, H., and P. Bearman. 2005. "After the Promise: The STD Consequences of Adolescent Virginity Pledges." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 36 (4): 271–278.
- Bute, J., and L. Russell. 2012. "Public Discourses about Teenage Pregnancy: Disruption, Restoration, and Ideology." *Health Communication* 27 (7): 712–722.
- Candie's Foundation (Video). 2010. *Bristol Palin PSA*. Accessed May 7, 2010. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpHlztPeHf8>.
- Cavuto, N. 2002. "Neil Cole, CEO of Candie's." *Fox News*, January 17. <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,43272,00.html>.
- CNN. 2011. "Big Payday for Bristol Palin." *CNN*, May 6. <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2011/04/06/big-payday-for-bristol-palin/>.
- D'Emilio, J., and E. Freedman. 1998. *Intimate Matters: A History of America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Doan, A. E., and J. C. Williams. 2008. *The Politics of Virginity: Abstinence in Sex Education*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Fang, L. 2011. "Bristol Palin's Nonprofit Paid Her Seven Times What It Spent on Actual Teen Pregnancy Prevention." *Think Progress*, April 5. <http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2011/04/05/156116/bristol-palin-profit-teen-pregnancy/>.
- Fine, M. 1988. "Sexuality, Schooling, and Adolescent Females: The Missing Discourse of Desire." *Harvard Educational Review* 58 (1): 29–53.
- Fuss, D. 1989. *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gilens, M. 1999. *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Anti-poverty Policy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Gill, R. 2007a. "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10 (2): 147–166.
- Gill, R. 2007b. *Gender and the Media*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Gill, R. 2008. "Culture and Subjectivity in Neoliberal and Postfeminist Times." *Subjectivity* 25: 432–445.
- Giroux, H. 2004. "Public Pedagogy and the Politics of Neo-liberalism: Making the Political More Pedagogical." *Policy Futures in Education* 2 (3 & 4): 494–503.
- Goldstein, A., and M. Shear. 2008. "A Tenacious Reformer's Swift Rise." *Washington Post*, August 30. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/29/AR2008082903593.html>.
- Harvey, D. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Hoerl, L., and C. Kelly. 2010. "The Post-nuclear Family and the Depoliticization of Unplanned Pregnancy in *Knocked Up*, *Juno*, and *Waitress*." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7 (4): 360–380.
- Iconix Brand Group. 2011. "Candie's: Breaking Hearts Since 1981." Iconix Brand Group, Inc. Accessed June 4, 2011. http://www.iconixbrand.com/can_history.html.
- James, S. D. 2009. "NYC Teens Chide Palin's Abstinence Call." *ABC News*, May 7. <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/ReproductiveHealth/story?id=7516975&page=1>.
- Kellner, D. 2005. *Media Spectacle*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kelly, D. M. 1996. "Stigma Stories: Four Discourses about Teen Mothers, Welfare, and Poverty." *Youth and Society* 27 (4): 421–449.
- Kelly, D. M. 2000. *Pregnant with Meaning: Teen Mothers and the Politics of Inclusive Schooling*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Kidger, J. 2005. "Stories of Redemption? Teenage Mothers as the New Sex Educators." *Sexualities* 8 (4): 481–496.
- Kulkarni, S. 2007. "Romance Narratives, Feminine Ideals, and Developmental Detours for Young Mothers." *Journal of Woman and Social Work* 22 (1): 9–22.

- Lazar, M. M. 2007. "Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis." *Critical Discourse Studies* 4 (2): 141–164.
- Lazar, M. M. 2009. "Communicating (Post)feminism in Discourse." *Discourse & Communication* 3 (4): 339–344.
- Leadbeater, B. J. R., and N. Way. 2001. *Growing Up Fast: Transitions to Early Adulthood of Inner-city Adolescent Mothers*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Luker, K. 1996. *Dubious Conceptions: The Politics of Teenage Pregnancy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Luttrell, W. 2003. *Pregnant Bodies, Fertile Minds: Gender, Race, and the Schooling of Pregnant Teens*. New York, NY: Routledge Press.
- Luttrell, W. 2009. "The Two-in-Oneness of Class." In *The Way Class Works: Readings on School, Family, and the Economy*, edited by Lois Weis, 125–156. New York, NY: Routledge Press.
- Luttrell, W. 2011. "Where Inequality Lives in the Body: Teenage Pregnancy, Public Pedagogies and Individual Lives." *Sport, Education and Society* 16 (3): 295–308.
- McRobbie, A. 2004. "Postfeminism and Popular Culture." *Feminist Media Studies* 4 (3): 225–264.
- Mehta, S. 2008. "GOP Ticket Split Over Condom Use." *Los Angeles Times*, September 6.
- Nathanson, C. 1991. *Dangerous Passage: The Social Control of Sexuality in Women's Adolescence*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Negra, D. 2009. *What a Girl Wants? Fantasizing the Reclamation of Self in Postfeminism*. London: Routledge.
- Page, C. 2006. *How the Pro-choice Movement Saved America: Freedom, Politics, and the War on Sex*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Phoenix, A. 1991. *Young Mothers?* Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Phoenix, A., and A. Woollett. 1991. "Motherhood: Social Construction, Politics and Psychology." In *Motherhood: Meanings, Practices, and Ideologies*, edited by A. Phoenix, A. Woollett and E. Lloyd, 13–27. London: Sage.
- Pillow, W. 2004. *Unfit Subjects: Educational Policy and the Teen Mother*. New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Rains, P., L. Davies, and M. McKinnon. 1998. "Taking Responsibility: An Insider View of Teen Motherhood." *Families in Society* 19 (3): 308–319.
- Rimer, S. 2007. "TV's Perfect Girl is Pregnant: Real Families Talk." *New York Times*, December 21. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/21/us/21girl.html?ref=jamielynnspears>.
- Rolfe, A. 2008. "'You've Got to Grow Up When You've Got a Kid': Marginalized Young Women's Accounts of Motherhood." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 18: 299–314.
- Rosenbaum, J. E. 2006. "Reborn a Virgin: Adolescents' Retracting of Virginitude Pledges and Sexual Histories." *American Journal of Public Health* 96 (6): 1098–1103.
- Rosenbaum, J. E. 2009. "Patient Teenagers? A Comparison of the Sexual Behaviors of Virginitude Pledgers and Matched Nonpledgers." *Pediatrics* 123 (1): 110–120.
- Rosin, H. 2008. "What Scarlet Letter? Why Christian Conservatives have Only Admiration for Sarah Palin." *Slate*, September 4. http://www.slate.com/articles/double_x/xxfactor_xxtra/2008/09/what_scarlet_letter.html.
- Santelli, J., M. Ott, M. Lyon, J. Rogers, Daniel Summers, and R. Schleifert. 2006. "Abstinence and Abstinence-only Education: A Review of U.S. Policies and Programs." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 38 (1): 72–81.
- Schultz, K. 2001. "Constructing Failure, Narrating Success: Rethinking the 'Problem' of Teen Pregnancy." *Teachers College Record* 103 (4): 582–607.
- Seelye, K. Q. 2008. "Palin's Teen Daughter is Pregnant; New G.O.P. Tumult." *New York Times*, September 1. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/02/us/politics/02PALINDAY.html?pagewanted=all>.
- Shanker, W. 2011. "Jamie Lynn Spears: 'The Last Time Anyone Heard from Me, I Was 16 and Pregnant'." *Glamour*, February 2. <http://www.glamour.com/entertainment/2012/02/jamie-lynn-spears-interview-glamour-march-2012#ixzz22QN9T220>.
- Solinger, R. 2000. *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe v. Wade*. New York, NY: Routledge Press.

- Solinger, R. 2005. *Pregnancy and Power: A Short History of Reproductive Politics in America*. New York: New York University Press.
- Talbot, M. 2008. "Red Sex, Blue Sex: Why do so Many Evangelical Teen-agers become Pregnant?" *New Yorker*, November 3. http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/11/03/081103fa_fact_talbot#ixzz1nE4K0LVD.
- Tasker, Y., and D. Negra. 2007. *Interrogating Post-feminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- The Daily Show (television program episode). 2008. "Bristol Palin's Choice." *Comedy Central*, September 4. <http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/thu-september-4-2008/bristol-palins-choice>.
- Tienabeso, S. 2011. "Bristol Palin Makes more than \$250K for Pregnancy Prevention Campaign." *ABC News*, April 6. <http://abcnews.go.com/US/bristol-palins-high-paying-psa-candies-foundation-paid/story?id=13310630#.T5cBWdXrR8E>.
- Tolman, D. 2005. *Dilemmas of Desire: Teenage Girls Talk about Sexuality*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Tolman, D. L., R. Spencer, M. Rosen-Reynoso, and M. V. Porche. 2003. "Sowing the Seeds of Violence in Heterosexual Relationships: Early Adolescents Narrate Compulsory Heterosexuality." *Journal of Social Issues* 59 (1): 159–178.
- US House of Representatives, Committee on Government Reform-Minority Staff. 2004. *The Content of Federally Funded Abstinence-Only Education Programs*. Prepared for Rep. Henry A. Waxman. http://www.apha.org/apha/PDFs/HIV/The_Waxman_Report.pdf.
- Van Dijk, T. A. 1993. "Principles of Discourse Analysis." *Discourse & Society* 4 (2): 249–283.
- Van Dijk, T. A. 2001. "Critical Discourse Analysis." In *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, edited by Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi E. Hamilton, 352–371. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Van Susteren, G. 2009. "Exclusive: A Visit with the Palins." *Fox News*, February 18. <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,494205,00.html>.
- Walkerdine, V., H. Lucey, and J. Melody. 2001. *Growing Up Girl: Psychosocial Explorations of Gender and Class*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Weinberg, M. 2004. "Young Single Mothers: The Work of Proving Fitness for Parenting." *Journal of the Association for Research and Mothering* 6 (2): 79–89.

Copyright of Gender & Education is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.