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SexEd: Pedagogy, Pornography, Precocity, and Adolescent Sexual Subjectivity

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Communication

by

Carl Lee McKinney

Committee in charge:

Professor Valerie Hartouni, Co-Chair
Professor Robert Horwitz, Co-Chair
Professor Kelly Gates
Professor Toby Miller
Professor Charles Thorpe

2014

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Co-Chair

Co-Chair

University of California, San Diego

2014

DEDICATION

For American adolescents: Make your own truth.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC: American Broadcasting Corporation
ACLU: American Civil Liberties Union
ACT: Action for Children's Television
AFLA: Adolescent Family Life Act
AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ALA: American Library Association
AMA: American Medical Association
ASHA: American Social Hygiene Association
BASR: Bureau of Applied Social Research
BSH: Bureau of Social Hygiene
CBAE: Community-Based Abstinence Education
CBS: Central Broadcasting System
CDA: Communications Decency Act
CDC: Center for Disease Control
CDL: Citizens for Decent Literature
CIPA: Children's Internet Protection Act
COPA: Child Online Protection Act
CRPS: Committee for Research in Problems of Sex
DOE: Department of Education
DOPA: Delete Online Predators Act
FCC: Federal Communication Commission
FLE: Family Life Education
FLEA: Family Life Education Act
FRC: Federal Radio Commission
FTC: Federal Trade Commission
HBO: Home Box Office
HHS: Department of Health and Human Services
HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, and Queer
MLE: Media Literacy Education
MPPC: Motion Picture Patents Company

MPPDA: Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America
MPRC: Motion Picture Research Council
MSE: Movie Sexual Exposure
NAB: National Association of Broadcasters
NACRE: National Advisory Council on Radio in Education
NAMPI: National Association of the Motion Picture Industry
NBC: National Broadcasting Company
NBR: National Board of Review of Motion Pictures
NCER: National Committee for Education on Radio
NSCJR: National Committee for the Study of Juvenile Reading
NCTE: National Council of Teachers of English
NEA: National Education Association
NICHD: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
NIH: National Institutes of Health
NII: National Information Infrastructure
NIMH: National Institute of Mental Health
NRC: National Research Council
NSF: National Science Foundation
NTIA: National Telecommunications and Information Administration
OAPP: Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs
PFS: Payne Fund Studies
PHS: Public Health Service
PTA: Parent Teacher Association
REAL: Responsible Education About Life Act
SEM: Sexually Explicit Material
SIECUS: Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States
SMLS: Sexual Media Literacy Suite
SPRANS: Special Projects of Regional and National Significance
STD: Sexually Transmitted Disease
STI: Sexually Transmitted Infection
VD: Venereal Disease
WAP: Women Against Pornography
YMCA: Young Men's Christian Association

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VITA

- 2002 Bachelor of Arts in Literature, University of California, Santa Cruz
- 2007 Master of Arts in Communication, University of California, San Diego
- 2010 Certificate of Philosophy, University of California, San Diego
- 2014 Doctor of Philosophy in Communication, University of California,
San Diego

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

SexEd: Pedagogy, Pornography, Precocity, and Adolescent Sexual Subjectivity

by

Carl Lee McKinney

Doctor of Philosophy in Communication

University of California, San Diego, 2014

Professor Valerie Hartouni, Co-Chair

Professor Robert Horwitz, Co-Chair

Since its invention at the turn of the twentieth century, adolescence has been defined by a problem: sexual maturation prior to the age at which sex is socially acceptable. To address this problem, young people have been subject to particular knowledge intended to protect and maintain their sexual innocence. They have become the focus of an intense scientific scrutiny that generates sexual knowledge *about* them, which in turn informs and shapes sexual knowledge created *for* them. Adolescents learn about sex and are constituted as sexual subjects through this knowledge.

SexEd examines the production of adolescent sexual knowledge in the United States. Tracing a system of discourses, institutions, and practices through which this knowledge is produced reveals the underlying logic by which a normative ideal of adolescent sexual innocence

is maintained. Construed by cognitive, psychological, neurological, and biological sciences as inherently at risk of making irrational and impulsive sexual decisions, adolescents are subject to both the prophylactic knowledge of the ‘facts of life’ they are taught in school, and to representations of sex in the media that are shaped by regulations meant to keep them from being ‘harmful to minors’. Extracting sex from the complex of ‘bodies and pleasures’ in which it is practiced into these scientific, pedagogic, and media discourses produces *abstract sexual knowledge* that reproduces particular values, norms, and ideals as sexual ‘truths’, while also delegitimizing the embodied experiences and situated knowledge of youth.

SexEd argues that the logic of protecting the young by such a tactical deployment of sexual knowledge is flawed, and shows how efforts to do so are being undercut by youth participation in a pornographic and confessional culture enabled by new media technologies. Adolescents are knowing participants in the production of sexual knowledge to which they are subjects, yet they are often unaware of how to engage the abstract information, ideas, and images that comprise this knowledge in ways that make them relevant and meaningful in their own lives. *SexEd* calls for a *critical sexual pedagogy* that helps young people negotiate and effectively participate in the sexual discourses to which they are subject by teaching *sexual media literacy*.

Introduction

Young people are going to find information wherever they can get it. But watching porn to learn how to have sex is like watching Vin Diesel movies to learn how to drive.
— Nina Hartley¹

In a seminar I teach that explores how sexuality is constituted through particular modes of communication, a student shared her story of a recent sexual experience. She and her boyfriend were, “y’know, going at it,” when he put his hands around her neck and started choking her. She pushed him away and asked what he was doing. “I dunno, I saw it in a porn video,” he replied, “I thought you’d like it.” A recent *New York Times* article on how to talk to children about pornography reported a similar story: “Dana, a divorced mother of three in Massachusetts, assumed her sons would seek out pornography, and thought it was normal for her 9-year-old to want to look at pictures of naked women. But when he was 13, he asked why women liked to be choked.”²

These stories are poignant indicators of the role media representations of sex play in what Richard Dyer calls “the education of desire.”³ American youth are increasingly turning to the media to learn about sex what they are not being taught by parents, peers, and sex education programs in schools. Often they seek sensual knowledge. Not the anatomy of sexual organs, not the biology of sexual reproduction, not the pathology of sexually transmitted infections — which they may or may not have learned elsewhere — but practical knowledge of the actual experience of sex. Kids look to the media not for the knowledge of *scientia sexualis*, but for the knowledge of the *ars erotica*, the practices of pleasure: What does it look like? What does it sound like?

¹ Nina Hartley is an American porn star, adult film director, sex educator, and author. Quoted in: Diu, Nisha Lilia. “Don Jon: How Porn is Rewiring Our Brains.” *The Telegraph*. Telegraph Media Group Ltd.,
² O’Leary, Amy. “So How Do We Talk About This?” *New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 9 May 2012. Web. 20 Nov. 2013.

³ Dyer, Richard. “Coming to Terms: Gay Pornography.” *Only Entertainment*. New York: Routledge, 1992. 121-134. Print.

What does it feel like? How are bodies positioned? How do they move? What do you say? How do you kiss? How do you touch? In short, how do you actually *do sex*?

The article in the *Times* suggested — as I had to my students — that this is exactly why we need to talk to kids about pornography. Children are curious. They *will* seek, and they *will* find a cornucopia of images, ideas, and information about sex in the media, both from the readily available glut of explicit pornography and from the increasingly pornographic media mainstream. What happens when they find images of women being choked? For many, if not most adults, this is such an abhorrent thought — that these images exist, that they are easily accessible, that kids find them and think that this is what sex is — that censorship seems like a reasonable response. Efforts to ban pornography and to curb its mainstream manifestations have thus taken on a new urgency. This is not merely a conservative backlash to sexual liberalism. Across the political spectrum, the need to regulate youth access to sex in the media has become a kind of common sense underwriting a host of legal and technological measures meant to do so. As I suggested to my students, and as I argue in *SexEd*, these efforts to protect kids from media sex are fundamentally flawed. Not only are they doomed to fail in the face of a digitally networked media culture in which sexual representations can be almost instantly and infinitely reproduced, but they ultimately fail our children by trying to provide protection rather than guidance in their encounters with media sex. We need to take seriously the pedagogic function of sexual representations in the media; but rather than respond with revulsion and fear, we need to accept, and even embrace media sex as an opportunity for kids to gain sexual knowledge that schools and parents rarely provide. The role of parents and educators in this sexual pedagogy should not be censors, but docents and mentors.

The desire to protect children from carnal knowledge stems from the Romantic ideal of childhood innocence. Indeed, childhood — as a distinct category of being — has been constructed around the idea of innocence, and is maintained by protecting the young from what is

considered to be adult knowledge.⁴ The discourse of childhood innocence has informed, and continues to inform, popular understandings of youth that underlie efforts to regulate their access to sexual knowledge.⁵ It has fueled numerous moral panics about the sexualization of youth that have shaped public debates, government policies, legal doctrines, and scientific inquiries, which in turn bear directly on formal programs of sex education and representations of sex in the media.⁶ In short, the discourse of childhood innocence is at the root of a complex discursive formation — a concatenation of discourses, institutions, and practices that create and control the sexual knowledge of youth.

SexEd explores the discursive formation through which the sexual knowledge of American adolescents — both the knowledge available to them and knowledge of them as sexual beings — is produced and regulated. The ways in which we ‘talk’ about sex — the specific discourses and representational practices that have emerged in institutional contexts like the classroom, the courtroom, Congress, scientific studies, and the media — together form a ‘system’ of sex education through which young people not only learn about sex, but also become sexual subjects. *SexEd* argues that adolescents are *sexed* through this discursive formation, that discourses about sex and youth form a field of sexual knowledge to which they are subject and within which they become sexual beings.

The discourse of innocence and the desire to protect have shaped a particular field of sexual knowledge to which adolescents are subject. While the sexuality of children was taken up and produced through a broader flourishing of sexual discourse beginning in the seventeenth

⁴ Meyer, Anneke. “The Moral Rhetoric of Childhood.” *Childhood* 14.1 (2007): 85-104. Print.

⁵ Robinson, Kerry H. *Innocence, Knowledge and the Construction of Childhood: The Contradictory Nature of Sexuality and Censorship in Children’s Contemporary Lives*. New York: Routledge, 2013. Print.

⁶ Albury, Kath & Catherine Lumby. “Too Much? Too Young? The Sexualization of Children Debate in Australia.” *Media International Australia* 135 (2010): 141-152. Print; Egan, Danielle R. & Gail L. Hawkes. “Endangered Girls and Incendiary Objects: Unpacking the Discourse of Sexualization.” *Sexuality & Culture* 12.4 (2008): 291-311. Print; Renold, Emma & Jessica Ringrose. “Schizoid Subjectivities? Re-Theorizing Teen Girls’ Sexual Cultures in an Era of ‘Sexualization.’” *Journal of Sociology* 47.4 (2011): 389-409. Print.

century, it was only with the progressive movement at the turn of the twentieth century that young people became the target of a specific knowledge aimed at protecting them.⁷ Innocence would no longer be maintained through ignorance, but rather through knowledge of the ‘facts of life’. By learning the anatomy, the biology, and the pathology of sex, young people would become responsible for protecting their own virtue, upon which the progress of society was seen to depend. But the so-called ‘facts of life’, while dressed in the neutrality and authority of empirical science, have never been mere facts. Sexual science, as a tool for producing sexual knowledge in the service of social progress, has always been shaped by dominant ideas about what society should be. The ‘facts of life’ — the knowledge of sex deemed necessary for youth to protect their innocence and to advance society — have been inflected by the class, race, gender, and sexual politics that inform public discourse about the goals and values of social transformation.

The ‘facts of life’ were fundamentally shaped by the Protestant, white, male, heterosexual, and middle-class values of those who created them at the turn of the twentieth century in the interest of protecting the young. Some of these ‘facts’ are: that the purpose of sex is biological reproduction, and thus heterosexual coitus is the ‘natural’ expression of sexual behavior; that pursuing sex for pleasure is potentially pathological; that healthy and ‘natural’ sexual relations are monogamous; that males are ‘natural’ sexual aggressors, driven by a biological need for physical release; that females are ‘naturally’ passive, and submit to sex only for the sake of children and family; that adolescent sexual behavior is driven by ‘raging hormones’; that social progress depends on ‘judicious mating’; that ‘superior’ people are able to rationally suppress the sexual impulse; and that ‘inferior’ races, classes, and categories of people are controlled by their sexual desires. While the specific ‘facts’ have changed somewhat since

⁷ Moran, Jeffrey P. *Teaching Sex: The Shaping of Adolescence in the 20th Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000. Print.

they were organized into a body of sexual knowledge suitable for teaching young people, the ‘facts of life’ — the actual body of knowledge comprised of particular facts — continues to be largely informed by the same values. The value-laden ‘facts of life’ constitute a ‘natural truth’ of sex to be taught to adolescents, and this authoritative knowledge subjugates other knowledge of sex as ‘unnatural’ and ‘untrue’. Promiscuity, homosexuality, race and class mixing, and a host of ‘bodies and pleasures’ not oriented toward monogamous reproduction are delegitimized and silenced by the ‘facts of life’.

Adolescents are subject to not only this specific body of scientific knowledge constituted about and for them, but also to the broader field of sexual knowledge that the ‘facts of life’ shapes. What is deemed appropriate and necessary to teach young people about sex modulates the appearance of sexual information, ideas, and images within culture at large. The history of sex within the popular culture of American media unfolds through repeated efforts at keeping it ‘appropriate for kids’ — that is to say, in line with the ‘facts of life’, with the ‘natural truth’ of sex and its subtending values. This history reveals the extent to which sexual representations have reflected, and worked to maintain, a social order privileging the white, male, heterosexual, middle class from which these values derive.

Even as media sex has become more ‘liberal’, these values have contoured the forms it takes and determined the dominance of some forms over others. Sex in the mainstream media has become more promiscuous, and the proliferation of pornography now provides all kinds of kink, but as a whole, media sex is still very ‘vanilla’ — straight, white, and patriarchal — while specific representations tend to map normative notions of race, class, and gender onto the forms of promiscuity and kink they portray. Moreover, the regulation of youth access to media sex circumscribes certain kinds of sexual expression that do not align with dominant social values. While these regulations often fail to limit access to these forms of expression, they nonetheless

work to define, and thus to teach, the ‘appropriate’ values and functions of sex; in doing so, they also maintain ‘inappropriate’ sex as enticingly taboo.

So-called ‘choke porn’, then, should not be seen merely as a manifestation of a dangerous sexual liberalization that needs to be contained lest our kids learn the ‘wrong’ thing about sex. Rather, it must be understood in terms of the values in which it traffics, and within the whole ‘system of meaning’ in which this form of sexual representation becomes coherent. An image of a woman deriving pleasure from being choked is an abstraction that only takes on meaning and value within a broader field of sexual knowledge. Taken out of its context of practice and mobilized through diverse discourses, this sexual act comes to connote masochism, male dominance, violence, volition, deviance, power, pleasure, or perversion only in relation to other images, ideas, and information. What kids learn from such an image is thus relative to the whole field of sexual knowledge to which they are subjects.

The real danger of this education, then, lies not in the particular information, ideas, and images portrayed, but in how they are constituted as sexual knowledge. Anatomical diagrams of sex organs, graphic images of advanced syphilis, couples kissing on TV, entwined bodies on billboards, and pornographic videos of women being choked are all produced through particular discursive practices that abstract sex from its heterogeneous haecceity and recontextualize it within an epistemic tableau of sexual truth. These sexual abstractions take on meaning and value within the field of *abstract sexual knowledge* that they constitute, becoming indicators of natural or unnatural, normal or deviant, true or untrue ‘bodies and pleasures’. The danger is not that kids might mistake one for the other and learn the ‘wrong’ thing, but that they will not question the meanings and values that inform these sexual representations and the practices through which they have been informed, and will thus not learn how to evaluate their relative claims to truth.

By tracing the genealogy of this sexual knowledge, *SexEd* reveals how sex is made abstract as it is ‘put into discourse’, how values, meanings, and norms are embedded into sexual

abstractions, and how American adolescents have been targeted by the abstract knowledge produced in this process. It all begins with the birds and the bees.

The Birds and the Bees

All nature seems at work... The bees are stirring — birds are on the wing...
— Samuel Coleridge

The sun is out, birds are singing, bees are trying to have sex with them — as is my understanding...
— Bart Simpson

In the twentieth century, ‘the birds and the bees’ became a common idiom for referring not only to sexual knowledge, but more specifically to the euphemistic expression of this knowledge to the young. References to the birds and the bees as sexual metaphors had appeared as early as the seventeenth century. In Thomas Carew’s “The Spring,” the awakening of “the drowsy cuckoo, and the humble bee” suggested a carnal arousal that contrasted with his would-be lover, who “still doth hold her heart congeal’d.”⁸ The Romantics embraced this trope in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to express human sexuality as the ‘work of nature’, so readily seen in the bloom and buzz of spring. In “Work Without Hope,” for example, Samuel Coleridge bemoaned his disconnect from this natural order: While “bees are stirring” and “birds are on the wing,” he is “the sole unbusy thing, nor honey make, nor pair, nor build, nor sing.”⁹

American naturalist John Burroughs directed this talk of birds and bees toward teaching children about the work of nature. His *Birds and Bees* described, in a detailed but accessible way, the courting habits of birds and the reproductive habits of bees, and invested in these behaviors

⁸ Carew is considered a “cavalier poet,” one whose court poetry was taken to express the Royalist values of King Charles, including beauty, love, nature, and sensuality. Carew, Thomas. “The Spring.” *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature, 2nd Edition, Volume 2*. Eds. Joseph Black, et al. Peterborough: Broadview, 2010. 788. Print.

⁹ Romantic poetry sought to capture, in Wordsworth’s phrase, “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.” Coleridge often dealt with the tragic inability to love or be loved. Mahoney, John L. “‘We Must Away’: Tragedy and the Imagination in Coleridge’s Later Poems.” *English Romantic Poetry*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 2004. 185-214. Print.

human motives that made them almost allegorical. As Mary Burt noted in her introduction to *Birds and Bees, Sharp Eyes, and Other Papers*, it was because of this that Burroughs' essays made ideal teaching tools for the young and curious. "They like to trace analogies between the human and the irrational," wrote Burt, "to think of [...] Nature as a tell-tale when taken by surprise." Burroughs' tales encouraged kids to use reason to "sneak up" on a seemingly capricious nature and have her divulge her secrets. Especially for "children living in crowded cities," who are "constant witnesses of the effects of human passion," Burt prescribed "the tonic" of Burroughs' "quiet literature," rather than "a literature that calls forth excited feelings."¹⁰

Yet it was likely the Rev. Ozora Davis and Dr. Emma Drake's *The Story of Life* that secured to the birds and the bees their idiomatic role in sexual pedagogy. Like Burroughs, Davis and Drake speak only obliquely of sex; but the popularity of their narratives, which unfold in the voices of a devoted father and a doting mother sharing the wonders of the natural world with son and daughter, made them models for teaching kids 'the facts of life'. *The Story of Life* circulated widely in early twentieth-century America, especially after being appended to the social hygiene manual *Safe Counsel, or Practical Eugenics*, which was reprinted more than forty times between the 1890s and 1930s.

The eugenics and the social hygiene movements grew side-by-side in the Progressive era, both seeking to improve American society by bringing science to bear on sexual behavior through public policy. While best remembered for enforced sterilization of the 'unfit' — a practice applied in some states until the 1970s to a category of people defined along race, ethnic, class, and gender lines — eugenics was, according to its modern founder Sir Francis Galton, "by no means confined to questions of judicious mating." It was also concerned with "all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race," including "those that develop them to the utmost

¹⁰ Burroughs, John. *Birds and Bees, Sharp Eyes, and Other Papers*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1887. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Nov. 2013.

advantage.”¹¹ The “practical eugenics” of *Safe Counsel* sought to shape these developmental influences through “moral, educational, and personal prophylaxis,” offering facts and advice on topics ranging from sexual anatomy and venereal disease, to nutrition and exercise, to love, marriage, and childrearing. As such, *Safe Counsel* must be understood in the broader context of ‘life advice’ or ‘improving’ literature, of which popular tracts on eugenics and social hygiene are a part. This literature, which first flourished in Victorian England and had become immensely popular in turn-of-the-century America, targeted parents and youth with a litany of tips for navigating the travails of becoming an upstanding adult.¹²

The proliferation of advice literature was a response to social changes that redefined the relation between child and adult. Childhood, as a protected period of idyllic innocence prior to the hardships of adulthood, had emerged in the seventeenth century.¹³ “Why rob these innocents of the joys that pass so quickly?” asked Rousseau. His *Emile* was perhaps the first manual on childrearing, advising a sort of supervised space of autonomy in which a child’s natural instincts could develop before being socialized into the adult world.¹⁴ The Victorians institutionalized this idea of an autonomous space for child development by slowly removing children from the vast

¹¹ Galton, Francis. *Inquiries Into Human Faculty and Its Development*. London: Macmillan, 1883. 17. Print; Galton, Francis. “Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope, and Aims.” *The American Journal of Sociology* 10.1 (1904): 1-25. Print.

¹² Bailey, Beth L. *From Front Porch to Backseat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988. Print; Gibbs, Phillip A. “Self Control and Male Sexuality in the Advice Literature of Nineteenth Century America, 1830-1860.” *Journal of American Culture* 9.2 (1986): 37-41. Print; Gorham, Deborah. *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982. Print; Hemphill, C. Dallett. *Bowing to Necessity: A History of Manners in America, 1620-1860*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Print; Laipson, Peter. “‘Kiss With our Shame, for She Desires It’: Sexual Foreplay in American Advice Literature, 1900-1925.” *Journal of Social History* 29.3 (1996): 507-525. Print; Stearns, Peter N. *Battleground of Desire: The Struggle for Self-Control in Modern America*. New York: New York University Press, 1999. Print; Walters, Ronald G. *Primers for Prudery: Sexual Advice to Victorian America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974. Print.

¹³ Ariès, Phillipe. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. Trans. Robert Baldick. New York: Knopf, 1962. Print; Boas, George. *The Cult of Childhood*. London: The Warburg Institute, 1966. Print; Calvert, Karin. *Children in the House: The Material Culture of Childhood, 1600-1900*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992. Print.

¹⁴ Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Emile, or On Education*. Trans. Alan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, 1979. Print.

labor pool fueling the Industrial Revolution, by advancing the legal ages of consent and marriage, and by formalizing education.¹⁵ Publications like *The Mother at Home*, *Hints to Mothers*, *Thoughts of a Parent on Education*, *Home Education*, *Advice to Mothers*, and *The Nurture and Management of Children* offered advice on raising children in a world that was beginning to value their education, development, and socialization as much, if not more, than their immediate labor power.¹⁶

In turn-of-the-century America, urbanization, industrialization, and im/migration were also reshaping the social landscape, breaking up tightly knit rural and small-town communities, dividing and dispersing families along generational lines, and eroding established means of childrearing and socialization.¹⁷ Moreover, as family size shrunk with the increasing division of labor, decreasing infant mortality, and better knowledge and availability of birth control, parents began investing more — economically and emotionally — in the fewer children they now had.¹⁸ And as state adoption of compulsory primary education further institutionalized childhood by physically and socially segregating children from adults, the spread of secondary and post-

¹⁵ Minge-Kalman, Wanda. “The Industrial Revolution and the European Family: The Institutionalization of ‘Childhood’ as a Market for Family Labor.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20.3 (1978): 454-468. Print; Prout, Alan. *The Future of Childhood: Towards the Interdisciplinary Study of Children*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2005. Print; Qvortrup, Jens, et al. *Childhood Matters: Social Theory, Practice and Politics*. Aldershot: Avebury, 1994. Print; Zelizer, Viviana A. *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. Print.

¹⁶ Abbot, John S.C. *The Mother at Home; or, the Principles of Motherly Duty*. New York: American Tract Society, 1833. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Bull, Thomas. *Hints to Mothers, for the Management of Health During the Period of Pregnancy, and in the Lying-In Room; With an Exposure of Popular Errors in Connexion with Those Subjects*. London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, & Longmans, 1837. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Chavasse, Pye Henry. *Advice to Mothers on the Management of Their Offspring*. London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, & Longmans, 1839. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Smiles, Samuel. *Physical Education; or, the Nurture and Management of Children, Founded on the Study of Their Nature and Constitution*. Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1838. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Taylor, Isaac. *Home Education*. New York: Appleton, 1838. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Trench, Melasina. *Thoughts of a Parent on Education*. London: John W. Parker, 1837. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

¹⁷ D’Emilio, John & Estelle B. Freedman. *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988. 171-173. Print.

¹⁸ Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child*, 56-72.

secondary schools and the increasing length of internship for skilled labor further prolonged the time before entering into an adulthood marked by career and matrimony.¹⁹

At the same time, better nutrition and medicine promoted earlier onset of puberty, further widening the gap between “the awakening of the sexual impulse” and its socially sanctioned expression in marriage.²⁰ This gap, which would become known as adolescence, was fraught with risks.²¹ New public spaces — boardwalks, arcades, amusement parks, and Nickelodeans — hosted temptations and diversions (legal and illegal) for crowds comprised across lines of gender, class, race, age, and ethnicity.²² Here the young adolescent might fall prey to the wrong influence, whether it be the bad habits of ‘lesser’ classes or races, such as swearing, drinking, gambling, or laziness; or the allure of an easy path to wealth and power in a life of crime; or the enticement of an immoral and unhealthy sexual escapade.²³ At the very least, the young were here exposed to an adult world of images and ideas. Even, then, as childhood was being institutionalized as a space cordoned off from adulthood, these new public spaces were blurring the lines that kept them distinct. Advice literature counseled youth and their concerned parents in the inculcation of good habits, good hygiene, good morals, and good manners, which worked to both maintain the line between child and adult and to aid in the safe transition from the former to the latter.

¹⁹ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 15.

²⁰ James Tanner calls the decreasing age of the onset of puberty since the late nineteenth century due to environmental factors “the secular trend.” Tanner, James M. “Growth as a Matter of the Nutritional and Hygienic Status of a Population.” *Hormone Research* 38 (1992): 106-115. Print; See also: Kett, Joseph F. “Adolescents and Youth in Nineteenth Century America.” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2.2 (1971): 283-298. Print; Neuman, R. P. “Masturbation, Madness, and the Modern Concepts of Childhood and Adolescence.” *Journal of Social History* 8.3 (1975): 1-27. Print;

²¹ The designation of this ‘stage’ of life as ‘adolescence’ and its characterization as a time of risk was first articulated by psychologist G. Stanley Hall in his two-volume study *Adolescence*. Hall, Stanley G. *Adolescence; Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*. New York: D. Appleton, 1905. Print.

²² Czitrom, Daniel J. *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982. 43-52. Print; D’Emilio & Freedman, 194-201; Sklar, Robert. *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies*. New York: Vintage, 1994. 18-19. Print; Peiss, Kathy. *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986. Print.

²³ D’Emilio & Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 208-210.

Like its Victorian predecessor, turn-of-the-century advice literature was shaped by the moral propriety of an emerging middle class trying to secure social status by distancing itself from the ‘uncivilized’ behavior of the masses. Unlike its predecessor, it was shaped by the progressive imperative to enact change through science and education, which was informed by the idea that ‘dispelling the darkness’ of ignorance was half the struggle of reform. Whereas Victorians had tried to shelter children from the perceived vulgarity of carnal knowledge, Progressives tried to protect children by sharing this knowledge with them. “Every child has the right to approach the problems and the powers of his own sex life through the avenue of science,” the Rev. Ozora Davis wrote in his preface to *The Story of Life*, “in order that he may understand himself consistently in the world of nature of which he is the crowning part.”²⁴ By appealing to ‘the work of nature’ within the scientific framework of evolution — or in the pseudo-science of social Darwinism — the story of the birds and the bees ennobled sex by naturalizing it, while also distancing its human manifestation in aesthetic beauty, social progress, affection, and love from the merely animalistic drive to reproduce, which was associated with those ‘savage others’ in the lower rungs of the social hierarchy.

The birds and the bees thus produced a particular kind of sexual knowledge that was grounded in biological and anatomical facts but was framed within a certain moral and social order. As science, this knowledge was presented as the immutable truth of sex; shaped by the values of the Protestant, white, male, Progressives, however, this truth had race, gender, class, and religious valances. In twentieth-century America, then, the birds and the bees provided a way to impart to the young a prophylactic knowledge that served both practical eugenics and the progressive cause by defining sexual behavior in terms of a social structure favoring men,

²⁴ Jefferis, Benjamin G. & James L. Nichols. *Safe Counsel, or Practical Eugenics*. Naperville: J.L. Nichols, 1928. 388. Print.

marriage, and monogamy, and disfavoring miscegenation, class mixing, promiscuity, and homosexuality.

In the twenty-first century, we speak of the birds and the bees with a postmodern sense of ironic awareness. With an implied wink, the term is used to refer to sex education in the schools, to ‘the talk’ between parents and pubescent adolescents, and to the sexual knowledge kids glean from the media.²⁵ Actual birds and bees more often than not have nothing to do with it, yet the idiom continues to function in the service of the euphemistic expression of sexual knowledge to the young. As with its early usage a century ago, the birds and the bees indicates a scientific dissimulation of the social complexity of carnal knowledge, a rationalized reduction of a tangle of morally, politically, and economically charged relations to a ‘natural’ order. Beneath this veneer of half-truths about sex that we teach our children, beneath the ‘facts of life’, lie often unexamined assumptions about race, gender, class, and sexuality that continue to be shaped by a contemporary moral and social order that is in no way natural.

SexEd begins with the birds and the bees because this is where the sexual education of American adolescents begins, both historically and in the present. The “pedagogization of children’s sex,” as Foucault observed, was bequeathed to us by the Victorians through an “institutional incitement to speak about” sex. Sex was, and is, “put into discourse” as part of the “polymorphous techniques of power” whereby populations are regulated and controlled.

²⁵ See, for example: *BrdzNBz*. Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Campaign of North Carolina. Web. 10 Feb. 2014; Boyd, Hannah. “Talking About the Birds and the Bees.” *Education.com*. Education.com, Inc. 6 Mar. 2009. Web. 10 Feb. 2014; Draper, Corinne. “The Birds and the Bees: Dispel the Myths and Have an Open Conversation.” *Kidspot: Your Kids, Your Life*. Kispot. n.d. Web. 10 Feb. 2014; Lang, Amy. *Birds+Bees+Kids*. Birds+Bees+Kids, LLC. Web. 10 Feb. 2014; Matchen, Linda. “The Birds and the Bees... and the Parents.” *Boston.com*. Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC. 26 Apr. 2011. Web. 10 Feb. 2014; Nelson, Jana Ariane. “The Birds and the Bees.” *Alaska Public Media*. Alaska Public Media. 21 Jan. 2013. Web. 10 Feb. 2014; “Never Too Young to Learn.” *The Economist*. The Economist Newspaper, LTD. 28 Aug. 2008. Web. 10 Feb. 2014; Newman, Catherine. “Talking About the Birds and the Bees.” *DisneyFamily.com*. The Walt Disney Company. n.d. Web. 10 Feb. 2014; *Sex Education: The Birds and the Bees!* A2ZCDS.com, 2005. DVD; *Time for ‘The Talk’*. Time For The Talk. Web. 10 Feb. 2014; Weston, Louanne Cole. “When to Talk to Your Child About Sex.” WebMD. WebMD, LLC. 1 Sep. 2006. Web. 10 Feb. 2014.

“Population” emerged as an economic and political problem of the state in the eighteenth century, and “the manner in which each individual made use of his sex” was at the heart of this problem. No longer “simply condemned or tolerated,” sex became a “public potential” to be “managed, inserted into systems of utility, [and] regulated for the greater good of all.” Since the eighteenth century, the sex of children in particular has become “an important area of contention around which innumerable institutional devices and discursive strategies have been deployed.”²⁶ Yet it is only in the twentieth century that adolescence was created as a unique category of personhood, defined specifically in terms of a sexuality seen as a public problem that must be controlled in the interest of social progress. Adolescence was born of sexual discourse, and has been structured by numerous institutional devices, pedagogical practices, and discursive tactics and strategies that work to discipline the sexual pleasures, desires, and bodies of youth.

Emerging in response to the ‘problem’ of adolescent sexuality, the birds and the bees functions as a discursive tactic in the pedagogization of children’s sex. By relying on the “general scientific normativity” of reproductive anatomy and biology, the logic of the birds and the bees allows the morals, economics, and politics that structure the terms of social progress to be “recast in a scientific-sounding vocabulary” functional for educating adolescents in a pragmatic and progressive society. *SexEd* traces how this discursive tactic attracts, connects to, and propagates other tactics that together form a “comprehensive system,” of which “the logic is perfectly clear” and “the aims decipherable,” yet “no one is there to have invented.” The “system” of sexual pedagogy that emerges in the twentieth century is neither uniform nor stable, but is rather “a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies.”²⁷ Such a system — un-authored, amorphous, and ever-changing — cannot be comprehensively mapped; *SexEd*, then, seeks only to trace the development of a set of discursive elements and the strategies

²⁶ Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 1990. 11, 17-18, 24-26, 30. Print.

²⁷ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 54-55, 95, 100.

through which they are mobilized, to chart the underlying logics, and to decipher the aims of sexual pedagogy in the United States.

SexEd takes the birds and the bees as the logical linchpin of a complex discursive system that works to discipline the sexuality of American adolescents by producing and regulating sexual knowledge about and for them. The logic of teaching kids ‘the facts of life’ has warranted and produced a tangle of discourses and co-constituent silences that interact across a range of social, cultural, and political sites. *SexEd* examines three interrelated fields where the birds and the bees, as a discursive tactic for regulating the sexual knowledge of youth, has been mobilized in broader strategies for disciplining their sexual behavior and producing adolescent sexual subjectivity: sex education, sex in the media, and sexual science.

Most apparent are the points where sexual discourses manifest in formal efforts at sex education. Popular advice literature, and moral and medical tracts produced by the social purity movement, were the first such efforts in the United States. During the progressive era, a more programmatic approach to sex education developed as the social hygiene movement recast the moral issues of the social purity movement as public health problems, and developed policies and programs to address these problems.²⁸ This established an enduring model of sex education in America, in which the values of particular interest groups are embedded in pedagogical materials and practices through a process of identifying a ‘problem’ with adolescent sexuality and pushing for policy that supports these groups’ interventions.

To overcome resistance by those who feared the corruption of innocence that teaching sex seemed to entail, adolescents were discursively constructed as naturally sexual beings who needed to learn how to sublimate the sexual impulse until it could be safely expressed within the context of a socially sanctioned marriage and its concomitant monogamous reproduction. The

²⁸ Clark, Walter. *Taboo: The Story of the Pioneers of Social Hygiene*. Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1961. 25-27. Print; D’Emilio & Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 202-205; Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 23-67.

birds and the bees facilitated this learning by naturalizing sex and ennobling its role in social progress, while also decontextualizing it from, and delegitimizing, the broader complex of relationships, meanings, emotions, desires, and pleasures in which it is actually practiced. Teaching the birds and the bees — the ‘facts of life’ abstracted from the social complexity of sex — was thus incorporated into public health policy under the logic of risk-reduction, bringing with it gendered, raced, classed, and sexed assumptions about the social function of sex and about sexual risk that continue to inform public opinion, discourse, and policy regarding adolescent sexual knowledge.

Less obvious, but equally important in the production of adolescent sexual knowledge, are the points where sexual discourses manifest as informal pedagogy. While formal sex education tends to distill sex to a set of scientific facts, media representations of sex can imbue it with complicated cultural meanings and values related to the social, affective, and embodied experiences of sex. Media sex thus functions in the ‘re-education of desire’, teaching about the complex choreography of human minds and bodies that is neglected in anatomical and biological accounts.

Rather than being freed from the restricted and reductive logic of the birds and the bees, however, the representation of sex in the media has been codified in accord with this logic. Even as media sex has been “liberated from the shackles of moral censorship,” it has increasingly been regulated specifically to protect the young.²⁹ Laws, policies, and media industry codes and practices create some of the “many silences” that are “less the absolute limit of discourse [...] than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies.”³⁰ For a scientific sexual discourse to take root in formal pedagogical institutions as the authoritative ‘truth’ of sex, sexual representations in popular media must be

²⁹ Kendrick, Walter. *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987. 201-202. Print.

³⁰ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 27.

regulated so that other sexual knowledge — knowledge of desires, pleasures, bodies, and relations potentially disruptive of the ‘natural’ order represented by the birds and the bees — is silenced or dismissed as ‘untruth’.

Yet efforts to silence media sex — to limit it to what is considered its natural expression — have actually worked to bring sex into the public sphere. By the perverse logic of discourse, the subjugation of knowledge produces knowledge of the subjugated: bracketing off representations as illegitimate requires attention to them, that they be observed, analyzed, described, sorted, and categorized. Trying to define and classify certain sexual representations as indecent or obscene puts these very representations into the public spotlight, bringing, as Linda Williams says, the obscene on scene.³¹ Moreover, as the definition of obscenity was whittled down to “sex for the sake of sex,” sex was itself being recognized as a “vital problem of human interest and public concern.” Sex has thus been brought into the public sphere framed by particular meanings and values consonant with considerations of literary, artistic, political, or scientific merit, and these considerations are informed by the ‘natural’ order of the birds and the bees.³²

Over the course of the twentieth century, and particularly since the 1980s, a substantial scientific literature has been produced that reflects the position Progressives took regarding adolescent sexuality at the turn of the century. This sexual science produces a knowledge of adolescents as innocents at risk of learning about sex from unwholesome sources, which poses a threat to both their own health and that of society, and thus necessitates their protection.

The science of media sex seeks to establish direct causal chains between representations of sex in the media, developmental risks, and problems of public health such as teen pregnancy, sexual abuse, venereal disease, and AIDS. The discourse that this work traffics in is a modern

³¹ Williams, Linda. “Porn Studies: Proliferating Pornographies On/Scene: An Introduction.” *Porn Studies*. Ed. Linda Williams. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004. 3. Print.

³² Kendrick, *Secret Museum*, 201-202. Print; Lockhart, William B. & Robert C. McClure. “Why Obscene?” *To Deprave and Corrupt...’: Original Studies in the Nature and Definition of ‘Obscenity’*. Ed. John

manifestation of the story of the birds and the bees, a scientific dissimulation of the complex social contexts in which young people engage with media sex that defines such engagement in the abstract and reductionist terms of biological, psychological, cognitive, and pathological processes. This discourse has become a kind of ‘common sense’ that is articulated in arguments for regulating youth exposure to sex in the media, and also in arguments for providing a prophylactic sex education that would inoculate them against media sex by teaching the ‘truth’.

Manifested through the discursive fields of sex education, media sex, and sexual science, the birds and the bees produces an abstract sexual knowledge that positions adolescents as innocents in need of protection. Regulatory strategies and disciplinary mechanisms are then mobilized for controlling their access to sexual knowledge and policing their sexual behavior, which help to produce the sexual subjects that these discourses define. By treating young people as innocents in need of protection, the language, knowledge, voice, and agency needed to negotiate life as sexual beings is constrained, making them more vulnerable by undermining their development as informed, competent, and critical sexual subjects.³³

But adolescents are not so much innocent as they are ignorant. Efforts to regulate media sex have become largely ineffectual in the face of digital, networked communication technologies, which foster a confessional culture that encourages and normalizes participation in the production, circulation, and consumption of sexual representations. Young people

Chandos, New York: Association Press, 1962. 59. Print; *Roth v. United States*. 354 U.S. 476. U.S. Supreme Court. 1957. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Nov. 2013.

³³ Corteen, Karen & Phil Scraton. “Prolonging ‘Childhood’, Manufacturing ‘Innocence’ and Regulating Sexuality.” *‘Childhood’ in ‘Crisis’*. Ed. Phil Scraton. London: University College London Press, 1997. 76-100. Print; Hawkes, Gail & R. Danielle Egan. “Developing the Sexual Child.” *Historical Sociology* 22.2 (2008): 443-466. Print; Kitlinger, Jenny. “Who Are You Kidding? Children, Power and the Struggle Against Sexual Abuse.” *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*. Ed. Alison James & Alan Prout. London: The Falmer Press, 1990. 157-183. Print; Plummer, Ken. “Understanding Childhood Sexualities.” *Journal of Homosexuality* 20.1-2 (1990): 231-249. Print; Robinson, Kerry H. “Doing Anti-Homophobia and Anti-Heterosexism in Early Childhood Education. Moving Beyond the Immobilizing Impacts of ‘Risks’, ‘Fears’ and ‘Silences’. Can We Afford Not To?” *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood Education* 6.2. (2005): 175-188. Print; Robinson, Kerry H. “In the Name of ‘Childhood Innocence’: A Discursive Exploration of the Moral Panic Associated with Childhood and Sexuality.” *Cultural Studies Review* 14.2 (2008): 113-29. Print.

increasingly participate in this world of sexual knowledge that goes well beyond the ‘facts of life’, but they are provided no framework for thinking through this knowledge and no discursive space for talking about it.³⁴ While the birds and the bees emerged as a tactic for maintaining innocence by dispelling ignorance, through the discursive system formed around it — through the institutional devices, pedagogical practices, regulatory mechanisms, juridical proceedings, and epistemic assemblages that together produce a body of knowledge constituting the ‘truth’ of sex about and for adolescents — the birds and the bees has instead encouraged ignorance by diminishing innocence.

Clearly it is time to move beyond the birds and the bees.

Beyond the Birds and the Bees

The ‘system’ of sexual pedagogy that coalesced around the logic of the birds and the bees over the course of the twentieth century targets an abstract adolescent with abstract sexual knowledge. Adolescence is itself an abstraction, a category created to contain a problem. Delayed marriage and earlier onset of puberty opened a gap between childhood and adulthood, during which the young person ‘risks’ the ‘premature’ loss of sexual innocence. This loss threatens a moral and social order structured around sexual reproduction within the context of monogamous marriage, which is maintained in part through the regulation of knowledge that keeps young people distinct from, and dependent upon, adults. The invention of adolescence called forth numerous discursive and disciplinary mechanisms for guarding this order by protecting the innocence of youth.

Once labeled, a battery of sciences endeavored to define adolescence through a process of further abstraction. Psychology, anatomy, biology, cognitive science, endocrinology, and neuroscience have all isolated particular traits as normative markers of development, which

³⁴ Robinson, *Innocence*, 8.

together substantiate a model of adolescence as a stage characterized by an inopportune sexual awakening. The development of genitalia and the reproductive system signal sexual maturity, which is made inexpedient by the irrationality and impulsiveness characteristic of ‘raging hormones’ and a prefrontal cortex outpaced in development by the limbic system. Abstracted from the specific social, cultural, and economic contexts that shape development, individual developmental differences are defined as deficiencies or deviance.³⁵ This generalizing and universalizing model is brought to bear on young people through medical, psychological, psychiatric, therapeutic, juridical, parental, and pedagogical institutions and practices, transforming adolescents from abstract objects of knowledge into the subjects of an abstract knowledge.

Under the logic of the birds and the bees, a knowledge abstracted from the contexts of sexual practice is trained upon the abstract adolescent. Formal curricula advance an anatomical, biological, and pathological model of sex sterilized of infectious ideas, images, and information about emotions, intimacy, desire, lust, fantasy, and pleasure. The media push an equally abstract sexual knowledge. This was cleansed in consonance with sex education curricula for much of the twentieth century, presenting a coquettish sexuality that flirted with carnal knowledge but always contained it by excluding much of its affective, embodied, and relational specificity. But even as media sex has become ‘dirtier’, the knowledge it produces has not become less abstract. As a universal and ubiquitous signifier of desire, sex in the media is often disembodied and divorced of substantial social context, fragmented and reassembled into a cryptic code of juxtaposed body parts, and mobilized toward myriad ends. Splintered and splattered across the cultural landscape, media sex is scattershot, a collage of decontextualized carnality backdroping everyday life.

Adolescents come to sexual knowledge upon this contested terrain of *abstract sex*, where diverse discourses trafficking in facts and fantasies jostle for the claim to truth. It is here that they

³⁵ Walkerdine, Valerie. “Beyond Developmentalism?” *Theory & Psychology* 3.4 (1993): 451-469. Print.

encounter videos of women deriving pleasure from being choked, amidst innumerable other fetishized tokens of sex: illustrations of sexual anatomy, myths about virginity, descriptions of ‘normal’ sexual development, depictions of disease, stories of sexual ‘scandals’, statistics about sexual ‘risks’, ideas about orgasm, advice on birth control, billboards of ‘beautiful’ bodies, graphic displays of data on the ‘effects’ of teen pregnancy, televised images of intimacy, artistic portraits of passion, and myriad other elements of sexual discourse. At issue here is not that ‘fact’ mingles freely with ‘fiction’, but rather how these disparate elements are able to exercise a truth effect. The parts of this postmodern pastiche take on meaning and value in relation to each other and within the contexts they are encountered, forming an abstract sexual knowledge shaped by the logic of the birds and the bees, which functions as a comprehensive ‘system’ of sex education that teaches a particular sexual ‘truth’.

This pedagogical system is couched in an abstract empiricism that imposes on youth an ontogenetic acquiescence demanding didactic tactics. John Locke’s empirical model of the child as a ‘blank slate’ upon whom experience inscribes knowledge informed both the innocence of Rousseau’s *Emile* and the ‘banking’ model of pedagogy, which require the regulation of youth experience as a way of investing in them ‘appropriate’ knowledge that will pay off when they mature into rational and morally upstanding adults. Sex education and media regulation coevolved to serve this purpose, one as a method of writing a prophylactic knowledge on the young mind to protect it from exposure to ‘unwholesome sources’ of sexual knowledge, and the other as a means of preventing such exposure. Both of these methodologies are underwritten by an empirical abstraction that locates youth outside society and history by positioning them as passive receivers of knowledge that has direct psychological and behavioral effects.

Developed amidst growing concerns about mass media and the promise of mass education, this abstract system of sexual pedagogy has begun to crumble under the weight of new media and new models of childhood, which together draw attention to how young people interact with

sexual knowledge. The resurgence of the Children's Rights Movement and the emergence of the 'new sociology of childhood' in the 1980s and 1990s recast youth as active agents in both their own socialization and in broader social transformations. This idea of empowered youth was wed to a technological utopianism surrounding the development of interactive and networked technologies, defining a 'digital generation' whose facility with these technologies promised to change the world. Early research on digital media revealed their potential to not only provide access to sexual knowledge, but to also provide spaces in which young people could explore and experiment with sexuality, and thus participate in the production of sexual knowledge to which they are subject.

At the same time, their agency and autonomy in the developing digital realm gave them access to adult knowledge and experiences that had been guarded in order to maintain their innocence and dependence. This challenged parents, educators, legislators, and other 'guardians' of youth culture by threatening the distinction between child and adult. In the ensuing media panics over cyberpornography and online predators, a handful of incidents were explained by media sex science in terms of adolescent innocence and risk, sensationalized in the popular media, and mobilized by moral entrepreneurs in new legislative, technological, and pedagogical strategies for regulating youth access and participation in new forms of media sex. While these strategies have been ineffective at keeping young people out of the online sexual sphere, they have worked to maintain dominant developmental discourses of adolescent innocence, irrationality, risk, and desire, which work to delegitimize their agency, denigrate their experiences, and silence their voices. In doing so, they have obfuscated the complex ways in which adolescents can actively engage with sexual representations and discourses through new media to explore sexuality and experiment with sexual identity in a reflexive process of subject formation.

Moving beyond the birds and the bees first requires taking the pedagogic function of media sex seriously, as it is increasingly through the media that adolescents learn about sex and become sexual beings. Rather than assuming this is a direct or didactic process, we need to pay attention to how young people actually engage with sex in the media. Doing so reveals that they are rarely innocent, but rather are ‘knowing’: They do not merely have sexual knowledge; they actively participate in its production and circulation as they interact with images, information, and ideas. But because their active role is denied or delegitimated, youth are not provided with resources or assistance in this process. They are thus often ignorant of how to work with this sexual knowledge, how to make sense of the abstractions they encounter, how to evaluate them, how to contextualize them, how to give them meaning, how to apply them in their own lives. They thus tend to reproduce dominant ideas about sex — not because they are imitative, but because they are not critical. And they are uncritical not because they are irrational, but because they have not been taught or encouraged to be critical through the didactic pedagogies of sex education and regulated media sex.

Moving beyond the birds and the bees thus requires practicing a *critical sexual pedagogy*. Such a practice would provide youth with resources and tools for navigating abstract sexual knowledge and the tangle of discourses, institutions, and practices through which it is produced, helping them to make meaning of this knowledge by interpreting, critiquing, and contextualizing it, so that they can appositely apply it to their own lives. Adolescents would thus be able to make abstract sexual knowledge concrete, relevant, and useful.

A critical sexual pedagogy would foster *sexual media literacy*. Such literacy entails not only the ability to ‘read’ sexual ‘texts’ and to understand the social, political, and economic contexts of their production, but to also appropriate and repurpose these texts, and to produce new ones. Sexually literate adolescents would be able to critically engage in the discursive production

of sexual knowledge to which they are subject, and would thus be able to play a meaningful role in shaping their sexual subjectivities.

A Genealogy of Adolescent Sexual Knowledge

I have tried to reveal the specificity of a method that is neither formalizing nor interpretive; in short, I have appealed to a whole apparatus, whose sheer weight and, no doubt, bizarre machinery are a source of embarrassment.
— Michel Foucault³⁶

SexEd is primarily a genealogical study. As a “history of the present,” this method seeks to address a contemporary issue by beginning from “a question posed in the present” and then “work[ing] out its genealogy.”³⁷ *SexEd* addresses the issue of adolescent sexual knowledge. What do American adolescents know about sex and how do they come to know it? Why are they subject to a specific sexual knowledge? How is this knowledge produced, and by whom? What purpose is it meant to serve, and what does it actually do?

Grappling with these questions has entailed traversing a broad range of discursive sites through which adolescent sexual knowledge has been produced and regulated: medical and moral tracts, and childrearing guides; pedagogical materials and practices; social and political movements; private and public organizations; government agencies and policies; media corporations and industry trade groups; philanthropic foundations and research institutes; Congressional commissions, records, and reports; conventions and conferences; legislation, policies, and juridical proceedings; scientific disciplines, theories, and methods; surveys and statistics; art and literature; newspapers and magazines; films, radio and TV shows; advertisements, websites, chatrooms, and text messages. Together these sites form what Foucault

³⁶ Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon, 1972. 135. Print.

³⁷ Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1995. 31. Print; Foucault, Michel. “The Concern for Truth.” *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings of Michel Foucault, 1977-1984*. Ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman. New York: Routledge, 1988. 262. Print.

called a *dispositif*. While this term is often translated as “apparatus,” it might better be thought of as a “grid of intelligibility.”³⁸ A *dispositif* is a “heterogeneous ensemble” of discourses, institutions, and practices that forms around a particular problem, and within which a specific knowledge pertaining to the problem becomes intelligible as such.³⁹ By tracing the emergence of this ensemble, genealogy problematizes this knowledge — that is, it reveals how the production of knowledge constructs the problem to which it responds. *SexEd* studies the development of the *dispositif* within which forms a knowledge that produces the adolescent sexual subject as a problem.

Genealogy is not a structured methodology but rather “a set of profound philosophical and methodological suspicions toward the objects of knowledge that we confront.”⁴⁰ These suspicions arise from Nietzsche’s fundamental insight that all knowledge is a function of the will to power.⁴¹ Knowledge is not the discovery of truth through neutral observation of reality, but is rather the product of an imposition of order through a particular way of perceiving that serves the preservation of our species.⁴² This calls into question not only the ontological status of the object of knowledge, but also the means and methods by which the object is apprehended and evaluated as knowledge, as well as the notion of an autonomous subject who apprehends and evaluates. We thus need to maintain, as Nietzsche argued, “an absolute skepticism toward all inherited

³⁸ Dreyfus, Hubert L. & Paul Rabinow. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983. 120-122. Print.

³⁹ Foucault, Michel. “The Confessions of the Flesh.” *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980. 194. Print.

⁴⁰ Hook, Derek. “Genealogy, Discourse, ‘Effective History’: Foucault and the Work of Critique.” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 2.1 (2005): 4. Print.

⁴¹ Mahon, Michael. *Foucault’s Nietzschean Genealogy: Truth, Power and the Subject*. Albany: New York State University Press, 1992. 91. Print.

⁴² “The utility of preservation,” argued Nietzsche, “stands as the motive behind the development of the organs of knowledge — they develop in such a way that their observations suffice for our preservation.” Through “the regularity of perceptions” that humans have developed, we render reality “calculable and constant” so as to “base a scheme of behavior on it [...] to become master of it, in order to press it into service.” Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1968. 480. Print.

concepts.”⁴³ The object and the subject, our perceptions and our instruments of observation, our philosophies, histories, and sciences, our thinking, reason, and morals, are all ‘suspect’ — not because behind them lurks a noumenal reality that they distort, but because they purport to give us access to an essential truth that they in fact create. Through philosophical skepticism and methodological suspicion, genealogy proceeds not by looking for truth, but by tracing the manifold means, methods, and moments through which truth is produced.⁴⁴

Genealogy pursues what Nietzsche called “effective history.”⁴⁵ Against a monumental history that strings together ‘great’ moments of the past into a continuous progression toward the realization of truth in the present, and against an antiquarian history that preserves and reveres obscure moments as reflections in which an underlying truth can be re-cognized, Nietzsche suggested a critical method for dissolving the “saturation” of the present with these histories’ oppressive truths.⁴⁶ By resisting the tradition of looking to the past for universal constants and a continuity that would comprise a teleological totality, genealogy reveals traditional history as a contingent production of truth.⁴⁷ Genealogy is “effective history” to the extent that it exposes the effects of the past on the present not in terms of metaphysical, transcendental, or suprahistorical absolutes, but in terms of how the will to knowledge works upon disparate, disconnected, and accidental events — “the iron hand of necessity shaking the dice-box of chance” — to produce truth-effects.⁴⁸

⁴³ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 409.

⁴⁴ For an analysis of Foucault’s philosophical skepticism and how it functions as a critical rewriting of history that serves to free the subject from the past, see: Rajchman, John. *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. Print.

⁴⁵ Foucault, Michel. “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.” *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon, 1984. 87-89. Print.

⁴⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich. “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life.” *Untimely Meditations*. Ed. Daniel Breazale. Trans R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 67-80. Print.

⁴⁷ Genealogy reveals “the history of an error we call truth.” Foucault, “Nietzsche,” 80.

⁴⁸ Dean, Mitchell. *Critical and Effective Histories: Foucault’s Methods and Historical Sociology*. New York: Routledge, 1994. 18-21. Print; Nietzsche, Friedrich. “Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality.” *The Nietzsche Reader*. Eds. Keith Ansell Pearson & Duncan Large. Malden: Blackwell, 2006. 200. Print.

Genealogy thus “opposes itself to the search for ‘origins’” characteristic of traditional history, which “assumes the existence of immobile forms” and attempts to unveil “a primordial truth” by capturing “the exact essence of things.” By refusing this metaphysical quest and instead “listening to history,” the genealogist discovers “not a timeless and essential secret” behind things, “but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion” from “the dissension of other things.”⁴⁹ At the core of the object of knowledge is not a unity that reveals truth, but a disparity that exposes truth as a phantasm. How does the genealogist “listen to history” and thus “diagnose and demythologize” such “truth phenomena”?⁵⁰ Foucault suggests that rather than looking for origins, genealogy must trace descent and emergence.

The analysis of descent does not seek to establish the inviolable unity of a concept, practice, thing, or being by tracing a chain of events through which it develops, but rather seeks to maintain its heterogeneous traits by studying its “numberless beginnings” — the profusion and dispersion of disconnected and often chance events through which it forms.⁵¹ “The entire history of a ‘thing,’” wrote Nietzsche, is a “chain of reinterpretations and rearrangements, which need not be causally connected,” but “may simply follow one another.”⁵² Because we tend to interpret history in terms of “events caused by intentions,” the analysis of descent requires tempering our belief in causality. And because this is essentially a “belief that every event is a deed” and “that every deed presupposes a doer,” and is thus, as Nietzsche argued, a “belief in the subject,” analysis also requires decentering the humanist subject from its position as the agent of history.⁵³ To do so, Foucault suggests a practice of “eventalization,” whereby the genealogist effects a

⁴⁹ Foucault, “Nietzsche,” 77-79.

⁵⁰ Tamboukou, Maria. “Writing Genealogies: An Exploration of Foucault’s Strategies for Doing Research.” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 20.2 (1999): 201-217. Print.

⁵¹ Foucault, “Nietzsche,” 81.

⁵² Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann & R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage, 1989. 77-78. Print.

⁵³ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 550.

“multiplication or pluralization of causes” by making visible the singularity and disparity of “the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies and so on which at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal and necessary.”⁵⁴ By not searching for autonomous and intentional subjects behind ‘things’, genealogy expands the field of events in which they form. In turn, identifying the disparate events through which things ‘descend’ dissolves apparitions of unity and dissociates the self, revealing objects as accidental assemblages, and subjects as the locus of an illusory coherence inscribed by the historicization of events.

Having identified an unordered array of events that gives rise to the ‘things’ that constitute a *dispositif*, genealogy proceeds to trace their emergence. A concept, practice, thing, or being emerges not through “an obscure purpose that seeks its realization at the moment it arises,” but through a struggle of forces that seek to subject it to a variety of needs.⁵⁵ Genealogy thus studies a “thing” as “a vector of forces” within which it “attains epistemological coherence.”⁵⁶ By paying attention to the various and often contentious ways in which a field of events is organized to give coherence to ‘things’, the analysis of emergence can chart the struggles through which a discursive space is defined and cleared for them to appear as objects of knowledge.⁵⁷ As the emergence of a ‘thing’ never culminates, analysis can only isolate “episodes in a series of subjugations,” of “substitutions, displacements, disguised conquests, and systematic reversals.” By studying these episodes of emergence, genealogy reveals the object and subject of knowledge as the effects of a historical concatenation of interpretations, of “violent or surreptitious appropriation[s]” that “bend it to a new will.”⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Foucault, Michel. “Questions of Method.” *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Eds. Graham Burchell, et al. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. 76. Print.

⁵⁵ Foucault, “Nietzsche,” 83.

⁵⁶ Hook, Derek. “Genealogy,” 16.

⁵⁷ Dreyfus & Rabinow, *Michel Foucault*, 125.

⁵⁸ Foucault, “Nietzsche,” 83-86.

As analytic tools, descent and emergence counter “the traditional devices for constructing a comprehensive view of history and for retracing the past as a patient and continuous development.” By exploding causality into a field of disparate events and studying the struggles to locate ‘things’ within a particular ordering of events so as to give them meaning, genealogy destabilizes what seemed to be self-evident and “introduces discontinuity into our very being.”⁵⁹ The remaining task is to (re)write a history that maintains this instability and discontinuity against the Platonism of metaphysical, anthropological, monumental, and antiquarian accounts. Foucault identifies three strategic ways to use history to do so: the parodic, the dissociative, and the sacrificial.

By “revitalizing the buffoonery of history,” the parodic counters the solemnity with which history stands as a representation of reality. In this mode, genealogy takes the form of a “concerted carnival,” reinscribing the absurdities that have been written out of history in order to push its masquerade to the point of “unrealization.”⁶⁰ The dissociative mode opposes the continuity of history by highlighting inconsistencies, and impugns humanist conceptualizations of a stable and essential subject by revealing “the heterogeneous systems” that “inhibit the formation of any form of identity.”⁶¹ Genealogy writes a dissociative history by reporting on the institutions, practices, and technologies that converge at the point of a thing or being to produce it as an object or subject of knowledge. Finally, the sacrificial use of history works against the truth claims of knowledge production. By interrogating the various forms of historical and scientific “consciousness,” genealogy exposes their appearance of neutrality and their commitment to truth as “masks” that cover the instinct, passion, violence, and injustice of the will to knowledge.⁶² The sacrifice of truth is performed by describing the desires, interests, intuitions, appetites, needs, values, and compulsions that drive the production of knowledge.

⁵⁹ Foucault, “Nietzsche,” 88.

⁶⁰ Foucault, “Nietzsche,” 93-94.

⁶¹ Foucault, “Nietzsche,” 94-95.

By identifying the profusion and dispersion of events from which concepts, things, practices, and beings descend, by tracing a series of struggles through which they emerge as coherent objects of knowledge, and by reinscribing them within a parodic, dissociative, and sacrificial history, genealogy functions as a critique of institutional forms of knowledge production.⁶³ Indeed, genealogy is neither historiography nor epistemology, but is instead a mode of historiographical and epistemological critique.⁶⁴ This is not an empty exercise in erudition or hermeneutics; rather, it functions as a diagnostic tool, as a method for diagnosing the present.⁶⁵ The genealogist analyzes the historical production of knowledge and rewrites its history in order to understand and draw attention to how it determines our contemporary conditions.⁶⁶

By analyzing how adolescent sexual knowledge has been produced, *SexEd* exposes the contemporary situation of American adolescence. It critiques the institutional production of this knowledge as an exercise of power whereby youth are targeted, on the one hand, by a scientific scrutiny that renders them as abstract objects of knowledge, and on the other, by discursive, pedagogic, regulatory, and disciplinary measures that make them subjects of abstract knowledge. This critique works by tracing the emergence of a number of discourses, institutions, and practices that form the *dispositif* in which this knowledge becomes intelligible as truth. It dissolves the unity of these discursive elements through a ‘pluralization of causes’. Christian asceticism, Victorian morality, the Protestant ethic, empiricism, industrialism, urbanization, im/migration, communication technologies, puberty, poverty, prostitution, pregnancy, pornography, pedophilia, masturbation, delinquency, venereal disease, birth control, and economic, gender, and racial inequality are identified as some of the many causes from which the

⁶² Foucault, “Nietzsche,” 95-96.

⁶³ Hook, Derek. “Genealogy,” 4-5.

⁶⁴ Prado, C.G. *Starting With Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy*. Boulder: Westview, 1995. 152-154. Print; See also: Dean, *Critical and Effective Histories*; Hook, “Genealogy”; Mahon, *Foucault’s Nietzschean Genealogy*; Tamboukou, “Writing Genealogies.”

⁶⁵ Mahon, *Foucault’s Nietzschean Genealogy*, 121.

⁶⁶ Simon, John K. “A Conversation with Michel Foucault.” *Partisan Review* 38.2 (1971): 192. Print.

discourses, institutions, and practices particular to adolescent sexual knowledge ‘descend’. These discursive elements are shown to ‘emerge’ through ‘episodes’ in which a ‘play of forces’ constitutes them as coherent by organizing their underlying causes. These episodes include the ‘inventions’ of childhood, adolescence, hysteria, obscenity, and pornography; the emergence of the middle class, eugenics, Progressivism, and philanthropy; disciplinary fragmentation, the ‘golden age of endocrinology’, and the ‘cognitive turn’; the ‘discovery’ of erotic antiquity, the ‘rise of the novel’, ‘nickel madness’, the ‘code era’, ‘anarchy in the ether’, the ‘porno chic’ phenomenon, and the video and digital ‘revolutions’; the ‘crusade for children’, the ‘children’s crusade’, the ‘disappearance of childhood’, and children’s rights; sexual ‘revolutions’, moral panics, anti-pornography crusades, the rise of the New Right, and welfare and regulatory reforms.

SexEd invokes the parodic to deflect history’s solemn pretense of reflecting reality by exposing the absurdity of such ‘things’ as ‘spermatorrhoeal rings’ and infibulation, female ‘passionlessness’ and male ‘sexual necessity’, eugenics and recapitulation, Comstockery and Bowdlerization, the ‘crisis of virginity’ and the ‘crisis of masculinity’, the ‘epidemic’ of teen pregnancy and the ‘teen sexting epidemic’, ‘Condom Roulette’, the ‘tendency to deprave and corrupt’, ‘gateway sexual activity’, ‘biological romance’, ‘a floodtide of filth’, ‘harmful to minors’, and Porn Star onesies. It works dissociatively both to disrupt the smooth continuity of history by drawing attention to inconsistencies in the ‘development’ of education, public policy, the law, industry regulation, and science, and also to impugn the essential self at the core of the humanist subject by showing how people are ‘made up’ through heterogeneous discursive elements, for example, the ‘young person’, the ‘innocent child’, the ‘precocious adolescent’, the ‘pregnant teen’, the ‘slut’, the ‘juvenile delinquent’, ‘digital natives’, the ‘libertine homosexual’, and the ‘promiscuous poor’. Finally, *SexEd* sacrifices truth by interrogating sexual surveys, statistical methods, sociological studies, psychological theories, endocrinological research, and the neuro-imaging of adolescent brains, sweeping aside their veils of neutrality and objectivity to

reveal the assumptions, interests, values, needs, and compulsions that drive these productions of knowledge.

SexEd thus deconstructs the particular discursive practices within which sexual knowledge is articulated as truth, in order to reveal the function of power in creating those specific conditions within which adolescents become intelligible as sexual subjects. The danger of taking this approach is that it suggests that the sexual subjectivity of adolescents is determined by the discursive construction of sexual knowledge. Ken Plummer points out that it is important to “look at sexuality through the child’s eyes to grasp how [the child] actively has to construct a sexual world.”⁶⁷ As Louisa Allen and others have shown, and as we will see, kids are not passive recipients of sexual knowledge, but rather, actively negotiate the often contradictory meanings and values of sexual discourse in the performance and production of their sexual subjectivities.⁶⁸ By focusing on the discursive production of adolescent sexual knowledge, *SexEd* runs the risk of participating in the same practice it critiques: the silencing of youth through the discursive production of knowledge about and for them.

Taking this approach was a practical necessity. The controversial nature of claiming youth as active and knowing agents in the construction of their own sexual subjectivity has significantly limited research in this area.⁶⁹ This is particularly true in the United States for a number of reasons that will become clear in the following chapters: the imposition of innocence on American adolescents, and the associated dominance of abstinence education; a legacy of

⁶⁷ Plummer, “Understanding,” 240.

⁶⁸ Allen, *Sexual Subjects*.

⁶⁹ Blaise, Mindy. “Kiss and Tell: Gendered Narratives and Childhood Sexuality.” *Australian Journal of Early Childhood* 35.1 (2010): 1-9. Print; Davies, Criss & Kerry H. Robinson. “Hatching Babies and Stork Deliveries: Constructing Sexual Knowledge and Taking Risks in Early Childhood Education.” *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 11.3 (2010): 249-260. Print; Jackson, Stevi. *Childhood and Sexuality*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982. Print; Renold, Emma. *Girls, Boys, and Junior Sexualities: Exploring Children’s Sexual Relations in the Primary School*. London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2005. Print; Robinson, Kerry H. & Criss Davies. “Tomboys and Sissy Girls: Power, Agency, and Girls’ Relationships in Early Childhood.” *Australian Journal of Early Childhood* 35.1 (2010): 24-31. Print; Robinson, Kerry H.

Protestant asceticism that denigrates sexual pleasure; the culture wars, which have linked sexual liberalism to a host of social ills; the political and religious right, who freak out when the words ‘youth’ and ‘sex’ appear in the same sentence; the particular history of sexual research in the U.S., which dictates its focus on public health issues; and an overwhelming concern with “childhood protection” in the wake of decades of moral panic, which “has intensified the cautiousness and regulation associated with children’s participation in research, especially research of this kind.”⁷⁰ Researchers of youth sexuality are subject to heightened scrutiny, have difficulty attaining institutional support and funding, and are vulnerable to becoming targets of moral panic. This creates a chilling effect that shuts down research interests before they are even articulated, or ensures that they develop in the most conservative way.⁷¹

Even though *SexEd* does not directly engage youth voices, it contributes to filling a gap in the understanding of their sexual subjectivities that has formed through the silencing and exclusion of their voices by the dominant discourses that produce the knowledge to which they are subject. In doing so, *SexEd* offers contributions to the fields of youth studies, sexuality studies, media studies, legal studies, science studies, critical pedagogy, sex education, and media literacy education. More importantly, as an “effective history,” as an epistemological critique, as a diagnosis of contemporary conditions, *SexEd* “traces the history of the present in order to undermine its self-evidences and to open possibilities.”⁷² As Nietzsche argued, “We want to serve history only to the extent that history serves life.”⁷³ *SexEd* serves history in order to separate us from “the contingency that has made us what we are” and thus to open “the possibility of no longer being, doing or thinking what we are, do, or think.”⁷⁴ By contributing to an understanding

“‘Difficult Citizenship’: The Precarious Relationships Between Childhood, Sexuality and Access to Knowledge.” *Sexualities* 15.3-4 (2012): 257-276. Print.

⁷⁰ Robinson, *Innocence*, 10-11.

⁷¹ Robinson, *Innocence*, 11.

⁷² Mahon, *Foucault’s Nietzschean Genealogy*, 101.

⁷³ Nietzsche, Friedrich. “Uses and Disadvantages,” 59-62.

⁷⁴ Mahon, *Foucault’s Nietzschean Genealogy*, 122.

of adolescent sexual knowledge, *SexEd* attempts to open up a discursive space in which adolescents can articulate sexual subjectivities under-determined by the contingencies of history.

An Overview of the Chapters

The first three chapters of *SexEd* explore three different discursive fields in which adolescent sexual knowledge is produced: education, the media, and science. Each of these chapters shows how a particular yet heterogeneous ensemble of discourses, institutions, and practices emerged during the twentieth century, forming a ‘grid of intelligibility’ within which specific information, ideas, and images come to constitute an abstract sexual ‘truth’ of and for American adolescents. The fourth chapter examines how youth participation in the discursive production of sexual knowledge through new media technologies has begun to disrupt this grid by introducing into it the knowledge and experiences of youth, which have long been subjugated to the sexual ‘truth’ produced through education, media, and science.

Chapter one, *(A)sexual Education*, traces the emergence of formal sex education in the United States. It shows how the values and norms of white, male, heterosexual, middle-class America have been integrated into science-based sex education policies and programs. While the first such policies and programs were products of the progressive era’s social hygiene movement, they were shaped by a number of prior developments: changes in the conceptualization of children since the seventeenth century, whereby childhood was constructed as a time of sheltered innocence, the child was imagined as a blank slate upon whom appropriate knowledge must be inscribed, and children were invested with the futurity of society and nation; the conflation of morality and medicine in Victorian ‘improving literature’, which stressed the importance of sexual self-control to both individual health and social prosperity; the social purity movement, which brought to light the classed and gendered politics behind the social cost of sexual ‘vice’; and the ‘invention of adolescence’, which defined the sexuality of young people, who were

‘coming of age’ well before becoming adults, as a social problem. Informed by these developments, Progressives sought to provide young people with a ‘scientific’ sex education that would help them make the ‘intelligent choice’ of sexual self-control. In doing so, they established the extant model of sex education in the United States, in which private organizations push policy and programs that deal with youth sexuality as a problem of public health to be addressed through scientific sexual knowledge both about and for adolescents.

Within this paradigm, a number of organizations have been able to mobilize public resources in response to anxieties about various social problems by linking these problems to adolescent sexuality and prescribing curricula designed to address them. Sexually transmitted diseases, juvenile delinquency, the disintegration of family, teen pregnancy, and sexual abuse have all occasioned campaigns for sex education. While some of these have been more progressive than others, under the logic of the birds and the bees they have all worked to produce a sexual knowledge abstracted from the contexts of sexual practice into discourses of anatomy, biology, and pathology, which obscures underlying assumptions about gender, class, race, and sexuality behind a cloak of scientific facts. This knowledge fails to prepare young people for sexual life, and particularly disadvantages those who fall outside its limited purview of ‘natural’ and thus ‘normal’ sexuality. Alienated from this abstract knowledge offered in formal sex education programs, adolescents increasingly look to the media for sexual knowledge.

The second chapter, *Media Sex*, explores the sexualization of American media. It reveals how efforts to regulate the media have shaped a specific sexual knowledge appearing in the public spaces of popular culture, while also determining who is qualified to access these spaces. These efforts have been a necessary counterpart to the discursive production of an authoritative sexual ‘truth’, assisting in the subjugation of ‘inferior knowledges’ by purging them from the public sphere. Just as sex was exploding into discourse in the eighteenth century, the first obscenity laws were enacted, and a number of discursive mechanisms also developed through

which the production and circulation of sexual knowledge was regulated. These juridical and discursive contrivances worked together to circumscribe the *sexual public sphere*, controlling not only what could appear, but also who could participate. Those thought to lack the rational capacity for critical reflection and to thus be controlled by emotions and desires — women, children, and the lower classes — were disqualified.

For much of the twentieth century, laws and regulations kept the sexual public sphere well bounded. Outlining the emergence of movies and broadcasting through industry institutions and practices, government agencies and public interest groups, laws and policies, and media texts, this chapter reveals how the disruptive potential for these new mass media to democratize access to knowledge was contained as they were instead developed as commercial forms of entertainment. Regulated by their parent industries — which were intent on appealing to a broad audience comprised precisely of those disqualified from unfettered access to knowledge — sexual content in film, radio, and television was cleansed of all connotations that might disrupt the ‘natural’ order of sex, producing an abstract sexual knowledge aligned with the values embedded in the logic of the birds and the bees.

At the same time, a struggle to define the boundaries of the sexual sphere was playing out amongst artists, publishers, prosecutors, jurists, legislators, merchants, and moral crusaders in the public spaces of congressional hearings and commissions, courts, and the media. Tracing this struggle shows how it worked to not only ‘liberate’ sexual representation, but also to bring sex into the public sphere as a floating signifier of desire. Defined as a “motive force in human life” and a “vital problem of public concern,” and yet intrinsically void of meaning or value, sex became an “explanation for everything” that could be inserted into different contexts, given disparate meanings, and mobilized toward diverse ends. This has effectively produced a postmodern *pornotopian culture*, where sex proliferates within a protean media montage, forming an abstract sexual knowledge that functions in the “education of desire.”

Chapter three, *Overexposed*, examines how American adolescents have become the objects and subjects of a sexual knowledge produced through scientific scrutiny of their experiences with sex in the media. It traces the development of a particular research culture that takes media and youth behavior as its objects of analysis, and through an “amalgam of arrangements and mechanisms” constructs the *abstract adolescent*: a subject at risk of exposure to media sex. This epistemic culture emerged at the nexus of a number of discourses, institutions, and practices — welfare, clinical, and social work, research institutes and philanthropic foundations, government agencies and commissions, academic theories and methods, scholarly publications, and the popular press — and was shaped by how these discursive elements had amalgamated in the areas of child study, media effects research, and studies of sexual behavior. Together these shaped a ‘normal science’ of media sex — an entrenched paradigm for producing an authoritative sexual ‘truth’ by counting, coding, cataloguing, and correlating adolescent exposure to media sex and sexual risk.

The chapter exemplifies this ‘normal science’ in a recent study which found that adolescent exposure to sex in the movies predicts risky sexual behavior. A close analysis reveals how a set of variables was defined, movie content coded, behaviors catalogued, and a statistical model constructed and then adjusted until it ‘revealed’ correlations, which were then framed in an explanatory theory that suggested a public health risk calling for regulatory intervention. This study is put into historical context by first looking at the Payne Fund Studies. Conducted before the contemporary epistemic culture of media sex science coalesced, this early research into the effects of media on youth exercised a kind of ‘abnormal science’: Informed by disparate theories, methods, and values drawn from the amorphous field of child study, the Payne Fund Studies proceeded through exploration, contestation, and failure, producing more questions than answers.

Tracing the emergence of child study, media effects research, and studies of sexual behavior allows us to see the normalization of media sex science following the Payne Fund

Studies, as elements from these areas of research coalesced into a particular epistemic culture. Child study contributed the developmental model of adolescence as an inherently risky ‘stage’ characterized by irrational, impulsive, and imitative behavior. Media effects research established the dominant theoretical and methodological paradigm for studying causal relations between media representations and behavior through the abstract empiricism of content coding, surveys, and statistical analysis. Further informed by the particular sexual politics developing out of studies into sexual behavior, research on the behavioral effects of media sex was necessarily articulated in terms of public health issues in order to acquire institutional legitimacy. Incorporating these elements, the normal science of media sex is empirical, epidemiological, and etiological, working to maintain a normative ideal of adolescent innocence by linking exposure to sexual knowledge to risky sexual behavior that threatens both ‘healthy’ development and public health. Media sex science thus function within and through the logic of the birds and the bees: In the interest of protecting their innocence, it dissimulates the complex social contexts in which young people engage with sex in the media.

The fourth chapter, *Innocence or Ignorance*, looks at adolescent engagement with new forms of media sex such as cyberpornography, cam sex, and sexting. It portrays a “panic-stricken production of the real,” whereby public anxieties about youth participation in new media sex have been channeled into a set of dominant discourses that position young people as problematic sexual subjects requiring regulatory and disciplinary interventions. This is traced through a series of moral panics in which youth have been made proxies for broader social concerns, sensationalist media coverage that has fueled these panics by organizing ‘evidence’ into emotionally charged discourses of danger, and legal and juridical proceedings that attempt to regulate adolescent involvement with new media sex. Together these have worked to produce young people as disempowered and potentially dangerous sexual subjects.

More specifically, the chapter details the development of a particular discourse that positions adolescents who intentionally and actively participate in new media sex as precocious prodigies whose innate technological skills abet a problematically premature carnal knowledge. This discourse emerges out of fears about child pornography, child abuse, pedophilia, and sexual predators, which became entangled with concerns about the autonomy and agency within the digital realm that young people seemed to attain through their presumed proclivity with new media technologies. As active participants in the adult spaces of knowledge and experience within this realm, adolescents are positioned as knowing perpetrators of media sex. This discourse of *prodigious precocity* complements the discourse of innocence, forming a discursive binary that constructs and contains as a problem youth engagement with new media sex.

By positioning adolescents within this binary as victims and/or villains, their voices are silenced, their knowledge denigrated, their experiences rendered incomprehensible, and their agency delegitimized. In doing so, the complicated ways in which they actually engage with new media sex are obscured. Evidencing recent research, this chapter shows that many young people use new media to explore sexuality and experiment with sexual identity in a reflexive process of sexual subject formation. Yet it also reveals how social inequalities constrain this process so that gender, class, race, and sexual differences underlying these inequalities are often reproduced within the new media spaces where youth articulate their sexual subjectivities. It also reveals how they tend to ‘speak’ in the terms of dominant discourses, perform the roles these discourses describe, and produce the subjectivities they define. This indicates that adolescents are not innocent, but that they are ignorant — that they have sexual knowledge, but do not always know how to use it to effectively participate in the discourses to which they are subjects.

Finally, the conclusion shows that youth engagement with new media sex undermines the logic of the birds and the bees that structures the production of adolescent sexual knowledge within education, the media, and science. It unravels four key assumptions that underwrite this

logic: that adolescents are innocent, irrational, prone to risk, and defined by desire. In doing so, it moves beyond the birds and the bees and advances toward a *critical sexual pedagogy*. Such a practice begins from the recognition that adolescents are not innocent but rather ‘knowing’, that risks are social constructs they are capable of negotiating, that the promotion of abstract reason obscures the situated and embodied nature of thinking through which they make sexual decisions, and that their sexual subjectivity is not determined by their desires but by diverse discourses and practices in which they can participate.

These re-cognitions would allow a critical sexual pedagogy to take seriously the educative function of the media, not as a didactic tool but rather as a site for articulating and practicing an alternative public pedagogy. By assuming young people have the potential to engage critically with media sex but not assuming that they always do, such a pedagogy would necessarily be a form of media literacy praxis. The conclusion explores the possibilities and problems of promoting and practicing a critical sexual pedagogy that fosters *sexual media literacy*, and suggests one way in which such a practice could be implemented.

Chapter 1: (A)sexual Education: Morality, Medicine, and American Adolescence

Don't medicine and morality teach the same lesson?
— Ronald Reagan

In April of 2012, the Obama Administration quietly added Heritage Keepers to a list of groups eligible for federal funds. Heritage Keepers is a Christian organization that provides abstinence-based sex education curricula to schools. This prompted a collective outcry from numerous organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Human Rights Campaign, and the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), who criticized both the content and the effectiveness of Heritage Keepers' curricula.

A year and a half earlier, these groups had applauded as the administration seemed to put an end to almost thirty years of federal funding for abstinence-based programs by eliminating the Community Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) grant and the abstinence-only-until-marriage portion of the Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA). The programs supported by CBAE and AFLA had come increasingly under fire as studies began to reveal that they failed to deter teens from having sex. Moreover, critics argued, by preaching abstinence and not teaching contraception, these programs were putting adolescents at risk. This critique seemed to be born out as incidents of sexually transmitted disease and teen pregnancy began to rise in the first decade of the twenty-first century.⁷⁵

In response, the Obama administration had entered into the political fray of sex education by first cutting funding to abstinence-only programs and then dedicating \$110 million in grants to 'evidence-based' programs for reducing teen pregnancy. This technocratic foray into sex education was meant to appease opposed interests, but instead, as details of the Obama policy emerged, seemed to offend everyone. Critics of abstinence-only education complained that grants totaling \$9.3 million would go to programs such as WAIT Training and Choose the Best —

which, they charged, include misleading information about contraception and ask students to make controversial “virginity pledges” — as well as to health services like the Women’s Clinic of Kansas City — which they denounced as one of the “pregnancy crisis centers” that “proselytize to pregnant women about the evils of abortion.”⁷⁶ Abstinence-only proponents, on the other hand, were upset that so little money was going to programs they condoned, especially on the heels of the extensive support of these programs by the Bush administration, which had shelled out over \$1.5 billion to 169 abstinence programs throughout the country over the course of eight years.

In defunding abstinence-only programs and calling for “demonstrated outcomes” vetted through “an open and transparent scientific process,” the Obama technocracy distanced itself from the values-based approach of the Bush era.⁷⁷ Yet the inclusion of Heritage Keepers in what has been called “the holy grail of the Administration’s commitment to a science-based approach to teen pregnancy prevention” complicates any simple distinction between moral values and science as the basis for public sex education policy.⁷⁸ It begs the question, asked decades earlier by president Ronald Reagan in a rhetorical appeal to abstinence as the best method for avoiding AIDS: Can medicine and morality teach the same lesson?⁷⁹

This chapter explores how the moral and social values of the white, male, heterosexual, American middle-class shaped the development of sex education in the United States during the twentieth century. Through the discursive logic of the birds and the bees, a scientific sexual knowledge — the ‘facts of life’ — has been targeted at the young. Abstracted from the complex

⁷⁵ Wind, Rebecca. “Following Decade-Long Decline, U.S. Teen Pregnancy Rate Increases as Both Births and Abortions Rise.” *Guttmacher*. Guttmacher Institute, 26 Jan. 2010. Web. 31 May 2012.

⁷⁶ Stein, Rob. “Obama Administration Launches a Sex-Ed Program.” *washingtonpost.com*. The Washington Post, 28 Oct. 2010. Web. 31 May 2012.

⁷⁷ HSS spokesman Mark Weber, quoted in: Carmon, Irin. “Why Obama’s in Bed with Abstinence-Only Education.” *Salon*. Salon Media Group, 8 May 2012. Web. 31 May 2012.

⁷⁸ Hauser, Debra, et al. “He-Men, Virginity Pledges, and Bridal Dreams: Obama Administration Quietly Endorses Dangerous Ab-Only Curriculum.” *RH Reality Check*. Rh Reality Check, 1 May 2012. Web. 31 May 2012.

⁷⁹ Davis, Peter. “Exploring the Kingdom of AIDS.” *New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 31 May 1987. Web. 31 May 2012.

social contexts in which sex is situated, this knowledge naturalizes particular behaviors, practices, and relations as sexual ‘truth’. This ‘truth’ aligns with a notion of social progress that has been inflected by race, class, gender, and sexual politics, and which values forms of sexual expression that maintain and reproduce heterosexuality, patriarchy, racial purity, and economic disparity. The birds and the bees has thus functioned as the discursive mechanism by which the translation of sexual values into sexual science has obtained. Heritage Keepers is but one of many programs developed since the turn of the twentieth century that teaches the birds and the bees: a sex education that smuggles in particular values under the guise of science. Its support under the Obama administration indicates how sex education in the United States has been shaped by the values of particular interest groups so as to target youth with an abstract sexual knowledge meant to maintain their sexual innocence.

Heritage Keepers insists that their programs are not values-based, but rather, are “based on sound science and widely accepted research,” are founded in “sound theory and methodology,” and are “fully referenced and approved for medical accuracy.”⁸⁰ But a 2008 review of Heritage Keepers by SIECUS reported that their curriculum was based not on presentation of facts or encouragement of critical thinking, but rather on the instillation of fear and guilt, the withholding and distortion of information, a clear bias against non-traditional families, a refusal to acknowledge sexual diversity, and reproduction of traditional gender norms.⁸¹ In short, Heritage Keepers bore all the marks of a values-based, rather than an evidence-based, sex education program. Moreover, a 2007 report to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HSS) by policy analysis group Mathematica found that Heritage Keepers had little impact on sexual

⁸⁰ *Heritage Community Services*. 24 May 2012. Heritage Community Services. Web. 31 May 2012.

⁸¹ “Heritage Keepers Review.” *Community Action Kit*. SIECUS, 2008. Web. 31 May 2012.

abstinence.⁸² How, then, did it make the HHS list of evidence-based programs eligible for federal funds?

HHS criteria for evidence-based programs require only that studies show “one measure of sexual risk behavior or its health consequences.”⁸³ Moreover, studies need only receive a “moderate” rating of their methodological quality. Heritage Keepers made the HHS list based on review of an unpublished 2011 study by the Institute for Research and Evaluation.⁸⁴ This study, which received the merely acceptable moderate rating due to its quasi-experimental design, was able to show that in a sample of 2,215 seventh to ninth grade students, “sexual experience” had only increased from 29 to 33 percent a year after participating in the program, compared to 43 percent in a control group who had not participated.⁸⁵ Even though the study’s quasi-experimental design means that there is a distinct “possibility that the findings are attributable to unmeasured group differences,” and despite that these findings contradict most prior research on the impact of abstinence-only education, this single metric was sufficient for HHS to grant Heritage Keepers evidence-based status, making it eligible for federal funding.⁸⁶

Whether or not the research methods and findings were adequate should certainly be questioned. As we will see, Heritage Keepers is part of a network of fundamentalist Christian

⁸² Trenholm, Christopher, et al. “Impacts of Four Title V, Section 510 Abstinence Education Programs, Final Report.” *HHS.gov*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Apr. 2007. Web. 31 May 2012.

⁸³ “Identifying Programs That Impact Teen Pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Infections, and Associated Sexual Risk Behaviors, Review Protocol, Version 2.0.” *HSS.gov*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Apr. 2012. Web. 31 May 2012.

⁸⁴ This Salt Lake City based nonprofit research institute was largely dedicated to the evaluation of abstinence education programs until Congress stopped funding community-based abstinence education (CBAE) in 2010. They have since supplemented their revenue in part through consultancy for programs hoping to achieve evidence-based status.

⁸⁵ Quasi-experimental designs have a control or comparison group, but subjects are not randomly assigned. This means that “even if the treatment and comparison groups are well matched based on observed characteristics, they may still differ on unmeasured characteristics. We therefore cannot rule out the possibility that the findings are attributable to unmeasured group differences.” Interestingly, one of the services that the Institute for Research and Evaluation offers its clients is the identification of “appropriate comparison groups.” “Identifying Programs.”

⁸⁶ “Identifying Programs.”

organizations that forms an alternative sexual knowledge industry.⁸⁷ Through numerous channels — radio, cable TV, books, magazines, videos, websites, and educational programs and workshops — this industry produces and circulates the message of abstinence. While this works in part through the mobilization of traditional moral values and what Michael Warner has called a “politics of sexual shame,” it increasingly functions through a discourse of medical-scientific respectability to achieve public support.⁸⁸ An important element of this Christian sexual knowledge industry is a group of research institutes dedicated to producing surveys, statistics, and data that support the abstinence argument. The Institute for Research and Evaluation is one of them.

Other questions must also be asked about the idea of “a science-based approach to teen pregnancy prevention.” How has teen pregnancy become a target of government intervention? Why is teen pregnancy a public problem? Why is education the tool for conducting an intervention into this problem? And why is science being hailed as the appropriate mechanism for implementing and evaluating this educational effort?

Scientific discourse carries the authority of truth, and this authority is a function of its empiricity: science purports to merely observe the world and discover the truths inherent in it. This scientific eye is supposedly neutral, amoral, and value-free. But is it really? Research is always framed by the beliefs and values of researchers, and also by a particular worldview.⁸⁹ Moreover, social problems do not merely exist for the neutral scientific eye to discern.⁹⁰ They are

⁸⁷ Irvine, Janice. *Talk about Sex: The Battle Over Sex Education in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. 11-12. Print.

⁸⁸ Warner, Michael. *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. Print.

⁸⁹ Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print; Merton, Robert K. *On Social Structure and Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print; Myrdal, Gunnar. *Objectivity in Social Research*. New York: Pantheon, 1969. Print.

⁹⁰ Addelson, Kathryn P. “The Man of Professional Wisdom.” *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science*. Ed. Sandra Harding & Merrill B. Hintikka. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1983. 165-186. Print; Becker, Howard. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Free Press, 1973. Print.

political constructs. As we will see, teen pregnancy has been historically constructed as a social problem that sex education can address by applying knowledge in order to change sexual behavior. Yet the authority granted to science as a neutral mechanism for discovering the truth of sex, for targeting sexual behavior with the knowledge it discovers, and for evaluating the effects of this effort, obscures the values and beliefs subtending the construction of teen pregnancy as a social problem.

More generally, the science in and around sex education cloaks the underlying values and worldview that motivate the social imperative to teach sex, while also shaping the form this education will take. As we will see in this chapter, the history of sex education in the United States is animated by the mobilization of science in the service of moral and social values. While rooted in Victorian era ‘improving literature’, which brought science to bear on youth sex in the maintenance of gender norms, racial purity, and the social progress of the emerging middle class, formal sex education begins with the Progressive movement in the early twentieth century. Progressive social reformers utilized medical and scientific discourse to reshape public perceptions of youth and of sex, making adolescent sex a public health issue requiring public policy and sex education interventions.

The Progressives had only limited success in promoting widespread sex education, but they had a lasting influence on its development, establishing a model whereby sex education would be implemented through public-private partnerships in which particular interest groups push policies that support their programs. To inform these policies and programs, adolescents would be increasingly subject to scientific scrutiny, which worked to link their sexual behavior to a host of social problems. Adolescent sex was thereby constructed through a discourse of danger and disease, which steered sex education toward prevention, while the ‘sexual respectability’ of the Progressives framed prevention in terms of adolescent abstinence. Thus the Victorian logic of the

birds and the bees was installed at the core of American sex education policy, programs, and the research that supports them.

Between the sexual ‘revolutions’ of the 1920s and 1960s, a proliferation of social science and medical research on adolescent sexual behavior linked youth sex to numerous social problems manifesting in juvenile ‘delinquency’, and fingered the disintegration of family as the cause. Organizations like the American Social Hygiene Association (ASHA) and SIECUS used this ‘sexual science’ as a basis for integrated sex education programs that prepared adolescents for family life. In doing so, they perpetuated the white, middle-class, heterosexual values and gender norms that underwrote conceptualizations of what family life should be.

In the 1970s, the increasing public presence of sex induced a moral panic over an ‘epidemic’ of teen pregnancy. Typical of moral panics, teen pregnancy stood in for broader concerns about sexual liberalism, which had been provoked by the legalization of birth control and abortion, increasing deregulation of sex in the media, feminist sexual empowerment, and the emerging gay rights movement. Moral entrepreneurs mobilized the idea of the ‘pregnant teen’ to condense anxieties about sex and gender norms, class status, and racial purity into a fear of social decay. This conservative backlash to sexual liberalism was a key plank in the rise of the New Right.⁹¹ Newly empowered evangelicals and other Christian conservatives were able to shape public policy to bankroll an alternative sexuality industry that uses medical-scientific discourse to deploy their message of abstinence in sex education programs throughout the country.

As a result, abstinence began to “assert a kind of natural authority” in sex education, reducing it to either “abstinence-only” or “abstinence-plus” curricula.⁹² The former is the province of the sexual conservatives of the political and religious right, who imagine that sex is

⁹¹ Janice Irvine argues that the rise of the Right was predicated on their ability to dominate debates about sex, and culture more generally. Irvine, *Talk about Sex*. See also: Hunter, James Davison. *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*. New York: Basic Books, 1991. Print; Stein, Arlene. *The Stranger Next Door*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001. Print.

primarily a private affair between man, woman, and God, although they have begun to acknowledge the necessity of producing public information about sex as a discursive strategy both in cultural debates and for dominating the field of sex education. The latter is the domain of sexual liberals, who imagine that the provision of information will grant adolescents sexual autonomy and agency. Both present preventative models of sex education that construct adolescent sex as a danger to be avoided, or a risk to be mitigated. And both are fraught with problems that the shortcomings of modeling sex education around the metric of risk entail.

Abstinence-only education leverages fear, couched in the language of statistics and medical science, to dissuade students from engaging in sexual activity. It addresses contraception, abortion, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) only as scare tactics to reinforce the message of abstinence. Its universalizing message distributes risk disproportionately to students who do not align with the values of sex as heterosexual reproduction within the context of monogamous marriage. Although abstinence-plus sex programs mitigate the risks of teen pregnancy and STIs by factually addressing contraception and abortion, they cleave closely and instrumentally to the medically prescribed agenda of risk reduction and its empirically demonstrable outcomes. By decontextualizing sex from the complex of social relationships, meanings, emotions, and pleasures in which it is practiced, both abstinence and abstinence-plus education traffic in an abstract sexual knowledge that reproduces white, middle class values and conventional sex and gender norms. In doing so, they fail to foster the development of healthy sexuality and self-determining sexual subjects, and particularly disadvantage those who do not fit within this ethos.

Of course formal sex education is only one channel through which adolescents learn about sex. By tracing the genealogy of formal sex education in the United States, this chapter prepares us for understanding why adolescents turn elsewhere for an education in sex, and what they might

⁹² Fine, Michelle & Sara McClelland. "Sexuality Education and Desire: Still Missing After All These Years." *Harvard Education Review* 76.3 (2006): 299. Print.

hope to learn there. By demonstrating the limits of an empirical approach to sex education, we can begin to see the possibilities that sexual knowledge produced and circulated in other channels offer adolescents — not only for learning about sex, but also for the sexual interaction and experimentation that fosters the development of self-determining sexual subjects.

Victorian Morality, Victorian Medicine

Although formal programs were not instituted until the early twentieth century, the development of sex education is rooted in the informal circulation of moral and medical tracts during the Victorian era. Beginning in the 1830s, lectures, advice manuals, and popularizations of science written by ministers, physicians, and naturalists proliferated. These works of ‘improving literature’ suggested that success and respectability hinged on responsibility, hard work, discipline, and moral rectitude.⁹³ Based in Christian asceticism and its American incarnation in the Protestant ethic, they stressed the denial of immediate gratification and the control of instinctual urges as the foundations of strong character. While recommendations ranged from avoiding alcohol and spicy food to not wasting time in ‘light’ reading and small talk, control over sexual impulses was always central.⁹⁴ Not only were most other vices thought to be linked to the “stirring of passions,” so that mastery over sexual urges was the trump card in the exercise of sovereign will over all temptations, but more importantly, sexual control was also at the core of mental and physical health within the Victorian cosmology.⁹⁵

⁹³ Such “improving literature” had existed for some time prior to the Victorian era. Benjamin Franklin’s *Poor Richard’s Almanack* is probably the most famous in American history. What distinguished the “improving literature” of the Victorian era was the conflation of the moral and the medical to support its prescriptions. Lightman, Bernard. “‘The Voices of Nature’: Popularizing Victorian Science.” *Victorian Science in Context*. Ed. Bernard Lightman. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. 187-211. Print.

⁹⁴ Noted health reformers Sylvester Graham and John Kellogg, for example, prescribed bland foods such as crackers and cereal, as well as sexual continence, to promote a healthy life. D’Emilio & Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 68-69.

⁹⁵ Cominos, Peter. “Late-Victorian Sexual Respectability and the Social System.” *International Review of Social History* 8.1,2 (1963): 18-48, 216-250. Print; Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 8; Napheys, George H. *The*

Viewing the body as a fixed-energy system, the popular physiology of the time proscribed ‘unnecessary’ sexual response as a waste of resources which compromised health. Physician Benjamin Rush, for example, wrote that “when excessive, [sex] becomes a disease of both the body and mind” that could result in “seminal weakness, impotence... pulmonary consumption, hypochondriasis, loss of memory... and death.”⁹⁶ To indulge sexual urges was thus not only a moral weakness that would debase one’s character and lead to social ruin, but was also an unhealthy practice that would drain one’s body and lead to physical decline. This convergence of the moral and the medical around sexual control would become characteristic of sex education efforts, as science was increasingly put in the service of supporting certain social agendas.

In the Victorian era, this was especially notable in the condemnation of masturbation. Giving in to “the solitary indulgence” was not just a mere personal weakness, but one that compromised the Protestant values of thrift and delayed gratification girding American society in the nineteenth century.⁹⁷ The moral prohibition on masturbation was cast as a necessary part of encouraging the self-sacrificing, thrifty, and hard-working citizenry required for building a prosperous nation. Reverend John Todd’s widely popular *Student’s Manual*, for example, proscribed the “secret vice” because it would deplete resources necessary for productive labor.⁹⁸ The personal struggle against sexual urges, however, whether at the service of one’s character or

Transmission of Life: Counsels on the Nature and Hygiene of the Masculine Function. Philadelphia: H.C. Watts, 1877. 263-264. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁹⁶ Takaki, Ronald T. *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. 24. Print.

⁹⁷ Engelhardt, Tristram. “The Disease of Masturbation: Values and Concept of Disease.” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 48 (1974): 234-248. Print; Hare, E.H. “Masturbatory Insanity: The History of an Idea.” *Journal of Mental Science* 108 (1962): 1-26 Print; Jones, Kathleen W. *Taming the Troubled Child: American Families, Child Guidance, and the Limits of Psychiatric Authority*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. 16-38. Print; Kett, Joseph. *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*. New York: Basic Books, 1977. 133-135. Print; Neuman, R. P. “Masturbation, Madness, and the Modern Concepts of Childhood and Adolescence.” *Journal of Social History* 8.3 (1975): 1-27. Print; Rosenberg, Charles. “Sexuality, Class, and Role in 19th Century America.” *American Quarterly* 25 (1973): 131-153. Print; Sokolow, Jayme A. *Eros and Modernization: Sylvester Graham, Health Reform, and the Origins of Victorian Sexuality in America*. Cranbury: Associated University Press, 1983. 77-99. Print.

society at large, was fraught with difficulties. Even the most strong-willed agonized over their inability to resist temptation. But where moral rectitude failed, medicine provided reinforcement. An 1835 article in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, for example, argued that ejaculation “should be made but sparingly” because “sturdy manhood... loses its energy and bends under too frequent expenditure of this important secretion.”⁹⁹ Masturbation was often described as a form of self-abuse that leads inevitably to feeble mindedness, failing health, and eventually, an early death.¹⁰⁰ In cases where individuals lacked the will to overcome their sexual urges, doctors would prescribe ‘spermatorrhoeal rings’, cauterization, blistering, or infibulation. Though these more radical methods of controlling sex would eventually fall into disrepute, masturbation would continue to be seen as not only morally wrong, but also pathological, well into the twentieth century.

The medical and moral literature of sexual control during the nineteenth century was targeted primarily at those who were seen as being most at risk for giving into urges, yet most capable of exercising a rational restraint over them: young men.¹⁰¹ Women were seen as emotional rather than rational, and also typically asexual. As such, they were not the targets of these early, informal efforts at sex education. Female ‘passionlessness’, however, was itself the construct of a different set of morally prescriptive literature circulating in the nineteenth century. These popular pamphlets and books that taught appropriate female behavior were shaped not only by earlier etiquette manuals stressing female modesty, but also by middle-class moralists’ elevation of female virtue as an attack on aristocratic libertinism, and evangelical Protestants’ call

⁹⁸ D’Emilio & Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 68; Todd, John. *The Student’s Manual: Designed, by Specific Directions, to Aid in Forming and Strengthening the Intellectual and Moral Character and Habits of the Student*. Northampton: J.H. Butler, 1837. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁹⁹ D’Emilio & Freedman. *Intimate Matters*, 69.

¹⁰⁰ Hare, “Masturbatory Insanity.”

¹⁰¹ Gibbs, Phillip A. “Self Control and Male Sexuality in the Advice Literature of Nineteenth Century America, 1830-1860.” *Journal of American Culture* 9.2 (1986): 37-41. Print; See also: Stearns, Peter N. *Battleground of Desire: The Struggle for Self-Control in Modern America*. New York: New York

for women to initiate moral reform.¹⁰² Female virtue elevated women to spiritual equality with, and moral superiority to, men — a position that had been denied them under the Christian view of woman as the carnal temptress.¹⁰³ Purity was, however, the province of only the upper and middle classes; poor and working class, ethnic immigrant, and black women were still seen as sexual.¹⁰⁴ When these women exhibited sexual behavior it was considered natural, but when white, middle-class women expressed an interest in sex it was pathologized. If diagnosed as a symptom of hysteria, medical massage of the genitalia was prescribed;¹⁰⁵ if symptoms (sexual desire) persisted, some of the more draconian medical procedures mentioned above might be applied.¹⁰⁶

While these women were thought to be naturally virtuous, a young man's virtue had to be acquired through self-denial. As with women's virtue, young men's virtuous position of self-denial was traced along class, ethnic, and racial lines, and served to maintain these divisions. Merchants, shopkeepers, and artisans — the emerging middle class — distinguished themselves from common laborers through their self-restraint. More than exhibiting mere manners such as not spitting and cussing in public, the “civilizing” classes were temperate and chaste, or at least had to perform that role to achieve and maintain a social status higher than the “uncivilized” masses of common laborers.¹⁰⁷ Thus the “child who was of such concern to doctors and educators,” observed Foucault, “was not the child of the people, the future worker who had to be

University Press, 1999. Print; Walters, Ronald G. *Primers for Prudery: Sexual Advice to Victorian America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974. Print.

¹⁰² Cott, Nancy F. “Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850.” *A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women*. Eds. Nancy F. Cott & Elizabeth H. Pleck. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979. Print; Gorham, *Victorian Girl*.

¹⁰³ Female virtue could also be used as leverage in sexual relations, allowing women to deny men's advances. See: D'Emilio & Freedman. *Intimate Matters*, 70-71.

¹⁰⁴ D'Emilio & Freedman. *Intimate Matters*, 45-46.

¹⁰⁵ Maines, Rachel P. *The Technology of Orgasm: “Hysteria, the Vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. Print.

¹⁰⁶ Barker-Benfield, G.J. *The Horrors of the Half-Known Life: Male Attitudes Toward Women and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Harper & Row, 1976. 88-89. Print; D'Emilio & Freedman. *Intimate Matters*, 146; Weeks, Jeffrey. *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800*. London: Longman, 1981. 48-52. Print.

taught the disciplines of the body, but rather the schoolboy [...] who was in danger of compromising [...] the obligation to preserve a healthy line of descent for his family and his social class.”¹⁰⁸ In the United States, these “future workers” were increasingly Irish and Italian immigrants, and, following emancipation, African-Americans.¹⁰⁹ Supported by an emerging anthropology that focused its flawed ethnographic lens on the deviant sexualities of “savage” cultures, these people were seen as being incapable of tempering their desires, and beyond rational appeal.¹¹⁰ Like women, they were thus not the focus of early sex education efforts, but rather were often the targets of more coercive, if not violent, strategies of sexual control.¹¹¹

Young white men became the focus of early sex education due to changes in the social landscape during this time. With industrialization, urbanization, and the transportation revolution of the railroads, young men were increasingly abandoning traditional occupations centered around agriculture to pursue opportunities in commerce and industry.¹¹² This often entailed leaving the protective fold of family and community, which broke established methods of cultural transmission through which sex was ‘taught’ and regulated.¹¹³ Coming of age in tightly knit, hard working, farming communities offered few opportunities to indulge in vices before being safely married. But when single in the city, free from the watchful eyes of their elders, and off work for the evening with a pocketful of money, young men were more prone to temptation than ever. Concern for these white, middle-class youth, whose purity and health seemed imperiled, would frame the development of sex education in the twentieth century, bringing into it, through the

¹⁰⁷ Norbert Elias describes the emergence of class distinctions through the “civilizing process” of acquiring manners of public behavior. Elias, Norbert. *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994. Print.

¹⁰⁸ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 121.

¹⁰⁹ Johnson, Paul E. *A Shopkeeper’s Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1978. Print; Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 11.

¹¹⁰ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 16.

¹¹¹ For example, lynching functioned as a public spectacle in part to deter “inappropriate” sexual behavior.

¹¹² Kett, *Rites of Passage*, 30-31.

¹¹³ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 12; Neuman, “Masturbation.”

moral and medical discourses of sexual self-control, the gendered, classed, and raced values of the Victorian era.

Coming of Age in America

Adolescence is a twentieth century invention.¹¹⁴ Coined by G. Stanley Hall in 1904, the term ‘adolescent’ refers to a new category of personhood existing in the stage of life between being a child and becoming an adult.¹¹⁵ Hall was the father of American psychology, helping to establish this new discipline by bringing the rigor of empirical study to what had been a branch of philosophy.¹¹⁶ Also a founder of the child study movement and an advocate of education reform, Hall focused his research on what children know and how they learn it. Bringing together biology and evolutionary theory with his own behavioral observations, experiments, and testing, Hall proposed that the onset of puberty initiated a new stage of human development. Adolescence was defined by the sexual awakening of puberty that ends childhood, and was characterized by the “storm and stress” of the myriad biological and psychological changes puberty brings.¹¹⁷ Hall’s work, however, was shaped not only by science, but also by the Victorian morality underlying the values of the emerging middle class, who were distinguishing themselves from the plebeian masses through public display of their control over ‘savage’ instinctual desires and adherence to ‘civilized’ social relations. Successful passage through this dangerous stage of development into

¹¹⁴ See: Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 1-22.

¹¹⁵ The term “adolescent” comes from the Latin word *adolescere*, which means “to grow up,” as distinguished from *adultus*, which means “to have grown up.” Prior to the decline of Latin at the end of the middle ages, the term “adolescent” was used by scholars and clergy to describe those who had not achieved the rights associated with adults. Graham, Philip. *The End of Adolescence*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. 25. Print.

¹¹⁶ After earning the first American doctorate in psychology under William James at Harvard and then briefly working with Wilhelm Wundt in the first psychology laboratory at the University of Leipzig, Hall started the first American psychology lab at Johns Hopkins University in 1883. He also founded the *American Journal of Psychology* in 1887 and was the first president of the American Psychological Association.

¹¹⁷ Hall, *Adolescence*.

adulthood thus required the willful suppression of the sexual impulse until it could be expressed properly in the procreative context of socially respectable marriage.

The invention of adolescence was predicated on, and informed by, the invention of childhood. If adolescence was marked by a dangerous sexual awakening that must be contained, then childhood must be defined by a sexual somnolence, a period of innocence and purity undefiled by carnal feelings and knowledge. But for much of human history such a childhood did not exist.¹¹⁸ Youth was full of danger and uncertainty. A vast majority of children did not live to be adults. As such, families had many children and invested very little in them emotionally in their early years because they would more than likely die, while those who did live were encouraged to grow up quickly. They were put to work soon after they could walk, and they lived from then on in an adult world unshielded from ‘the facts of life’. Even amidst the less brutish conditions of the elite, children were viewed as “inchoate adults” and included in all aspects of adult life from an early age.¹¹⁹

While in the Middle Ages childhood began to be distinguished from adulthood, this was only to the extent that children were looked at as adults-to-be. They were immature, but not necessarily naive. And so, rather than sheltering them from adult reality, or trying to shape them into adults, children were examined for the already possessed character traits that would determine who they would be as adults.¹²⁰ Not until the seventeenth century did children come to be seen and described as totally distinct from adults.

This line being drawn between childhood and adulthood during the seventeenth century was inherently sexual:

[The Child] is the best copy of *Adam* before he tasted of Eve or the apple; his soul is yet a white paper unscrawled with observations of the world, wherewith,

¹¹⁸ Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*.

¹¹⁹ Calvert, *Children in the House*.

¹²⁰ Schultz, James A. *The Knowledge of Childhood in the German Middle Ages, 1100-1350*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995. Print.

at length, it becomes a blurred notebook. He is purely happy because he knows no evil, nor hath made means by sin to be acquainted with misery...

This quote from John Earl's *Microcosmographie* [1628] exemplifies the "cult of childhood" emerging in the seventeenth century.¹²¹ The child is invested with a primal innocence constructed in antithesis to the Biblical fall from grace that carnal knowledge signifies. Rousseau would take up this ideal of childhood innocence more than a century later, arguing in *Emile* [1762] for the need to shelter children from the harsh realities of the adult world.¹²² Yet the quote also evidences the emerging idea of the child as a *tabula rasa*, which John Locke would explicate in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [1690]. Refuting the rationalist concept of innate ideas, Locke argued that at birth our minds are blank, and that it is only through sensory experience that we learn information, ideas, and the rules with which to process them.¹²³ This theory is at the core of empiricism, which would shape over the course of the next three centuries the development of both science and education.¹²⁴ Empirical science and empiricist pedagogy, as we will see, are the foundations of sex education.

On the one hand, then, the child is morally constructed as a sexual innocent that must be protected from knowledge. On the other hand, the child is the ur-object of empiricism, a blank slate that must be inscribed, an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge. These two seemingly

¹²¹ Boas, *Cult of Childhood*.

¹²² Rousseau, *Emile*.

¹²³ Locke's ideas of childhood were influenced by the work of eleventh and twelfth century "Arabick" philosophers. Ibn Sina wrote that "human intellect at birth is rather like a *tabula rasa*, a pure potentiality that is actualized through education and comes to know." Russell, Gül. "The Impact of the Philosophus Autodidactus: Pocockes, John Locke and the Society of Friends." *The 'Arabick' Interest of the Natural Philosophers in Seventeenth-Century England*. Ed. Gül A. Russell. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994. 224-262. Print; See also: Avicenna. "De Anima." *Avicenna's De Anima, Being the Psychological Part of Kitāb al-Shifā'*. Trans. Fazlur Rahman. London, Oxford University Press, 1970. Print; Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. Roger Woolhouse. London: Penguin, 1997. Print.

¹²⁴ Scientific empiricism is defined not just by the use of the empirical method, but by a dogmatic faith in empiricity as the fount of knowledge. This dogmatic empiricism particularly shaped the formation of the social science disciplines as they sought to distinguish themselves from pseudosciences. Especially in the United States, the development of education was shaped by pragmatic philosophy, which is strongly based in empiricism. Mende, Jens. "The Poverty of Empiricism." *Informing Science Journal* 8 (2005): 189-209. Print; Quine, Willard Van Orman. "Two Dogmas of Empiricism." *The Philosophical Review* 60 (1951): 20-43. Print.

contradictory discourses — the moral discourse of innocence and the scientific discourse of empiricism — would inform the logic of the birds and the bees: protect sexual innocence by providing a scientific sexual knowledge. As the cult of childhood developed — as children became more a topic of social concern, the objects of scientific study, and the subjects of disciplinary techniques — these two discourses would shape how children would be reared and educated, that is, how children would be produced as subjects of these moral and scientific discourses about them. In turn, this would frame both the invention of adolescence and the creation of sex education.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, as infant and child mortality rates dropped due to improvements in sanitation and advances in medicine, and as the legal reform of child labor made children an economic liability, parents began having fewer children and investing in them more resources — both emotional and material.¹²⁵ A proliferation of discursive mechanisms, institutions, and practices geared toward protecting innocence and providing knowledge began to separate children from an adult world. Childrearing guides, informed in part by the emerging field of psychology, advised parents not only on health issues, behavioral problems, and disciplinary practices, but also on what, how, and when to teach their children.¹²⁶ Customs and laws regarding the age of consent and matrimony were put into place. Children's hospitals, orphanages, playgrounds, nurseries, and bedrooms fixed discrete childhood spaces.¹²⁷ Child labor laws and schools demarcated distinct social spheres for adults and children. In the United States, formal education, articulated as necessary to democracy, became a crucial part of childhood development. Free public schools flourished — first elementary, and then secondary. States

¹²⁵ Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child*, 56-72.

¹²⁶ Hemphill, C. Dallett. *Bowing to Necessity: A History of Manners in America, 1620-1860*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Print.

¹²⁷ Gutman, Marta. "The Physical Spaces of Childhood." *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World*. Ed. Paula S. Fass. New York: Routledge, 2013. 249-265. Print; Olwig, Karen Fog & Eva Gulløv, eds. *Children's Places: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.

began to make attendance compulsory.¹²⁸ As children came into public focus as a discrete category of personhood requiring rigorous preparation for adult life, the transition between the two increasingly became an issue of concern.

By the turn of the century, decreasing age of the onset of puberty coupled with increasingly delayed marriage due to longer periods of education and training opened the transition from childhood to adulthood into a developmental gap. Sexuality defined this gap, and the mastery of self-control over sexuality was seen as the key to development. This was the focus of Hall's 1904 two-volume magnum opus *Adolescence*. As the father of American psychology and founder of the child study movement, Hall would have tremendous influence on ideas about child development, adolescent behavior, and education.

Hall's theories were shaped by a social-Darwinist take on recapitulation: Child development replayed the stages of social or racial evolution. For Hall, pubescence marked the point of divergence between the 'civilized' and the 'savage'. In 'lesser' races, this was the point of full maturity, the end of the developmental process; in more evolved races, puberty was the final stage of development, which fostered the capacity for reason, morality, and will that less evolved races lacked. Adolescent chastity, then, did not just *signify* the *moral* superiority of the white middle and upper classes over the ethnic immigrants and blacks of the poor and working classes; it *determined a factual* superiority as part of the evolutionary process. Sexual control was thus necessary for not only the development of the individual, but also for continued racial progress.¹²⁹ Likewise, giving in to temptation would not only spell the ruin of the adolescent, as he would not then develop his full capacity as a rational, ethical, and strong-willed individual, but would also lead to racial decline, as he would not be able to pass on these "later acquisitions of

¹²⁸ Tyack, David B. "Ways of Seeing: An Essay on the History of Compulsory Schooling." *Harvard Educational Review* 46.3 (1976): 355-389. Print.

¹²⁹ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 16-18.

the race.”¹³⁰ Although Hall’s theory of recapitulation was short lived, the idea of adolescent chastity as not just a moral marker of superiority, but also as an evolutionary marker of distinction — as ‘civilized’ behavior — would become a kind of common sense over the course of the twentieth century. Along with it, temptation — long the work of the devil — would be recast as a social problem subject to scientific scrutiny and public policy.

And adolescence in turn-of-the-century America was rife with temptation. Despite a growing number of studies showing the harmful effects of obscene material on both individuals and society, and despite efforts to stanch the flow of sexually explicit publications, popular demand and the falling price of print kept these titillating texts in public circulation. If the newsboy on the corner didn’t have some stashed amidst his papers, he would likely know where they could be acquired.¹³¹ And despite efforts to stamp out prostitution on the parts of ‘social purity’ campaigns and their scientific reincarnation in ‘social hygiene’ reform, red light, or vice, districts thrived in major metropolitan areas, and brothels maintained a strong presence in smaller cities throughout the country.¹³² Adolescents were all too easily exposed to temptation: “College students explored vice districts together” and “young male migrants to the city lived in rooming-house districts where prostitution was visible.”¹³³

Even outside the growing realm of vice, sexual temptation was becoming a feature of public life. As job opportunities outside the home expanded for young women, their presence in the public sphere increased, while they were also freed of adult supervision. And as the ethic of hard work and frugality gave way to the blooming consumer society, new public spaces devoted to consumption and leisure proliferated. Department stores, dance halls, parks, arcades,

¹³⁰ Stocking, George W., Jr. *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. 242. Print; See also: Hall, *Adolescence*, 324.

¹³¹ Sanger, William W. *The History of Prostitution: Its Extent, Causes, and Effects Throughout the World*. New York: The American Medical Press, 1895. 521-522. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

¹³² Or, as D’Emilio and Freedman suggest, “social purity campaigns may have contributed to the creation of [red-light] districts by forcing prostitution beyond the view of middle-class women and into the working-class neighborhoods of immigrants and blacks.” D’Emilio & Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 181.

nickelodeons, and promenades brought women even more into the public. This recomposition of the once almost exclusively male public sphere offered new opportunities for mingling of the sexes, which sometimes led to sexual indiscretions.¹³⁴ In the parks, there were “shocking occurrences by the score,” and in the dance halls, “most of the younger couples were hugging and kissing.”¹³⁵

As adolescents began mingling more in these public spaces, traditional courtship rituals, which had been structured under the watchful gaze of family, were displaced by new practices. Before modern ‘dating’ emerged in the 1930s, young men would assert their economic independence by ‘treating’ young women with no discretionary money to the new consumer and leisure pleasures.¹³⁶ Often they expected sexual favors in return, and the young women would sometimes play this to their economic advantage.¹³⁷ Much to the horror of middle-class reformers, who still often conflated “women in public” with “public women,” this new practice of treating looked a lot like the prostitution they had been working to stamp out.¹³⁸ To some extent, then, the initial shock registered in response to these open displays of carnal temptation was a reaction of the middle-class to working-class sexual mores, which were being exposed in these new public spaces. But as these spaces increasingly became sites for the mingling of not only the sexes, but also the working and middle classes, it became clear that these temptations were not the sole province of ‘less civilized’ people.

¹³³ D’Emilio & Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 182.

¹³⁴ As Christine Stansell has shown, this was not unprecedented. In the mid-nineteenth century, working class “Bowery Boys” and “Bowery Gals” mingled freely on the sidewalks, in ice-cream parlors, dance halls, and theaters. But this was a very localized activity in which the neighborhood community policed their activities. Stansell, Christine. *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York 1789-1860*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986. 89-100. Print.

¹³⁵ D’Emilio & Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 194-196.

¹³⁶ Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 53-55.

¹³⁷ Meyerowitz, Joanne. *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988. 101-106. Print; Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 108-110.

¹³⁸ Clement, Elizabeth Alice. *Love for Sale: Courting, Treating, and Prostitution in New York City, 1900-1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006. 46-47. Print.

For the middle class, the eruption of sexual temptations in public spaces embodied many of their fears about the shifting social landscape that came along with ongoing industrialization, urbanization, and im/migration. Adolescents, awakening from their innocent childhoods into this world of vice, were particularly imperiled, and the threat to their innocence signified a threat to middle-class social progress. Trying to protect the innocence of youth and the moral purity upon which their progress hinged, middle class moral reformers attacked the sources of temptation through campaigns against obscenity, prostitution, and public spaces like dance halls, arcades and nickelodeons. But they had only limited success in the face of both a well-established system of graft that encouraged police and politicians to look the other way, and a hearty entrepreneurial spirit that assured when one brothel or dance hall was shut down another would open elsewhere. The Progressive reformers who followed in their footsteps would take another tack. Enlisting science to study both adolescents and the corrupting sources of their temptation, Progressives would work to shape public policy around educative efforts to inculcate sexual self-control.

The Progressive Influence

The Progressive movement was a response to a number of social problems that had begun cropping up as the nation shifted from a largely agrarian economy to an industrial one over the course of the nineteenth century. Industrialization brought significant prosperity, which on the one hand gave birth to the American middle class, and on the other hand gave rise to significant economic inequality, injustice, and corruption. The ‘robber barons’ of the railroad, oil, steel, and banking industries had amassed great wealth by questionable means, often at the expense of the poor and working classes. Progressives were mostly middle-class reformers, who while sympathetic to the struggles for social and economic justice embodied in the labor movement, and wary of the political power that the economic elite were beginning to exhibit, were also

invested in maintaining the position of elevated social status they had only recently carved out for themselves.¹³⁹

Many of the ills of rapid industrialization and unchecked capitalism were starkly revealed in exploding urban centers. Poverty, disease, alcohol and drug abuse, prostitution, child labor, corruption, and crime were rampant, and they signaled to the emerging middle class the internal decay of society. Waves of immigration to the United States from southern and eastern Europe, coupled with increasing migration within the country due to urbanization and the transportation revolution of railroad, were reshaping the social landscape. As traditional forms of community eroded, the dynamics of intimate social relations changed, and this seemed to manifest in the crumbling of its core institution: the family.¹⁴⁰ Marriage was on the decline, both amongst the upper classes, who could afford to postpone or refuse marriage as its economic incentives were weakened in the face of more lucrative investment opportunities, and in the middle classes, where women were being swept up by a new wave of feminism, and were trading family life for education, careers, and activism. Divorce skyrocketed at the beginning of the twentieth century for similar reasons.¹⁴¹ At the same time, the nation's birthrate began a precipitous decline, as an effect of changing marriage and divorce rates, as well as shrinking family size in response to the failure of the family farming economy.¹⁴² For Progressives, all of the problems plaguing the country seemed to either stem from or lead to this decline of the American family.

Influenced by the homegrown philosophy of American pragmatism, the Progressive movement — or rather, movements — imagined that these social problems could be solved

¹³⁹ Flanagan, Maureen A. *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivism, 1890s-1920s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. Print; Hofstadter, Richard. *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* New York: Vintage Books, 1955. Print; McGerr, Michael. *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of Progressive Movement in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. Print.

¹⁴⁰ O'Neill, William L. "Divorce in the Progressive Era." *American Quarterly* 17.2 (1965): 203-217. Print.

¹⁴¹ O'Neill, "Divorce."

¹⁴² Luker, Kristin. *When Sex Goes to School: Warring Views on Sex — and Sex Education — since the Sixties*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 45-47. Print.

through an empirical approach.¹⁴³ Close observation and analysis would produce testable hypotheses, and experiments that put these hypotheses into practice would lead to provable and reproducible results.¹⁴⁴ Through the emerging science of public administration, this method could be applied to economics, law, and government to build a better society.¹⁴⁵ Progressives approached this through a number of reform movements, which through the organizing efforts of voluntary associations sought to shape public policy. Temperance and suffrage are well-known Progressive movements, and their manifestation in Constitutional amendments attests to the determination of Progressives to mobilize through rational appeal broad support for enacting permanent social change.¹⁴⁶ Progressives also worked on reform in many other areas, including industry, finance, medicine, public services, and education.

Sex education grew out of the Progressive's social hygiene movement. 'Social hygiene' was essentially the medicalization of 'social purity'. During the nineteenth century, Protestant clergy and women's rights activists in the emerging middle class had campaigned for moral reform. Their 'social purity' movement — 'social' being a euphemism for 'sexual' — took aim at prostitution, which had become more visible in the public spaces of big cities where the working and middle classes increasingly rubbed elbows. Prostitution had been largely tolerated up to that

¹⁴³ Feffer, Andrew. *The Chicago Pragmatists and American Progressivism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993. Print.

¹⁴⁴ Flanagan, Maureen A. *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivism, 1890s-1920s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. Print.

¹⁴⁵ The scientification of public administration was itself a response to the corruption and bloated inefficiency that formed in government during the rapid industrialization of the Gilded Age. Woodrow Wilson, who as President from 1913-1921 would enact much of the legislation regulating labor, industry, and finance that Progressives pushed for, had written an article in 1887 titled "The Study of Administration," which called for "administrative study to discover, first, what government can properly and successfully do, and, secondly, how it can do these proper things with the utmost possible efficiency and at the least possible cost either of money or of energy." See: Wilson, Woodrow. "The Study of Administration." *Political Science Quarterly* 2.2 (1887): 197-222. Print.

¹⁴⁶ The temperance and suffrage movements existed prior to the Progressive era, but it was the Progressives who organized and mobilized professional and scientific expertise in support of these initially moral movements, for example, in the creation of the Department of Scientific Temperance Instruction. In fact, these two movements became intertwined during the Progressive era as the statistical correlation between alcohol abuse and male-on-female violence made temperance a women's rights issue rather than a moral one.

point as a “necessary evil” for dealing with “male sexual necessity,” and the depravity of it had been attributed to the “fallen women” of the “uncivilized” classes.¹⁴⁷ But the social purity movement, developed by women already involved in benevolent associations helping the poor, took pity on the prostitute as a victim of the “treachery of man.”¹⁴⁸ Recognizing the class and gender inequalities inherent in prostitution, social purity crusaders claimed that “while woman’s want of bread induces her to pursue this vice, man’s love of the vice itself leads him there.”¹⁴⁹ So while pushing for laws to curtail prostitution and providing missionary outreach to “uplift” poor and working-class women so they wouldn’t “fall” into prostitution, they also attacked men’s licentiousness, which seemed to be at the root of not only prostitution, but also intemperance and gender inequality.¹⁵⁰

By the turn of the century, however, “scientific charity” had replaced the benevolence of earlier reformers, doctors had emerged as the new authorities on sexual matters, and social critique of prostitution had shifted from a moral to a medical register.¹⁵¹ Advances in science had improved the understanding of syphilis and gonorrhea, allowing them to be easily diagnosed, their effects catalogued, and their circulation mapped. While urbanization and im/migration undoubtedly accelerated the spread of venereal diseases, the increased awareness that scientific studies provided fueled the perception of an epidemic. And though prostitutes were still seen as the primary source of these diseases, these studies made it shockingly clear that due to “masculine unchastity,” there was “more venereal infection among virtuous wives than among professional

¹⁴⁷ In this view, male sexual desire is seen as inherently uncontrollable, and it was believed that if men did not engage in sex regularly, their health would suffer. See: Brandt, Allen M. *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. Print; Exner, Max J. *The Physician’s Answer: Medical Authority and the Prevailing Misconceptions About Sex*. New York: Association Press, 1913. Print; Howell, William H. *The So-Called Sexual Necessity in Man*. Baltimore: Maryland Society of Social Hygiene, 1912. Print; Morrow, Prince A. *The Young Man’s Problem*. New York: American Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis, 1900. Print.

¹⁴⁸ Freedman, Estelle B. *Their Sisters’ Keepers: Women’s Prison Reform in America, 1830-1930*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981. 33. Print.

¹⁴⁹ Anthony, Susan B. “Social Purity.” *PBS*. Public Broadcasting Service, 2009. Web. 11 Jun. 2012.

¹⁵⁰ D’Emilio & Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 140-156.

prostitutes.”¹⁵² Clearly moral reformers’ efforts to stamp out prostitution were not enough to protect the family, or society, from the effects of sexual vice.¹⁵³ Social hygiene would attempt to do so through empirical science and education.

This does not mean that the social hygiene movement was unmotivated by the values of the middle class. Like the social purity movement before it, social hygiene was animated by class and race fear. Victorian sexual morality had worked to distinguish the emerging middle class from the poor and working classes. The public visibility of prostitution in urban areas revealed the immorality of supposedly respectable men; coupled with the prevalence of venereal diseases in middle class families, this seemed to signal the breakdown of the sexual code that had maintained class boundaries. At the same time, the decline of the family recognized in decreasing marriage, increasing divorce, and decreasing childbirth among the middle and upper classes, coupled with massive immigration of ethnic minorities, posed the threat of “race suicide.”¹⁵⁴ These fears of the ‘uncivilized’ masses encroaching on respectable society manifested in the eugenics movement — another legacy of the Progressives — which sought to marry social Darwinism with public administration to build a better society by weeding out the weak and inferior members of the

¹⁵¹ D’Emilio & Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 145.

¹⁵² As physician Prince Morrow warned the Medical Society of the County of New York in 1906. Morrow’s 1904 *Social Diseases and Marriage* was the first comprehensive scientific treatise on venereal disease, and it focused on the dire effects of “innocent infections” within marriage. Morrow, Prince A. “A Plea for the Organization of a Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis.” *Transactions of the American Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis* 1 (1906): 21; Morrow, Prince A. *Social Diseases and Marriage*. New York: Lea Brother & Co., 1904. Print.

¹⁵³ Moral reformers had worked at the municipal level to regulate the spaces in which sexual commerce took place, such as red light districts, or was thought to take place, such as dance halls and nickelodeons. At the federal level, their efforts to stanch the flow of sexual traffic succeeded in the 1910 Mann Act, which outlawed the transportation of women across state lines for “immoral purposes.” Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 34.

¹⁵⁴ At the turn of the century, Theodore Roosevelt had popularized the idea that native-born Anglo-Americans were killing themselves off by not reproducing as prodigiously as ethnic immigrants. Dawson, George E. “The Child’s Rights: The Right of the Child to be Well-Born.” *Religious Education* 6 (1911): 167. Print; Dyer, Thomas G. *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980. 143-167. Print.

human race.¹⁵⁵ To this effect, the scourge of venereal disease channeled middle class moral values and their manifestation in race and class fears into scientific efforts to regulate sex.

As medical treatment was still rudimentary and relatively ineffective, efforts to deal with the scourge of venereal disease quickly focused on prevention. Because “in their essential nature they are not merely diseases of the human body, but diseases of the social organism,”¹⁵⁶ these efforts would need to enlist the help of community and professional associations, state health boards, and schools in a “campaign of education” to dispel the “conspiracy of silence” that fueled the ignorance underlying the spread of venereal disease.¹⁵⁷ Where the social purity movement had sought to address all the social problems that prostitution seemed to embody by inculcating morals, the social hygiene movement tried to do so by educating the public in the sexual knowledge that medical science provided.

The “campaign of education,” first proposed by New York physician Prince Morrow in 1905 was spearheaded by what would become the movement’s flagship organization, the American Social Hygiene Association (ASHA). ASHA first focused on educating the general public by publishing pamphlets and establishing a network of physicians to give lectures to fraternal organizations and reading clubs, and in local union halls and YMCAs. Believing that a rational understanding of sexual function and a wholesome fear of disease would trump lustful urges, they sought to dispel the myth of male ‘sexual necessity’, to make clear the connection between prostitution and venereal disease, and to terrify the public with graphic images of the horrors of syphilis.¹⁵⁸ But it soon became clear that their efforts were having little effect on adults who had already been corrupted. “You cannot teach a drunkard abstinence after he has become a

¹⁵⁵ The eugenics movement would eventually manifest in a campaign of forced sterilization for “feeble-minded” women, most of them African-Americans and Native Americans, beginning in the 1920s with its legitimation by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Buck v. Bell*, and continuing in some states into the 1980s. Davis, Angela Y. *Women, Race, and Class*. New York: Random House, 1981. Print.

¹⁵⁶ Morrow, “A Plea,” 17.

¹⁵⁷ Clark, *Taboo*, 25-27; D’Emilio & Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 202-205.

¹⁵⁸ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 35-36.

drunkard,” argued one physician, in a typical invocation of the parallels between vices.¹⁵⁹

Substantial change to established patterns of sexual behavior would require intervention at an earlier age.

Public schools at the time seemed to be the ideal venue. Progressives were already pushing for mandatory education and professionalization of the field, which would ensure the near universal reach of a well-articulated message. And because the explosion in school attendance in the early twentieth century was fueled by immigrants unfamiliar with American life, public schools were already beginning to teach “practical” subjects such as manners, sociality, hygiene, and health to prepare students for “complete living.”¹⁶⁰ But bringing sex education into the schools flew in the face of the widespread and deep-seated idea of the ‘innocent child’. The common assumption was that exposing the young to sexual knowledge would implant the seeds of corruption. Progressives, however, taking a pragmatic approach to education, saw the child as a tabula rasa who needed to be exposed from an early age to experiences that would allow instinctual urges to be empirically shaped through the child’s own choices.

Social hygienists would have to both reconstruct the child of the popular imaginary as an already sexual being — naturally sexual rather than morally innocent — and show the public that a science-based sex education would help the child to develop his innate sexuality into appropriate adult sexual behavior. Physicians and biologists involved in the social hygiene movement took up this task. They described the sexual impulse as a biological fact that had been sublimated in human evolution, which had allowed for the development of all the higher functions that distinguish humans from animals: rational thought, complex social structures,

¹⁵⁹ Talmey, Bernard S. “Are Sanitary Prophylaxis and Moral Prophylaxis Natural Allies?” *Journal of the Society for Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis* 5 (1914): 41-42. Print.

¹⁶⁰ Cremin, Lawrence. *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962. 66-126. Print.

conjugal love, aesthetics, and spirituality.¹⁶¹ These developments in turn shaped expression of the sexual impulse through the environment they fostered.¹⁶² Sexual behavior — how one acted in response to the sexual impulse — was neither moral nor immoral, but rather a product of that to which individuals were exposed.

Studies showed that early exposure formed a lasting understanding of sex, and that adolescents “received their first permanent impressions about sex from unwholesome sources [...] before the beginning of puberty.”¹⁶³ Due to a “morbid modesty” and Victorian prudery, children were learning that sex was dirty and shameful; but rather than repressing the sexual impulse, this shaped it into dirty and shameful sexual behavior.¹⁶⁴ To be able to make the “intelligent choice” of sexual self-control,¹⁶⁵ adolescents would need an education that “build[s] up from early childhood the attitudes, tastes, desires, ideals, and habits which make for sound character.”¹⁶⁶ By presenting a biological and evolutionary (and inherently eugenic) model of sex that defined it in terms of strategic reproduction, scientific sex education would inculcate a healthy understanding of sex as natural, and foster sexual behavior oriented strictly toward a rational decision to procreate.¹⁶⁷

Getting such an education into the schools was an uphill battle in which the social hygiene movement would have only scattered, local, and limited victories. While students were receptive to early programs and expressed demand for more, they faced stiff opposition from school boards,

¹⁶¹ Galloway, Thomas W. *Sex and Social Health: A Manual for the Study of Social Hygiene*. New York: American Social Hygiene Association, 1924. 85. Print.

¹⁶² Bigelow, Maurice A. *The Established Points in Social Hygiene Education, 1905-1924*. New York: American Social Hygiene Association, 1924. 5. Print.

¹⁶³ Exner, Max J. “Sex Education by the Young Men’s Christian Associations in Universities and Colleges.” *Social Hygiene* 1 (1915): 575. Print; Galloway, Thomas. “Sex Instruction.” *NEA Journal of Addresses and Proceedings* 51 (1913): 643. Print.

¹⁶⁴ Curtis, Henry S. “Education in Matters of Sex.” *Pedagogical Seminary* 28 (1921): 41. Print; Hall, *Adolescence*, 485.

¹⁶⁵ Bigelow, *Established Points*, 5.

¹⁶⁶ Exner, Max J. *What is Social Hygiene?* New York: American Social Hygiene Association, 1930. 4. Print.

¹⁶⁷ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 40-49.

parents, and the Catholic Church, who saw such practices as not only defiling innocent minds and encouraging promiscuity, but also undermining their authority. As the fight against venereal disease ramped up for World War I, the social hygienists had more success pushing through national policy that implemented education programs for soldiers and civilian adults. In the first federal effort to provide some form of sex education, the Social Hygiene Instruction Division of the new Commission on Training Camp Activities lectured recruits using scientific arguments for continence.¹⁶⁸ The first legislation to provide public services and federal funding for sex education, the 1918 Chamberlain-Kahn Act, created the Venereal Disease Division of the United States Public Health Service (PHS) and the Interdepartmental Social Hygiene Board, and ultimately appropriated \$4 million to fight venereal disease. While half of this money went toward treatment, and 20 percent toward quarantining suspected prostitutes,¹⁶⁹ over half a million dollars was funneled through state boards of health to support hygiene departments at colleges and universities.¹⁷⁰

When the war ended, the Public Health Service refocused its efforts on the civilian population, declaring a “People’s War” on venereal disease and illicit sexuality.¹⁷¹ The PHS enlisted the support of social hygiene groups to help develop and distribute pamphlets such as *Sex Facts for Young Men about Venereal Diseases* and *Sex Facts for the Adolescent and Mature Woman*, poster series for sex education programs such as *Keeping Fit* and *The Science of Life*,

¹⁶⁸ Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 62.

¹⁶⁹ “Under the Chamberlain-Kahn Act, the government could quarantine for the 'protection of the military and naval forces of the United States' any woman suspected of having venereal disease. The discovery of venereal infection upon examination could constitute proof of prostitution. In effect, during the war any American woman could legally be detained and medically examined if, in the opinion of officials of the CTCA or the Interdepartmental Social Hygiene Board, her life-style or observed or rumored sexual behavior indicated that she might be infected.” Connelly, Mark Thomas. *The Response to Prostitution in the Progressive Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980. 143-144. Print.

¹⁷⁰ Storey, Thomas A. “A Summary of the Work of the United States Interdepartmental Social Hygiene Board, 1919-1920.” *Social Hygiene* 7 (1921): 76. Print.

¹⁷¹ *A People’s War*. Washington, DC: Public Health Service, 1919. 5, 12. Print; Lord, Alexandra M. *Condom Nation: The U.S. Government’s Sex Education Campaign from World War I to the Internet*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010. 25. Print.

and films like *Fit to Win*, *Open Your Eyes*, and *The End of the Road*. Couched in medical facts but often presented as morality tales, these PHS sex education media sought to use science to inculcate in adolescents a link between morality and health.

Gaining widespread public approval for this ‘war’ often meant shying away from the ‘facts’. This was, as Foucault would put it, “a science made up of evasions” that was concerned with “pathological abatements and morbid aggravations.”¹⁷² The Public Health Service was well aware, for example, that condoms were effective protection against venereal disease, and that masturbation did not cause feeble-mindedness, infertility, or blindness, yet they did not promote these as viable practices that could help in avoiding venereal disease. In trying to “validate traditional moral codes by giving them a veneer of science,” the PHS was able to gain popular support for their programs, but this was at the expense of providing a more comprehensive sex education.¹⁷³

The Progressive movement began to decline in the 1920s, but by then had significantly shaped the development of sex education in the United States in a number of ways. By focusing on disease, Progressive reformers made sex education an issue of public health, which established the lasting basis for government intervention. The focus on prostitution and venereal disease also served to construct sex as dangerous and to gear sex education toward prevention, while the reformers’ middle class values and the status position that ‘sexual respectability’ helped secure framed prevention in terms of abstinence. To be channeled into public health, though, these values behind the promotion of sex education had to be dressed up in science. And while science provided respectability and credibility, it had to be shaped to conform to contemporary moral standards to gain public support. Finally, the process by which organizations with a particular interest in sex education pushed policy that would provide them with support for the development

¹⁷² Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 53.

¹⁷³ Lord, *Condom Nation*, 46.

of their own programs would become the standard model of public-private partnership through which sex education would be implemented.

Sexual Revolution, Sexual Science

In 1913, the popular periodical *Current Opinion* declared that it was “sex o'clock in America.”¹⁷⁴ Although Progressive reformers’ success at promoting sex education had been limited, their persistent efforts had succeeded in focusing public attention on sex, and in particular, on adolescent sexual behavior. By the 1920s, a proliferation of articles in newspapers and magazines were reporting on “the revolt of youth.”¹⁷⁵ ‘Flappers’ were bobbing their hair, rouging their cheeks, raising their hemlines, drinking, smoking, stealing kisses, and cavorting in cabarets. Sexually suggestive and physically intimate dance styles became popular. Young men and women attended ‘petting parties’ where they engaged in sexual foreplay. It seemed that a sexual revolution was underway.

Imagining that the Progressives kicked off a sexual revolution entails believing that sex was previously repressed by a ‘conspiracy of silence’, and had been liberated by the social hygienists’ frank and open talk. As we have seen, however, sex, and particularly the sexual behavior of youth, was already the subject of moral and medical discourse during the Victorian era. The social hygienists, rather than breaking a silence, had contributed to a proliferation of sexual discourses that began two centuries prior. Rooted in the seventeenth century Christian ‘confession of the flesh’, the incitement to speak about sex was incorporated into the modern science of governance beginning in the eighteenth century. As statecraft shifted from ruling subjects to managing populations, sex, as a key factor in numerous relevant statistics — fertility, birth rates, health, habitation — became linked to national prosperity. Sex could no longer be

¹⁷⁴ “Sex O’Clock in America.” *Current Opinion* 55 (1913): 113. Print.

¹⁷⁵ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 68-97.

“simply condemned or tolerated” on moral grounds, but now had to be studied, managed, and “regulated for the greater good of all.”¹⁷⁶ To this end, the developing disciplines of science were put in the service of public administration. Social purity reformers’ campaigns against prostitution, Stanley Hall’s adolescent psychology, medical studies of venereal disease, and the myriad lectures, pamphlets, programs, and educational films of the social hygienists all contributed to the discursive production of sexual knowledge through which sex was socially regulated.

Certainly sexual attitudes and mores were changing in the early twentieth century, but rather than an explosion of a previously repressed sexuality, this was the function of a ‘discursive explosion’ that was continuing to construct sexuality by producing new public knowledge about sex. The expanding fields of the social and medical sciences proliferated studies of adolescent sexual behavior, and these were increasingly publicized by the mass media, which was becoming the mouthpiece of ‘experts’. Some commentary on the youth ‘revolt’ was overtly moralizing. But following on the heels of Progressive era muckrakers’ critiques of the press as a tool of capitalist enterprise, journalism was undergoing a professionalization that stressed neutrality and objectivity.¹⁷⁷ Most reportage was thus couched in the languages of the sociologists, psychologists, and medical professionals studying changes in adolescent sexual behavior, as these were seen to be the neutral and objective voices of science. In doing so, however, the media reproduced the gendered, classed, and raced moral values of the Victorian era that had become entangled with these scientific discourses.

Women involved in the social hygiene movement had hoped to overturn the double standard that granted men the right to be sexually promiscuous while condemning women for the same behavior. Breaking down the myth of male sexual necessity, fighting prostitution, and

¹⁷⁶ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 24.

¹⁷⁷ McChesney, Robert W. *The Problem of the Media: U.S. Communication Politics in the 21st Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004. 58-66. Print.

insisting on abstinence outside of marriage were all apiece with the struggle for sexual equality. Yet in trying to hold men to the same moral standard of sexual behavior to which they had been subjected, these women reproduced a discourse of purity through which psychology and medical science had pathologized ‘excessive’ female sexuality. The rapt media attention to flappers was shaped by, and also reproduced, this discourse by constructing the behavior of these young women as sexually deviant. Likewise, many of these behaviors had already been common among working class women, while the ‘new’ dance styles had emerged from working-class dance halls and African-American jazz clubs.¹⁷⁸ Constructing these as ‘primitive’ drew on the biological, evolutionary, and anthropological literature of the eugenics movement and worked to maintain the Victorian values that served to distinguish and elevate the social status of the American middle class.

The perception of a sexual revolution that the media helped construct would reshape the efforts of sex education advocates. Sex could no longer be isolated as an object of study or a target of reform. To be sure, adolescent sex was still considered undesirable and aberrant behavior, but it had become clear that it was connected to many other aspects of adolescent social life. As such, sex education advocates pushed for a move away from the ‘emergency’ model of sex education, which targeted adolescents with brief and sporadic messages about the dangers of sex, and a move toward an integrative approach that would educate the ‘whole child’. Effective sex education would have to be incorporated into every component of the school curriculum. Biology or general science courses would teach the basics of anatomy and reproduction necessary to understand sexual function. Physical education would instruct students in health and hygiene, and, as necessary, address the intimate issues of menstruation, seminal emissions, and masturbation. Civics would inculcate a sense of the importance of family, ethics, and social

¹⁷⁸ D’Emilio & Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 241.

responsibility. Literature would provide a cultural and aesthetic context for discussing love, morals, and the tragic consequences of the “wrong ways of living.”¹⁷⁹

Although this integrated approach to sex education aligned with the National Education Association’s (NEA) progressive principles of “education for life,” and would eventually gain their support, implementing it proved difficult.¹⁸⁰ Except for large high schools in urban areas, most schools lacked the diversity of courses and the skilled and willing teachers required for integrated sex education. Even in larger schools, many teachers were reluctant to bring sex education into their classes. Not only was it an uncomfortable topic, but it also took time away from what were considered more important subjects, and put their jobs at risk from community and administrative disapproval. As a result, while the number of schools offering sex education increased over the 1920s, they were for the most part teaching only the basic science of sex, and this was often framed by eugenics.¹⁸¹ And because the integrative approach lacked the urgency of the emergency model, public enthusiasm for sex education waned. Due in part to this and also to the unfolding economic depression, Congress cut funding to the PHS for sex education in 1932. The depression also undermined the work of voluntary associations like ASHA. Lacking any national support or central consensus, sex education was left to the whims of the states and local schools. When the PHS was refunded by a provision in the Social Security Act and the 1938 National Venereal Disease Control Act, the money was dispersed through state boards of health, with allocations for education going not to integrative programs, but to emergency instruction that counseled abstinence as a medical measure for countering venereal disease.

¹⁷⁹ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 102-103; Thompson, Louise B. “Opportunities for Sex Education in English Classes.” *Social Hygiene* 6 (1920): 393-397. Print.

¹⁸⁰ National Education Association. “Report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education.” *American Education in the Twentieth Century: A Documentary History*. Ed. Melvin Lazerson. New York: Teachers College Press, 1987. 79-87. Print.

¹⁸¹ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 104-111; Usilton, Lida J. & Newell W. Edson. *Status of Sex Education in the Senior High Schools of the United States in 1927*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1928. Print.

Through the 1940s and 1950s sex education shifted toward what would become known as Family Life Education (FLE). The implicit acknowledgment of contraceptive effectiveness behind the military's distribution of condoms to soldiers during World War II, along with the mass production of penicillin and its discovery as an effective cure for venereal disease, made emergency sex education unnecessary. At the same time, growing public concern with 'juvenile delinquency' directed attention to a supposed disintegration of family, even as the "companionate marriage"¹⁸² ideal of the 1920s was developing into a "cult of marital happiness"¹⁸³ that situated family life at the center of human satisfaction and fulfillment. Sociological and psychological studies linked healthy sexual behavior — which since the 'revolution' of the 1920s had increasingly been seen as manifesting in all aspects of adolescent social life — to a healthy family environment. Citing these studies, proponents of sex education recast "marriage education" as preventative medicine for a whole host of social and psychological ills, and mobilized support for FLE as a public health issue.

As implemented across state and local communities, the content of FLE courses varied widely. While some schools would include the 'physical aspects', many stuck to the social, psychological, and economic aspects of married life, focusing on imparting mundane but

¹⁸² "Sociologists first coined the phrase 'companionate marriage' in the 1920s to describe a transformation in the social and economic functions of marriage for middle-class, and predominantly white, American families. By the early 1920s, norms of middle-class social behavior were in flux. In place of the nineteenth-century ideal of white women's 'passionlessness', American moderns acknowledged the naturalness of sexual desire among so-called respectable women. Rates of premarital sex, divorce, and women's white-collar employment had all risen over the previous two generations. The birth control movement's early successes also enabled women with access to physicians to obtain increasingly reliable forms of contraception. Particularly after women won the franchise in 1920, marriage no longer created a legally or politically cohesive unit: married women possessed unprecedented control over their personal property, employment, and bodies. As sociologists explained, those changes in women's status and in reproduction had helped develop the modern idea of companionate marriage. Such marriages embraced democratic family organization, produced fewer children, and prioritized couples' mutual emotional and sexual needs." Davis, Rebecca L. "Not Marriage at All, but Simple Harlotry": The Companionate Marriage Controversy." *The Journal of American History* 94.4 (2008): 1137-1163. Print.

¹⁸³ Pointing to a proliferation of studies and publications on conjugal bliss, Kingsley Davis defined the "cult of marital happiness" as Americans' "firm belief that the purpose of marriage is happiness." Davis, Kingsley. "The American Family: What It Is — and Isn't." *New York Times Magazine* 30 Sep. 1951: 18. Print.

necessary life skills such as childrearing, conflict resolution, and how to balance a checkbook. This marked a significant retreat from not only the ambitions of integrated sex education, but also from those of liberal education, as the popular uptake of FLE coincided with a shift in pedagogical emphasis from training minds to think, to imparting skills.¹⁸⁴

Moreover, though teaching life skills was cast as an objective response geared toward serving the growing diversity of the exploding school population, these skills were based on, and reinforced, traditional gender norms and class values. Girls were prepared to become “debutantes, fiancées, brides, mothers, and citizens,” while boys were taught how to manage finances and how to apply for a job.¹⁸⁵ The family to which they were to aspire was decidedly middle class: “In family life education textbooks there are never families of six children or barren couples, and they never live in three rooms or a house that badly needs paint. There are no full ashtrays... Children aren’t grimy or sticky... Teenagers don’t slouch or swear or have cigarettes hanging out of the corners of their mouths... Fathers don’t lounge around the house in their undershirts or remain unshaven on the weekend.”¹⁸⁶ Needless to say, these families were also always white and heterosexual.

By the 1960s, formal efforts at sex education in the United States were teaching less about sex than they had at the turn of the century. In a widely cited survey, only eight percent of adolescents reported receiving significant sexual information from school.¹⁸⁷ As we will see in the next chapter, however, informal sources of sexual information were flourishing. The Supreme Court’s 1957 decision in *Roth v. United States* had opened the floodgates for pulp novels and pornography by legally distinguishing obscenity from sexual explicitness. The Hollywood

¹⁸⁴ Hofstadter, Richard. *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963. Print.

¹⁸⁵ Kearney, Nolan C. “Sex Education in Public Schools.” *Symposium on Sex Education*. Ed. Edgar C. Cumings. New York: American Social Hygiene Association, 1957. 12-13. Print.

¹⁸⁶ Leslie, Gerard R. “Personal Values, Professional Ideologies, and Family Specialties.” *Marriage and Family Living* 21 (1959): 5-6. Print; Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 152.

¹⁸⁷ Campbell, Patricia J. *Sex Education Books for Young Adults, 1892-1979*. New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1979. 110. Print.

production code that had long kept even a lingering kiss off the silver screen was crumbling. Rock 'n' roll music was beginning to speak openly of the sex it had always suggested. And even as some books, magazines, and newspapers were focusing their shocked attention on the rebellious behavior of the youth counterculture, including the radical idea of 'free love', others presented 'sexual freedom' in more prosaic terms. Hugh Hefner's *Playboy*, for example, catered to the aspiring urbane rake, while Helen Gurley Brown, first in her bestselling 1963 advice book *Sex and the Single Girl*, and then as editor of the women's magazine *Cosmopolitan*, championed female sex outside of marriage.

In 1964, *Time* magazine claimed that this new "sex-affirming culture" signaled a "second sexual revolution." While in the first sexual revolution "youth buried the Victorian era," they now found themselves "adrift on a sea of permissiveness."¹⁸⁸ Likening American culture to psychologist Wilhelm Reich's Orgone Box — a therapeutic tool that was supposed to work by concentrating libidinal energy — *Time* suggested that:

Improved and enlarged to encompass the continent, the big machine works on its subjects continuously, day and night. From innumerable screens and stages, posters and pages, it flashes the larger-than-life-sized images of sex. From countless racks and shelves, it pushes the books which a few years ago were considered pornography. From myriad loudspeakers, it broadcasts the words and rhythms of pop-music erotica. And constantly, over the intellectual Muzak, comes the message that sex will save you and libido make you free.¹⁸⁹

Reich had coined the term "sexual revolution" in the 1930s to describe how "the belief spread that repression, not license, was the great evil, and that sexual matters belonged in the realm of science, not morals."¹⁹⁰ So while *Time* implicitly recognized this as more of a media revolution than a revolution in sexual behavior, it was still presented as promising freedom from sexual repression through the elevation of science over morality. And regardless of the questionability of Reich's science, this revolution was certainly a scientific one. The 68ers may have been quoting

¹⁸⁸ "The Second Sexual Revolution." *Time* 24 Jan. 1964: 54-59. Print.

¹⁸⁹ "The Second Sexual Revolution," 57.

Reich in France, but the revolution in the United States was fueled by the works of Alfred Kinsey, William Masters and Virginia Johnson, who had legitimated the study of sex and elevated it to a science.¹⁹¹ It was a medical revolution as well, a revolution of reproductive technologies, bracketed on one end by ‘the pill’ and on the other end by the legal acceptance of abortion as a safe medical alternative to pregnancy, which freed women from the threat of unwanted pregnancy.

The more sexualized society of 1960s America demanded more sex education, especially as rates of venereal disease were on the rise.¹⁹² With the support of the American Medical Association (AMA), the American Association of School Administrators, the NEA, and the U.S. Office of Education, many schools ramped up their sex education programs.¹⁹³ The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) played a central role, organizing community efforts and providing guidelines for the reformulation of these programs.¹⁹⁴ Like ASHA, SIECUS connected sex to health. But rather than focusing on the sexual act, which tended to bracket sex off from everyday life, SIECUS focused on sexuality. As a core component of identity that shaped every aspect of an individual’s life, sexuality was crucial to personal health. Sexuality, argued SIECUS, needed to be studied and understood in order to provide social guidance for helping people develop healthy life patterns. Their purpose was:

To establish man’s sexuality as a health entity: to identify the special characteristics that distinguish it from, yet relate it to, human reproduction; to dignify it by openness of approach, study and scientific research designed to lead towards its understanding and its freedom from exploitation; to give leadership to professionals and to society, to the end that human beings may be aided towards

¹⁹⁰ Turner, Christopher. *Adventures in the Orgasmatron: How the Sexual Revolution Came to America*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011. 18. Print.

¹⁹¹ Turner, *Adventures in the Orgasmatron*, 15-19.

¹⁹² Fields, Jessica. *Risky Lessons: Sex Education and Social Inequality*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2008. 116. Print; Wilcox, R. “A World Look at the Venereal Diseases: Recrudescence of the Venereal Diseases.” *The Medical Clinics of North America* 56.5. (1972): 1057-1071. Print.

¹⁹³ Gudridge, Beatrice. *Sex Education in Schools, Education U.S.A. Special Report*. Washington, DC: National School Public Relations Association, 1969. Print.

¹⁹⁴ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 161-170.

responsible use of their sexual faculty and towards assimilation of sex into their individual life patterns as a creative and re-creative force.¹⁹⁵

Like Kinsey, and Masters and Johnson, SIECUS “expressed a quintessentially rationalist faith that scientific information would ease cultural anxiety and individual guilt about sex” and “sought to capitalize on the cultural authority of medicine” to legitimate their work.¹⁹⁶ This strategic move positioned them as neutral within moral debates about sex and sex education, and aligned them with the sexual relativism emerging in the 1960s. But “scientific medicine easily masquerades as objective and value-free,” as Janice Irvine shows, and under the veneer of science, SIECUS founders and educators espoused “family values.”¹⁹⁷ Outspoken as they sometimes were about the right to sexual pleasure, it clearly had its place “within marriage or stable heterosexual relationships.”¹⁹⁸ While they did not condemn premarital sex or homosexuality, they did not condone it. As such, “SIECUS-style education can rightly be considered yet another mechanism by which sex is policed through the speech and silences of discourses.”¹⁹⁹

Although SIECUS helped to develop and expand sex education in the 1960s, it continued to function in the service of entrenched middle-class values. Guidelines for comprehensive K-12 programs were drawn up by organizations like ASHA and SIECUS, but these certainly did not promote the right to sexual freedom and pleasure that Reich’s revolutions demanded. And while they might suggest discussing issues like pre-marital sex, birth control, masturbation, or homosexuality, these guidelines were more likely to stress the role of morals, home, church, and community in healthy sexual development. As actually implemented, even the most innovative programs preached a “basically conformist philosophy” that prepared students for an idealized

¹⁹⁵ “The SIECUS Purpose.” *SIECUS Report* 1.1 (1965): 2. Print.

¹⁹⁶ Irvine, Janice M. *Talk about Sex: The Battles over Sex Education in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. 25. Print.

¹⁹⁷ Irvine, *Talk about Sex*, 27. For a detailed account of the politicization of sexual behavior and sexual science, see: Irvine, Janice M. *Disorders of Desire*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990. Print.

¹⁹⁸ Irvine, *Talk about Sex*, 36.

¹⁹⁹ Irvine, *Talk about Sex*, 32.

family life that could only be found “in the pages of our own elementary school health textbooks or in the glossy color pages of the *Ladies Home Journal* or *House and Garden*.”²⁰⁰

SIECUS would, however, play a more significant role in the development of sex education in the United States by galvanizing the division between sexual conservatism and sexual liberalism. Beginning in the Progressive era and developing over the course of the twentieth century, this division emerged between evangelicals and Christian fundamentalists, who saw sex in Biblical and reproductive terms as a covenant between man and wife for the purpose of procreation, and the more liberal and secular Protestants of the social hygiene movement, who “detached sexual activity from the instrumental goal of procreation, affirmed heterosexual pleasure as a value in itself, and defined sexual satisfaction as a critical component of personal happiness and successful marriage.”²⁰¹ Sexual conservatives opposed sex education because for them sex was inherently a private matter between man, wife, and God. Sexual liberals supported sex education because social problems like prostitution, venereal disease, and unwanted children made sex inherently a public matter between man, woman, and State. While the tension between these two opposed interests had been bubbling under the surface of debates about sex education throughout the century, the emergence in the 1960s of SIECUS as the public face of sexual liberalism coincided with a conservative backlash to liberal progressivism, which was sparked by Barry Goldwater’s 1964 presidential campaign and would fully manifest in the rise of the New Right in the 1970s. Sex and sex education would become key issues on the Right’s cultural agenda as it organized around issues of teen pregnancy, abortion, the sexualization of media, and opposition to feminism and gay rights. This powerful coalition of social conservatives and Christian fundamentalists would dominate sex education debates well into the twenty-first century.

²⁰⁰ Breasted, Mary. *Oh! Sex Education!* New York: Praeger, 1970. iii. Print.

²⁰¹ D’Emilio & Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 241. See also: Gardella, Peter. *Innocent Ecstasy: How Christianity Gave America an Ethic of Sexual Pleasure*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. Print.

The Pregnant Teen and the Bankrolling of Abstinence

In 1976, the Guttmacher Institute released a report proclaiming an “epidemic” of teenage pregnancy in the United States. The title of the report — “Eleven Million Teenagers” — was misleading. Eleven million refers not to the number of teen pregnancies, but to the number of people under the age of eighteen who reported having sex at least once a year. The actual number of teen pregnancies was less than a million per year, and of those almost two-thirds were over eighteen.²⁰² And while the report warned of the consequences both to teens and society-at-large of unwanted children, the fact is that teen motherhood had been on the decline since the mid-1950s.²⁰³ Moreover, though Alan Guttmacher reported to Congress that this “epidemic” cut across socioeconomic strata, more than 80 percent of teen mothers in the United States were in the poor and working classes — a number that remained relatively consistent for decades before and after the report.²⁰⁴

Despite (or perhaps because of) its inaccurate portrayal of teen pregnancy, the report served to catalyze growing public anxiety about teen sex.²⁰⁵ Since the sexual revolution of the 1960s, the number of adolescents having sex had been on the rise, with the ‘onset’ of sexual behavior occurring at a younger age. This was due in no small part to the increasingly widespread availability of effective contraception, especially ‘the pill’. First marketed in the United States in 1961, the combined oral contraception pill allowed women to have sexual intercourse free of the threat of unwanted pregnancy. Reflecting changing public attitudes about sex and its relation to reproduction and marriage, in 1965 the U.S. Supreme Court guaranteed the right to contraception for married women in *Griswold v. Connecticut*, and in 1972, the Court confirmed this right for

²⁰² Guttmacher Institute. *Eleven Million Teenagers: What Can Be Done About the Epidemic of Adolescent Pregnancies in the United States?* New York: Planned Parenthood Federation of America, 1976. 9-11. Print; Levine, Judith. *Harmful to Minors: The Perils of Protecting Children from Sex*. New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2002. 96. Print.

²⁰³ Luker, Kristin. *Dubious Conceptions: The Politics of Teenage Pregnancy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996. 8. Print.

²⁰⁴ Guttmacher Institute. *Sex and America’s Teenagers*. New York: Guttmacher Institute, 1994. 58. Print.

unmarried women in *Eisenstadt v. Baird*.²⁰⁶ Incorporating this growing acceptance of contraception into public policy, Title X of the Public Health Service Act, signed into law in 1970, provided family planning, including contraception, to low-income and uninsured people.²⁰⁷

Although adolescent sexual behavior had increased somewhat during the 1960s, both the role of the media at the time and subsequent media mythologizing about the ‘free love’ of the sexual revolution had greatly inflated its prevalence.²⁰⁸ The “crisis of virginity” that *Time* had trumpeted was more talk than action.²⁰⁹ A proliferation of media ‘talking’ about sex — news and magazine articles, popular music, sex manuals, pulp novels, and pornography — brought sex into the public sphere — not in the staid discourses of science, medicine, and the law, but through the bold headlines and glossy images of popular culture. The social anxiety about teen sex was stoked more by the resultant increase in public perception than by the actual increase in sexual behavior. Moreover, although the majority of teen mothers were poor and black, the actual increase in premarital sex was only amongst white and middle class teens. The number of teens having sex before marriage had remained relatively static or even declined in the working class and amongst African-Americans and other racial minorities.²¹⁰

It was not, then, merely *more sex* that caused public anxiety; the fear of social and moral decay was stoked by *who was having sex*. Public concern with “deviant sexuality and reproduction” had shifted from the earlier eugenic problem of poor, black women, to the threat to

²⁰⁵ Levine, *Harmful to Minors*, 96.

²⁰⁶ *Eisenstadt v. Baird*. 405 U.S. 438. U.S. Supreme Court. 1972. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 15 Jun. 2012; *Griswold v. Connecticut*. 381 U.S. 479. U.S. Supreme Court. 1965. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 15 Jun. 2012.

²⁰⁷ *Population Research and Voluntary Family Planning Programs*. Pub. L. 91-572. *Thomas*. Web. 15 Jun. 2012.

²⁰⁸ See: D’Emilio & Freedman. *Intimate Matters*; Gitlin, Todd. *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*. New York: Bantam Books, 1987. Print.

²⁰⁹ Irvine, *Talk about Sex*, 20.

²¹⁰ Forrest, Jacqueline D. & Susheela Singh. “The Sexual and Reproductive Behavior of Young Unmarried Women in the United States, 1982-1988.” *Family Planning Perspectives* 22.5 (1990): 206-214. Print; Zelnik, Melvin & John F. Kantner, “The Probability of Premarital Intercourse.” *Social Science Research* 1 (1972): 335-341. Print.

white, middle-class girls.²¹¹ At the same time, the threat of poor, black, unwed mothers to white, middle-class family values and society-at-large was reconstructed. The 1965 Moynihan Report had attributed black poverty to single motherhood. This “culture-of-poverty” model, which implicitly normalized the nuclear family as the stable base of social order and economic prosperity by linking the absence of the father figure to a generational cycle of poverty, violence, and crime, would inform much of the subsequent research on single motherhood, the poor, unemployment, and gender and racial inequality.²¹² Functioning through a process that Ian Hacking calls “making up people,” whereby counting, quantifying, creating norms, and making correlations creates new social categories,²¹³ research from Moynihan to Guttmacher had created the ‘pregnant teen’, who became a powerful symbol of social decay.²¹⁴ The gendered, classed, and raced dimensions of this new social category would in turn shape both policy and public perceptions of premarital sex and its impact on society.

The teen pregnancy panic was not, then, as much about teen pregnancy as it was about ‘the pregnant teen’, who was a scapegoat for concerns about sex outside of marriage and the threat to gender norms, class status, and racial purity it suggested.²¹⁵ Unleashed by the increasing public presence of sex and given a name by scientific research, this “sex panic” would manifest in a conservative backlash to the perceived threat against traditional, white, middle-class family

²¹¹ Nathanson, Constance A. *Dangerous Passage: The Social Control of Sexuality in Women's Adolescence*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991. 47. Print.

²¹² Fields, *Risky Lessons*, 10. See also: Solinger, Rickie. *Wake up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race before Roe v. Wade*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.

²¹³ Hacking, Ian. “The Looping Effect of Human Kinds.” *Causal Cognition: A Multi-Disciplinary Debate*. Eds. Dan Sperber, et al. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. 351-383. Print; Hacking, Ian. “Making up People.” *Beyond the Body Proper: Reading the Anthropology of Material Life*. Eds. Margaret Lock & Judith Farquhar. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. 150-163. Print.

²¹⁴ For example, Joseph A. Califano, Jr., Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, testified to Congress in 1978 that “for hundreds of thousands of teenagers, particularly the majority who are unmarried, the birth of a child can usher in a dismal future of unemployment, poverty, family breakdown, emotional stress, dependency on public agencies, and health problems for mother and child.” Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 201.

²¹⁵ “Analysts of moral panics on sexual topics have noted the frequent inclination and capacity of entrepreneurial individuals to advance disparate agendas through the designation of scapegoats. Such entrepreneurs manage to suggest that society’s ills stem from some particular set of sexually problematic

values posed by the “contraceptive mentality” of *Griswold, Eisenstadt*, and Title X.²¹⁶ And though contraception and family planning, particularly as implemented under Title X, actually served to reduce the demand for abortions,²¹⁷ in the wake of *Roe v. Wade*, abortion, contraception, family planning, and Title X were all grouped together by the “moral entrepreneurs”²¹⁸ of the emerging New Right as signs of moral and social decay that was manifesting in the ‘epidemic’ of teen pregnancy.

In response, the OAPP (Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs) was created by the 1978 Adolescent Health Services and Prevention and Care Act to administer adolescent pregnancy programs under Title VI of the Public Health Service Act. Three years later, Title XX, also known as the Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA), or colloquially as the “Chastity Act,” replaced Title VI. The ‘family life’ of Title XX meant pro-life, and it was intended to replace the ‘family planning’ of Title X, which had become associated with contraception and abortion. AFLA was the brainchild of right wing, anti-abortion zealots Jeremiah Denton and Orrin Hatch. Denton was a poster child for the emerging New Right. A consultant for the Christian Broadcasting Network and founder of the pro-traditional family organization Coalition for Decency, he had been swept into Congress with a rash of other Reagan conservatives after running on a ‘traditional values’ platform backed by the Moral Majority.²¹⁹ These two republican senators were staunchly opposed to Title X, which they saw as encouraging teen sex and

individuals or groups.” Epstein, Steven. “The New Attack on Sexuality Research: Morality and the Politics of Knowledge Production.” *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* 3.1 (2006): 3. Print.

²¹⁶ Saul, Rebekah. “Whatever Happened to the Adolescent Family Life Act?” *Guttmacher Report on Public Policy* 1.2 (1998): 5-11. Print.

²¹⁷ Guttmacher Institute. “Facts on Publicly Funded Contraceptive Services in the United States.” *Guttmacher Institute*. Web. 15 Jun. 2012.

²¹⁸ Cohen, Stanley. *Folk Devils and Moral Panic: The Creation of Mods and Rockers*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.

²¹⁹ Moritz, Charles, ed. “Denton, Jeremiah A., Jr.” *Current Biography Yearbook*. New York: H.W. Wilson Company, 1982. 92-95. Print.

undermining family values. While Hatch worked to dismantle Title X,²²⁰ Denton pushed AFLA quietly through committee and into the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981.²²¹

AFLA was the first federal law written specifically to fund sex education. Its strategy for reducing teen pregnancy took clear aim at family planning and everything associated with it, targeting contraception, abortion, and sex outside of marriage. It promoted adoption as the preferred alternative to unwed motherhood or abortion, and it prohibited federal funding to programs or agencies that even offered information about abortion, while providing funding for “family-centered” programs “to promote chastity and self-discipline.” To be eligible for funding, programs had to involve religious groups.

Almost all early AFLA grants went to far-right and religious groups who used the funds to develop fear-based sex education programs for the promotion of abstinence.²²² Some of these drew the attention of civil liberties groups for including explicitly religious doctrine in their curricula, and in 1983, the ACLU’s Reproductive Freedom Project filed suit against AFLA, charging that it violated the constitutional separation of church and state by “smuggling the values of the Christian Right [...] to public school children at public expense.”²²³ On appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, AFLA was found to be constitutional on its face, but the case was remanded to the District Court for further consideration of whether it was unconstitutional as applied.²²⁴ In an out-of-court settlement reached in 1993, the OAPP agreed to establish a process for reviewing

²²⁰ Hatch attempted to cut Title X’s funding by 25% and to restructure it in block grants to the states, which would effectively do away with the federal mandate that states spend this money on reproductive services. Title X survived this attack as part of a compromise with democrats that ensured the passage of AFLA. Levine, *Harmful to Minors*, 97-98.

²²¹ Saul, “Whatever Happened,” 6.

²²² Saul, “Whatever Happened,” 8.

²²³ Levine, *Harmful to Minors*, 98.

²²⁴ In *Kendrick v. Sullivan* [1985], the Federal District Court of Washington, DC found AFLA to be unconstitutional on its face, as it had the effect of advancing religion insofar as religious groups were fulfilling its function. The Court also found it unconstitutional as applied, since it provided funds to “pervasively sectarian” groups. Young, Michael & William Bailey. “The Politics of Abstinence Education: From Reagan’s Title XX to Welfare Reform’s Title V.” *The International Electronic Journal of Health Education* 1 (1998): 207-212. Print.

educational materials to be used in Title XX programs, to ensure that they were medically accurate and religiously neutral, and that they neither encouraged nor discouraged abortion.

But by then, as Judith Levine shows, “some of the biggest federal grant recipients [...] had already turned their tax-payer-funded church-developed sex-education curricula into big for-profit businesses.”²²⁵ In the 1970s, the Christian Right had begun to implement a new discursive strategy in the struggle over sex education. Sexual conservatives had in the past sought to censor public talk about sex, but evangelicals and other conservative Christians now began to take a proactive stance. Just as they were coming into political power, they began to position themselves as experts on issues of sex.²²⁶ While they continued to rely on “depravity narratives”²²⁷ — mobilizing sexual threat, fear, and shame through distortion, innuendo, hyperbole, and fabrication to discredit liberal sex educators — they also began to speak positively about sex (within the context of heterosexual marriage, of course) through their own network of media outlets, books, videos, lectures, educational programs, and workshops. This allowed them to shift the argument from *whether* sex education should be taught to *which curriculum* should be taught.²²⁸ While promoting sex within marriage as positive, through a “politics of sexual shame,” they effectively silenced ideas other than abstinence-until-marriage by attaching to them conventional sexual affects such as shame, fear, and disgust.²²⁹ In doing so, topics like masturbation, oral sex, and homosexuality were taken completely off the table, while contraception, abortion, and STIs were reduced to scare tactics in the reinforcement of abstinence. In the 1980s, the Christian Right took advantage of AFLA to successfully integrate their “positive” views of sexuality into public school education. For example, the Sex Respect education program developed in the 1980s with the help of \$1.6 million in AFLA grants, was by the early 1990s being used in one-quarter of American

²²⁵ Levine, *Harmful to Minors*, 98.

²²⁶ Irvine, *Talk about Sex*, 81-82.

²²⁷ Irvine, *Talk about Sex*, 54-55.

²²⁸ Irvine, *Talk about Sex*, 11-12.

²²⁹ Warner, Michael. *The Trouble with Normal*. New York: Free Press, 1999. 21. Print.

school districts. Teen-Aid, jumpstarted by AFLA grants while the ACLU's suit worked through the courts in the late 1980s, had become a major publisher of abstinence-only education programs. AFLA had effectively bankrolled the upstart of the Christian Right's sex education industry.

But with the OAPP review process in place, these organizations' Title XX funding was under threat, and along with it, the sex education industry that allowed the Christian Right to spread their message of abstinence. They responded in two ways. First, they recast their message in the language of science and medicine. Through their own research institutes such as the Family Research Council and the Medical Institute for Sexual Health, the Christian Right produced studies, statistics, and data that supported their arguments about abstinence. Publications and programs were scrubbed of their earlier Biblical content, and overt moralizing about premarital sex was replaced with statistical 'facts' about its consequences. For example, the correlation between teen pregnancy and poverty became an oft-cited 'fact' in abstinence education curricula, which assumed teen sex would result in pregnancy rather than promoting contraception, and also ignored the socio-economic context of poverty in which the vast majority of teen pregnancies occur. If mentioned, contraception was not condemned or downplayed, but was instead presented as a dangerous alternative to abstinence. For example, the Family Research Council published an article titled "Condom Roulette," which cited research showing 5 micron holes in latex gloves and pointed out that the HIV virus measures between .1 and .3 microns. Of course not all latex is the same, so while the facts were correct, the reasoning was specious. An overwhelming amount of research points to the efficacy of latex condoms in preventing HIV infection.²³⁰ Nonetheless, the 5 micron hole argument would be reproduced in numerous other publications and programs. Similarly, if these programs and publications covered abortion, it was described not as a sin, but in terms of its physical and psychological risks. Not only was the real potential for medical

complications played up, but some programs also cited research about “post-abortion syndrome,” and claimed links between abortion and breast cancer.²³¹ The research behind both of these claims has since been refuted.²³² But religious-based research institutions also studied and evaluated these programs and published often-questionable reviews of their content and impact, which nonetheless functioned to validate them.²³³

Second, in order to ensure their new abstinence-only programs would be widely integrated into public schools, a group of conservative, pro-family organizations including the Heritage Foundation, the Christian Coalition, Concerned Women for America, and the Eagle Forum, lobbied conservative lawmakers for an abstinence-only education provision as part of welfare reform.²³⁴ Introduced as an eleventh-hour amendment to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act in 1996, what became Title V of the Social Security Act would provide \$50 million per year to enable states “to provide abstinence education [...] with a focus on those groups most likely to bear children out of wedlock.” Who “those groups” were was clear from the imagined target of welfare reform: the so-called “welfare queen.” With its connotations of a single, poor, oversexed, black mother milking the system, Reagan’s welfare queen had brought together sex, class, race, and gender in a resonant if mythical symbol of social decay that continued to shape policy long after his presidency. As with the Moynihan Report thirty years earlier, sex outside of marriage was cast as the cause of cyclical poverty as well as racial and gender inequality. Abstinence was the cure that Title V would provide.

²³⁰ Irvine, *Talk about Sex*, 116-117.

²³¹ See, for example: Reisser, Teri K. & Paul C. Reisser. *Identifying and Overcoming Post-Abortion Syndrome*. Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family, 1994. Print; Rue, Vincent M. “The Psychological Realities of Induced Abortion.” *Post-Abortion Aftermath: A Comprehensive Consideration*. Ed. Michael T. Mannion. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994. 5-43. Print.

²³² Edwards, S. “Abortion Study Finds No Long-Term Ill Effects on Emotional Well-Being.” *Family Planning Perspectives* 29.4 (1997): 193-194. Print; Rookus, Matt A. & Flora E. van Leeuwen. “Induced Abortion and Risk for Breast Cancer: Reporting (Recall) Bias in a Dutch Case-Control Study.” *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* 88.23 (1996): 1759-1764. Print.

²³³ Irvine, *Talk about Sex*, 101.

²³⁴ Young & Bailey, “The Politics of Abstinence Education.”

To be eligible, states had to match federal funds three-to-four, and programs funded had to adhere to a strict eight-point definition of abstinence education, now commonly referred to as “A-H.” Such a program:

- A. Has as its exclusive purpose, teaching the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity;
- B. Teaches abstinence from sexual activity outside marriage as the expected standard for all school-age children;
- C. Teaches that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems;
- D. Teaches that a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual activity;
- E. Teaches that sexual activity outside of the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects;
- F. Teaches that bearing children out -of- wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child’s parents, and society;
- G. Teaches young people how to reject sexual advances and how alcohol and drug use increase vulnerability to sexual advances; and
- H. Teaches the importance of attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity.

These standards were also required by Congress to be incorporated into the OAPP review process for funding under Title XX, effectively smuggling conservative Christian family values back into AFLA. Between Title XX and Title V, by the late 1990s federal and state funding for abstinence-only sex education dwarfed funding for other programs still provided through Title X.

Nonetheless, in 2000 Congress approved yet another program for promoting abstinence. Funded by the maternal and child health care block grant and administered by the Bureau of Maternal and Child Health, Special Projects of Regional and National Significance (SPRANS) provided \$20 million in 2001 and \$40 million in 2002 through Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) directly to programs that not only adhered to the eight-point policy of Title V, but actively promoted each of the points. In the first two years, grants went to Christian and pro-life groups such as Mid-South Christian Ministries, Catholic Charities of Buffalo, and the Crisis Pregnancy Centers of Greater Phoenix. Moreover, because so much federal funding relied on “A-

H,” and so many programs and curricula adopted and adhered to them in order to be eligible for this funding, they became the standards by which all sex education was judged. School boards across the country began insisting that whatever instruction was given, whether receiving federal funds or not, must be A-H compliant.

Meanwhile, efforts to promote more comprehensive sex education have floundered. The Family Life Education Act (FLEA), which would have provided \$100 million in grants to states “to conduct programs of family life education, including education on both abstinence and contraception for the prevention of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS,” was introduced by Rep. Barbara Lee in 2001 and again in 2005. Neither time did it make it out of committee. Its successor, the Responsible Education About Life Act (REAL), was introduced in 2007. As of 2013 — twelve years after such legislation was first introduced — it remains in committee.

To Abstain, or Not to Abstain, That is NOT the Question

If we had good education [...] moral, responsible sex education [...] we could raise the next generation of adolescents to be abstinent until monogamous.

— Surgeon General C. Everett Koop

As we have seen, teaching adolescents abstinence is grounded in the Romantic notion of the innocent child who must be protected from the corruption of carnal knowledge. It has deeply religious roots in the doctrine of original sin and the fall of man, as well as Christian asceticism. The moral values deriving from these religious precepts have been mobilized through the proscription of adolescent sex in the construction and maintenance of gender, class, and racial distinctions. But it is not merely through moralizing that these values have been perpetuated. Since at least the Victorian era, medical and scientific discourses have also constructed adolescent sexuality as a social threat, and the assumed neutrality of their empiricity has cloaked the values that frame these discourses, while also granting them authority.

Beginning in the Progressive era, social movements and organizations utilized these discourses to shape both public perceptions of sex and public policy on sex education. Progressive social reformers turned from the moral discourse of social purity to the scientific discourse of social hygiene in their attack on promiscuity. By enlisting science they were able to construct adolescent chastity as a necessary function of social progress, while also pragmatically reframing the innocent adolescent who needed to be sheltered from sexual knowledge as a *tabula rasa* who needed to be inscribed with appropriate sexual knowledge. This garnered public support, federal funding, and the establishment of a government bureaucracy for administering sex education.

The sexual ‘revolutions’ of the twentieth century then refocused these efforts from adolescent sex to adolescent sexual behavior and sexual identity through a proliferation of social science and medical research, which was amplified by the growing mass media. This ‘sexual science’ was mobilized by organizations like ASHA and SIECUS in more integrated sex education programs that nonetheless perpetuated white, middle-class, heterosexual values and gender norms.

Finally, the teen pregnancy panic of the 1970s evidenced a backlash by social conservatives and the religious right, whose family values were threatened by the increasing public presence of sex that over a century of sexual discourse created. As a network of conservative Christian organizations gained significant political and economic power in the 1980s, they were able to advance their abstinence-only message by building an alternative sexuality industry that trafficked in both a ‘politics of shame’ and medical-scientific discourse. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the Victorian moral and social values informing adolescent chastity had been enshrined in American sex education as sound science.

Now, a century after its beginning in the Progressive era, sex education in the United States has progressed little beyond the message of abstinence. True, most students are now offered some

sort of sexual instruction in middle or high school.²³⁵ But what they are taught, and when, is a complex function of state laws and local school board policies, which are inflected by federal and state funding programs. Some states may not require sex education, but will stipulate what can be taught if programs are provided, including both general guidelines such as medical accuracy, age appropriateness, prohibitions on bias, and opt-out policies, as well as content requirements such as abstinence, contraception, and HIV/AIDS.²³⁶ School boards will decide on sex education programs based on their state's laws, community demands, funding and budget considerations, program availability, and the training, skills, and capabilities of their schools' staff. The patchwork of laws, policies, programs, and funding, coupled with inadequate teacher training, ensures inconsistent sex education across the nation with a tendency toward minimal provision centered on abstinence.

Even while considerably less is being spent on abstinence education under Obama — its proponents note that sixteen times as much is now being spent on non-abstinence programs — states and local school boards are pushing away from more comprehensive sex education. With the lack of clear state policy on what must be taught, local school boards often bow to community pressure to limit sex education, or preempt debate by avoiding potentially controversial topics altogether. The easiest option — the one least likely to arouse controversy and most likely to gain board approval — is to buy into a program that has already been vetted as evidence-based. This allows school boards to sidestep moral debates by claiming they are only teaching facts that have proven effective at changing adolescent sexual behavior. It also opens their schools to federal sex education funding.

²³⁵ 93% of public schools offer sex education, but in 35 states schools are required to allow parents to opt out on behalf of their children. It's unclear how many parents exercise this option. Guttmacher Institute. "State Policies in Brief: Sex and HIV Education." *Guttmacher Institute*. Web. 15 Jun. 2012.

²³⁶ For specific data on state policies, see: "SIECUS State Profile: A Portrait of Sexuality Education and Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in the States." *SIECUS*. Sexual Information and Education Council of the United States, 2010. Web. 15 Jun. 2012.

Not all evidence-based programs are abstinence-only, but all of them teach abstinence, and most are likely to stress abstinence and offer little other substantial instruction beyond the basics of contraception.²³⁷ In the classroom, even teachers given more latitude often defer to abstinence-only education: Teaching other topics is not only uncomfortable, it may be career suicide.²³⁸ This “defensive teaching” reduces curricula to a series of facts to be tested and avoids discussion to avert controversy.²³⁹ Moreover, the logic of abstinence-only education is “beginning to assert a kind of natural cultural authority, in schools and out.”²⁴⁰ As a result, almost all students who receive sex education in the United States will be told that they should abstain from sex; half of them will be told little beyond this.

This narrowing scope of sex education in the United States is certainly not in response to overwhelming public demand. While the abstinence-only voices of the political and religious right are often the loudest, research has consistently shown that “parents want a wider range of topics taught than is often included in sex education today.”²⁴¹ In a Kaiser Family Foundation survey, 98 percent of parents wanted discussion of HIV/AIDS, 84 percent wanted discussion of where to get and how to use birth control, and 76 percent wanted to see homosexuality addressed.²⁴² Students have also demanded more from their sex education. A majority want more information about HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, while about a third say

²³⁷ A 2001 report by the Guttmacher Institute showed that “86% of school districts with a sexuality education policy require promotion of abstinence” while only “14% of school districts have policies that are truly comprehensive and teach both contraception and abstinence.” Cited in: Collins, Chris, et al. “Abstinence Only vs. Comprehensive Sex Education: What Are the Arguments? What is the Evidence?” *AIDS Research Institute Policy Monograph Series*. University of California, San Francisco, 2002. Print.

²³⁸ Levine, *Harmful to Minors*, 103-104.

²³⁹ Irvine, *Talk about Sex*, 122.

²⁴⁰ Fine & McClelland, “Sexuality Education,” 299.

²⁴¹ Hoff, Tina, et al. *Sex Education in America: A View from Inside the Nation’s Classrooms*. Menlo Park: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2000. 4. Print.

²⁴² Hoff, *Sex Education in America*, 4.

they need more information about contraception and abortion, and 27 percent want to hear more about sexual orientation.²⁴³

Teaching abstinence-only is dangerously unrealistic. Although the increasing percentage of American teens engaging in sexual activity since the sexual revolution of the 1960s has leveled off,²⁴⁴ seventy percent of males and females have sex before they are nineteen, with seventeen being the average age of first sexual experience.²⁴⁵ By refusing to account for the fact that the vast majority of teens will have sex at some point during their high school years, abstinence-only education fails to prepare students for a sexually active life. Often called “fear-based” sex education, abstinence-only programs downplay information about sex engagement and play up the risks of premarital sex, couching these risks in the language of statistical facts. In addition to pregnancy and disease, these risks may include guilt, embarrassment, disappointed parents, shotgun weddings, selfishness, heartbreak, loneliness, poverty, loss of self-esteem, diminished ability to communicate, isolation, fewer friendships, alienation, distrust, objectification, inability to commit, irresponsibility, dishonesty, sexual violence, jealousy, depression, and death.²⁴⁶ Contraception and abortion are not covered, except perhaps to say that “contraception can and often does fail,”²⁴⁷ and that “abortions can and do leave lasting emotional effects on people.”²⁴⁸ If

²⁴³ Hoff, *Sex Education in America*, 5.

²⁴⁴ After rising steadily for almost three decades, the number of teens reporting sexual experience actually declined between 1995 and 2002, and then did not change significantly between 2002 and 2008. Abma, JC, et al. “Teenagers in the United States: Sexual Activity, Contraceptive Use, and Childbearing, National Survey of Family Growth 2006–2008.” *Vital and Health Statistics* 23.30 (2010): n.p. Print.

²⁴⁵ Abma, “Teenagers in the United States”; Chandra, A, et al. “Fertility, Family Planning, and Reproductive Health of U.S. Women: Data from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth.” *Vital and Health Statistics* 23.24 (2005): n.p. Print; Martinez, GM, et al. “Fertility, Contraception, and Fatherhood: Data on Men and Women from Cycle 6 (2002) of the National Survey of Family Growth.” *Vital and Health Statistics* 23.26 (2006): n.p. Print.

²⁴⁶ Mast, Colleen Kelly. *Sex Respect: Parent-Teacher Guide*. Bradley: Respect, Inc., n.d. 45. Print.

²⁴⁷ In addition to the 5 micron argument, abstinence-only programs often cite a 31 percent failure rate of condoms. What they don’t say is that this high rate of failure is due to user error, which is a function of an inadequate sex education that fails to teach proper condom use. The failure rate of condoms when used properly is less than 2 percent. And the 31% figure seems to be an unsubstantiated estimate. Most studies put the typical use failure rate at 10 – 18%, and the perfect use failure rate at about 2%. Moreover, they have been found to effectively reduce the transmission of HPV by 70 percent, and the transmission of HIV by up to 95 percent. Cates, Willard & Markus Steiner. “Dual Protection Against Unintended Pregnancy and

sexually transmitted diseases are referenced, it is only as another threat further justifying abstinence.²⁴⁹ Lacking knowledge of contraception, abortion, and sexually transmitted diseases — or, as is often the case, misinformed about these topics — these students are at much greater risk for having an unwanted pregnancy and possibly an unwanted child, or of contracting chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes, or HIV.

Moreover, when applied to a diverse population of students, the universalizing message of abstinence-only programs disproportionately distributes these risks among students of different backgrounds. Poor students are more likely to get pregnant or to get someone pregnant, as well as being more likely to contract a disease.²⁵⁰ The same is true for students already exposed to sexual violence.²⁵¹ These students are put at greater risk by not being provided education about contraception, abortion, STIs, and sexual abuse. On top of this, abstinence-only programs tend to be favored in poor, rural areas and working class suburbs, which often have large black and ethnic minority populations. Students in these social strata are also less likely to receive sexual knowledge at home that might prepare them for what abstinence-only education does not.

And due to the still pervasive double standard of sexual morality, as well as structural sexism, teen girls are more likely to be receptive to the abstinence message, but are also more likely to suffer greater consequences should they have sex without the benefit of a more

Sexually Transmitted Infections: What Is the Best Contraceptive Approach?" *Sexually Transmitted Diseases* 29.3 (2002): 168-174. Print; "Family Planning: A Global Handbook for Providers." World Health Organization, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, 2011. 200. Print; Winer, Rachel L., et al. "Condom Use and the Risk of Genital Human Papillomavirus Infection in Young Women." *New England Journal of Medicine* 354.25 (2006): 2645-2654. Print.

²⁴⁸ Luker, *When Sex Goes to School*, 30.

²⁴⁹ Collins, "Abstinence Only," 14.

²⁵⁰ Kearney, Melissa & Phillip B. Levine. "Income Inequality and Early Nonmarital Childbearing: An Economic Exploration of the Culture of Despair." *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper* No. 17157. Cambridge: NBER, 2011. Print; Also see: Kearney, Melissa & Philip B. Levine. "Explaining Recent Trends in the U.S. Teen Birth Rate." *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper* No. 17964. Cambridge: NBER, 2012. Print; Kearney, Melissa & Philip B. Levine. "Why Is the Teen Birth Rate in the United States so High and Why Does It Matter?" *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper* No. 17965. Cambridge: NBER, 2012. Print.

comprehensive education. The stigma that is often attached to girls who have sex makes them less likely to seek help on sex-related issues, and less likely to get tested for STIs. And teen girls who get pregnant — and don't abort because they've been taught that abortion is wrong — are far more likely to drop out of school and into low-wage labor or onto welfare than the teen boys who get them pregnant.

Furthermore, in assuming marriage as the only appropriate venue for sexual activity, abstinence-only education fails to serve those who might not want to, or cannot, marry. Abstinence-only curricula may not be outwardly hostile to LGBTQ youth, but their foundational assumption precludes addressing them as legitimate sexual subjects with specific educational needs, and excludes them from sexual citizenship.²⁵²

Finally, there is no substantial evidence that abstinence-only programs effectively deter students from engaging in sex before marriage.²⁵³ Those with strong religious convictions that are reinforced by family and peers may take the abstinence-until-marriage message to heart, but it is unclear what role the programs play in their decision. Beyond this, a small percentage of students in these programs *delay* having sex for up to eighteen months. This ability to delay the 'onset' of sexual activity is what abstinence-only proponents trumpet as proof of success. This is what allowed Heritage Keepers to be granted evidence-based status.

²⁵¹ Anda, Robert F. et al. "Abused Boys, Battered Mothers, and Male Involvement in Teen Pregnancy." *Pediatrics* 107.2 (2001): 1-8. Print; Roosa, Mark W. et al. "The Relationship of Childhood Sexual Abuse to Teenage Pregnancy." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 59 (1997): 119-130. Print.

²⁵² 'Sexual citizenship' has been advanced as a way of understanding how people are included or excluded from social, cultural, and political arenas based on their sexuality. See: Bell, David & Jon Binnie. *The Sexual Citizen: Queer Politics and Beyond*. Malden: Blackwell, 2000. Print; Evans, David T. *Sexual Citizenship: The Material Construction of Sexualities*. New York: Routledge, 1993. Print; Plummer, Ken. *Intimate Citizenship: Private Decisions and Public Dialogues*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003. Print.

²⁵³ Collins shows that there are few published and peer reviewed reports correlating abstinence-only programs with decreased sexual activity. Of those that do, positive results were only found in small peer-group environments and amongst religious groups already dedicated to pre-marital abstinence. This indicates these programs cannot be reliably scaled-up to public education settings. Collins, "Abstinence Only," 9.

But is comprehensive sex education any better? Most comprehensive programs are far from comprehensive in their coverage of sex. In most cases, ‘comprehensive’ actually means more comprehensive than abstinence-only education, and is thus often referred to as ‘abstinence-plus’. Abstinence-plus programs promote abstinence, but acknowledge that many teenagers will become sexually active. Thus, while pushing abstinence-until-marriage as the safest option for preventing pregnancy and disease, these programs also teach about contraception and abortion, and include discussion of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.²⁵⁴ Rarely do they teach more than this.

Abstinence-plus programs are criticized by abstinence-only proponents for condoning, if not promoting, teenage sexual activity. They cite the historical correlation between the provision of sex education and the increase in teen sex as proof. Studies have shown, however, that students who receive abstinence-plus sex education are no more likely to have sex than those who receive abstinence-only education, and that students of both types of programs are less likely to have sex than those who receive no sex education at all.²⁵⁵ More importantly, abstinence-plus programs have been shown to increase the use of contraception amongst those teens who do have sex, and particularly the use of condoms, both to prevent pregnancy and reduce risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections.²⁵⁶ Even as the rate of teen sex increased and the average age of onset of sexual behavior came earlier, incidents of teen pregnancy and STIs decreased relatively.

Abstinence-plus sex education has proven successful at promoting safer sex, and this is laudable. Yet this success, like the success that abstinence-only programs have had in delaying teen sexual activity, reveals the limits of American sex education set by a century of moral and

²⁵⁴ Collins, “Abstinence Only,” 1.

²⁵⁵ Collins, “Abstinence Only,” 14; United States Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General. *The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Sexual Health and Responsible Sexual Behavior*. Rockville: Office of the Surgeon General, 2001. Print.

²⁵⁶ Kirby, Douglas. “The Impact of Abstinence and Comprehensive Sex and STD/HIV Education Programs on Adolescent Sexual Behavior.” *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 5.3 (2008): 18-27. Print; Kohler,

medical-scientific discourse. Christian morality and middle-class values have narrowly centered sex education around the idea of abstinence, but the incorporation of science has further constrained the possibilities of what may be taught. This works in two ways. First, medical and scientific research suggests a sex education agenda by identifying public health issues. For example, research showing increasing rates of venereal disease or teen pregnancy suggests a need for sex education to address these issues. Second, research on the efficacy of sex education programs suggests what should be taught in order to address the issues that have been identified. For example, research shows that teaching abstinence delays sexual activity, or that teaching contraception decreases incidents of teen pregnancy or STIs. This instrumentalist approach limits sex education to what can be easily measured and empirically proven.²⁵⁷ Take, for example, the push for family life education in the 1940s and 1950s. This was prompted by sociological and psychological research that linked healthy sexual behavior to a healthy family environment. But evaluating the efficacy of FLE proved impossible. Not only was measuring values like “marital happiness” problematic, but it was also difficult to isolate the influence of teaching these values from other variables that influenced sexual behavior.²⁵⁸ FLE was abandoned for these reasons, and likewise, the efforts to reintroduce it more recently, first through FLEA and now through REAL, have been doomed by the lack of empirical evidence of its effectiveness.

And so, sex education has become narrowly focused on those issues that science identifies as public health problems — teen pregnancy and STIs — and teaches only what science has proven to be effective interventions — abstinence and contraception. This excludes a wide range of issues with which anyone who engages in sex should be familiar. SIECUS’s *Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education* gives a sense of what is missing by outlining the concepts,

Pamela K. et al. “Abstinence-only and Comprehensive Sex Education and the Initiation of Sexual Activity and Teen Pregnancy.” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 42.4 (2008): 324-326. Print.

²⁵⁷ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 205.

²⁵⁸ Cuber, John F. “Can We Evaluate Marriage Education?” *Marriage and Family Living* 11 (1949):94-95. Print; Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 146-147.

topics, and goals of an ideal comprehensive K-12 sex education.²⁵⁹ Concepts include not only the standard human development and sexual health, but also relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, and the place of sex and sexuality in society and culture. Topics to be covered under these concepts give a sense of their broad range. For example, human development is not just about sexual anatomy and puberty, but also includes body image, sexual orientation and gender identity. The concept of sexual behavior should cover masturbation, fantasy, and dysfunction. Under society and culture, students should learn about sexuality in relation to gender roles, religion, law, media, and art. Among the goals of such an education are providing “an opportunity for young people to question, explore, and assess their own and their community’s attitudes about society, gender, and sexuality” and “helping young people develop the capacity for caring, supportive, non-coercive, and mutually pleasurable intimate and sexual relationships.”²⁶⁰ The lack of these concepts, topics, and goals in American sex education has a number of consequences for adolescents:

- When relationships are addressed in sex education programs, it is usually in terms of teaching girls strategies for “saying no” and teaching boys that “no means no.” These “refusal strategies” are important lessons for resisting peer pressure and avoiding date rape. But they not only assume heterosexuality and gender stereotypes of the passive female and aggressive male, they also oversimplify sexual negotiation. Often adolescents want to say “yes” to sex even if they don’t want to “go all the way,” but this is never presented as an option. Nor does the oversimplified model of sexual negotiation equip students with the skills to discuss contraception with their partners should they choose to go all the way. Furthermore, the complex entanglement of emotions and sexual urges involved in intimate relationships is either ignored, or reduced to the reactive responses

²⁵⁹ National Guidelines Task Force. *Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Kindergarten through 12th Grade*. SIECUS, 2004. Print.

²⁶⁰ National Guidelines Task Force, *Guidelines*, 19.

of regret, fear, and shame. Insomuch as the feeling of desire is a topic, it is cast as a biological and hormonal function, which tends to dissociate what students are taught about sex from what they are actually feeling. Students are not given the skills to parse feelings of love, lust, and desire; nor are they given a language in which to discuss these with their intimates, or any sense that these are things that should be discussed. This sets students up for bad sexual experiences, as positive emotional experiences about sex correlate strongly with well informed, consensual decisions about sexual engagement, and negative emotional experiences correlate with a lack of information and understanding about what to expect from the experience.²⁶¹

- By failing to address sexual orientation and gender identity, sex education programs tend toward implicit gender- and hetero-normativity. Images consistently pair female and male to reveal sexual functions.²⁶² Menstruation is often presented as failed conception, which not only stresses sex as heterosexual reproduction, but also constructs a “biological romance” in which the female awaits fulfillment from the male.²⁶³ Males are often presented as being naturally more physically sexual, while females are presented as emotional, consenting to sex only to attain love.²⁶⁴ Male sexual pleasure is acknowledged — tacitly, physiologically — in talk of wet dreams, ejaculation, and erections, whereas the physiology of female pleasure — vaginal lubrication, swollen clitorises, and orgasms

²⁶¹ Herold, E. S. & M.S. Goodwin. “Premarital Sexual Guilt.” *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science* 13 (1981): 65-75. Print; von Sadvoszky, Victoria, et al. “Emotions Involved in College Students’ Sexual Encounters.” *West Journal of Nursing Research* 28.7 (2006): 864-879. Print.

²⁶² Fields, *Risky Lessons*, 112-113.

²⁶³ Diorio, Joseph A. & Jennifer A. Munro. “Doing Harm in the Name of Protection: Menstruation as a Topic for Sex Education.” *Gender and Education* 12.3 (2000): 347-365. Print; Fausto-Sterling, Anne. *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books, 2000. Print; Gilbert, Jane. “The Sex Education Component of School Science Programmes as a ‘Micro-Technology’ of Power.” *Women’s Studies Journal* 12.2 (1996): 37-58. Print; Martin, Emily. “The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 16.31 (1991): 485-501. Print.

²⁶⁴ Fine, Michelle. “Sexuality, Schooling, and Adolescent Females: The Missing Discourse of Desire.” *Harvard Educational Review* 58.1 (1988): 29-53. Print.

— is not.²⁶⁵ The focus on intercourse and pregnancy ignores the possibility of non-heterosexual relations, marginalizing or silencing LGBTQ youth, particularly at the intersections of race and class.²⁶⁶

- The anatomical depictions of bodies used in sex education programs reduce the sexual body to organs and their functions. The set of terminology and facts mapped onto these bodily renderings has little bearing on what students are actually experiencing with their own bodies. Sexual knowledge is disintegrated from embodied experience. Students can point to the vas deferens or the fallopian tubes on a chart and explain what they do without correlating these to the visceral feelings of ejaculation or ovulation. When more than just anatomical charts, the stylized images of bodies are normative. They are often white, never too fat or too thin, penises are never too big or too small or crooked when erect, breasts are neither flat nor flapping and never of different sizes or shapes, scrotums never sag unevenly, and labia are always small and neatly proportionate. If these bodies are sexually entangled, it is only as objects, never as subjects in the context of social relationships.²⁶⁷
- Teaching the anatomical and reproductive functions of sex with a focus on preventing pregnancy through abstinence or contraception reduces sex to penile-vaginal intercourse. This emphasis on intercourse perpetuates the idea that coitus is the ultimate goal of sexual engagement. By not contextualizing coitus within a broad range of sexual

²⁶⁵ Fine, “Sexuality.”

²⁶⁶ Connell, Catherine & Sinikka Elliott. “Beyond the Birds and the Bees: Learning Inequality through Sexuality Education.” *American Journal of Sexuality Education* 2.2 (2009): 83-102. Print; Elia, John P. & Mickey Eliason. “Discourses of Exclusion: Sexuality Education’s Silencing of Sexual Others.” *Journal of LGBT Youth* 7.1 (2010): 29-48. Print; Fine & McClelland, “Sexuality Education,” 328; Garcia, Lorena. “‘Now Why Do You Want to Know About That?’: Heteronormativity, Sexism and Racism in the Sexual Education of Latina Youth.” *Gender & Society* 23.4 (2009): 520-541. Print; Griffin, Christine. *Representations of Youth: The Study of Youth and Adolescents in Britain and America*. Cambridge: Polity, 1993. Print; Rasmussen, Mary Lou. “Wounded Identities, Sex, and Pleasure: ‘Doing It’ at School. NOT!” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 25.4 (2004): 445-458. Print.

²⁶⁷ Fields, *Risky Lessons*, 110-116.

behavior not necessarily oriented toward it, students are denied a deeper understanding of its place in human sexuality and sexual expression. This restrictive concept of sexual activity constricts the sexual subjectivity of adolescents.²⁶⁸ “By equating and confounding sexuality with sexual intercourse, we limit how all adolescents learn to conceptualize their romantic relationships and themselves as sexual beings.” Moreover, “by focusing on sexual intercourse [...] we have left out and glossed over another key aspect of sexuality and sexual development: *sexual feelings*.”²⁶⁹ Furthermore, other forms of sexual behavior such as kissing, necking, grinding, oral sex, and mutual masturbation, which are effective at preventing pregnancy, and in some cases, STIs, are not discussed.²⁷⁰

- The anatomical and coital model of sex education teaches students only the bare mechanics of but one type of sexual activity. But adolescents are both curious and anxious about how to actually perform sex, whether it be kissing or cunnilingus. By not discussing how other forms of sexual engagement work, students neither know what to do nor what to expect. This both amplifies their anxiety and increases their chances of having unpleasant sexual experiences.²⁷¹ It also leads them to seek this knowledge elsewhere.
- Finally, the overwhelming focus on the negative aspects of sex — danger and disease — means that positive views of sex or sexuality are rarely presented.²⁷² Discourses on adolescent sexuality have been increasingly framed in terms of risk, and this has erased

²⁶⁸ Fields, *Risky Lessons*, 169-170.

²⁶⁹ Tolman, Deborah L. *Dilemmas of Desire: Teenage Girls Talk About Sexuality*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002. 23-24. Print.

²⁷⁰ Ingham, Roger. “‘We Didn’t Cover That in School’: Education Against Pleasure or Education for Pleasure?” *Sex Education: Sexuality, Society and Learning*. 5.4 (2005): 375-388. Print.

²⁷¹ Herold & Goodwin, “Premarital Sexual Guilt”; von Sadovszky, “Emotions Involved.”

²⁷² SIECUS reports that only 12 percent of sex education programs supply any positive information about sexuality. National Guidelines Task Force, *Guidelines*, 1.

notions of pleasure.²⁷³ Satisfaction and gratification are never discussed.²⁷⁴ Desire is the missing discourse of sex education underlying the absence of pleasure, satisfaction, or gratification.²⁷⁵ Describing sex organs as “reproductive organs” naturalizes the role of sex as reproduction and obscures the possibility of them being used for pleasure.²⁷⁶ Masturbation is rarely a topic, and when it is, it is talked about not in terms of pleasure, but of satisfying sexual urges.²⁷⁷ The lack of pleasure in sex education perpetuates the secrecy whereby it is associated with guilt and shame.²⁷⁸ By not discussing desire and pleasure, sex education constrains the agency of adolescents, particularly females, whose expressions of sexual desire and pleasure are already coded in constraining cultural logics.²⁷⁹ The agency of working-class youth, teens with disabilities, Black and Latino adolescents, and lesbian/gay/bisexual and transgender youth is similarly more constrained by the missing discourse of desire.²⁸⁰

Formal sex education in the United States is clearly inadequate for preparing adolescents for a sexual life, whether or not it be in the context of marriage. By taking sex out of the context of the complex social relationships, meanings, emotions, and pleasures of which it is a part, the preventative model of sex education — whether abstinence-only or abstinence-plus — presents an abstract sexual knowledge that fails to foster the development of healthy sexuality and self-determining sexual subjects.²⁸¹ A century of moral and medical discourse has constructed adolescent sex as a danger to be avoided, or at best, a risk to be mitigated. Sex education has been

²⁷³ Greslé-Favier, Claire. “The Legacy of Abstinence-only Discourses and the Place of Pleasure in US Discourses on Teenage Sexuality.” *Sex Education* 10.4 (2010): 413-422. Print.

²⁷⁴ Levine, *Harmful to Minors*, 103-104.

²⁷⁵ Fine, “Sexuality”; Fine & McClelland, “Sexuality Education.”

²⁷⁶ Fields, *Risky Lessons*, 113-114.

²⁷⁷ Ingham, “‘We Didn’t Cover That.’”

²⁷⁸ Ingham, “‘We Didn’t Cover That.’”

²⁷⁹ Fine, “Sexuality.” See also: Tepper, Mitchell S. “Sexuality and Disability: The Missing Discourse of Pleasure.” *Sexuality and Disability* 18.4 (2000): 283-290. Print.

²⁸⁰ Fine & McClelland, “Sexuality.”

²⁸¹ Fields, *Risky Lessons*, 165-173.

constructed around this threat of adolescent sex, and has been constrained by what empirical science can prove. Most of the topics and concepts listed in SIECUS's *Guidelines* cannot be taught, not only because they threaten particular moral values and social norms, but also because their impact cannot be easily measured and evaluated. And so sex education continues to perpetuate the values and norms that have always framed abstinence: Sex is a function of heterosexual reproduction in the context of marriage between conventionally gendered men and women. It would seem, as Ronald Reagan once suggested, that medicine and morality do indeed teach the same lesson.

Of course sex education does not happen in a vacuum. Sexual subjectivity develops in a social context that is inflected by “the stubborn complexities of economic, geographic, and historical factors.”²⁸² Class position and status, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, local community, school environment, family life, and cultural background will all shape each individual student's sex education experience. There is no silver bullet of sex education that will produce desired results — whether that be abstinence or informed, safe, and pleasurable sexual practice — across the range of social positions adolescents occupy in the United States.

Moreover, adolescents learn about sex from myriad sources: family, friends, peers, books, magazines, movies, radio, TV, texting, Twitter, websites, online forums, and social network sites. Family and friends have long been sources of sexual knowledge, but over the course of the twentieth century kids turned increasingly toward the media to learn about sex, just as the media became increasingly sexualized. The next chapter will examine how this unfolded, producing media sex as an informal mode of pedagogy that functions in the education of adolescent sexual desire.

²⁸² Collins, “Abstinence Only,” 8. See also: Fields, *Risky Lessons*, 17-18.

Chapter 2: Media Sex: The Pornification of Culture and the Education of Desire

Movies are a liberal education in the art of making love.

— Female, 20, white, college sophomore [*Movies and Conduct*, 1933]

In *The Big Disconnect*, Catherine Steiner-Adair corroborates the anecdotes with which *SexEd* began. In the course of interviewing over 1,000 kids in the United States about the role of technology in their lives, Steiner-Adair had numerous conversations with young boys in which they asked why women like being choked, hit, or urinated on.²⁸³ Media technologies have taken on a “defacto coparenting role,” argues Steiner-Adair, increasingly working as nannies, guardians, tutors, and teachers. In this case, they have come to function as sex educators, as pedagogues in the education of adolescent desire.

Unlike the formal sex education programs offered in schools, which traffic in information, ideas, and images abstracted from the embodied experience of sex into the biological, anatomical, and medical discourses of danger and disease, the informal sex education provided by the media functions in highly corporeal ways. Not only can media sex physically arouse, but it also works through generic conventions and techniques to define and shape embodied practices associated with sexual acts. For example, as Linda Williams argues about the ‘money shot’, this particularly efficacious technical convention for making visible sexual climax has become a mainstay of both straight and gay pornography.²⁸⁴ Through repetitive representation

²⁸³ Steiner-Adair, Catherine. *The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family Relationships in the Digital Age*. New York: Harper, 2013. Print.

²⁸⁴ The term “money shot” refers in general to a visual element of a film, TV show, or publication that is disproportionately expensive to produce but is essential to the importance or value of the work. In pornography it refers specifically to the visual of male ejaculation, which, according to *The Film Maker’s Guide to Pornography*, is “the most important element in the movie,” for which the actor is paid extra, and for which the audience pays to see. According to Williams, the money shot developed as a convention of pornography because it visually signals to the audience the satisfaction of sexual desire. Mills, Jane. *The Money Shot: Cinema, Sin and Censorship*. Annandale: Pluto Press, 2001. Print; Williams, Linda. *Hardcore: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible.”* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. Print; Ziplow, Steven. *The Film Maker’s Guide to Pornography*. New York, Drake, 1977. Print.

as the *sin qua non* of sex, the money shot has entered into common sexual practice.²⁸⁵ Likewise, as images of men choking women become a pornographic convention for representing sexual dominance, their reiteration works to ‘educate’ heterosexual male desire.

This education of desire is not, however, limited to the realm of pornography. As mainstream media become not only increasingly sexualized, but also increasingly pornified, particular images, ideas, conventions, and practices that emerge in pornography are integrated into both the language of media and the popular culture it constitutes.²⁸⁶ The pornification of mainstream culture is part of a process that Williams calls “on/scenity,” whereby “a culture brings on to its public arena the very organs, acts, ‘bodies and pleasures’ that have heretofore been designated as ob/scene and kept literally off-scene.”²⁸⁷ The money shot has been able to evolve from a pornographic convention into a popular sexual practice in part by moving through the normalizing channels of mainstream media culture. For example, the details of the “physically intimate” encounters between President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky were revealed, both in the relentless media coverage and in the *Starr Report*, as a series of pornographic scenes building up to the money shot and its visible evidence on Lewinsky’s infamous blue dress.²⁸⁸ HBO’s *Sex and the City* [1998-2004] referred to the money shot — though not by name — numerous times,

²⁸⁵ Passonen, Susanna, Kaarina Nikunen, & Laura Saarenmaa. “Pornification and the Education of Desire.” *Pornification: Sex and Sexuality in Media Culture*. Eds. Susanna Paasonen, et al. Oxford: Berg, 2007. 13. Print.

²⁸⁶ See: Dines, Gail. *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2010. Print; Driver, Susan. “Pornographic Pedagogies? The Risk of Teaching ‘Dirty’ Popular Cultures.” *M/C Journal* 7.4 (2004): n.p. 30 Jun. 2013. Web; Jeffreys, Sheila. *Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West*. New York: Routledge, 2005. 67-86. Print; Levy, Ariel. *Male Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*. New York: Free Press, 2005. Print; McNair, Brian. *Mediated Sex: Pornography and the Postmodern Culture*. New York: Arnold, 1996. Print; McNair, Brian. *Striptease Culture: Sex, Media and the Democratization of Desire*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print; Passonen, Susanna, Kaarina Nikunen, & Laura Saarenmaa, eds. *Pornification: Sex and Sexuality in Media Culture*. Oxford: Berg, 2007. Print; Paul, Pamela. *Pornified: How Pornography Is Damaging Our Lives, Our Relationships, and Our Families*. New York: Owl Books, 2005. Print; Poynor, Richard. *Designing Pornotopia: Travels in Visual Culture*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006. Print; Sarracino, Carmine & Kevin M. Scott. *The Porning of America: The Rise of Porn Culture, What It Means, and Where We Go From Here*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2008. Print.

²⁸⁷ Williams, “Porn Studies,” 3.

including an episode in which Miranda is ejaculated on and one in which Samantha is on the receiving end of a “female money shot” by Maria.²⁸⁹ A 2003 ad for Puma shoes pictured a woman in a red skirt and red Pumas, shown only from the shoulders down, squatting in front of a man in black Pumas with his jeans rumped around his ankles; what appears to be semen drips down her thigh.²⁹⁰ More recently, an episode of HBO’s *Girls* revealed semen on Natalia’s chest to mark the end of a sexual encounter with Adam.²⁹¹ Through all of these media sex moments, the money shot has been brought “on/scene,” into the public arena of popular culture, and normalized as a sexual practice. Will choke-porn follow a similar path? A recent issue of *Vogue Hommes International* featuring an erotic photo spread of models Stephanie Seymour and Marlon Teixeira may be an indicator. The cover photo shows Teixeira holding Seymour from behind, one hand groping her breasts while the other tightly grips her neck.

²⁸⁸ St. John, Maria. “How to Do Things with the *Starr Report*: Pornography, Performance, and the President’s Penis.” *Porn Studies*. Ed. Linda Williams. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004. 27-47. Print.

²⁸⁹ Henry, Astrid. “Orgasms and Empowerment: *Sex and the City* and the Third Wave Feminism.” *Reading Sex and the City*. Eds. Kim Akass & Janet McCabe. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006. 65-82. Print; “Was It Good For You?” *Sex and the City*. HBO. 19 Sep. 1999. Television; “What’s Sex Got to Do With It?” *Sex and the City*. HBO. 17 Jun. 2001. Television.

²⁹⁰ Puma denied they had anything to do with the advertisement, although it was produced by a subsidiary of their advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi, and online sales spiked significantly when the ad went viral.

²⁹¹ “On All Fours.” *Girls*. HBO. 10 Mar. 2013. Television.



A



B

Image 1: A) The Money Shot B) The Education of Desire?

This chapter explores the pornification of American media culture. Increasing sexualization of the media has tracked with the decreasing viability of sex education over the course of the twentieth century, unwittingly filling in where it fails. We saw in the first chapter that under the logic of the birds and the bees the mobilization of science in the service of moral and social values led to the development and broad implementation of formal sex education programs focused on abstinence. By defining adolescent sexuality in terms of risk, these programs tend to decontextualize sex from the complex of social relationships, meanings, emotions, and pleasures in which it is practiced, obscuring their underlying values and failing to prepare students for sexual life. Recent research has shown that in the absence of an adequate and relevant sex education young people look to the media for information and ideas about sex,

particularly for the “discourses of desire” that are missing from formal curricula.²⁹² The first chapter showed how the urge to protect the young from carnal knowledge has produced through formal sexual education an abstract sexual knowledge; this chapter reveals how the same urge has also produced an abstract sexual knowledge in the media, though in a very different way. Efforts to shield youth from sexual representations in the media, which are a necessary counterpart to efforts at providing a prophylactic education, have actually worked to bring these representations on/scene as decontextualized signifiers that can be made to stand in for a range of meanings and values.

Media sex is not new, nor is social anxiety about the role of media sex in sexual learning. The past is replete with sexual representations, but the project of modernity in the West demanded their containment within discourses consonant with a moral and social order conducive to governing the large populations of nation-states. As sex exploded into political, economic, and scientific discourses that sought to regulate it “for the greater good of all,” potentially disruptive representations of sexual pleasure had to be purged from the public sphere of popular culture.²⁹³ Repressive mechanisms of censorship were concomitant to the discursive production of sexual

²⁹² Albury, Kath. “Young People, Media and Sexual Learning: Rethinking Representation.” *Sex Education* 13.S1 (2013): S32-S34. Print; Allen, Louisa. “‘Looking at the Real Thing’: Young Men, Pornography, and Sexuality Education.” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 27.1 (2007): 69–83. Print; Allen, Louisa. “Closing Sex Education’s Knowledge / Practice Gap.” *Sex Education* 1.2 (2001): 109-122. Print; Brown, Jane D. & Kelly L. L’Engle. “X-Rated: Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors Associated With U.S. Early Adolescents’ Exposure to Sexually Explicit Media.” *Communication Research* 36.1 (2009): 129-151. Print; Carmody, Moira. *Sex & Ethics: Young People and Ethical Sex*. South Yarra: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print; Ingham, Rob. “‘We Didn’t Cover that at School’: Education Against Pleasure or Education for Pleasure?” *Sex Education* 5.4 (2005): 375–388. Print; McKee, Alan. “The Importance of Entertainment for Sexuality Education.” *Sex Education* 12.5 (2012): 499–509. Print; McKee, Alan, Katherine Albury & Catharine Lumby. *The Porn Report*. Carlton: Melbourne University, 2008. Print; Measor, Lynda. “Young People’s Views of Sex Education.” *Sex Education* 4.2 (2004): 153-166. Print; Strasburger, Victor & Barbara Wilson, eds. *Children, Adolescents, and the Media*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2002. Print; Thornburgh, Dick & Herbert Lin, eds. *Youth, Pornography, and the Internet*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2002. Print; Ward, L. Monique. “Understanding the Role of Media in the Sexual Socialization of American Youth.” *Developmental Review* 23.3 (2003): 347-388. Print; Wolak, Janis, et al. “Unwanted and Wanted Exposure to Online Pornography in a National Sample of Youth Internet Users.” *PEDIATRICS* 119.2 (2007): 247-257. Print; Zillmann, Dolf. “Influence of Unrestrained Access to Erotica on Adolescents’ and Young Adults’ Dispositions Toward Sexuality.” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 27.2 (2000): 41-45. Print.

knowledge; together they shaped the *sexual public sphere* by determining who could say what about sex and where. The “rise of the novel” provoked fear that the “Young Person,” lacking the rational capacity for critical reflection, would mistake the novel’s characteristic realism for reality and act immorally upon the passions it aroused.²⁹⁴ Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, who follows the heroines of the novels she reads into a real-life affair, embodied the worst fears of the educative function of this increasingly popular medium, and Flaubert’s prosecution for *outrage aux bonnes mœurs* was part of a concerted effort to stamp out media sex that was building steam throughout the nineteenth century.

Even as the obscenity trials of the twentieth century began “liberating” literature from these “shackles of moral censorship” by paring down the definition of obscenity to the “hard core,” new forms of popular media were emerging that would more broadly contain sexual representations within the contemporary moral and social order.²⁹⁵ Motion pictures and broadcasting were potentially disruptive technologies in that they offered mass fora for educating the public on the social issues that the Progressive movement was bringing to light. This pedagogic function was seen as a threat. Not only could these media be used as powerful propaganda in the shaping of public opinion, but their direct appeal to the senses seemed to bypass rational thought and provoke imitative action. Efforts to channel the powers of these media by developing them as educational tools clashed with the motion picture and broadcasting industries. As a result, they were developed primarily as forms of entertainment, and their potential for representing anything disruptive — particularly sex — was contained through industry self-regulation in the interest of both avoiding government intervention and appealing to a broad audience. Even as sex was being ‘liberated’, then, the sexual content of movies, radio, and television would continue to be regulated by moral codes of decency.

²⁹³ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 18-24.

²⁹⁴ Kendrick, *Secret Museum*, 79-87.

²⁹⁵ Kendrick, *Secret Museum*, 188-212.

The particular way in which sexual representation was ‘liberated’, however, would significantly shape the contexts in which it would appear. By defining the obscene as “utterly without redeeming social value” while declaring sex a “motive force” and a “vital problem of human interest and public concern,” *Roth v. United States* opened the gates for “a floodtide of filth,” forcing obscenity into the public sphere as a locus of sexual politics. Stripped down to the meaningless and valueless representation of sexual pleasure — sex for the sake of sex — obscenity would be brought on/scene through diverse discourses that gave sexual pleasure social value by contextualizing it within systems of meaning. In the post-*Roth* era, publishers, pornographers, Congress, the courts, government commissions, and anti-pornography crusaders would all work to make public ‘obscene’ representations within contexts often only abstractly related to the representations.

Following *Roth*, print and film pornography flourished. Along with the more liberal sexual mores of the post-war moral order and the emerging sexual ‘revolution’, the increased public presence of pornography — not only at newsstands and in theaters, but also in highly publicized court cases, commissions, and congressional hearings — helped to normalize it during the 1960s. This culminated in the ‘porno-chic’ phenomenon of the early 1970s, in which a number of pornographic films attained mainstream success, playing to large audiences from all walks of life in mainstreet theaters. Subsequent attempts to rein in obscenity, driven by the emerging New Right, only succeeded in diluting the public presence of pornography as it proliferated, while also keeping it on/scene by legitimating it as a public concern.

Even as pornography withdrew into the privacy of the home with the ‘video revolution’, mainstream media culture was becoming more pornographic, as industry self-regulation dissolved into competition for an audience reared in a culture of ‘sex talk’. This manifested in a postmodern porno-chic phenomenon, in which artists, musicians, filmmakers, marketers, and the porn industry itself borrow the aesthetic conventions of pornography and apply them to a range of

cultural commodities. Pornographic signifiers — references to that ‘hard core’ of obscenity, sex for the sake of sex — have become prevalent in music videos, Hollywood movies, TV shows, video games, fashion ads, and everyday objects like t-shirts and coffee mugs.

This pornification of the media is producing a *pornotopian culture*, in which sexual representations are often abstracted from the contexts that give them meaning and value, either to be discursively reframed and mobilized in the pursuit of other meanings and values, or left to drift across the postmodern media landscape, where they coalesce, or are curated, into collections that may or may not suggest any meaning or value beyond that of sexual pleasure. In this postmodern pornotopia, where media sex moves in and out of contexts as a floating signifier that sexualizes anything to which it refers, sex for the sake of sex has become commonplace. This banality of postmodern media sex further fosters a confessional culture, in which participation in the production and circulation of media sex has become normative. It is within this postmodern, pornotopian, confessional culture, where meaningless media sex has become a part of everyday life, that the education of adolescent desire takes place.

Science, Censorship, and the Sexual Sphere

1857 was a critical year in the history of sexual representation.²⁹⁶ In France, Gustave Flaubert and Charles Baudelaire were on trial for *outrage aux bonnes mœurs*, while “father of neurology” Jean-Martin Charcot was publishing his first lectures on hysteria.²⁹⁷ In England, Lord Campbell’s Obscene Publications Act was passed, the term ‘pornography’ debuted in a medical dictionary as “a description of prostitution as a matter of public hygiene,” and physician William

²⁹⁶ I am expanding here on Peter Gay’s identification of 1857 as a “critical” year in the history of sexual censorship. Gay, Peter. *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud, Vol. 1: Education of the Senses*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984. 359. Print.

²⁹⁷ Goetz, Christopher G., Michel Bonduelle, & Toby Gelfand. *Charcot: Constructing Neurology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. 51-52. Print.

Acton published the first treatise dedicated wholly to the physiology of human sex.²⁹⁸ Such coincidences of science and censorship were crucial to the discursive construction of the *sexual public sphere*, working together to determine who could say what about sex and where, and to thus circumscribe the ‘truth’ of sex by authorizing particular sexual knowledges and subjugating others.

Public representations of sex have a long and prolific history in the West, but for much of modernity their proliferation has been constrained. The carnal pleasures of sex were painted on the ceilings of Abri Castanet²⁹⁹ and the walls of Pompeii,³⁰⁰ carved into the corbels of medieval churches,³⁰¹ and inscribed in the works of Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Shakespeare. Yet even as new technologies allowed for easier reproduction and broader distribution of a wider range of sexual texts and images, numerous discursive devices developed for controlling the circulation, the form, and the meanings of these materials.

Censorship and science are complementary discursive mechanisms for containing and channeling sexual representation into a public knowledge functional in the construction and maintenance of a productive social order. As Foucault notes, the emergence of “a whole restrictive economy” of the “politics of language and speech” accompanied the “political, economic, and technical incitement to talk about sex,” allowing it to be “inserted into systems of

²⁹⁸ Acton, William. *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs in Childhood, Youth, Adult Age, and Advanced Life Considered in the Physiological, Social, and Moral Relations*. London: John Churchill and Sons, 1865. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

²⁹⁹ The engravings and paintings of female sex organs found at this cave site in southern France were, according to radiocarbon dating, created 37,000 years ago as part of the Aurignacian culture of the Upper Paleolithic era. Not only are these images older than the cave art found at nearby Chauvet, but at Castanet sex is the dominant motif, rather than animals. Moreover, unlike the images at Chauvet, which were found deep underground and far removed from living areas, the proximity of the the images to tools and cookware at Castanet shows that they were a part of everyday life. White, Randall, et al. “Context and Dating of Aurignacian Vulvar Representations at Abri Castanet, France.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 109.22 (2012): 8450-8455. Print.

³⁰⁰ Buried in the 79 A.D. eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, Pompeii was discovered in 1745, and soon after, rumors began to circulate about the “lascivious” frescoes and statuary being unearthed and secreted away in the Museo Borbonico in Naples. Kendrick, *The Secret Museum*, 2-9.

³⁰¹ Weir, Anthony & James Jerman. *Images of Lust: Sexual Carvings on Medieval Churches*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.

utility” and “regulated for the greater good of all.”³⁰² For sex to be put to work as a public good — for it to be taken up as discourse and made the basis of a knowledge fundamental to the ordering and maintenance of modern society — the erotic pleasure that had historically animated its representation would have to be purged from popular culture and subjugated to sexual science.

Organized efforts to control public representations of sex developed in response to “the rise of the novel” during the eighteenth century.³⁰³ The growing popularity of this genre, as Ian Watt argues, paralleled a shift toward realism in philosophy and science, and tracked with the rise of commercial capitalism, the middle class, and individualism.³⁰⁴ The view that reality exists independently of observation and that only science can describe it clashed with the aesthetic

³⁰² Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 18-24.

³⁰³ Prior to the eighteenth century, “The most striking fact about official censorship,” writes Walter Kendrick, “was its clumsiness.” From the fifteenth through the early eighteenth century, sexual representations had functioned largely as critiques of religious and political institutions. Texts employing profane language that played on class and gender distinctions, grotesque caricatures of political figures, and detailed dialogues of the sexual lives of nuns and clerics were subject to church persecution and state prosecution not because of their portrayals of sex, per se, but specifically because of their subversive intent. The relative obscurity of these texts, however, and their closed circulation amongst the literati, rendered these piecemeal attempts at censorship both somewhat unnecessary and largely ineffectual. The publication of books such as John Cleland’s *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* and the Marquis de Sade’s *Justine* shifted the focus of censorship both by assaulting morality itself rather than the political and religious institutions underwriting it and by trafficking in the formal realism characteristic of the novel. *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, claims David Foxon, was “the first pornography to use the form of the novel.” In “Reflections on the Novel,” Sade explained his use of this form: “’Tis therefore Nature that must be seized when one labors in the field of fiction, ’tis the heart of man, the most remarkable of her works, and in no wise virtue, because virtue, however becoming, however necessary it may be, is yet but one of the many facets of this amazing heart, whereof the profound study is so necessary to the novelist, and the novel, the faithful mirror of this heart, must perforce explore its every fold.” Findlen, Paula. “Humanism, Politics and Pornography in Renaissance Italy.” *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800*. Ed. Lynn Hunt. New York: Zone Books, 1993. 49-108. Print; Foxon, David. *Libertine Literature in England, 1660-1745*. New Hyde Park: University Books, 1965. 45. Print; Frappier-Mazur, Lucienne. “Truth and the Obscene Word in Eighteenth-Century Pornography.” *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800*. Ed. Lynn Hunt. New York: Zone Books, 1993. 203-221. Print; Hunt, Lynn, ed. *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800*. New York: Zone Books, 1993. 10. Print; Hunt, Lynn. “Pornography and the French Revolution.” *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800*. Ed. Lynn Hunt. New York: Zone Books, 1993. 301-339. Print; Kendrick, *Secret Museum*, 97; Marquis de Sade. *120 Days of Sodom and Other Writings*. Trans. Austryn Wainhouse & Richard Seaver. New York: Grove, 1966. 107. Print; Weil, Rachel. “Sometimes a Scepter is Only a Scepter: Pornography and Politics in Restoration England.” *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800*. Ed. Lynn Hunt. New York: Zone Books, 1993. 125-153. Print.

³⁰⁴ Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. Print.

claim of “formal realism” to authentically account for actual experiences, and this manifested in emerging class tensions. The condescension of the literati toward middle-class reading habits — particularly the solitary pleasure taken in novels — signaled an anxiety that these ‘uncivilized’ readers would irrationally mistake representations for reality and act upon the passions they aroused.³⁰⁵ “Written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle,” warned Samuel Johnson, novels “take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, and produce effects almost without the intervention of the will.”³⁰⁶ Responding to these anxieties, the first laws against sexual representations were enacted in England in 1787, and in France in 1791.³⁰⁷ These acts engendered a flurry of what would come to be known as obscenity trials.

Anxiety about the contagious pleasures of representation continued in the nineteenth century as middle-class disquietude over the popularity of “penny dreadfuls”³⁰⁸ amongst the working class, and as a more general unease about the young readership of “half-dime novels” and “story papers.”³⁰⁹ Increasing literacy and more widespread availability were putting such “sensationalist” texts into the hands of whom Walter Kendrick identified as the “Young

³⁰⁵ Kendrick, *Secret Museum*, 92-93.

³⁰⁶ Johnson, Samuel. *Rambler* 4 (31 Mar. 1750). In: Johnson, Samuel. *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, Vol. 3. Eds. W.J. Bate & Albrecht B. Strauss. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. 21-22. Print.

³⁰⁷ In 1787, King George III issued “A Proclamation for the Encouragement of Piety and Virtue, and for the Preventing and Punishing of Vice, Profaneness and Immorality,” which called for the suppression of all “loose and licentious Prints, Books, and Publications, dispersing Poison to the minds of the Young and Unwary.” The law was enforced by the Proclamation Society, and later, by its successor, The Society for the Prevention of Vice, which worked to “check the spread of open vice and immorality, and more especially to preserve the minds of the young from contamination by exposure to the corrupting influence of impure and licentious books, prints, and other publications.” A law was enacted in France in 1791, with a similar focus on protecting women and the young from corruption by indecent actions and obscene publications. These acts engendered a flurry of what would come to be known as obscenity trials. Thomas, Donald. *A Long Time Burning: The History of Literary Censorship in England*. New York: Praeger, 1969. 113. Print.

³⁰⁸ This “alluring and low-priced form of escapist reading,” writes John Springhall, was given the ‘dreadful’ label “by middle-class journalists in order to amplify social anxiety or ‘moral panic’ over the latest commercial innovation directed at the young.” Springhall, John. “‘Disseminating Impure Literature’: The ‘Penny Dreadful’ Publishing Business Since 1860.” *The Economic History Review* 47.3 (1994): 569. Print.

³⁰⁹ D’Emilio & Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 158.

Person.”³¹⁰ This included not just youth, but all those whose minds were seen as particularly susceptible to corrupting influences: women, children, and the lower classes.³¹¹ Seen as lacking the rational capacity for critical reflection, and thus at the mercy of uncontrollable emotions and desires, these ‘less developed’ groups of people needed to be protected from the immoral pleasures portrayed in new literary genres.

The ‘Young Person’ also had to be protected from profane representations of sexual pleasure that the sciences were beginning to ‘discover’ in both history and nature. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, archaeological sites, museums, catalogues, collections, translations, and anthologies developed as discursive mechanisms for soliciting, interpreting, and organizing cultural artifacts into a history of sexual knowledge within which contemporary subjects could be safely located. These essentially functioned as forms of self-imposed censorship that went hand-in-hand with legal and juridical forms of censorship; together they worked to protect the susceptible ‘Young Person’ from the potentially pernicious effects of a growing body of sexual knowledge.

As Kendrick has shown, the highly erotic art found adorning the everyday spaces of Pompeii during its first century of excavation was collected and locked away within a secret chamber at the Musee Borbonico in Naples, and knowledge of these artifacts circulated only through a small community of educated, elite gentlemen.³¹² Deeming themselves the only ones capable of casting a critical eye on such lascivious images, these scholars of antiquity documented and catalogued their findings in such a way as to erase, where possible, the overt

³¹⁰ Part of what made these texts “sensational” was that they were contemporary, and thus lacked the “lulling patina of veneration” that would “take the edge off their inflammatory qualities.” Kendrick, *Secret Museum*, 67.

³¹¹ The Young Person, who “lived only in the nervous imagination of men inhabiting a particular class,” writes Kendrick, “condensed into a single image the inchoate energies latent in women, children, and the vague conglomerate known as ‘the poor.’” Kendrick, *Secret Museum*, 123, 91.

³¹² Kendrick, *Secret Museum*; For an account of how sexual imagery functioned in the everyday lives of non-elite Romans see: Clarke, John, R. *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans: Visual Representation and Non-Elite Viewers in Italy, 100 B.C.—A.D. 315*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003. Print.

sexual pleasures of everyday Roman life that these images recorded,³¹³ and to construct a history in which these images were signs of either depravity, decadence, and decay,³¹⁴ or of an “ignorant and rustic people who consequently remained pure and virtuous even during the most elegant and depraved days of the Empire.”³¹⁵ The images were thus rendered safe for contemporary consumption, as M.L. Barré noted in the preface of his *Musée Secret*, through an “exclusively archaeological and scientific point of view” that made them “inaccessible, so to speak, to poorly educated persons, as well as to those whose sex and age forbid any exception to the laws of decency and modesty.”³¹⁶

³¹³ See, for example: Clarke, George, et al. *Pompeii*. London: Charles Knight, 1832. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Davenport, William Henry Adams. *The Buried Cities of Campania, or Pompeii and Herculaneum: Their History, Their Destruction, and Their Remains*. London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1873. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Dyer, Thomas H. ed. *Pompeii: Its History, Buildings, and Antiquities*. London: Bell & Daldt, 1867. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Gill, William & John P. Gandy. *Pompeiana: Topography, Edifices, and Ornaments*. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1852. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

³¹⁴ See: Bulwer-Lytton, Edward George. *The Last Days of Pompeii*. London: Ward, Lock, & Co., 1883. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Gibbon, Edward. *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1857. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

³¹⁵ Barré, M.L. *Musée Secret*, Vol. 8 of *Herculaneum et Pompéi, Recueil Général de Peintures, Bronzes, Mosaïques, etc. découverts jusqu'à ce jour et reproduits d'après Le Antichità di Ercolano, Il Museo Borbonico et tous les ouvrages analogues*. Paris: Librairie de Firmin Didot Frères, 1840. Quoted in: Kendrick, *The Secret Museum*, 14.

³¹⁶ Barré, quoted in Kendrick, *The Secret Museum*, 15.

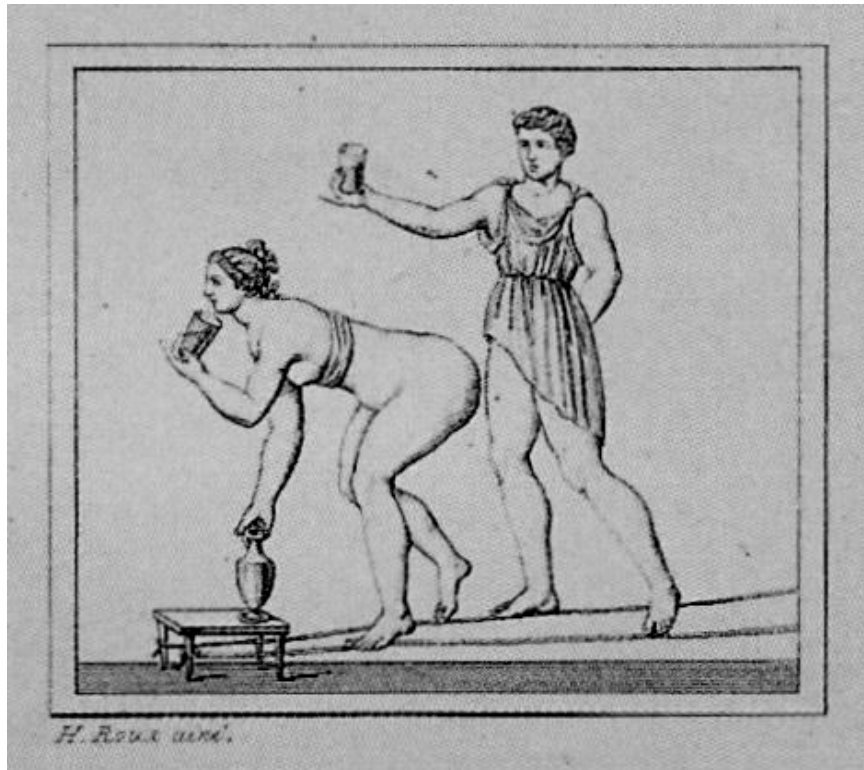


Image 2: *Muséé Secret*: Roman Lasciviousness Rendered Safe

Likewise, the commonplace sexual pleasures found in the comedies, tragedies, and philosophical writings of the Greeks, and in the bawdy lyrics of Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Shakespeare, were rendered safe by “learned men,” who, in the work of translating and anthologizing historical texts, expurgated lewd passages and references.³¹⁷ Such “Bowdlerization,” argues Kendrick, only became necessary because of the power attributed through scientific discourse to the realm of the sexual, whereby sex was seen to reveal a

³¹⁷ See, for example: Bowdler, Thomas. *The Family Shakespeare, in Ten Volumes*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Dryden, John. *Fables Ancient and Modern; Translated into Verse, from Homer, Ovid, Boccace, and Chaucer: With Original Poems*. Glasgow: Robert and Andrew Foulis, 1771. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Johnson, Samuel. *The Works of the English Poets*. London: J. Nichols, 1781. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

fundamental truth of human nature — a truth, however, that had to be translated into the contemporary moral order by purging it of any connotation of carnal pleasure.³¹⁸

As sexual representations began to proliferate, then, the potential threat to moral and social order posed by their widespread circulation was contained simultaneously through scientific discourses that produced legitimate sexual knowledge that was purified of pleasure, and through legal and juridical discourses that positioned sexual pleasure as subjugated knowledge. It was thus against the backdrop of the trials of Flaubert and Baudelaire in France and the passage of the Obscene Publications Act in England that the neuropsychology and physiology of sex were developed.

By portraying female sexual agency and pleasure in critiquing the gender, class, and religious hierarchy of French society, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* challenged the Catholic morality underlying the social order of both the July Monarchy and the Second Empire.³¹⁹ While their prosecution for *outrage aux bonnes mœurs* worked to maintain the moral order, the neurological and psychological study of sexuality buttressed the social order by soliciting from its female subjects a 'truth' within which sexual agency and pleasure were abnormal afflictions of the lower classes.

This 'truth' was not simply discovered through observation, but was rather the product of "a science made up of evasions." Unable to speak directly of sexual pleasure, discursive apparatuses were devised for 'discovering' sexual 'truth' through aberrations.³²⁰ The Salpêtrière Psychiatric Hospital in Paris, as exemplified by Foucault, is one such apparatus, through which

³¹⁸ During the nineteenth century, "Bowdlerization" became a general term for the editing of texts to expurgate immoral passages. It refers to Thomas Bowdler, who published in 1818 *The Family Shakespeare*, the subtitle of which was, *in which Nothing is Added to the Original Text; But Those Words and Expressions Are Omitted Which Cannot With Propriety Be Read Aloud in a Family*. Kendrick, *Secret Museum*, 53.

³¹⁹ Flaubert and Baudelaire were charged under a law established in 1819 under the Restoration monarchy of Louis XVIII, which condemned "outrages to public and religious morals and to good manners." DeJean, Joan. *The Reinvention of Obscenity: Sex, Lies, and Tabloids in Early Modern France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002. 126. Print.

Charcot pathologized female sexuality by staging performances of hysteria. Induced in patients through hypnosis, ether, or amyl nitrate before a crowded amphitheater during Charcot's famous Tuesday lectures, these performances were tightly scripted and meticulously documented in such a way as to elide evidence of pleasure, and to thus produce the 'truth' of female sexuality as a pathological condition.³²¹ Diagnosing female sexual response as involuntary paroxysm maintained bourgeois morality by constructing a treatable malady, while condemning as aberrant and immoral those who found pleasure in this pathos. In this way, science was subordinated "to the imperatives of a morality whose divisions it reiterated under the guise of the medical norm."³²² The division between normal and abnormal upheld by science in Charcot's re/presentations was mapped onto gendered and classed conceptions of sexual behavior as a division between moral and immoral, institutionalizing bourgeois sensibilities as sexual 'truth'.³²³

³²⁰ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 53.

³²¹ The complexity of this apparatus is only hinted at by Foucault. For a detailed analysis of the classed and gendered relationship of "desires, gazes, and knowledge" constituted between doctor, patient, and the camera at the Salpêtrière, see: Didi-Huberman, Georges. *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière*. Trans. Alisa Hartz. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003. Print.

³²² Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 53.

³²³ Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic technique was profoundly shaped by his observation of Charcot's methods at the Salpêtrière, furthering the "progressive formation (and transformations) of that 'interplay of sex and truth' which was bequeathed to us by the nineteenth century." Soliciting and enlisting the sexual confessions of bourgeois women in the construction of his influential psychological model of sexual desire, Freud produced a sexual 'truth' in which pleasure was subjugated to a social function consonant with the patriarchal order. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 56-57.



Image 3: Charcot Re/presents Hysteria at the Salpêtrière

In England, the Obscene Publications Act responded to growing concern over the increasing availability of obscene literature. The problem, as Lord Campbell explained to Parliament, was not so much with the “indecent books of high price,” which acted as “a sort of check” that had limited their circulation, but with “periodical papers of the most licentious and disgusting description,” which were “sold to any person who asks for them.”³²⁴ Of specific concern were women and youth in the growing ranks of the ‘respectable’ classes.³²⁵ Lord Campbell’s bill worked to maintain bourgeois morality by making it a statutory offense to sell works that “corrupt the morals of youth” and “shock the common feelings of decency in any well regulated mind.”³²⁶

Acton’s *Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs*, as Steven Marcus observes, “is entirely about men and male sexuality,” which no doubt reflects Acton’s belief — consonant

³²⁴ *Hansard Parliamentary Debates* 3.145 (11 May 1857): 102-103. Quoted in: Roberts, M.J.D. “Morals, Art, and the Law: The Passing of the Obscene Publications Act, 1857.” *Victorian Studies* 18.24 (1985): 611. Print.

³²⁵ Roberts, “Morals, Art, and the Law,” 612.

with Victorian ideals — that “the majority of women [...] are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind.”³²⁷ This “majority” did not include those “sad exceptions” of “low and vulgar women,” or those “women who have sexual desire so strong that they surpass those of men [...] terminating even in nymphomania.”³²⁸ As with Charcot, women’s sexuality was constructed as a potentially pathological condition afflicting those of lower social standing. Acton made a similar argument about children. “In a state of health,” writes Acton, “no sexual impression should ever affect a child’s mind or body.”³²⁹ This bracketed off the vast majority of children whose rural lives exposed them regularly to animal acts of sexual reproduction, as well as the urban poor, amongst whom, as Acton elsewhere acknowledged, children almost universally had knowledge and experience of sex.³³⁰ As Marcus argues, Acton’s work is “obviously directed at an audience composed of the urban middle classes, for only among those classes could their be found that combination of circumstances — living conditions, ideology, estrangement from traditional knowledge — which made possible a belief in the asexuality of childhood.”³³¹ Just as the Obscene Publications Act made illegitimate popular representations of sexual pleasure that threatened the moral framework of the gender, class, and age-based social order of Victorian England, Acton’s book helped develop a sexual science that reiterated gender, class, and age distinctions in terms of a chaste bourgeois morality.³³²

³²⁶ Hansard, quoted in Roberts, “Morals, Art, and the Law,” 613.

³²⁷ Marcus, Steven. *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England*. New York: Basic Books, 1964. 13. Print.

³²⁸ Acton, *Functions and Disorders*, 112.

³²⁹ Acton, *Functions and Disorders*, 17.

³³⁰ Acton, William. *Prostitution, Considered in its Moral, Social, & Sanitary Aspects, in London and other Large Cities, with Proposals for the Control and Prevention of its Attendant Evils*. London: John Churchill, 1857. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

³³¹ Marcus, *The Other Victorians*, 14.

³³² Acton’s work, as Peter Gay details, was (and is) the most well known, but was part of a growing corpus of medical literature that incorporated classed and gendered beliefs about sexual behavior into the physiological knowledge that, along with psychology, was forming the foundation of sexual science. Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience*, 144-168.

This interplay of censorship and science in subjugating pleasure to a sexual knowledge that maintained moral and social order manifested in discourses about masturbation, prostitution, and birth control, which reflected tensions over the shifting position and status of youth, women, and the working classes in the late nineteenth century. In the United States, Anthony Comstock, charged by the Postmaster General to enforce the 1873 federal obscenity act that Comstock had helped draft and lobby for, crusaded fervently for over forty years against “smut” and “filth.” Birth control, prostitution, and masturbation were all targets of this crusade, and also of the numerous ‘vice societies’ that were founded by middle-class progressives, funded by wealthy philanthropists, and followed in Comstock’s footsteps.³³³ Together they assured, for a time at least, that in the United States, sex was purged from public culture, and in scientific discourse was subjugated to the moral and social imperatives of sexual reproduction.

Attempts to provide information, products, or services pertaining to contraception or abortion were treated with the same moral reprobation, pursued just as fervently, and prosecuted under the same laws as the publication of obscenity. No distinction was made between fine art nudes displayed in Fifth Avenue galleries, “nudie” postcards sold on the Bowery, obscene novels like *The Lustful Turk*, literature such as Leo Tolstoy’s *Kreutzer Sonata*, and medical tracts on birth control.³³⁴ Alongside writers, artists, publishers, and booksellers, then, doctors, midwives,

³³³ A detailed account of the emergence of vice societies in the nineteenth century and their development during the Progressive era can be found in: Boyer, Paul S. *Purity in Print: Book Censorship in America from the Gilded Age to the Computer Age*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002. 1-52. Print.

³³⁴ The Comstock Law’s formal title was “An Act for the Suppression of Trade in, and Circulation of, obscene Literature and Articles of immoral Use.” The law made no distinction, calling for hard labor for those who would sell, lend, give away, exhibit, publish, or possess not only “an obscene book, pamphlet, paper, writing, advertisement, circular, print, picture, drawing or other representation, figure, or image on or of paper or other material, or any cast instrument, or other article of an immoral nature,” but also “any drug or medicine, or any article whatever, for the prevention of conception, or for causing unlawful abortion,” as well as for those who “shall advertise the same for sale, or shall write or print, or cause to be written or printed, any card, circular, book, pamphlet, advertisement, or notice of any kind, stating when, where, how, or of whom, or by what means, any of the articles in this section...can be purchased or obtained, or shall manufacture, draw, or print, or in any wise make any of such articles.” “Statutes at Large.” *The Library of Congress*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

women's rights activists, and social purity reformers were prosecuted under Comstock laws.³³⁵ Their crime was calling for "voluntary motherhood," a demand that tacitly acknowledged non-reproductive sex and opened onto the gendered politics of procreation and sexual pleasure, whereby women unduly bore the consequences of reproduction for providing pleasure to men.³³⁶

Samuel Tissot's *Onanism*, Claude François Lallemand's *A Practical Treatise on the Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment of Spermatorrhoea*, and William Acton's *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs* all pathologized experiences of sexual pleasure in youth, leading to a "masturbation hysteria" that would last well into the twentieth century.³³⁷ The deleterious effects of the 'diseases' of onanism and spermatorrhoea that these medical treatises detailed were endlessly cited in pro-censorship arguments such as Comstock's *Traps for the Young*.³³⁸ Acton's later work, *Prostitution*, was exemplary of numerous studies that characterized prostitution as a "necessary evil."³³⁹ Based on the hydraulic model of male sexuality that required periodic discharge to maintain health, and on the neuropsychological and physiological pathology of female sexual response as an affliction of 'lower' women, these medical and sociological

³³⁵ In the wake of the 1873 federal act, twenty-four states would pass similar laws, which became known collectively as Comstock laws.

³³⁶ Gordon, Linda. "Voluntary Motherhood: The Beginning of Feminist Birth Control Ideas in the United States." *Women and Health in America: Historical Readings*. Ed. Judith Walzer Leavitt. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999. 253-268. Print; Sanger, Margaret. "Voluntary Motherhood." Margaret Sanger Papers, Library of Congress, LCM 131:104. 1917. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

³³⁷ Acton's earlier *A Practical Treatise on Diseases of the Urinary and Generative Organs in Both Sexes* had also pathologized masturbation. Acton, William. *A Practical Treatise on Diseases of the Urinary and Generative Organs in Both Sexes*. New York: J.S. Redfield, 1853. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Acton, William. *Functions and Disorders*; Hodgson, Dominic. "Spermatomania — The English Response to Lallemand's Disease." *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 98.8 (2005): 375-379. Print; Lallemand, Claude François. *A Practical Treatise on the Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment of Spermatorrhoea*. Trans. Henry J. McDougall. London: John Churchill and Sons, 1851. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Tissot, Samuel Auguste David. *Onanism, or, a Treatise upon the Disorders produced by Masturbation, or, the Dangerous Effects of Secret and Excessive Venery*. Trans. J. Hume. London: J. Pridden, 1766. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

³³⁸ Comstock, Anthony. *Traps for the Young*. Ed. Robert Bremner. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967. Print.

³³⁹ Acton, *Prostitution*; See also: Sanger, William W. *The History of Prostitution: Its Extent, Causes, and Effects Throughout the World*. New York: The American Medical Press, 1895. *Internet Archive*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

‘pornographies’ studiously avoided any of the discussion of sexual desire or pleasure that qualified popular descriptions of prostitution as obscene.³⁴⁰

By the turn of the twentieth century, scientific sexual discourse had developed a studied detachment from carnal pleasure that served as defense against charges of obscenity.³⁴¹

Masturbation, prostitution, birth control, and even pleasure itself would become legitimate topics of sexual discourse and knowledge only when abstracted from their complex social contexts and reframed in terms of the utilitarian functions of reproduction, which increasingly would include medical, economic, and public health considerations.³⁴² The sexual public sphere was thus circumscribed as it was discursively constituted around this “common concern,” excluding from its ambit a range of sexual knowledges and those who voiced them — women, children, and the poor and working classes.³⁴³

³⁴⁰ The *Oxford English Dictionary* attributes the first English usage of the word pornography to an 1857 medical dictionary: “A description of prostitutes or of prostitution, as a matter of public hygiene.”

³⁴¹ For example, Havelock Ellis defended his book *Sexual Inversion*, which in examining homosexuality necessarily took up the topic of sexual pleasure outside the reproductive function, by stating that “said book was written by me as the result of many years of scientific study, investigation and observation and was written purely in the interest of science and scientific investigation and to the best of my ability in the scientific spirit.” London bookseller George Bedborough was prosecuted and fined in 1898 for selling a copy of Ellis’s book to an undercover policeman, and while this made it impossible for him to publish future volumes of his *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* in England, his work was never subject to censorship in the United States. Grosskurth, Phyllis. *Havelock Ellis: A Biography*. New York: Knopf, 1980. 195-197. Print.

³⁴² And, of course, assuming that these topics were discussed in the appropriate language. As Kendrick writes, “The English-speaking world gradually accustomed itself to talk about penises and vaginas, so long as the tone remained clinical and the lexicon polysyllabic.” He also notes the “time-honored strategy” of shifting into Latin to discuss more “delicate” matters. When not framed in these terms, these topics were still likely to be the targets of legal sanctions. For example, it would not be until 1936 that a U.S. Court of Appeals decision would exempt physicians from Comstock law, giving legal sanction to birth control. Even then, however, contraceptives were to be prescribed in the interest of patients’ health, not in the interest of allowing sexual pleasure outside of sex’s reproductive function. Engelman, Peter C. *A History of the Birth Control Movement in America*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011. 168-170. Print; Kendrick, *Secret Museum*, 189.

³⁴³ As Nancy Fraser argues, this was true of the public sphere more generally, which was constituted by “a number of significant exclusions,” particularly women and the lower classes. These exclusions determined what were and were not “common concerns” to be addressed in public, for example, domestic abuse, which was considered by the male bourgeoisie to be a private matter. Fraser, Nancy. “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy.” *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Ed. Craig Calhoun. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992. 109–142. Print.

The obscenity trials of the twentieth century, then, would specifically target those who tried to bring into the public sphere sexual representations that challenged the moral and social order in which the legitimate function of sex was reproduction. As Kendrick argues, these trials would slowly “liberate” literature from “the shackles of moral censorship,” as the long-held belief that “writing wields immediate force upon its reader” faded, as the terms of obscenity shifted from moral corruption to prurient interest, and as the belief took hold that “art” was not, by definition, obscene.³⁴⁴ Yet at the same time, new forms of media were emerging. Motion pictures and broadcasting originated as tools of science, and were quickly taken up as artistic and educational platforms. But what made these the first truly ‘mass media’ — with almost universal appeal across gender, class, age, and ethnic categories — was their development as forms of entertainment. Considered neither science nor art, but rather industrial entertainment commodities, representations in these new media were subject to different structures of censorship. Seeking to avoid government intervention and public opprobrium — which had embroiled the publishing industry for centuries — the motion picture and broadcasting industries quickly developed methods of self-regulation that tightly constrained sexual representation within the limits of the contemporary moral and social order.³⁴⁵

Making Movies Moral

One of the first motion pictures shown commercially to the public was Thomas Edison’s 1896 *The Kiss*. This film was made as a publicity stunt for the *New York World*, which in a

³⁴⁴ Kendrick, *Secret Museum*, 163-178.

³⁴⁵ Interestingly, John Sumner, Comstock’s successor at the New York Society for Suppression of Vice, would propose a similar system of self-regulation for the publishing industry in 1922, in which “book juries” chosen from a panel of representative citizens — nominated by civic and religious groups and professional organizations of authors and publishers — would approve, expurgate, or reject manuscripts submitted to publishers. But Sumner only offered this proposal after the courts began overturning obscenity charges rising from vice societies’ activities, and it was roundly rejected by the publishing industry, which was finally gaining legal ground after years of defending itself against attacks by the vice societies. Boyer, *Purity in Print*, 96-97.

feature article titled “The Anatomy of a Kiss,” reported on the “unlimited possibilities” of “forty-two feet of kiss” in which “every phase is shown with startling distinctness.”³⁴⁶ Early developers of motion picture technologies had imagined them as tools of science that would expose the subtle workings of animal locomotion to close observation and analysis.³⁴⁷ Fascination with animal locomotion, particularly that of humans, informed the production of motion pictures as they became commercialized.³⁴⁸ Taking advantage of the visual powers of this new medium, movies scrutinized movement by recording it, dividing it, slowing it down, blowing it up, reversing it, and repeating it. *The Kiss*, argues Linda Williams, was the first cinematic sex act, and as a sexual study in which the filmic techniques of fragmentation, magnification, and repetition subject human bodies in motion to anatomical scrutiny, it established motion pictures as a site of sexual voyeurism for “learning how to do it.”³⁴⁹

The potential of this new medium to teach and learn about sex, however, was soon contained. Motion pictures quickly became a target of Progressive reform. The ‘nickel madness’ that gripped working class neighborhoods of urban areas during the first decade of the twentieth

³⁴⁶ Musser, Charles. *Thomas A. Edison and His Kinetographic Motion Pictures*. New York: Scribner’s, 1995. 199. Print.

³⁴⁷ In the 1880s, French scientist Étienne-Jules Marey sought to unlock the secrets of flight by capturing the motion of birds’ wings using his chronophotographic gun, a technological precursor to the motion picture camera. Marey had been inspired by the December 1878 issue of the scientific journal *La Nature*, which had published a photographic study of equine motion conducted in California earlier that year by photographer Eadweard Muybridge. *Sallie Gardner at a Gallop*, a series of twenty-four photographs taken in sequence as the titular thoroughbred galloped over trip wires that snapped the shutter of twenty-four individual cameras, put to rest a long-standing dispute amongst gait analysts as to whether there was a point at which all four legs of a galloping horse are simultaneously off the ground. Too fast for the human eye to observe, the motion was captured in Muybridge’s experiment, revealing a moment of “unsupported transit” between the pulling motions of the front legs and the pushing motions of the rear. This visual study would be the first subject of motion picture projection via Muybridge’s zoopraxiscope; it was also presented in numerous scientific journals such as *La Nature* and *Scientific American*, and in a collection published by the University of Pennsylvania [*Animal Locomotion: An Electro-photographic Investigation of Consecutive Phases of Animal Movements*, 1872–1885] that also included Muybridge’s later studies of human motion.

³⁴⁸ Early shorts that comprised kinoscope loops and were later shown as vaudeville “chasers,” in arcades, and, as their popularity grew, in stand-alone storefront theaters, took motion itself as their subject. These “actualities,” as they were called, would remain popular even as cinematic pioneers like Edwin S. Porter and D.W. Griffith began to establish the conventions of longer-form narrative film fiction, and they would also shape the development of documentary film by maintaining the function of the camera as a tool for capturing a reality that the human eye cannot.

century seemed to threaten middle-class efforts to ‘uplift’ the poor and working classes. Largely invisible outside these neighborhoods, the rapid proliferation of storefront Nickelodeon theaters and the crowds they drew were first noticed by social workers and reformers, who began to question whether this ‘cheap diversion’ from the squalor and drudgery of poor, urban life was merely innocuous entertainment. Jane Addams, director of the Hull House settlement in Chicago’s Near West Side slums, devoted a chapter of her 1909 book *The Spirit of Youth and City Streets* to what she called the “House of Dreams.”³⁵⁰ Addams argued that motion pictures offered youth a cruel illusion that would fill “their impressionable minds” with “absurdities which certainly will become the foundation of their working moral codes and the data from which they will judge the proprieties of life.”³⁵¹ Children in poor, urban areas were of special concern. Not only were they seen as more impressionable than adults, but as they were often of immigrant families who clustered in tightly knit, culturally traditional communities, ‘picture shows’ were important sites of socialization and enculturation into American life.

Fear that these picture shows glamorized questionable activities and values and directly influenced audience behavior was soon legitimated by social scientists and jurists, who confirmed a need for regulation. Harvard psychologist Hugo Münsterberg argued in his 1916 book *The Photoplay* that the vivid images “force themselves on the mind,” which “is so completely given up to the moving pictures” that they “become starting points for imitation and other motor

³⁴⁹ Williams, Linda. *Screening Sex*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008. 30. Print.

³⁵⁰ Addams was a prolific Progressive, playing a major role in the founding of the ACLU, the Juvenile Protection Association, the Immigrant’s Protective League, the Campfire Girls, the National Child Labor Committee, the NAACP, the National Consumer’s League, the National Peace Congress, the Women’s Peace Party, and a dozen other organizations that worked for social reform. For her efforts, she was the first woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, in 1931. Epstein, Robert. *The Case Against Adolescence: Rediscovering the Adult in Every Teen*. Sanger: Quill Driver Books, 2007. 58. Print.

³⁵¹ Addams, Jane. *The Spirit of Youth and City Streets*. New York: Macmillan, 1909. 75-80. Print; Jowett, Garth S. et al. *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 24-25. Print.

responses.”³⁵² Psychiatrist and criminologist William Healy argued that “movies may be stimulating to the sex instinct” and that moving picture theaters were sources of sexual delinquency. He called for “rigorous censorship of perverting pictures” and “radical prosecution of those who produce and deal in obscene and other demoralizing pictorial presentations.”³⁵³ The U.S. Supreme Court echoed the fear of motion pictures’ influences and condoned their censorship in *Mutual v. Ohio*. In ruling that free speech protection did not extend to motion pictures because they are “a business, pure and simple” and are not “part of the press” or “organs of public opinion,” the Court noted that motion pictures were “capable of evil” and that this power of corruption was “greater because of the attractiveness and manner of exhibition.”³⁵⁴

Police raids, seizures of property, license revocations, censorship, and closures of Nickelodeons had become common as their notoriety grew. The fledgling motion picture industry, organized under Thomas Edison’s Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC), had sought to protect itself from these attacks through self-regulation. Joining with a number of civic organizations brought together by The People’s Institute, they formed the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures (NBR).³⁵⁵ Voluntarily submitting films to the NBR for review prior to distribution helped establish the legitimacy of this new cultural form amongst middle-class progressives. Having gained some control over what motion pictures could represent, reformers

³⁵² Munsterberg, Hugo. *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*. New York: Dover, 1970. 95. Print. Jowett, *Children and the Movies*, 24-25.

³⁵³ Healy pioneered the study of juvenile delinquency by arguing that criminal behavior is learned rather than genetic. Healy, William. *The Individual Delinquent*. New York: Littleton, Brown, 1915. 307-308. Print.

³⁵⁴ Because the U.S. Supreme Court had not yet begun to apply the First Amendment as a limit on state power, in *Mutual v. Ohio* (236 U.S. 230, 1915), they ruled that Ohio’s state constitutional protection of free speech did not apply to motion pictures. See: Jowett, Garth S. “‘A Capacity for Evil’: The 1915 Supreme Court Mutual Decision.” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 9.1 (1989): 59-78. Print.

³⁵⁵ First established as the New York Board of Motion Picture Censorship, its name was quickly changed to the National Board of Review to avoid the taint of censorship. Sklar, Robert. *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies*. New York: Vintage, 1994. 31. Print.

began to see their potential for moral uplift, cultural enrichment, and even education of immigrants, the working classes, and children.³⁵⁶

But the MPPC was soon broken up under anti-trust law, and without their pressure, studios were less inclined to submit their films for review or to make cuts for which the NBR called, and theaters were more inclined to show films that lacked the NBR seal of approval.³⁵⁷ Freed from the dictates of the MPPC, a new breed of independent producers — Jewish immigrants who had established themselves in the thriving Nickelodeon business³⁵⁸ — set up shop in southern California, far from the prying eyes of both the NBR and their New York financiers, and where

³⁵⁶ Ironically, it was the NBR who initiated these efforts. As Raymond Haberski notes, the NBR shifted emphasis toward educating the audience when their editorial function was largely displaced by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) in 1922, although these efforts began as early as 1917. The NBR endorsed movies of merit as the new “art of the people,” and through its publications sought to educate viewers in how to evaluate, distinguish, and appreciate good film. In contrast to regulation and censorship, this put responsibility for judgment on the viewer, which would (it was hoped) help realize the educational and democratic potential of film while also advancing it as an art and a valuable cultural resource by pressuring Hollywood to make better films for a more discerning audience. The NBR’s publications include: *Film Program* [1917-1926], *Exceptional Photoplays* [1920-1925], *Photoplay Guide to Better Movies* [1924-1926], *National Board of Review Magazine* [1926-1942], and *Films in Review*, which was first published in 1950. Following the publication of the Payne Fund Studies, film literacy efforts began to specifically target youth by integrating film into classrooms through two different efforts instigated by PFS researchers. Mark May spearheaded the film education movement. Through the non-profit organization Teaching Film Custodians, which was backed by the MPPDA, excerpts of Hollywood features were compiled into series designed to teach science, citizenship, and moral character. Edgar Dale collaborated with the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) to prepare course material and study guides to help students appreciate, evaluate, and critique films. Haberski, Raymond J. *It’s Only a Movie!: Films and Critics in American Culture*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001. 48-62. Print; Jacobs, Lea. “Reformers and Spectators: The Film Education Movement in the Thirties.” *Camera Obscura* 8.1 (1990): 28-49. Print; May, Mark. “Educational Possibilities of the Motion Picture.” *Journal of Educational Sociology* 11.3 (1937): 149-160. Print; Nichols, John. “Countering Censorship: Edgar Dale and the Film Appreciation Movement.” *Cinema Journal* 46.1 (2006): 3-22. Print.

³⁵⁷ The MPPC literally controlled the means of motion picture production in the United States, having amassed the patents on all camera and projection technologies, as well as the processes for making and developing film. Studios who were not part of this “trust” had to pay for licenses to use the equipment and processes necessary to make motion pictures, and the MPPC could withhold or revoke licenses of studios who did not comply with their demands. In *U.S. v. MPPC*, the court found that the MPPC went “far beyond what was necessary to protect the use of patents or the monopoly which went with them” and was thus in violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act. *United States v. Motion Picture Patents Company*. 225 F. 800. U.S. District Court of Pennsylvania. 1915. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

³⁵⁸ Carl Laemmle founded Universal Pictures in 1912; Adolf Zukor’s Famous Players, established in 1912, would become Paramount Pictures in 1927; William Fox’s Fox Films Corporation, also established in 1912, would merge with Daryl Zanuck’s 20th Century Picture Company in 1935 to form 20th Century Fox.

labor was cheap and the sun always shining.³⁵⁹ They began to expand production into new markets, targeting middle and upper class audiences with multi-reel feature films shown in upscale theaters built especially for motion picture exhibition.³⁶⁰ When the working classes also began to flock to these new theaters — willing to pay five or ten cents more for a longer and better program, for the service of uniformed ushers, and for the opulent ambience — the first true form of mass media was realized, with a broad appeal across social class, ethnicity, gender, and age.³⁶¹ Rather than embracing the high culture and educative ambitions of Progressive reformers, however, these new “movie moguls” would develop motion pictures into a highly lucrative form of mass entertainment.³⁶²

By the 1920s, movies were firmly ensconced in American life and culture. There were over 20,000 movie theaters in the United States.³⁶³ Daily nationwide motion picture attendance was estimated at 7 million, generating \$2 million at the box office every day.³⁶⁴ By the middle of the decade, 50 million Americans — half the population — were attending every week; by the end of the decade, 100 million were. Amongst the young, “going to the show” had become an almost ubiquitous social practice, a cornerstone of adolescent life.³⁶⁵

³⁵⁹ Early film stock required significant light for good exposure, and because artificial lighting was expensive, a dangerous fire hazard, and hot enough to melt makeup and make the coolest stars sweat, bright sunlight was a requirement for motion picture production at this time.

³⁶⁰ Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 44.

³⁶¹ Theaters were at the time racially segregated, like most public spaces, but motion pictures were equally popular amongst African-Americans, despite their often-troubling stereotypes of black people. Butsch, Richard. *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750-1990*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 139-172. Print; Knight, Arthur. “Searching for the Apollo: Black Moviegoing and its Contexts in the Small-Town US South.” *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*. Eds. Richard Maltby, et al. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 226-242. Print.

³⁶² This term came into use around 1915, and, as film historian Robert Sklar claims, nicely describes public perception of these immigrant producers as “part splendid emperors, part barbarian invaders.” Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 46.

³⁶³ These ranged from the “village theaters” of small towns to the “neighborhood theaters” of residential areas to the increasingly popular urban “picture palaces” such as the Roxy and Paramount in New York and Grauman’s Million Dollar, Egyptian, and Chinese theaters in Los Angeles. Koszarski, Richard. *An Evening’s Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990. 9-25. Print.

³⁶⁴ *The Film Year Book, 1927*. New York: John W. Alicoate, 1927. Print.

³⁶⁵ Butsch, *American Audiences*, 166.

Public criticism of the movies continued to focus particularly on their potential to morally corrupt youth. Adolescent behavior during the 1920s seemed evidence enough of this corruption. Sociological and psychological studies of juvenile delinquency — coupled with sensationalized media coverage of juvenile behavior, which often conflated under the label of delinquency prostitution and the social antics of the ‘flapper’ generation — fanned the flames of fear into a moral panic.³⁶⁶

Hollywood was a convenient scapegoat. Across the continent from the New York heart of American high culture, this west coast Gomorrah posed a threat to decades of Progressive reform. Built by “barbarian invaders” of questionable American values, Hollywood both produced and embodied an image of decadence that flouted the Protestant ethic of hard work and austerity. Unbridled displays of wealth and the scandalous lives of moguls and newly minted movie stars filtered back across the country through exposés like *The Sins of Hollywood* and the increasingly prevalent fan magazines and celebrity gossip columns of newspapers and magazines.³⁶⁷ The moral reprobation in most of these accounts did little to deter the dreams of ‘starstruck girls’, who were beckoned from small towns across the country by the allure of Hollywood lights, but who often wound up destitute and desperate, and were sometimes lured, coerced, or forced into disreputable lives. The very innocence and purity of youth, it seemed, was being corrupted by a new sort of American dream that hinged not on a life of hard work, but on the fantasy of overnight fame and fortune.

Hollywood movies seemed to reflect the immoral life of their producers and stars. Movie portrayals of romantic and sexual relations were of particular concern. The films of Cecil B. DeMille often took these relations as their focus, and were attacked by reformers for exploring

³⁶⁶ Messerschmidt, James. “Feminism, Criminology and the Rise of the Female Sex ‘Delinquent’, 1880-1930.” *Contemporary Crises* 11 (1987): 243-263. Print.

³⁶⁷ de Cordova, Richard. *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999. 108. Print; Lewis, Jon. *Hollywood v. Hard Core: How the Struggle over*

extra-marital sexual pleasure and other ‘debauchery’ through risqué imagery.³⁶⁸ While DeMille’s films resolved in the existing moral and gender order of the time, other films were more ambiguous. *A Fool There Was* [1915] brought the *femme fatale* archetype to the silver screen.³⁶⁹ In this film, Theda Bara became the first Hollywood sex symbol by defining the character of “the vamp” — the mysterious seductress who preys on and morally compromises upstanding men — which would become a stock Hollywood portrayal of female sexuality. In 1921, *The Sheik* propelled Rudolph Valentino to stardom and made him Hollywood’s first *male* sex symbol. “Sheik” quickly became a slang term for a man who aggressively woos women, and Valentino’s distinctive profile adorned tins of Sheik brand condoms. In *Blood and Sand* [1922], these two gendered tropes of sexuality met in a subtly sadomasochistic affair, as Valentino’s character Juan Gallardo falls prey to Doña Sol, played by Bara’s vamp successor, Nita Naldi. Both of these tropes were at odds with the gendered Victorian sexuality girding the middle class respectability of the Progressive era, in which women were supposed to be the asexual upholders of a chaste moral order, and men the rational sublimators of an innate sexual desire. Though the exotification of both the vamp and Valentino may have distanced their sexuality from the civilized sexuality of the white middle class, as screen idols and sex symbols they were still believed to have a persuasive influence on the sexual beliefs and behaviors of the audience.

Censorship Saved the Modern Film Industry. New York: New York University Press, 2000. 92-93. Print; Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 77.

³⁶⁸ Black, Gregory D. *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 56-70. Print.

³⁶⁹ *A Fool There Was* was based on a Broadway play of the same name, which was in turn based on Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The Vampire.”



Image 4: *Blood and Sand*: The Vamp and the Sheik

By the end of the 1920s, popular films like *Flesh and the Devil* [1926], *Wings* [1927], *The Wedding March* [1928], and *The Wind* [1928] were further pushing the bounds of public propriety in their explorations of sexual pleasure, showing nudity, French kissing, and same-sex kisses, hinting at non-coital sex acts and orgies, and engaging topics like incest, rape, and sexual aversion. Outside the mainstream, foreign films like *Un Chien Andalou* [1929] and *Pandora's Box* [1929] were even more graphic in their imagery and more immoral in their ideas; docu-dramas like *Moana* [1926], *Balinese Love* [1931], and *Tabu* [1931] sold tickets based on extensive scenes of exotic nude dancing; and exploitation films like *Pitfalls of Passion* [1927] and *Is Your Daughter Safe?* [1927] trafficked in sexual imagery under the guise of documenting brothels, birth control, venereal disease, teen pregnancy, and white slavery.

Following the break-up of the MPPC and the Supreme Court's pro-censorship ruling in *Mutual v. Ohio*, a number of studios, distributors, and theater owners had banded together and formed the National Association of the Motion Picture Industry (NAMPI). This trade organization was intended to counter government efforts to regulate the industry. NAMPI

attempted, but failed, to set in motion a constitutional amendment to protect motion pictures as free speech.³⁷⁰ They also established “Thirteen Points” by which members must abide — a list of taboo topics including “unnatural practices dangerous to social morality” such as depictions of intimacy that tend to “make virtue odious and vice attractive,” that “exploit interest in sex in an improper or suggestive manner,” or that show “prolonged passionate love.”³⁷¹

After numerous states put film censorship legislation on the table in the late teens and early 1920s, the obviously ineffectual NAMPI was dissolved and replaced by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA). William H. Hays was appointed as its president. As former chairman of the Republican National Committee, manager of Warren G. Harding’s successful presidential campaign, and postmaster general, Hays was politically connected, and had shown his general opposition to government intervention by putting an end to practices of mail censorship established under the 1917 Espionage Act.³⁷² Hays was also an elder in the Presbyterian Church, and would thus serve well as the public face of an industry under attack by Protestant reform groups concerned with the un-American values of its largely Jewish immigrant ownership. The “Movie Czar,” as Hays became known in the press, lobbied successfully to stop all but one of the film censorship bills in state congresses.³⁷³ Hays also mounted an “open door” public relations campaign that invited policy input from social reform groups, and, echoing the MPPC and NAMPI, began calling for industry self-regulation through a

³⁷⁰ Starr, Paul. *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communication*. New York: Basic Books, 2004. 317. Print.

³⁷¹ Vasey, Ruth. *The World According to Hollywood, 1918-1939*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997. 30. Print; Johnson, William Bruce. *Miracles & Sacrilege: Roberto Rossellini, the Church, and Film Censorship in Hollywood*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008. 87. Print.

³⁷² Jowett, *Children and the Movies*, 23-24; Starr, *Creation of the Media*, 318.

³⁷³ Out of thirty states with film censorship legislation on the table when Hays became president of the MPPDA, only Virginia would pass a censorship bill into law. Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 132.

list of “Don’ts and Be Carefuls” and through a system of voluntary review instigated early in the motion picture development process.³⁷⁴

Although the Hays Office, as the MPPDA became known, was able to take the immediate heat off the industry, some reformers were unconvinced that Hollywood had cleaned up its act.³⁷⁵ Suspicion that Hays was merely pacifying them merged with a growing wariness of an emerging oligopoly, in which the five major studios (Paramount, Fox, Warner Brothers, RKO, and MGM) and the “little three” (Universal, Columbia, and United Artists) had come to dominate not only motion picture production, but also, through the practices of blind bidding and block booking, distribution and exhibition.³⁷⁶ These suspicions were compounded by several other factors, which together threatened Hollywood’s hegemony in the early 1930s: 1) an economic crisis brought on by the Great Depression, the growing popularity of radio, and the high cost of producing sound films;³⁷⁷ 2) a conservative backlash to the libertine 1920s that wanted to pin America’s sudden fall from grace on the decade’s sinful decadence, which Hollywood had both portrayed and embodied; and 3) the Payne Fund Studies, which seemed to confirm the deleterious effects of movies on the emotions, attitudes, and behaviors of youth.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁴ Jowett, *Children and the Movies*, 25, 27-28. Print; Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 132. Print; Starr, *Creation of the Media*, 318.

³⁷⁵ Among them, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers and the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, which had both defected from their cooperative work with the Hays Office. Jowett, *Children and the Movies*, 29.

³⁷⁶ Under this system, “independent (‘unaffiliated’) theater owners were forced to take large numbers of [a] studio’s pictures sight unseen. Those studios could then parcel out second-rate product along with A-class features and star vehicles, which made both production and distribution operations more economical.” Schatz, Thomas. *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era*. New York: Henry Holt, 1988. 39. Print.

³⁷⁷ The Great Depression took a heavy toll on the box office, as cash-strapped families and once footloose singles shied away from leisure spending. This was compounded by the growing popularity of radio, which, once a receiver was purchased, offered an evening’s entertainment for free. Moreover, after the introduction and instant success of sound film in 1927, studios had rapidly converted to all sound production, which sent the cost of making a movie soaring. This cost could not be recouped at the already struggling box office. After the boom times of the 1920s — when almost everyone would go see almost any film released, so that profit was practically guaranteed, and movies were seen as sound investments for Hollywood’s New York financiers — the film industry was experiencing its first economic crisis.

³⁷⁸ The Payne Fund Studies are examined in detail in the next chapter.

Protestant reformers, whose political power had waned over the course of the 1920s, were joined in their movie reprobation by Roman Catholic pressure groups. Working with these groups, the MPPDA adopted a code of ethics for motion picture production in 1930. The Hollywood Production Code, as it became known, reflected NAMPI's Thirteen Points, specifying forbidden material under a list of twelve themes. Sex was clearly the predominant preoccupation of the Production Code.³⁷⁹ Movies must uphold "the sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home" and "shall not infer that low forms of sex relationship are the accepted or common thing." Adultery, when necessary for the plot, "must not be explicitly treated, or justified, or presented attractively." "Excessive and lustful kissing, lustful embraces, suggestive postures and gestures, are not to be shown," and "passion should so be treated that these scenes do not stimulate the lower and baser element." White slavery, miscegenation, sex hygiene, venereal diseases, childbirth, and sex perversion are all forbidden. Proscriptions of sexual representations also appear in most of the other themes covered by the Code: implicitly under vulgarity, obscenity, and profanity; and more explicitly under costume, which bans undressing and nudity; dances, which cannot suggest or present "sexual actions," "indecent passions," or "indecent movements"; locations, under which is only specified that the "treatment of bedrooms must be governed by good taste and delicacy"; titles, which cannot be "salacious, indecent, or obscene"; and repellant subjects such as "the sale of women, or a woman selling her virtue."³⁸⁰

Although the Code's "progressive and reformist impulse" was grounded in "a polished treatise reflecting long and deep thought in aesthetics, education, communication theory, and moral philosophy," a lax process of oversight and regulation resulted in almost universal

³⁷⁹ The other main focus was crime, which "shall never be presented in such a way as to throw sympathy with the crime as against law and justice or to inspire others with a desire for imitation." More specifically, "methods of crime should not be explicitly presented," smuggling and drug trafficking should never be portrayed, and "the use of liquor in American life," while not a crime, "will not be shown," except when "required by the plot or for proper characterization." Doherty, Thomas Patrick. *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. 351-357. Print.

noncompliance.³⁸¹ Upset with the industry's flouting of the mutually agreed-upon Code, the Catholic Church made good on its threat to pressure Hollywood through the box office by establishing the Legion of Decency in 1933. The Legion rated the moral "objectionability" of films and called on members to pledge to "unite with all who protest against [unwholesome moving pictures] as a grave menace to youth, to home life, to country and to religion," to "condemn absolutely those salacious motion pictures which, with other degrading agencies, are corrupting public morals and promoting a sex mania in our land," and to "promise to remain away from all motion pictures except those which do not offend decency and Christian morality."³⁸² The Legion quickly gathered over three million pledges,³⁸³ and was instrumental in mobilizing numerous women's groups to organize boycotts of movies they condemned.³⁸⁴

With this mounting crusade against movies, the growing economic crisis taking a toll at the box office, the conservative backlash against the decadence and sin of the 1920s, the Payne Fund Studies, and the insinuation of impending New Deal federal regulation of the oligopolistic film industry, Hollywood was under religious, economic, cultural, scientific, and legal siege. The MPPDA responded by establishing the Production Code Administration (PCA) and putting in charge Joseph Breen, a devout Roman Catholic who had worked in journalism and public relations for the Church.³⁸⁵ Under his guidance, the PCA would strictly enforce the Production Code for the next two decades — and for a decade more under his successor Geoffrey Shurlock

³⁸⁰ Doherty, *Hollywood's Censor*, 351-357.

³⁸¹ Co-written by Martin Quigley, the editor of the journal *Motion Picture Herald*, and Jesuit priest Father Daniel Lord, the Code rationalized a moral vision for movies, arguing that "art can be morally evil in its effects," and that as both "a product and the cause of definite effects, it has a deep moral significance and an unmistakable moral quality." Motion pictures have a special ethical obligation because unlike other arts, which appeal to the mature, motion pictures appeal to the masses, "to every class, mature, immature, developed, undeveloped, law abiding, criminal." Doherty, Thomas Patrick. *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema 1930-1934*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. 6. Print.

³⁸² Black, *Hollywood Censored*, 163-192.

³⁸³ Jowett, *Children and the Movies*, 93.

³⁸⁴ Hilliard, Robert L. & Michael C. Keith. *Dirty Discourse: Sex and Indecency in Broadcasting*. Malden: Blackwell, 2007. 118. Print.

³⁸⁵ Black, *Hollywood Censored*, 169-170; Doherty, *Hollywood's Censor*, 7-20.

— significantly reshaping how Hollywood made movies. During this “Code Era,” the representation of sex in movies became a fine art of subterfuge, showing only enough to let knowing adults know what was being hinted at, while still protecting the minds of innocent children from exposure to carnal knowledge. As subtle as filmmakers were, however, the Code ensured that even hints of sexual pleasure fell well within the moral strictures of monogamous, heterosexual marriage and reproduction. Geared toward protecting the innocence of the young and shaped by the values informing ideas about the ‘natural’ function of sex, Code Era Hollywood would produce an abstract sexual knowledge consistent with the logic of the birds and the bees.

Clean Air

In 1937, movie star Mae West, whose sultry sexual innuendo was being censored under the Hollywood Production Code, was a guest on NBC’s wildly popular variety program *The Chase and Sanborn Hour*. Before a radio audience of millions, West flirted with host Edward Bergen’s ventriloquist dummy Charlie McCarthy, and played the part of Eve in a skit about the Garden of Eden, urging the serpent to “Get me a big one... I feel like doin’ a big apple.” In portraying “women’s desire for carnal experience” through “Eve’s active enthusiasm in relinquishing her virginity for pleasurable purposes,” the skit challenged gender norms and sexual mores by retelling the foundation myth of Christian morality.³⁸⁶ Newspaper editorials across the nation complained that the radio industry had “prostituted” its services by allowing such “impurity [to] invade the air.” Religious organizations like the Legion of Decency threatened to boycott Standard Brands — the owner of Chase and Sanborn Coffee — for sponsoring such a “disgusting broadcast,” and reform groups like the Women’s National Radio Committee admonished NBC

³⁸⁶ Murray, Matthew. “‘The Tendency to Deprave and Corrupt Morals’: Regulation and Irregular Sexuality in Golden Age Radio Comedy.” *Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio*. Eds. Michele Hilmes & Jason Loviglio. New York: Routledge, 2002. 137-140. Print.

for defying “the most elementary sense of decency.”³⁸⁷ Congress condemned the skit as “blasphemous, sensuous, indecent, obscene, [and] profane.”³⁸⁸

FCC Chairman Frank McNinch, recently appointed by President Roosevelt to “inject some New Deal vigor into the politics-ridden FCC,” responded to the incident by writing a letter to NBC president Lenox Lohr.³⁸⁹ McNinch attributed the “objectionable character” of the program to a “lack of a proper conception of the high standards required for a broadcast program” that reaches “a much larger number of people daily than any other means of communication.” He argued for the “social, civil and moral responsibility” that broadcasters had for “the effect upon listeners of all classes and ages,” which made it necessary to “insure against features that are suggestive, vulgar, immoral or of such other character as may be offensive to the great mass of right-thinking, clean-minded American citizens.” He reminded Lohr that “the Commission has no power of censorship, but this power and responsibility rests squarely and unavoidably upon the licensee.” Because “licenses are granted [...] solely for the purpose of serving the public interest,” McNinch asserted, “the broadcaster must accept, along with the privilege granted, a definite, inescapable and high public trust in the use of the facilities licensed.”³⁹⁰ Finally, he delivered the verdict:

The Commission has decided to take no further action at this time than the writing of this letter in condemnation of the program. However, upon application for renewal of the licenses of the stations carrying this broadcast, the Commission will take under consideration this incident along with all other evidence tending to show whether or not a particular licensee has conducted his station in the public interest.³⁹¹

NBC got the message. Even though their in-house censors had almost certainly been aware of West’s “fame for moral impropriety,” NBC blamed West almost wholly for the incident,

³⁸⁷ Murray, “Tendency to Deprave,” 137-140.

³⁸⁸ Hilliard & Keith, *Dirty Discourse*, 9.

³⁸⁹ “FCC on Mae West.” *Time* 24 Jan 1938: 57-58. Print.

³⁹⁰ Excerpts from McNinch’s letter were reprinted in a *Time* magazine article several months later. “FCC on Mae West,” 57-58.

³⁹¹ “FCC on Mae West,” 57-58.

declaring her an “unfit radio personality” and banning even the mention of her name from their stations’ broadcasts.³⁹² Such “censorship by raised eyebrow” characterizes the regulatory relationship that had been established between broadcasters, the government, and the American public following World War I, which would thoroughly shape the representation of sex on radio and television for the rest of the twentieth century.³⁹³

Three years prior — the same year that the MPPDC started enforcing the Production Code — President Roosevelt had signed into law the Communication Act of 1934, capping an era of “anarchy in the ether.”³⁹⁴ Unlike motion pictures, the federal government was involved with radio from the beginning, assisting through military-industrial partnerships the research and development of wireless technology before, during, and after the first World War.³⁹⁵ Although the Radio Act of 1912 established government control of the airwaves by broadly dividing wireless spectrum for military, commercial, and amateur uses, and by requiring radio operators to be licensed, it failed to anticipate the birth of broadcasting following the War. Originally developed

³⁹² West “constituted a central icon of sexual deviance in twenties and thirties American culture,” argues Murray, through her “identification with the character of the 1890s bordello madam, her renown for transgressive heterosexuality (in the form of actively seeking, discussing, and enjoying copulation), and her personification as a gold-digging hussy.” Furthermore, “she had become associated with black culture and exotic sexuality by singing ‘dirty blues’ numbers in her early movies, and personally and professionally liaising with African-American, Asian, and Native American men.” NBC at first claimed that West had improvised, but when it became clear that she had in fact been reading directly from a script approved by both ad agency J. Walter Thompson (representing the interests of Chase and Sanborn) and NBC executives, the network instead argued that the indecency was due to West’s “mugging,” in which she had enhanced the sexual overtones “deliberately.” Murray, “Tendency to Deprave,” 138-144.

³⁹³ “Censorship by raised eyebrow” rather than “regulation by raised eyebrow” is how CBS president William Paley would characterize it six years later in Congressional hearings over a bill to redefine the FCC’s power. “Regulation (Fly) Vs. Freedom (Paley) Subject of Week’s White-Wheeler Hearings.” *Billboard* 20 Nov. 1943: 4. Print.

³⁹⁴ As one commentator identified the growing problem of radio having “turned the nation into a town meeting” with “no chairman and no parliamentary law.” Slosson, Edward E. “Voices in the Air.” *The Independent and Weekly Review* 108 (22 Apr. 1922): 386. Print.

³⁹⁵ In the early 1900s, the U.S. Navy used wireless for ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore communications, and contracted out to private companies for equipment. But development of radio became bogged down in patent disputes between various manufacturers. With the growing need for wireless equipment during the war, the government used its wartime powers to override patent protections, and under Navy guidance, corporations like GE and Westinghouse began to mass manufacture radio equipment. After the war, GE worked with the Navy to ensure that British owned American Marconi would not gain control over radio manufacturing in the United States. This “partnership” gave birth to the Radio Corporation of America

for communicating point-to-point, the omnidirectional use of wireless technology to send open messages to anyone who could tune in turned radio into a mass medium, and its growing popularity during the 1920s cluttered the airwaves with a cacophony of competing voices.

The ‘scarcity’ of airwaves necessitated the regulation of broadcasting, and growing awareness of the power of mass media to shape public opinion and to influence attitudes and behaviors informed regulatory policy through a struggle over contending uses of this new medium.³⁹⁶ Progressive reform groups, having seen their hopes for motion pictures as a platform for education, cultural enrichment, and social uplift dashed as they were instead developed by Hollywood as cheap entertainment, were particularly interested in realizing this potential in the new mass medium.³⁹⁷ Commercial operators, however, were just beginning to realize radio’s profit potential through advertising. The Communication Act of 1934 was the culmination of efforts to bring order to the airwaves amidst a struggle over how radio would serve ‘the public interest’. In favoring commercial, for-profit operators, these efforts and the resulting regulations established the public interest that mass media in the United States would serve as primarily that of entertainment. In the process, the regulation of content was largely ceded to the broadcast industry, which, like Hollywood, kept content clean in order to attract a broad audience.

Regulation emerged from a series of yearly Radio Conferences conducted by the Department of Commerce between 1922 and 1925. The conferences, as Thomas Streeter argues,

(RCA). See: Horwitz, Robert Britt. *The Irony of Regulatory Reform: The Deregulation of American Telecommunications*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989. 107-110. Print.

³⁹⁶ Department stores used radio to attract public attention, newspapers to extend their reach, churches to preach the gospel, unions and other social organizations to push their causes, and schools and universities to educate the public. Barnouw, Erik. *A Tower in Babel: A History of Broadcasting in the United States to 1933*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1966. 61-64. Print; Streeter, Thomas. *Selling the Air: A Critique of the Policy of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. 86. Print.

³⁹⁷ Goodman, David. *Radio's Civic Ambition: American Broadcasting and Democracy in the 1930s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 65-115. Print; Slotten, Hugh Richard. *Radio's Hidden Voice: The Origins of Public Broadcasting in the United States*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009. 152-157. Print.

were a quintessentially corporate liberalist phenomenon.³⁹⁸ Corporate liberalism was a response to the Progressive movement's challenge to the concentration of power in large industrial era trusts.³⁹⁹ Corporate liberals borrowed the Progressive strategy of mobilizing scientific knowledge and expertise in the shaping of public policy, but recast the interests that policy was to serve, discarding the Progressive values of equality and social justice in favor of the liberal economic values of free enterprise, private property, and the market. The Radio Conferences brought together businessmen, technology experts, and representatives of the government and military, who together redrew the lines dividing the spectrum and provided guidelines for reclassifying radio licensees accordingly. Couched in the legitimating language of technical necessity — with its connotations of scientific neutrality and objectivity — the new allocation and licensing of the spectrum favored large corporations like AT&T, RCA, GE, and Westinghouse⁴⁰⁰ with designated frequencies for high-powered, wide-coverage broadcasting, while relegating nonprofits such as schools, churches, and unions to shared frequencies requiring low-power broadcasting with a limited reach.⁴⁰¹

After a federal court ruling that the Commerce Department had no authority to allocate and license spectrum prompted an explosion of unlicensed stations, transmitter power increases, and frequency jumping, Congress passed the Radio Act of 1927, which established the Federal Radio

³⁹⁸ Streeter, *Selling the Air*, 88-89.

³⁹⁹ As David Noble argues, corporate liberals “aimed at absorbing moderate reform movements, anticipating or redirecting them, while at the same time isolating the proponents of more radical change.” Noble, David F. *America by Design: Science, Technology, and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism*. New York: Knopf, 1977. 61. Print.

⁴⁰⁰ RCA, GE, and Westinghouse manufactured radio receivers, and, seeking profitability in hardware, had first gotten into broadcasting to promote sales of their technologies. AT&T, drawing on their experience in the communication industry, foresaw the profitability of broadcasting itself, and in 1922 established WEAJ in New York City, which began selling airtime to people without stations. AT&T also used its long distance telephone lines to create a network of stations that by 1924 reached 65 percent of American homes with radios. They refused to allow the Radio Group — comprised of stations owned by RCA, GE, and Westinghouse — access to their lines. But, doubting that the federal government would tolerate an extension of its wired monopoly into wireless, AT&T decided in 1925 to get out of broadcasting directly. In a deal with the Radio Group, they sold WEAJ to RCA and opened contracts to provide wired networking to link the RCA, GE, and Westinghouse Radio Group stations in what became the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). See: Starr, *Creation of the Media*, 336-344.

Commission (FRC) and granted it the authority to regulate broadcasting.⁴⁰² The FRC, advised by a committee comprised of members of the Institute of Radio Engineers, most of whom worked for RCA or other corporations, enacted a policy for allocation and licensing that closely resembled the guidelines established under the Commerce Department's Radio Conferences.⁴⁰³

A number of interest groups involved in radio, as Robert McChesney has shown, were unhappy with this move toward corporate commercialization.⁴⁰⁴ Unions and other labor organizations, churches and missionary societies, and coalitions of independent and amateur broadcasters were deemed by the FRC as serving "special interests" rather than the "public interest," and were marginalized by having their frequencies repeatedly shifted, their transmitter power reduced, and their broadcasts limited to shared daytime hours, in order to make room in the scarce airwaves for commercial and affiliate stations of the emerging NBC and CBS networks.⁴⁰⁵ These groups were joined in agitating for radio reform by the American Civil Liberties Union

⁴⁰¹ Streeter, *Selling the Air*, 89-95.

⁴⁰² Sloten, Hugh Richard. *Radio and Television Regulation: Broadcast Technology in the United States, 1920-1960*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. 37-40. Print.

⁴⁰³ Starr, *Creation of the Media*, 350-351.

⁴⁰⁴ McChesney, Robert W. *Telecommunications, Mass Media, and Democracy: The Battle for Control of U.S. Broadcasting, 1928-1935*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. Print.

⁴⁰⁵ The most organized response came from the American Federation of Labor (AFL), and was centered on supporting the embattled station of its Chicago branch. The "official" labor radio station, WCFL found itself in an increasingly marginalized position typical of grassroots broadcasters. The FRC repeatedly shifted their frequency, reduced their transmitter power, and limited their broadcast to shared daytime hours in order to make room for commercial and affiliate stations of the emerging NBC and CBS networks. The FRC characterized WCFL as a "propaganda" station undeserving of license because its narrow message was not in the public interest. The Paulist Fathers, a New York based Catholic missionary society, faced a similar situation. Their station WLWL featured Catholic content on Sundays, but for the remainder of the week appealed to an interfaith and even secular audience, targeting the working class in particular with "social and literary subjects and discussions of interest of the present day." As with WCFL, their marginalization to shared frequencies and daytime hours made it almost impossible to reach their intended audience. And as with the AFL, Paulist appeals to the FRC were rebuffed due to their "special interest" status. Numerous smaller groups, from the Pacific-Western Broadcasting Federation to the American Radio Audience League, also felt that corporate commercialization of radio was undemocratically stifling particular voices, and agitated for broadcast reform. McChesney, *Telecommunications*, 63-91.

(ACLU), which was concerned that corporate commercialization of radio was undemocratically stifling particular voices.⁴⁰⁶

Educators played the biggest role in the radio reform movement. The Payne Fund, in addition to its involvement in motion picture research, was committed to seeing radio developed as an educational medium, and with their backing, the movement for educational broadcast reform became the strongest coalition of organizations resisting radio commercialization.⁴⁰⁷

Research into “schools of the air” that would broadcast educational programs on commercial stations was lauded by the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), yet subsequent efforts failed to get the already dominant networks NBC and CBS to donate air time for non-commercial educational programming.⁴⁰⁸ Finding the commercial interests of broadcasters to be at odds with educational motives, subsequent research recommended “an early and united effort on the part of the educational forces of the country to have radio channels permanently reserved for the use of educational stations.”⁴⁰⁹ With further Payne Fund support, the National Committee for Education

⁴⁰⁶ While concerned from early on with this silencing, the ACLU was also worried about the control the government would have to exert to reign in corporate dominance of the airwaves. But with mounting complaints of political censorship by commercial broadcasters, they entered the fray by establishing a Radio Committee that was, at least initially, a proponent of radio reform. The ACLU Radio Committee would continue to fight for broadcast reform well after the battle had been lost in 1934, but in 1938 would reverse course under the by-then dominant ideology that commercial broadcasters were, as historian Philip Rosen wrote, “the purveyors of the unqualified truth,” who needed to be protected from government censorship. McChesney, *Telecommunications*, 236-240.

⁴⁰⁷ Payne Fund directors were appalled by the commercial direction in which U.S. radio was moving, and were much impressed with the public service model of the recently chartered British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) — with its Arnoldian goal of “carry[ing] into the greatest possible number of homes everything that is best in every department of human knowledge, endeavor, or achievement.” Quote by John Reith, director-general of the BBC from its founding until 1938. Briggs, Asa. *The BBC: The First Fifty Years*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. 55. Print.

⁴⁰⁸ McChesney, *Telecommunications*, 39.

⁴⁰⁹ Concerned that without the guidance of educators schools would be flooded with “radio programs prepared for advertising purposes rather than educational value,” the National Education Association (NEA) called on the U.S. Office of Education to convene a committee to address the issue. A fact-finding sub-committee, financed by the Payne Fund, the Penney Fund, and the Carnegie Corporation, conducted the research. Quote by Arnold Perry, researcher and author of *Radio in Education*. McChesney, *Telecommunications*, 40-43; *Report of the Advisory Committee on Education by Radio*. Columbus: The F.J. Heer Printing Company, 1933. 35. Print.

on Radio (NCER) was established, which brought together representatives of numerous influential educational associations in a broad effort to promote and support broadcast reform.⁴¹⁰

The American public was sympathetic to this reform movement, as they generally disliked the intrusion of advertising into their homes, and found commercial program material to be mediocre at best.⁴¹¹ But the NCER effort to organize public support for reform was stymied by the broadcasting industry, which used its dominance of the airwaves to portray itself as innately American and democratic, and its political power to secure a regulatory system favorable to its interests. The industry depicted the reform movement as an “unreasoning sort of crusading,”⁴¹² while using its alliance with the pro-industry National Advisory Council on Radio in Education (NACRE) as “a smokescreen to further the efforts of the radio monopolies to gobble up broadcasting.”⁴¹³ Bureaucratic alliances developed through the Radio Conferences and a powerful lobby strengthened by the offering of free airtime to members of Congress gave the broadcasting

⁴¹⁰ The National Education Association, the Association of College and University Broadcast Stations, the National University Extension Association, the National Association of State Universities, the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities, the Jesuit Education Association, the National Catholic Education Association, the National Council of State Superintendents, and the American Council on Education all provided representatives for the NCER. After conducting further research that confirmed the need for educational radio to be distinct from commercial radio, the NCER blanketed public officials, educators, and politicians with personal letters and copies of their newsletter *Education by Radio*, wrote numerous articles for both the newsletter and the public press, and gave hundreds of speeches promoting broadcast reform. They provided legal counsel for educational stations whose frequencies were being challenged before the FRC by commercial interests. The NCER also lobbied Congress to set aside 15 percent of radio stations for nonprofit, educational use, and drafted a bill requiring the FRC to do so, which was supported and introduced to Congress by Senator Simeon Fess. McChesney, *Telecommunications*, 49-51.

⁴¹¹ McChesney, Robert W. “The Payne Fund and Radio Broadcasting, 1928-1935.” Jowett, Garth S. et al. *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 320. Print; Slotten, *Radio's Hidden Voice*, 152.

⁴¹² “Exit Mr. Morgan.” *Broadcasting* (15 Sep. 1935): 30. Print.

⁴¹³ Established by the American Association for Adult Education, which had been created by the Carnegie Corporation, NACRE was pro-industry, seeking to “become the mouthpiece of all education” by integrating into commercial broadcasting educational programming provided by Carnegie, rather than by establishing nonprofit radio stations serving the needs of professional educators. NACRE itself was committed to bringing education into radio, but as its director acknowledged, NBC and CBS had no “educational motive,” but rather, were using NACRE as a public relations face that would make apparent their compliance with the 1927 Radio Act’s mandate that broadcasters serve the public interest. With NCER and NACRE striving for different visions of educational programming — often antagonistically — and engaging different voices in support of their visions, the issue became confused, and public support for reform was divided. McChesney, *Telecommunications*, 51-56.

industry considerable sway in Washington.⁴¹⁴ This was reflected in a study prompted by the Senate and conducted by the FRC to address the issue of reform, which praised the American model of commercial broadcasting and unconditionally dismissed all criticism. President Roosevelt also sided with the broadcasting industry, as it allowed him to “go over the heads of a largely hostile press.”⁴¹⁵ Legislation introduced to make permanent the regulations established in the Radio Act of 1927 moved quickly through Congress and was signed by Roosevelt in 1934.⁴¹⁶

By 1934, then, the “anarchy in the ether” had been brought under control, and the movement for broadcast reform had been squashed.⁴¹⁷ In the process, a regulatory system had been established that governs broadcasting in the United States based on a sort of “perversion” of the “public interest.” Regulatory agencies, as Robert Horwitz has shown, emerged in the United States during the Progressive Era as “the modern *form* of state intervention” for reconciling corporate expansion with democratic demands for social justice and fairness.⁴¹⁸ Functioning as an institutionalized form of common law, regulatory agencies establish rules and policy after assessing the positions of various parties in the light of “supposedly nonpartisan, scientific

⁴¹⁴ McChesney, “Payne Fund,” 323-324.

⁴¹⁵ Schiller, Dan. *Theorizing Communication: A History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. 48. Print; Tebbel, John & Sarah Watts. *The Press and the Presidency: From George Washington to Ronald Reagan*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. 435. Print.

⁴¹⁶ A last minute campaign by national Catholic organizations to amend the proposed communication law by requiring the new Federal Communication Commission (FCC) that the law would establish to reserve 25 percent of radio channels for nonprofit use was defeated when a section was included in the law leaving the decision to the “experts” of the FCC, pending public hearings on the issue. Unsurprisingly — especially as they had already indicated as much beforehand — the FCC reported to Congress after the hearings that reserving 25 percent of radio channels for nonprofit use would be harmful to the established system of broadcasting. McChesney, “Payne Fund,” 330-332.

⁴¹⁷ Four years later the FCC would reverse course, allocating spectrum in the 41 to 42 MHz band for noncommercial broadcasting, and setting aside 25 channels in this range for educational purposes. But a year later, the FCC would shift the allocation to the 42 to 43 MHz band and require stations to operate in the new FM mode, which, due to the wider bandwidth requirement of frequency modulation, reduced the number of channels to five. In 1948, the FCC shifted FM to the 88 to 108 MHz band and allocated 20 channels for noncommercial use in the 88 to 92 MHz range. Sterling, Christopher H. & John Michael Kittross. *Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002. 176-177, 253. Print.

⁴¹⁸ Horwitz, *Irony of Regulatory Reform*, 47.

arguments of outside experts.”⁴¹⁹ But this discretionary authority, granted to these agencies by vague and often contradictory Congressional mandates, “tends to create a dynamic whereby the agency bargains with the principal contending parties.”⁴²⁰ Particularly with agencies created under the New Deal, which regulate specific industries, such bargaining favors the status quo, accepting the already established structure of the industry and working to stabilize and foster its growth.⁴²¹ Established by the Communication Act of 1934, the FCC is one such New Deal agency. It is charged with regulating the telecommunications industry “in the public interest, convenience, and necessity.” The vague idea of “the public interest,” however, has always been shaped by a process of negotiation towards pragmatic solutions that will not harm the industry, which effectively limits the public interest to only the commercial means whereby it can be served. This political process is both legitimated and obscured by the “aura of technology,” which casts the issues that the FCC adjudicates as beyond the lay understanding of the public, and thus only able to be resolved by expert commissioners, engineers, scientists, and industry professionals.⁴²²

This approach has largely limited formal regulative activity to technical issues. The actual substance of broadcasts has historically been addressed only indirectly through broad policy statements and by “raised eyebrow.” Through this process, the general tone, the broad goals, and the specific limits of broadcasting have been established, and when particular stations violate these standards, the FCC expresses their concern, which is given force by the often tacit threat of not renewing the station’s license. This informal regulatory process is due to the contradictory position of the FCC, which is prohibited from censoring broadcasts, but is required to have some

⁴¹⁹ Horwitz, *Irony of Regulatory Reform*, 48.

⁴²⁰ Horwitz, *Irony of Regulatory Reform*, 48.

⁴²¹ Horwitz, *Irony of Regulatory Reform*, 74.

⁴²² Streeter, *Selling the Air*, 226-227.

substantive basis for renewing licenses.⁴²³ The key basis has been that stations comply with the Communication Act's "indecent clause." Rather than securing the broader goals and more meaningful aspects of the public interest, such as providing information and serving local communities, FCC regulation of broadcasting has been mostly restricted to keeping the air clean. This effort has been assisted by the commercial broadcasting industry itself in the interest of attracting a broad audience, which, through the convoluted logic of advertising economics, pays the bills.

At the NAB convention two months after the Mae West incident, "a new and inspired leadership from within the broadcasters' ranks made plans [...] to inaugurate a process of self cleansing as a means of averting unnecessary governmental intervention."⁴²⁴ The NAB code of

⁴²³ The Act extended First Amendment protection to broadcasting by asserting that "Nothing in this Act shall be understood or construed to give the Commission the power of censorship over the radio communications or signals transmitted by any radio station, and no regulation or condition shall be promulgated or fixed by the Commission which shall interfere with the right of free speech by radio communication." Horwitz, *Irony of Regulatory Reform*, 156-158.

⁴²⁴ At the convention, FCC chairman McNinch summoned NAB members to "a public spirited cooperation" with the FCC and Congress, warned of "the danger to the ideals, the morals, the thought-habits of our youths and children" posed by broadcasting, and clarified the regulatory role of the FCC. McNinch asserted that "the Commission is under the mandate of the law to regulate this industry," but addressed this "obligation of office" only to technical matters, particularly whether the "chain broadcasting" of NBC and CBS constituted a "practical monopoly." He expressed his "genuine appreciation of the contributions made to our programs by the chains," but commented that "some of the program features fall below the standard" that "the public expects and has a right to expect." He assured the NAB, however, that these comments were "made in a friendly, cooperative, and purely advisory spirit," reaffirming his vow of office to "not exercise consciously any power of censorship," and leaving the supervision of programs as a responsibility of the broadcasters. The FCC would forward all complaints about programs to the stations who broadcast them with no opinion whatsoever on the matter. These complaints would, however, be taken into consideration when renewing licenses, and anything "vulgar, indecent, profane, [or] reasonably anticipated to give offense," being "contrary to the public interest," would become "the duty of the commission to do something about." The FCC would begin an investigation of the "practical monopoly" constituted by NBC and CBS later that year, but would not release its *Report on Chain Broadcasting* until 1941. CBS and NBC filed suit in federal court to set aside the regulations that the report recommended the FCC adopt. After the court dismissed the case because it did not have jurisdiction, the Justice Department filed antitrust suits against the two networks, who appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In *NBC v. U.S.* the Court upheld both the broad power entrusted to the FCC by Congress to regulate broadcasting in "the public interest, convenience, and necessity," and the specific regulations laid out in the *Report on Chain Broadcasting*. NBC was forced to sell its Blue network, which was acquired by Life Savers magnate Edward Noble and turned into the American Broadcasting Company (ABC). "A New and Stronger NAB Is Organized." *Broadcasting* 14.4 (15 Feb 1938): 11. Print; Horwitz, *Irony of Regulatory Reform*, 167-171; "McNinch Warns Industry to Toe the Mark." *Broadcasting* 14.4 (15 Feb 1938): 15-16, 103-104, 110. Print; Sterling & Kittross, *Stay Tuned*, 14, 210-211, 231-232, 259.

ethics would be the cornerstone of this process and the guiding principle for the self-regulation of the broadcasting industry.⁴²⁵ This obviated the need for FCC interference while assuring that “the public interest, convenience, and necessity” had nothing to do with sex. This was true of not only the kind of light-hearted promotional programming that had effectively resulted in the blacklisting of Mae West, but also of more serious fare. When NBC denied airtime to the American Birth Control League, for example, and when they refused to allow General Hugh Johnson to devote his weekly commentary to venereal disease, they claimed the public did not demand discussion of these issues.⁴²⁶ Even as venereal diseases were becoming epidemic, a program about them produced by a prominent medical association was denied airtime by CBS for refusing to avoid using the word syphilis.⁴²⁷

When television finally took off in the 1950s, programming was likewise self-regulated by broadcasters in accord with a slightly modified NAB code. In the 1940s, as television technologies were being developed and the FCC was working through the technical details of regulating standards, licensing, and spectrum for the new medium, a second wave reform movement, focused on the excessive commercialism of radio, had prompted a more progressive faction of the FCC to release a report titled *Public Service Responsibilities of Broadcast*

⁴²⁵ The NAB, formed in 1922, had first issued a Code of Commercial Practice in 1929, which dealt mostly with the regulation of advertising. This code became law under a National Recovery Administration (NRA) ruling in 1933, but was abandoned when the Supreme Court found the NRA unconstitutional in 1935. At the 1938 convention, FCC chairman McNinch praised the code of ethics adopted by the NAB at their convention two years prior, particularly the recognition that “the radio audience includes people of all ages and all types of religious, social, and political beliefs” and that stations must “prevent the broadcasting of any matter that would commonly be regarded as offensive.” “McNinch Warns Industry to Toe the Mark.” *Broadcasting* 14.4 (15 Feb 1938): 15-16, 103-104, 110. Print; Sterling & Kittross, *Stay Tuned*, 14, 213.

⁴²⁶ Benjamin, Louise M. *Freedom of the Air and the Public Interest: First Amendment Rights in Broadcasting to 1935*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001. 158-166. Print; MacDonald, J. Fred. *Don't Touch That Dial! Radio Programming in American Life, 1920-1960*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979. 105. Print.

⁴²⁷ Summers, Harrison Boyd. *Radio Censorship*. New York: H.W. Wilson, 1939. 129. Print; Semonche, John E. *Censoring Sex: A Historical Journey Through American Media*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007. 186. Print.

Licenseses.⁴²⁸ This so-called “Blue Book” was the FCC’s deepest incursion into regulating radio content. Reasserting broadcasters’ public service responsibility and documenting the extent to which the industry had failed to fulfill this obligation while turning tidy profits from extensive advertising, the Blue Book outlined what programming would be considered to be in the public interest. It emphasized the need to eliminate “advertising excesses,” to carry “local live programs” and “programs devoted to the discussion of public issues,” and to better balance between commercial and “sustaining” programs — those that “by their very nature may not be sponsored with propriety,” that embrace “significant minority tastes and interests,” that are “devoted to the needs and purposes of non-profit organizations,” and that are “secure from the restrictions [characteristic of] programs in which the advertiser’s interest in selling goods predominates.”⁴²⁹

But because the Blue Book was merely a codification of some FCC members’ “thinking” rather than a body of rules, and because of a red-baiting smear campaign against it spearheaded by the NAB, the Blue Book’s impact on the broadcasting industry was blunted.⁴³⁰ Television would thus develop a similar commercial model as radio, whereby the reliance on advertising would lead broadcasters to appeal to the widest possible audience with light entertainment, rather than local audiences and “minority tastes and interests” with “discussion of public issues.” The new NAB code, then, intended to foster TV programs that would “promote the commonly accepted moral, social, and ethical values of American life,” functioned — as it always had — less as a code of ethics, and more as a code of best business practices that protected the broadcasting industry from both government interference and the alienation of audience markets.

⁴²⁸ Pickard, Victor. “The Battle over the FCC Blue Book: Determining the Role of Broadcast Media in a Democratic Society, 1945–8.” *Media, Culture & Society* 33.2 (2011): 171-191. Print; See also: Newman, Kathleen M. *Radio Active: Advertising and Consumer Activism, 1935-1947*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. Print; Socolow, Michael J. “Questioning Advertising’s Influence over American Radio: The Blue Book Controversy of 1945–1947.” *Journal of Radio Studies* 9 (2002): 292–302. Print.

⁴²⁹ Federal Communications Commission. *Public Service Responsibilities of Broadcast Licensees*. Washington, DC: FCC, 1946. Print.

If sex, in any capacity, was valued in American life, or was a public issue worthy of discussion, this would not soon be revealed on television. The new medium's first hit show, *I Love Lucy*, debuted three years after the first of the Kinsey Reports shocked the nation by exposing the extent to which sex was not contained within a moral and social order structured around heterosexual, monogamous reproduction. Stars Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, a young married couple, slept in separate beds. It is unclear how Lucy became pregnant. CBS would not even allow the use of the word 'pregnant' on the show. This sort of willed televisual ignorance of sexuality would characterize TV content for the next two decades.

As with motion pictures, then, the development of radio and television as commercial entertainment thoroughly shaped sexual discourse in the public sphere of mass media. Sex was not banned from these media; rather, industry self-regulation produced an abstract sexual knowledge, and this functioned in an educative capacity. The willed ignorance and coy silences of the media were sexual curricula for an ignorant silence that defaulted to heterosexuality, monogamy, non-miscegenation, marriage, and reproduction. Even as sex was being brought back into the public arena through print publications that began challenging the implicit normativity of media culture's long sexual silence, the film and broadcast industries would maintain a mute and conservative chastity. When these industries themselves started becoming more liberal, their commercial form would still significantly shape how they represent sex, continuing to produce an abstract sexual knowledge that obscures its subtending values.

“A Floodtide of Filth”

In 1963, Charles Keating's Citizens for Decent Literature (CDL) produced a short documentary titled *Perversion for Profit*. Standing stiffly before a map of the United States, “outstanding news reporter” George Putnam narrates the film in a stentorian voice: “I'd like to

⁴³⁰ Horwitz, *Irony of Regulatory Reform*, 161-162; Pickard, “The Battle,” 182-185.

begin with a fact — a simple but shocking fact. It is this: A floodtide of filth is engulfing our country in the form of newsstand obscenity. It is threatening to pervert an entire generation of our American children.” Putnam continues to make his case through a number of facts and figures emphasized with illustrated title cards. Holding up one that depicts a group of boys and girls at a newsstand grinning mischievously as they pour over magazines with titles like ‘Wild’ and ‘Strip’, he states, “It is also a fact that no matter who buys this material, 75 to 90 percent of it ends up in the hands of our children.” On another card, enthusiastic italics punctuated with a businesslike boldface read “*It’s a TWO BILLION DOLLAR Business!*” A fat, bald man in a business suit chomps a cigar and greedily eyes the stacks of coins he is embracing. “Obscene literature is a two billion dollar a year business,” proclaims Putnam. “That’s two billion dollars.”

The facts and figures upon which *Perversion for Profit* relies are, for the most part, fabrications.⁴³¹ Keating himself admitted, in an unscripted moment several years later, that the numbers “came out of my head.”⁴³² Nonetheless, as the film circulated in the 1960s through religious associations, YMCAs, PTAs, fraternal organizations, and other community groups, these facts and figures were lent legitimacy by their repetition, and Keating was able to grow CDL into a powerful grassroots anti-pornography organization by convincing the American public that this “floodtide of filth” was threatening their children.

The founding of CDL in the 1950s and its subsequent growth marked the beginning of a backlash to the liberalization of sex in the post-war era. CDL would help lay the groundwork for the rise of the New Right, which would build popular support in part through a “politics of

⁴³¹ The ACLU attacked the film as an “evangelistic tent show,” excoriating the claims it made that “smut” leads to homosexuality, sex crimes, venereal disease, and illegitimacy, and had caused the collapse of ancient civilizations. They pointed out that it was impossible to document how 75 to 90 percent of these materials wound up in the hands of children, and that the two billion dollar figure was more than the gross sales of the entire publishing industry. Strub, Whitney. *Perversion for Profit: The Politics of Pornography and the Rise of the New Right*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011. 107-108. Print.

⁴³² Roberts, Edwin, Jr. *The Smut Rakers*. Silver Spring: National Observer, 1966. 116. Print.

outrage” about the increasingly public display of sexuality.⁴³³ While grounded in a conservative Christian morality, this reactionary sexual politics was characterized by a new kind of moral entrepreneurship that mobilized empirical data and expert opinions in making a case for the social harm of sexual liberalization and its public manifestations in the media.

There had certainly been an increase in the publication and circulation of risqué sexual materials since World War II. A decade prior to *Perversion for Profit*, Hugh Hefner had launched the inaugural issue of *Playboy* magazine, and had since built *Playboy* into a lifestyle brand targeting upwardly-mobile, middle-class men with an idealized vision of cosmopolitan male sexuality. His success relied on a liberalization of sexual attitudes during the war — promoted, in part, by popular sexual representations in magazines — and on social and economic shifts in its wake. Soldiers had been exposed to not only the more lax moral environment of wartime Europe, but also to a flood of titillating magazine pin-ups⁴³⁴ such as the stylized drawings of George Petty and Alberto Vargas in *Esquire* and photos like *Life*’s 1941 centerfold of Rita Hayworth, which were shipped to “the boys on the front” to help boost morale.⁴³⁵ These soldiers returned to a golden age of relative wealth and leisure.⁴³⁶ This shift in class status of millions of American men who had come of age in a highly sexualized wartime culture, along with the return to status quo gender roles that had been briefly upset by women entering the workforce to assist the war effort, was accompanied by changing taste cultures on the domestic front. *Playboy* captured the

⁴³³ Strub, *Perversion for Profit*, 84.

⁴³⁴ Renditions of these sexual representations would find their way onto military bombers and bombs, engendering the term “bombshell” to describe women with the exaggerated hourglass figure typical of these pin-ups. Kakoudaki, Despina. “Pinup: The American Secret Weapon in World War II.” *Porn Studies*. Ed. Linda Williams. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004. 335-369. Print.

⁴³⁵ Magazine pinups were also seen as an aid in helping to fight the spread of syphilis, which, as it had been in WWI, was one of the most pressing problems the military faced. While masturbation was still not socially condoned, the military touted it as a safer alternative to visiting prostitutes. Pinups also promoted patriotism by focusing desire on the “all-American girl” rather than exotic foreigners, and served a homophobia that countered the intense homosociality of military life through an “investment in extreme femininity.” Kakoudaki, “Pinup,” 361-362.

⁴³⁶ The GI Bill, which subsidized home mortgages and higher education, along with the accelerated development of the military-industrial complex in the Cold War era, which provided high paying jobs for both white and blue collar workers, paved the way for the explosive growth of the American middle class.

aspiration for a suave, sophisticated lifestyle that *Esquire* had set in motion prior to the war, and by linking the trappings of economic success and upward mobility with male sexual prowess, packaged and sold a new ideal of masculinity for the post-war moral order. In doing so, *Playboy* helped shift the commercial representation of sexual pleasure from the “cultural margins to the mainstream.”⁴³⁷



A



B

Image 5: A) Alberto Vargas: Boosting Morale B) Rita Hayworth: Boosting Morale

Playboy, however, was not really CDL’s concern.⁴³⁸ Considering its popularity by the 1960s, *Playboy* is conspicuously absent from the montage of magazine images presented by *Perversion for Profit* as examples of ‘filth’. The problem, explained Putnam, is not just that these

⁴³⁷ Osgerby, Bill. *Playboys in Paradise: Masculinity, Youth and Leisure-Style in Modern America*. New York: Oxford, 2001. 149. Print; Pitzulo, Carrie. *Bachelors and Bunnies: The Sexual Politics of Playboy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011. 71-103. Print

⁴³⁸ As Whitney Strub argues, the decentralized structure of CDL in its early years disposed it to local idiosyncrasies regarding what constituted obscenity. For example, a CDL unit in the Chicago suburbs informed Hefner — whose growing media enterprise was at the time still based in Chicago — that it had removed *Playboy* from its list of magazines to be removed from local newsstands. At the same time, the

magazines “display complete nudity,” but that “they do so in a perverted manner.” CDL’s attempt to define perversion is part of a struggle to shape the sexual public sphere.⁴³⁹ Exposure of the buttocks is an “appeal to the sodomist,” while “the preoccupation with female breasts [...] has become a fetish.” A nude woman reclining in a farmyard setting has “overtones of bestiality,” and a group of nude women sitting in bleachers has “lesbian implications.” The “so-called physique group of publications,” with their “homosexual viewpoint and poses,” are a particular threat to boys, “who take them as instruction of body development.” Though unaware of their “true nature,” they “will nevertheless pervert.” And then there are those images that “speak for themselves” yet Putnam narrates anyway, lingering on every detail: “The extreme spiked heel, the tight boots, the riding crop, the burning cigarette, rubber and leather garments, and all the rest.” CDL’s moral outrage over what it considered to be perverse sexual representations indicates the extent to which other sexual representations had been normalized, and how the lines circumscribing obscenity were being redrawn to exclude particular pleasures from the public sphere in order to protect the young.

Some of the magazines that *Perversion for Profit* targeted had been around for as long as mainstream ones like *Esquire*, as legal ambiguity about obscenity had allowed publishers to push the limits of acceptability in the early twentieth century.⁴⁴⁰ The 1868 English case *Regina v. Hicklin* had established obscenity as that which tends “to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences,” regardless of social, scientific, literary, or artistic value.⁴⁴¹

CDL in San Mateo, California were forcing the removal of *Playboy* from their city’s newsstands. Strub, *Perversion for Profit*, 99.

⁴³⁹ CDL also produced a small catalogue of other films, including *Pages of Death* [1962] and *Printed Poison* [1965], a number of pamphlets, and the bi-weekly newspaper *National Decency Reporter*, which all targeted specific types of sexual representation as perverse.

⁴⁴⁰ *The Nudist*, for example, which would later become *Sunshine & Health*, was first published in 1933 — the same year as the first publication of *Esquire*.

⁴⁴¹ The 1857 Obscene Publications Act had not defined “obscene,” but rather, had provided for the seizure of suspect material and the summons of those involved in their sales and distribution, who could defend the *intention* of the material in question. In *Regina v. Hicklin*, Chief Justice Cockburn interpreted the 1857 Act as banning anything that had the *tendency* to morally corrupt anyone into whose hands it might fall. The

The Hicklin test was imported into lower-court case law in the United States, and in the 1879 trial of iconoclastic publisher D.M. Bennett, was established as precedent at the federal level for prosecutions under the 1873 Comstock Act;⁴⁴² the Supreme Court adopted the Hicklin test in the 1896 case *Rosen v. United States*.⁴⁴³ But as Walter Kendrick shows, this “omnium gatherum called ‘obscenity’ was steadily pared down” in the decades since “to lay bare what came to be known as the ‘hard core.’”⁴⁴⁴

The first cut came in 1913, when District Court Judge Learned Hand upheld the grand jury indictment of publisher Mitchell Kennerley for mailing copies of Daniel Carson Goodman’s social hygiene novel *Hagar Revelly*.⁴⁴⁵ Hand’s ruling revealed doubts about the contemporary

onus of moral culpability was thus shifted from the intent of the text to its potential effects upon innocent minds.

⁴⁴² DeRobigne Mortimer Bennett founded *The Truth Seeker*, a periodical dedicated to science, morals, free thought, and human happiness, in 1873. His opposition to dogmatic Christianity and puritanical morality made him a target of Anthony Comstock’s anti-obscenity crusade. His arrest for publishing Ezra Haywood’s free-love tract *Cupid’s Yokes* was Bennett’s third, but the sensational news coverage of the trial and his sentence to thirteen months hard labor made it a *cause celebre* amongst free-thinkers and free speech advocates. Bradford, Roderick. *D.M. Bennett: The Truth Seeker*. New York: Prometheus, 2006. Print; Horowitz, Helen Lefkowitz. *Rereading Sex: Battles Over Sexual Knowledge and Suppression in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002. 433. Print; Wood, Janice Ruth. *The Struggle for Free Speech in the United States, 1872-1915: Edward Bliss Foote, Edward Bond Foote, and Anti-Comstock Operations*. New York: Routledge, 2008. 45. Print.

⁴⁴³ The U.S. Supreme Court reviewed two obscenity cases in 1896. Lew Rosen had been convicted in New York for publishing a special “Tenderloin Issue” of his magazine *Broadway*, in which spots of lampblack could be rubbed off to reveal “females in different attitudes of indecency.” Dan K. Swearingen, editor of the Burlington, Kansas *Courier*, had been convicted for publishing an issue of his paper that contained an article on a local politician that called him, for example, “lower, meaner, filthier, rottener than the rottenest strumpet that prowls the streets by night.” Using the Hicklin test, the Court upheld Rosen’s conviction, arguing that “in view of the character of the paper, the test prescribed was quite as liberal as the defendant has any right to demand,” but overturned the conviction of Swearingen because although the article was “exceedingly coarse and vulgar,” it did not have “a lewd, lascivious and obscene tendency, calculated to corrupt and debauch the mind and morals of those into whose hands it might fall.” Kendrick, *Secret Museum*, 175-176; *Rosen v. United States*. 161 U.S. 29. U.S. Supreme Court. 1896. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; *Swearingen v. United States*. 161 U.S. 446. U.S. Supreme Court. 1896. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013. See also: Ernst, Morris L. & Alan U. Schwartz. *Censorship: The Search for the Obscene*. New York: Macmillan, 1964. Print; Kilpatrick, James Jackson. *The Smut Peddlers*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1960. Print.

⁴⁴⁴ Kendrick, *Secret Museum*, 196.

⁴⁴⁵ Goodman was a physician who had written *Hagar Revelly* to warn “the innocent youth of the land [of] the wiles of vice.” Ironically, despite Goodman’s good intentions, the novel caught the attention of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, and was targeted by Anthony Comstock, who secured an indictment, led U.S. marshals in a raid of Kennerley’s office, had Kennerley arrested, and seized the stock and printing plates of the novel. Though Hand upheld the indictment, a federal court jury acquitted

applicability of the Hicklin test, which “however consonant it may be with mid-Victorian morals, does not seem [...] to answer to the understanding and morality of the present time.” He was particularly concerned about “reduc[ing] our treatment of sex to the standard of a child’s library in the supposed interest of a salacious few,” which would prevent “adequate portrayal of some of the most serious and beautiful sides of human nature.”⁴⁴⁶ Another cut came in 1922, when bookstore clerk Raymond Halsey, who had been arrested for selling a copy of Thophile Gautier’s *Mademoiselle de Maupin* to Comstock’s successor John Sumner, was awarded \$2,500 damages in a suit for malicious prosecution against the New York Society for Suppression of Vice. Judge William S. Andrews ruled that though some passages “taken by themselves” were “vulgar and indecent,” the book “must be considered broadly, as a whole.”⁴⁴⁷

Swayed by a growing anti-censorship sentiment embodied in a loose coalition of writers, publishers, scholars, booksellers, librarians, and attorneys rising to the defense of beleaguered books, the courts increasingly overturned obscenity charges as they began to weigh the “tendency to deprave and corrupt” against the overall tenor and intent of a text.⁴⁴⁸ James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, which had been under attack since its first serial installment in the *Little Review* in 1918, was utilized by the anti-censorship ‘movement’ as a test case in 1933, when Random House publisher Bennett Cerf arranged to have a copy seized by the U.S. Customs Bureau. District Court Judge John Woolsey argued that for a book to be obscene, it must be “written for the purpose of exploiting obscenity” — that is, “tending to stir the sex impulses” of the “person with average sex instincts” — and ruled that *Ulysses* was not obscene because “whilst in many places the effect

Kennerley after defense attorney John Quinn convinced them that the novel was within the mainstream of the social hygiene movement. Boyer, *Purity in Print*, 46-48.

⁴⁴⁶ *United States v. Kennerley*. 209 Fed. 119. U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. 1913. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁴⁷ *Halsey v. New York Society for Suppression of Vice* 234 N.Y. 1, 136 N.E. 219. New York Court of Appeals. 1922. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁴⁸ Boyer, *Purity in Print*, 143-151.

[...] on the reader undoubtedly is somewhat emetic, nowhere does it tend to be an aphrodisiac.”⁴⁴⁹

Such rulings outlined a post-Hicklin conception of obscenity, which would need to take into account the intent of the work as a whole, contemporary community standards, and its potential effect upon the average person.

This conception of obscenity was hardly universal, though, and rulings in obscenity trials continued to be uneven, unpredictable, and even contradictory.⁴⁵⁰ This “confusion in the courts” further emboldened publishers, and in the 1930s and 1940s, there was a significant increase in the publication and importation of not only risky literature, but also risky magazines.⁴⁵¹ The initial circulation of these magazines was limited, and the fervor having faded for hunting down obscenity as vice societies had in the heyday of Comstockery,⁴⁵² they only drew the attention of the post office and other censors when they appeared unsolicited.⁴⁵³

⁴⁴⁹ Woolsey was known as “the literary jurist.” He read and reread *Ulysses*, and heard the testimony of numerous literary experts presented by defense attorney Morris Ernst, who had become a key figure in the anti-censorship movement after first getting interested in it following a defeat in a 1927 Customs censorship case. In 1928, he collaborated with attorney William Seagle in writing the highly influential polemic *To the Pure... A Study of Obscenity and the Censor*. In 1929, he successfully defended Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness* from obscenity charges through what would become his trademark strategy of mobilizing public sentiment and expert testimony against censorship of literature. Boyer, *Purity in Print*, 132-135, 146-148; Ernst, Morris Leopold & William Seagle. *To the Pure... A Study of Obscenity and the Censor*. New York: Viking, 1928. Print; “To Pass on ‘Ulysses’.” *New York Times* 30 August 1933: 16. *ProQuest*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; *United States v. One Book Called “Ulysses”* 5 F. Supp. 182. U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. 1933. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁵⁰ It also had the effect of turning obscenity trials into venues for literary and aesthetic criticism, with experts and justices weighing in on the intent, the merit, and the effect of both texts and images. *Nudism in Modern Life* was acceptable by the District of Columbia Court of Appeals because it was “an honest, sincere, scientific and educational study,” while Lillian Smith’s *Strange Fruit*, a novel about race relations in the south, was found by a Massachusetts court to be obscene even though it was a “work of literary merit.” The nudist magazine *Sunshine & Health*, long a target of censorship, was found obscene in Arkansas but not Ohio. A District of Columbia federal judge found the magazine obscene only after an obsessive analysis of camera angles, subtitles, and lighting in the issue in question. The cover image of a young woman with “a bosom quite larger by far than normal,” shot “as to elongate and make quite massive the breast as distinguished from the very small nipple,” was not obscene, nor was the exposure of a young girl’s labia major, as it was “diminutive and juvenile,” but the picture of a man with his “male organ” cloaked in shadows was obscene because “the corona of the penis is clearly discernible.”

⁴⁵¹ For example: *Esquire*, *The Nudist*, *Beauty Parade*, *Eyeful*, *Bizarre*, *Whisper*, and *Titter*.

⁴⁵² The word “Comstockery” was first coined as a derogatory term by George Bernard Shaw in response to an inquiry by *New York Times* correspondent Robert Welch regarding the restricting of Shaw’s *Man and Superman* at the New York Public Library in 1905. Shaw wrote: “Comstockery is the world’s standing joke at the expense of the United States. Europe likes to hear of such things. It confirms the deep-seated conviction of the Old World that America is a provincial place, a second-rate country-town civilization

The growing presence of ‘nudie’ magazines at newsstands, however, where they could ostensibly be acquired by anyone, including youth, began to provoke concern. A 1951 article in *Women’s Home Companion* warned that “The Smut Peddler Is After Your Child,” claiming that the “smut racket” had become a multi-million dollar business, and citing police in attributing “mass outbreaks of sexual promiscuity” amongst students in a suburban high school outside Chicago to “obscene books or pictures in their possession.”⁴⁵⁴ In addition to nudist, physique, fetish, and “cheesecake” magazines,⁴⁵⁵ a rash of “stag mags” appeared in the wake of *Playboy*’s success.⁴⁵⁶ By 1957, *Time* found more than forty of these magazines on the market — “the biggest, bawdiest, bestselling collection of stag magazines in publishing history” — while *Newsweek* reported that this “spread of smut” was “now being directed at the nation’s youth.”⁴⁵⁷ *Better Homes and Gardens* made no distinction between “man about town” magazines and those

after all.” Public backlash to the overweening prudishness of Comstockery, which was becoming a national embarrassment, led to the decline of the once powerful vice societies in the 1930s and 1940s. The New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, for example, was renamed the Society to Maintain Public Decency in 1947 — a shift from an offensive to a defensive position that, as Whitney Strub notes, “signified the declining potency of the organization” — and following a disastrous fund-raising campaign in 1951, went on “inactive status.” Laurence, Dan H., ed. *Bernard Shaw: Collected Letters 1898-1910*. New York: Reinhardt, 1972. 559-560. Print; Strub, *Perversion for Profit*, 11-12. For a detailed account of the decline of American vice societies, see: Boyer, *Purity in Print*, 128-166.

⁴⁵³ Samuel Roth, for example, was in and out of the courts for decades prior to being the primary defendant in the landmark Supreme Court Case *Roth v. United States*. Prosecution focused on the unsolicited advertising of his publications to schools and orphanages. In his defense, Roth said he had acquired mailing lists from reputable sources.

⁴⁵⁴ Maisel, Albert. “The Smut Peddler Is After Your Child.” *Women’s Home Companion* Nov. 1951: 24-25, 49, 52, 54, 57. Print.

⁴⁵⁵ The term “cheesecake” first appeared in 1915, describing “publicly acceptable, mass-produced images of semi-nude women.” The Petty and Vargas girls of *Esquire* are early examples of cheesecake. Magazines dedicated to these kinds of images were pioneered by publisher Robert Harrison in the 1940s, beginning with *Beauty Parade* in 1941, and followed by a string of others that grew progressively more explicit: *Eyeful*, *Wink*, *Flirt*, *Titter*, and *Whisper*. Meyerowitz, Joanne. “Women, Cheesecake, and Borderline Material: Responses to Girlie Pictures in the Mid-Twentieth-Century U.S.” *Journal of Women’s History* 8.3 (1996): 10. Print; See also: Gabor, Mark. *The Pinup: A Modest History*. New York: Universe Books, 1972. Print.

⁴⁵⁶ For example, *Cabaret*, *Jaguar*, *Jem*, *Nugget*, and *U.S. Male*.

⁴⁵⁷ “Playkids.” *Time* 29 April 1957: 69-71. Print; “The Spread of Smut.” *Newsweek* 27 Apr. 1957: 41-42. Print.

in which “homosexuality, nymphomania, lesbianism, fetishism, and bestiality are common subjects,” and explicitly linked this “Newsstand Filth” to juvenile delinquency.⁴⁵⁸

The focus on youth was inspired by the Congressional hearings of the Kefauver Committee, formed by Senator Estes Kefauver to investigate the link between comics and juvenile delinquency. After producing an ambivalent report that suggested comics were unlikely to cause delinquency in “well-adjusted” children but might “give support and sanction to already existing antisocial tendencies,” Kefauver turned the committee’s attention — and the media’s — to the link between juvenile delinquency and obscene publications.⁴⁵⁹ The committee’s report played up “pornography” as a “\$500-million-a-year-racket,” of which a “very large percentage reaches the hands of juveniles” and intensifies “the impulses which spur people to sex crimes.”⁴⁶⁰ Although sparse on evidence, the report effectively rekindled public outrage over obscene publications, argues Whitney Strub, by “creating an image of [...] a massive industry run by murky characters who [...] targeted children and sexually corrupted them.”⁴⁶¹

In 1957, the U.S. Supreme Court — which had not ruled on obscenity in six decades — would try to resolve the ambiguity that was causing “confusion in the courts.”⁴⁶² *Butler v. Michigan*, which overturned a Michigan law banning the sale of books “tending to the corruption of the morals of youth,” reflected Learned Hand’s 1913 concern by arguing that “the incidence of this enactment is to reduce the adult population of Michigan to reading only what is fit for

⁴⁵⁸ Pollack, Jack Harrison. “Newsstand Filth: A National Disgrace!” *Better Homes and Gardens* Sep. 1957: 10-11, 197, 205. Print.

⁴⁵⁹ Shortly after initial hearings in May of 1955, the *New York Times* reported “Smut Held Cause of Delinquency,” citing committee findings that “the \$350,000,000-a-year industry has taken advantage of legal loopholes,” spreading pornography in “schools and other places where children gather,” and the testimony of Cornell psychiatrist George W. Henry claiming a correlation between this spread and the rise of juvenile delinquency. “Smut Held Cause of Delinquency.” *New York Times* 1 June 1955: 35. *ProQuest*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁶⁰ Senate Committee on the Judiciary. *Obscene and Pornographic Literature and Juvenile Delinquency: Interim Report of the Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency*. Washington: GPO, 1956. 3, 61-62. Print.

⁴⁶¹ Strub, *Perversion for Profit*, 27.

children.”⁴⁶³ In *Roth v. United States*, the court clarified that obscenity was “utterly without redeeming social importance” and thus not protected by the Constitution, but cemented a crucial distinction at play in the arguments of obscenity trials in the lower courts since at least 1922: that “the portrayal of sex in art, literature, and scientific works, is not itself sufficient reason to deny material the constitutional protection of freedom of speech and press.” Overturning the nearly century-old common law established in *Regina v. Hicklin*, *Roth* redefined obscenity in terms of “whether to the average person, applying contemporary community standards, the dominant theme of the material appeals to prurient interest.”⁴⁶⁴ While the Court upheld the conviction under Comstock law of Samuel Roth for selling through the mail the journals *Good Times* and *American Aphrodite*, the ruling effectively opened the floodgates for erotic publications — not only literature like D.H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and Henry Miller’s *The Tropic of Cancer*, but also the kind of magazines with which *Perversion for Profit* took umbrage.

The ambiguous notion of the “average person” and the lack of clarity about what constituted “contemporary community standards” only furthered confusion in the courts, inviting increasing prosecutions, but resulting in fewer convictions and in an overall increase in legally acceptable sexual representations. As Kendrick argues, though, it was the “inadvertently radical stance” of the phrase “utterly without redeeming social value” that really threw open the gates for the ensuing floodtide of filth, as now “the tiniest nugget of ‘social importance’ [...] would neutralize a mountain of prurience.”⁴⁶⁵

Publishers quickly took advantage of the new definition of obscenity, playing up the scientific, artistic, or literary value of their sex-themed publications. Fetish magazines, for

⁴⁶² A number of obiter dicta in other cases, however, had made clear the proscription of obscenity from Constitutional protection: *Public Clearing House v. Coyne*, *Hoke v. United States*, *Near v. Minnesota*, *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire*, *Hannegan v. Esquire*, *Winters v. New York*, *Beauharnais v. Illinois*.

⁴⁶³ *Butler v. Michigan*. 352 U.S. 380. U.S. Supreme Court. 1957. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁶⁴ *Roth v. United States*. 354 U.S. 476 U.S. Supreme Court. 1957. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

example — the “dominant theme” of which would make them suspect even under *Roth* — were cast as anthropological studies of sexual subcultures, and thus of eminent social value.⁴⁶⁶ So-called “sexploitation” films had long taken this tack, and following both *Roth* and the Supreme Court’s 1952 overruling of *Mutual v. Ohio* in *Burstyn v. Wilson*, which granted movies First Amendment protection, these films would flourish as well.⁴⁶⁷ In tandem with increasingly liberal attitudes toward sex and speech as the 1960s unfolded, *Roth* made it difficult to get obscenity convictions, for films or for publications. Rippling back through the legal system, obscenity prosecutions began to decline, and then arrests. Publishers and filmmakers, as well as booksellers, newsstand operators, and theater owners, were in turn emboldened to produce, distribute, and exhibit increasingly risqué sexual materials.

Moreover, *Roth* had made it clear that obscenity now pertained solely to sex, and more specifically, to representations of sexual pleasure intended to arouse desire.⁴⁶⁸ But rather than limiting these representations, this paring down of obscenity to the “hard core” allowed them to multiply through discursive mobilizations toward diverse ends. Justice Brennan’s proclamation that sex is a “motive force in human life” and “one of the vital problems of human interest and public concern” positioned sex as an inherently valuable topic of public discourse, but by bracketing off sexual pleasure from the realm of publicly acceptable ideas and expressions, *Roth*

⁴⁶⁵ Kendrick, *Secret Museum*, 201-202.

⁴⁶⁶ This tactic was not new, but it would be more successful following *Roth* than it had been in, say, the 1936 case *United States v. Levine*, in which Judge Learned Hand ruled obscene all three texts in question, finding the claim to “serious anthropology” in *Secret Museum of Anthropology* “extremely dubious,” the declaration of *Crossways of Sex* as “a scientific treatise on sexual pathology” to be “more than questionable,” and *Black Lust*, a supposed “study in sadism and sadomasochism,” to be “patently erotic.” *United States v. Levine*. 83 F.2d 156. U.S. Court of Appeals. 1936. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁶⁷ Schaefer, Eric. *“Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!” A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999. Print.

⁴⁶⁸ Thus Justice Harlan’s need to point out in *Cohen v. California* [1968] that “this is not [...] an obscenity case. Whatever else may be necessary to give rise to the States’ broader power to prohibit obscene expression, such expression must be, in some significant way, erotic.” In reference to the speech in question — the words “Fuck the Draft” painted on appellant Paul Cohen’s jacket — Harlan argued that “It cannot plausibly be maintained that this vulgar allusion to the Selective Service System would conjure up such psychic stimulation in anyone likely to be confronted with Cohen’s crudely defaced jacket.”

declared that sexual pleasure in and of itself had no inherent value.⁴⁶⁹ This had the effect of separating — by law — the representation of sexual pleasure from the whole complex of social, political, and economic entanglements in which it is always actually embedded. Sexual pleasure became a floating signifier, which in and of itself has no meaning or value, but can be deployed within systems of representation that provide it with a meaningful and valuable context. The politicization of erotic representation, as Richard Ellis argues, thus made it more “plainly available as a representational discourse, [as] a deployment of signifiers within contemporary culture.”⁴⁷⁰

The “opening of the floodgates,” then, was not merely a result of de-censoring sexual representations, but was rather a process of constituting “sex as a problem of knowledge and pleasure.” The juridical “construction of sex as a political and social problem belonging to society as a whole,” argues Linda Williams, meant that even sexual pleasure — sex for the sake of sex — “was automatically important and of interest.”⁴⁷¹ Not only from the “smut peddlers” did the flood of filth flow, but also from all those who discursively engaged with sexual pleasure as a public concern. For example, the films and publications of CDL, as Whitney Strub has shown, banked on the “erotic charge” of their vivid depictions of “deviant” sex to “arouse” the public and “stimulate” community action. Their pamphlets trafficked in the very same images they condemned, and also employed “the advertising techniques of the midcentury exploitation films that traveled small-town America promising illicit thrills under the radars of censors.”⁴⁷² A 1965 article in the *Nation* labeled a CDL pamphlet featuring “the nineteen dirtiest passages” from Henry Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer* “a piece of pornography,” and quoted a publisher saying of

⁴⁶⁹ As Solicitor General J. Lee Rankin explained to the Court, the only “idea” expressed in pornography was “that there is pleasure in sexual gratification” — the “social value” of this idea being “of course, nil.” Lockhart, “Why Obscene?” 59.

⁴⁷⁰ Ellis, Richard. “Disseminating Desire: Grove Press and the End[s] of Obscenity.” *Perspectives on Pornography: Sexuality in Film and Literature*. Eds. Gary Day & Clive Bloom. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988. 38-41. Print.

⁴⁷¹ Williams, *Hardcore*, 89-90.

Perversion for Profit that “hundreds of little old ladies in gym shoes have gotten their first sexual kicks in years.”⁴⁷³

In the decades following *Roth*, publishers and pornographers, attorneys and jurists, congressmen and commissioners, courts and government agencies, sociologists and psychologists, and feminist, religious, and other social organizations would all participate in the circulation of ‘obscene’ sexual representations as they struggled to contextualize sexual pleasure within discourses that would give it meaning and value. The representation of sexual pleasure — sex for the sake of sex, the very definition of obscenity — which for two centuries had been purged from the public arena of popular culture — would be put on/scene through this political struggle over the meaning of sex within the shifting moral and social order. The need to contextualize sexual representations in order for them to be legitimate would often result in contexts only abstractly related to the representations, producing abstract sexual knowledge that cloaks embedded values behind purported meanings.

The Golden Age: From Porn to Porno Chic

The period between *Roth* in 1957 and the Supreme Court’s 1973 ruling in *Miller v. California* has been called the golden age of pornography.⁴⁷⁴ Although the number of obscenity trials increased following *Roth* as various parties tested the terms of “contemporary community standards” and “social value,” successful prosecutions were difficult to obtain, and were increasingly overturned, often by the Supreme Court itself. In a 1957 per curiam decision, for example, the Court reversed an Illinois ruling that had banned the French film *The Game of Love*

⁴⁷² Strub, *Perversion for Profit*, 85, 107, 110-112.

⁴⁷³ Mark, Norman. “Censorship: Fanatics and Fallacies: The Anonymous Smut Hunters.” *Nation* (5 July 1965): 5-7. Print.

⁴⁷⁴ Lane, Frederick S. III. *Obscene Profits: The Entrepreneurs of Pornography in the Cyber Age*. New York: Routledge, 2000. 24. Print.

[1954].⁴⁷⁵ In 1958, they reversed a New York state ruling against a film version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* [1955], and vacated rulings against the homoerotic magazine *ONE* and the nudist magazine *Sunshine & Health*.⁴⁷⁶ In a 1962 reversal of obscenity findings against physique magazine publisher *MANual Enterprises*, the Court argued that portrayals of nude males “cannot fairly be regarded as more objectionable than many portrayals of the female nude that society tolerates.”⁴⁷⁷

The Court also attempted to address the issue of community standards, which had made pornography, as one California district attorney put it, “a matter of geography.”⁴⁷⁸ Justice Harlan clarified that “community” referred to “a national standard of decency.”⁴⁷⁹ Justice Brennan would reiterate this point two years later in reversing an obscenity ruling against Ohio theater manager Nico Jacobellis for screening the French film *Les Amants* [1958], pointing out that “It is, after all, a national Constitution we are expounding.”⁴⁸⁰ On the same day, the Court cited *Jacobellis* in reversing a Florida conviction based on Henry Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer*, which had been the subject of bans, seizures, burnings, and more than sixty criminal cases around the country.⁴⁸¹

In 1966, the Court reversed a Massachusetts ruling that had found obscene John Cleland’s *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, which had been subject to censorship for centuries. Justice

⁴⁷⁵ *Times Film Corp. v. Chicago*. 355 U.S. 35. U.S. Supreme Court. 1957. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁷⁶ *Kingsley International Pictures v. Regents*. 360 U.S. 684. U.S. Supreme Court. 1959. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; *One, Inc. v. Oleson*. 355 U.S. 371. U.S. Supreme Court. 1958. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; *Sunshine Book Co. v. Summerfield*. 355 U.S. 372. U.S. Supreme Court. 1958. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁷⁷ *MANual Enterprises v. Day*. 370 U.S. 478. U.S. Supreme Court. 1962. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁷⁸ Strub, *Perversion for Profit*, 66.

⁴⁷⁹ *MANual Enterprises v. Day*. 370 U.S. 478. U.S. Supreme Court. 1962. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁸⁰ In a concurring opinion, Justice Stewart argued that obscenity was “limited to hard-core pornography, “but admitted the impossibility of defining “the kinds of materials I understand to be embraced by that shorthand description,” adding, famously, that “I know it when I see it, and the motion picture involved in this case is not that.” *Jacobellis v. Ohio*. 378 U.S. 184 U.S. Supreme Court. 1964. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

Brennan reiterated that “a book cannot be proscribed unless it is found to be *utterly* without redeeming social value.”⁴⁸² The following year, *Redrup v. New York* reversed three convictions involving pulp novels and adult magazines. The Court’s per curiam opinion implied, as Edward de Grazia shows, that consenting adults ought to be Constitutionally entitled to concededly obscene and pornographic publications.⁴⁸³ In 1967 and 1968, in what became known as “Redrapping,” the Court reversed dozens of obscenity convictions.⁴⁸⁴ Finally, in 1969, the Court overturned a Georgia conviction for possession of pornographic films, arguing that “the Constitution protects the right to receive information and ideas, regardless of their social worth,” and thus extending constitutional protection to obscenity for the first time by ruling that “the mere private possession of obscene matter cannot be a crime.”⁴⁸⁵

Pornography flourished, and under a sometimes-thin veneer of social value became more explicit while also beginning to find its way into the cultural mainstream. The publication of adult-oriented men’s magazines exploded. The Kinsey Institute’s collection houses over 200 such titles that debuted in the United States between 1957 and 1973, twenty of which launched in 1957

⁴⁸¹ *Grove Press v. Gerstein*. 378 U.S. 577. U.S. Supreme Court. 1964. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Lewis, Anthony. “The Most Recent Troubles of ‘Tropic’.” *New York Times* 21 Jan 1962: 5, 16, 18. *ProQuest*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁸² *Memoirs v. Massachusetts*. 383 U.S. 413. U.S. Supreme Court. 1966. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁸³ Specifically, the Court reversed the convictions because in none of the cases “was there a claim that the statute in question reflected a specific and limited state concern for juveniles,” nor did they suggest “an assault upon individual privacies,” nor did they involve pandering. de Grazia, Edward. *Girls Lean Back Everywhere: The Law of Obscenity and the Assault on Genius*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993. 516. Print; *Redrup v. New York*. 386 U.S. 767. U.S. Supreme Court. 1967. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁸⁴ Redrup, explained John Rogge in a law review article of the time, “has become the password for reversing findings of obscenity.” As Edward de Grazia defines it, Redrapping was “decisions by the Court reversing lower court obscenity findings without written explanation other than citation to *Redrup*.” Redrapping, according to de Grazia, “encouraged sex-pulp publishers to produce soft-core pornography, soft-core publishers to harden the ‘core,’ and establishment publishers to issue works having slight, if any, literary or artistic value without fear for the sexual explicitness, or eroticism, of the content.” de Grazia, *Girls Lean Back*, 518; *Redrup v. New York*. 386 U.S. 767. U.S. Supreme Court. 1967. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Rogge, O. John. “[T]he High Court of Obscenity.” *University of Colorado Law Review* 41.1 (1969): 59. Print. For a list of the Court’s “redrappings,” see: Kobylka, Joseph. *The Politics of Obscenity: Group Litigation in a Time of Legal Change*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1991. 174-175. Print.

alone, and half of which launched by 1960. There were undoubtedly others lost to history. Many of these magazines sought the upscale market of *Playboy*, such as *Monsieur*, which billed itself as “Sophisticated Entertainment for Men,” *King*, which was “For the Gallant Male,” *Impact*, “The Magazine for Discerning Men,” and *Debonair*, “For the Man Who Wants the Better Things in Life.” Others seemed to appeal to a coarser crowd, including *Satan*, “Devilish Entertainment for Men,” *Scamp*, “The Sparkling Companion For Men,” *Bare*, which delivered “Exposés Others Fear To Print!” and *Jester*, “America’s Freshest, Lustiest Magazine.” All of these magazines contextualized their erotic images within an appeal to a particular lifestyle, constituted by the composition of the images themselves and their captions, as well as cover art, layout, and the articles, reviews, interviews, and advertisements that filled out the pages.⁴⁸⁶ The trend across the lot is toward greater explicitness over time, as growing competition drove publishers to push the limits of acceptability. This is exemplified in what became known as the “Pubic Wars,” in which Bob Guccione’s *Penthouse* went head-to-head with *Playboy* in a battle to be the most explicit, with fighting points indexed to the amount of pubic hair shown. *Penthouse* won when Hugh Hefner, concerned with alienating his “sophisticated readers,” backed down, choosing to keep *Playboy* more demure while launching the more explicit *Oui*.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁵ *Stanley v. Georgia*. 394 U.S. 557. U.S. Supreme Court. 1969. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁸⁶ Other magazines were more specific in their appeal, as evidenced in their titles and taglines: For “The Worldly Man,” *Don Juan*, or *Girls of the World*, which promised that “Wherever Women are, We Uncover Them,” or *Girls Around the World*; for the voyeur (as if they all aren’t), *Ogle* and *Girl Watcher*; for the lingerie lover, *Tip Top* focused “From the Tip of the Toes to the Top of the Hose,” as did *Satin and Lace*, *Black Nylons*, *The Nylon Jungle*, *Naughty Nylons*, *Red Garter*, *Slip & Garter*, *Nifty Nylons*, and *Black Lace*; for the Francophile, *Moulin Rouge* offered “The French Touch in Entertainment,” *comme l’a fait Paris Chere*, *French Frills*, *French Pastry*, *La Femme*, *Paris Taboo*, and *Fabulous Femmes*; for the nudist, *Jaybird High Jinx!* indulged in “The Exploration of a Heavenly Body,” as did *Suburban Jaybird*, *Nude Rebels*, *Teenage Jaybird*, *The Jaybird Era*, and *Jaygirl Photos*; for the swinger, *Swingle*, “The Magazine for Swinging Singles,” *Pad*, “The Magazine that Swings,” *The Swinger*, and *Swingers World*; and for those with a more particular fetish, *Fantasia* offered female domination and spanking, *Busty* focused on big breasts, *Brunette* was for lovers of dark hair, *Derriere*, *Bottoms Up*, and *Raised Skirts and Bare Asses* focused on female buttocks, while *Private Secretaries* allowed one to “See Their Erotic Fantasies Acted Out,” and *Blast Off!* presented “A Naked Saga of Conquests in Outer Space.”

⁴⁸⁷ Lane, *Obscene Profits*, 28.

Sexually explicit films had been around for almost as long as motion picture technology.⁴⁸⁸ Until the 1960s, however, they had only circulated outside the public sphere. In the United States, “stag” and “sexploitation” films had traveled an underground roadshow circuit, being privately screened by fraternal organizations at “stag parties” or “smokers.”⁴⁸⁹ *Roth* helped propel exploitation films into the public by lending legal weight to their shaky justifications for screening sex. After the New York Court of Appeals, citing *Roth*, found the nudist film *Garden of Eden* not obscene in 1957, a wave of films using the “nudist-camp” theme as a pretext for on-screen nudity washed over the emerging “grindhouse” circuit of small, rundown theaters in poor, urban neighborhoods.⁴⁹⁰ In 1959, Russ Meyer released *The Immoral Mr. Teas* — billed as “A French Comedy for Unashamed Adults.” Originally distributed to grindhouse theaters, the film “moved across the tracks” to art house theaters, drawing a “concourse of solid-looking citizens,”

⁴⁸⁸ One of the oldest extant American porn films is *A Free Ride*, also known as *A Grass Sandwich*, which the Kinsey Institute dates circa 1917-1919. Al DiLauro and Gerald Rabkin date it 1915 in their history of the stag film, *Dirty Movies*, as does filmmaker Alex DeRezney in his 1970 anthology film *A History of the Blue Movie*. Other early examples are *A Country Stud Horse* [1920], *The Pick Up* [1923], *The Casting Couch* [1924], *The Virgin in the Hot Pants* [1924], and *Wonders of the Unseen World* [1927]. These stag films are characterized by either “radical narrative discontinuity” (a string of disconnected scenes) or narrative “primitivism” (“minimally intelligible” attempts at narrative long after film narrative had matured into a complex visual language for storytelling), as well as an obsessive oscillation between exhibitionist “split beaver” shots (legs spread, genitals visible) and voyeuristic “meat shots,” which document the “genital event.” Di Lauro, Al & Gerald Rabkin. *Dirty Movies: An Illustrated History of the Stag Film, 1915-1970*. New York: Chelsea House, 1976. Print; Williams, *Hardcore*, 60-80.

⁴⁸⁹ In Europe, as Linda Williams notes, stag films were shown primarily at brothels, but in both cases, the private-public exhibition functioned as a space for male bonding, which worked through the film’s function of arousing sexual desire. This was very different from both the exhibition of pornography in public theaters, which, as Williams argues, functioned through a kind of narrative satisfaction of desire, and the private viewing of pornography made possible by the advent of home video, which functions primarily to relieve sexual desire. Williams, *Hardcore*, 72-76; See also: Pennington, Jody W. *The History of Sex in American Film*. Westport: Praeger, 2007. 24-27. Print.

⁴⁹⁰ The term “grindhouse” comes from a reference in the 1943 film *Lady of Burlesque* to a burlesque theater on 42nd street in New York, but it would come to refer in the 1950s and 1960s to small movie theaters in poor, urban neighborhoods, which, due to suburbanization, urban decay, white flight, and the growing popularity of television, began to show low-budget exploitation films that portrayed the crime, violence, and sexual content banned in Hollywood films by the Production Code in order to stay in business. Some “nudist-camp” films that played the grindhouse circuit following the *Garden of Eden* ruling were *Hideout in the Sun* [1960], *Diary of a Nudist* [1961], *Nude on the Moon* [1962], *Daughter of the Sun* [1962], *Nature’s Playmates* [1962], and *Gentlemen Prefer Nature Girls* [1963]. Pennington, *History of Sex*, 20-21; *Matter of Excelsior Pictures Corp. v. Regents of the University of the State of New York*. 3 N.Y.2d 237. Supreme Court of the State of New York. 1957. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

eventually grossing over \$1 million, and drawing sexploitation films out of the shadows.⁴⁹¹ A number of “nudie-cuties” followed, borrowing Meyer’s comedic adoption of the nudist-camp genre’s voyeuristic gaze and expanding on the settings and actions that “justified” nudity.⁴⁹² In the mid-1960s, “roughies,” “kinkies,” and “ghoulies” brought simulated sex to the screen, maintaining “social value” by contextualizing these acts in narratives of moral corruption or explorations of contemporary social problems.⁴⁹³ The early 1970s saw a host of sexploitation films purporting to be studies or exposés of sexual issues or of sexual representation.⁴⁹⁴

Meanwhile, the growing popularity of British neorealist and French new wave films such as *And God... Created Woman* [1956], *Room at the Top* [1958], *Les Amants* [1958], *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* [1960], and *Breathless* [1960] was putting pressure on Hollywood producers to incorporate sexual themes and content. Together, European imports and the more daring domestic films they inspired would unravel the Hollywood Production Code.

Michelangelo Antonioni’s *Blow-Up* [1966], which showed full frontal nudity of two teenage girls in a scene where they wrestle each other out of their clothes and have sex with the main character,

⁴⁹¹ Stinson, Charles. “Immoral Mr. Teas’ Ends Era in Movies.” *Los Angeles Times* 26 Jan. 1960: 18. *ProQuest*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁹² Some examples of nudie-cuties that followed the success of *The Immoral Mr. Teas* are: *The Adventures of Lucky Pierre* [1961], *The House on Bare Mountain* [1962], and *Pardon My Brush* [1964].

⁴⁹³ “Roughies” such as *Lorna* [1964], *The Defilers* [1965], *Bad Girls Go to Hell* [1965], and *Hot Spur* [1968], always punished characters — often violently — for their sexual sins and moral degeneracy. “Kinkies” like *Sin in the Suburbs* [1964], *One Shocking Moment* [1965], *The Swap and How They Make It* [1966], and *Suburban Confidential* [1966] depicted sexual deviancy as a problem related to the broader social pathology of the suburban middle class. “Ghoulies” like *Blood Feast* [1963], *Color Me Blood Red* [1964], and *Two Thousand Maniacs* [1964] combined the violent retribution for sexual sin of roughies, the sexual deviancy of kinkies, and the gore of horror movies in what would become a drive-in mainstay: the slasher film. Russ Meyer’s *Faster Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* [1966] seemed to satire this emerging genre even while embracing it.

⁴⁹⁴ For example: *Man and Wife* [1969], which claimed to be “An Educational Film for Married Adults”; *History of the Blue Movie* [1970], a studious compilation of stag film excerpts; *The Casting Call* [1970], a documentary on sexploitation film directors; *Sexual Freedom in Denmark* [1970], which examined the sexual sociology of Denmark and the issues of venereal disease and prostitution; *Rabin’s Revenge* [1971], a massage parlor exposé; and *Case Histories from Krafft-Ebing* [1971], which provided reenactments of case studies found in sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s work. As Linda Williams notes, these films “could hardly be taken seriously as advancing scientific knowledge of sexual practices,” but they suggest that “there is in fact no separating ‘sex for sex’s sake’ from the quest for knowledge of sex being undertaken by investigators into the *scientia sexualis*.” Williams, *Hardcore*, 98.

would be the first such film distributed in the United States by a member of the MPAA — MGM. In the same year, Mike Nichols' film adaptation of Edward Albee's play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, which had been denied a Pulitzer because of its profanity and sexual themes, was produced and distributed by Warner Brothers after securing an exemption from the Production Code Administration by classifying it as "Adults Only." The following year, Nichols' *The Graduate*, which was not classified for adults only, revealed brief glimpses of frontal nudity in a plot centered on an adulterous affair between a young college graduate and the wife of his father's business partner. The film was both a box office and critical success, grossing over \$100 million and winning numerous awards. The Production Code was clearly defunct, and in 1968, after the Supreme Court signaled that a ratings system would be Constitutional if not overly vague,⁴⁹⁵ the MPAA adopted such a system.⁴⁹⁶ MPAA ratings divided audiences according to age, signaling a shift in industry regulation of media sex that echoed the legal turn toward protecting youth in particular.

Freed from the Code, the New Hollywood began to test the recently redrawn limits of obscenity, increasingly incorporating the nudity, sexual themes, and simulated sex of neorealism, new wave, and sexploitation into mainstream films. *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* [1969] explored open marriage, affairs, wife-swapping, and group sex. *Midnight Cowboy* [1969], an X-rated portrait of the travails of a male prostitute, won three Academy Awards, including Best Picture. Barbara Streisand played a prostitute in *The Owl and the Pussycat* [1970], and Jane Fonda took

⁴⁹⁵ The city of Dallas had enacted an ordinance establishing a Motion Picture Classification Board to classify films as suitable or not suitable for young persons, defined as those under 16. In *Interstate Circuit v. Dallas*, the Court found the ordinance in violation of the First and Fourteenth Amendments, being unconstitutionally vague, since it lacks "narrowly drawn, reasonable and definite standards for the officials to follow." *Interstate Circuit v. Dallas*. 390 U.S. 676. U.S. Supreme Court. 1968. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁹⁶ The original system classified films as "G" for General audiences, "M" for Mature audiences (parental guidance recommended), "R" for Restricted (under 16 must be accompanied by parent or guardian), and "X," for which no one under 17 would be admitted. "M" was changed to "GP" (General audiences, Parental guidance recommended) in 1970 because the word "mature" was seen to have sexual connotations, and to "PG" in 1972 (Parental Guidance Suggested).

the Best Actress Oscar for her portrayal of a call girl in *Klute* [1971]. Following the popular success of Russ Meyer's sexploitation film *Vixen!*, Twentieth Century-Fox commissioned Meyer to make the X-rated *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* [1970], which followed an all-girl rock band on their drug and sex fueled rise and fall. Intended "simultaneously to be a satire, a serious melodrama, a rock musical, a comedy, a violent exploitation picture, a skin flick and a moralistic exposé," the film was a hit, grossing ten times its production costs at the box office.⁴⁹⁷

This blurring of pornographic and mainstream film in the *Roth* era would find its apotheosis in the "porno chic" phenomenon of the early 1970s. By this time, adult theaters and bookstores had become common, not only in urban centers, but also in the suburbs and in small towns of the heartland.⁴⁹⁸ Newspapers across the country were running articles on the growing popularity of pornography; some, like *The New York Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the Hollywood trade paper *Variety*, were running positive reviews of pornographic films.⁴⁹⁹ This culminated in the breakout success of *Deep Throat* [1972], and following it, *Behind the Green Door* [1972] and *The Devil in Miss Jones* [1973]. These hardcore films played to large audiences in mainstreet theaters, drawing celebrities, diplomats, businessmen, single women, couples, and throngs of the middle classes, for whom attendance was a sign of hip, sexual sophistication. The films became the topic of cocktail-party and dinner-

⁴⁹⁷ Ebert, Roger. "Russ Meyer: Ten Years After the 'Beyond.'" *Film Comment* (July-August, 1980): 44. Print.

⁴⁹⁸ Even Dodgeville, Iowa, with a population of twenty, had a tavern that doubled as a porn theater several nights a week. King, Seth S. "Pornographic Shows Spread in Midwest." *New York Times* 11 Mar. 1973: 48. *ProQuest*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Roberts, Steven V. "Pornography in U.S.: A Big Business Getting Bigger." *New York Times* 22 Feb. 22 1970: 1, 66. *ProQuest*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁴⁹⁹ Even the conservative *Wall Street Journal* ran "A Kind Word or Two About Smut" that claimed "pornography is harmless" and "restricting it is dangerous." The article cited the \$550 million to \$2 billion estimates of the smut industry's value to the GDP, noted the high cost of enforcing useless anti-pornography laws, called for decriminalization of obscenity, and asked, "Why can't we all just mind our own business?" Gartner, Michael. "A Kind Word or Two About Smut." *Wall Street Journal* 15 Sep. 1972: 12. *ProQuest*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

table conversations, of numerous articles in the popular, trade, and academic press, and of late-night talk show jokes.⁵⁰⁰ Pornography had entered the mainstream.

Not everyone was enthusiastic about the newfound popularity of porn. The emerging New Right had lumped pornography together with the liberal mores of the sexual revolution, the New Left politics of groups like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and the music, drugs, and revolutionary rhetoric of the counterculture, which were all seen as “pathological” conditions of “the permissive society.”⁵⁰¹ With Richard Nixon in the White House, the New Right’s moral crusade against permissiveness — particularly the liberalization of sexual representation that had unfolded since *Roth* — gained administrative backing. Nixon went on the offensive soon after taking office, pressuring Congress to enact legislation that would stem the flow of “offensive sex materials,” prodding Attorney General John Mitchell to “seek strong measures to curb pornography,” and urging Postmaster General Winton Blount to “Put the Smut Merchants Out of Business.”⁵⁰² Nixon rejected the report of President Johnson’s Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, which had found no evidence of social or psychological harm from porn, and had recommended its decriminalization.⁵⁰³ Calling the report “morally bankrupt,” Nixon stated that, “So long as I am in the White House, there will be no relaxation of the effort to control and eliminate smut from our national life.” Arguing that smut “should be outlawed in every State in the union,” Nixon called on “the legislatures and courts at every level of American life [to] work in unison to achieve that goal.”⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰⁰ Barnes, Clive. “Sex Shockers: Hard Porno-Cash.” *Vogue* Apr. 1973: 20. Print; Blumenthal, Ralph. “Porno Chic.” *New York Times* 21 Jan. 1973: E28, 30. *ProQuest*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Gans, Herbert. “*Deep Throat*: The Pornographic Film Goes Public.” *Social Policy* Jul./Aug. 1973: 119-121. Print; Williamson, Bruce. “Porno Chic.” *Playboy* Aug. 1973: 132-137, 153-161. Print; See also: O’Toole, Laurence. *Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire*. London: Serpent’s Tail, 1998. 70. Print; Strub, *Perversion for Profit*, 166-168.

⁵⁰¹ Sokoloff, Boris. *The Permissive Society*. New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1971. 5. Print.

⁵⁰² Strub, *Perversion for Profit*, 142-143.

⁵⁰³ *The Report on the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography*. New York: Bantam, 1970. Print.

⁵⁰⁴ Weaver, Warren Jr. “NIXON REPUDIATES OBSCENITY REPORT AS MORALLY VOID.” *New York Times* 25 Oct. 1970: 1. *ProQuest*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

Nixon's agenda advanced with his appointment of four new Supreme Court justices, which radically reshaped the court from Warren-era liberalism to Burger-era conservatism. The Court, in turn, reshaped obscenity jurisprudence in a quintet of 1973 cases. Two of these erased the distinction between material intended for public and private use, eroding the precedent of *Stanley v. Georgia*.⁵⁰⁵ A third case, *Paris v. Slaton*, upheld a Georgia state court's injunction against showing obscene films in a theater restricted to consenting adults.⁵⁰⁶ A fourth case, *Kaplan v. California*, upheld the conviction of an adult bookstore proprietor for selling a book "made up entirely of repetitive descriptions of physical, sexual conduct, 'clinically' explicit and offensive to the point of being nauseous." This case reversed the trend away from prosecuting written texts for obscenity, and along with *Paris v. Slaton*, further shifted obscenity jurisprudence toward protecting children in particular by arguing that the obscenity was "capable of encouraging or causing antisocial behavior, especially in its impact on young people."⁵⁰⁷

Finally, *Miller v. California* established a new test for obscenity. The Court rejected *Roth's* "utterly without redeeming social value" as "a burden virtually impossible to discharge under our criminal standards of proof," opting instead to question "whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value." The Court also found that trying to determine "national community standards" was an exercise in futility, and ruled that states should

⁵⁰⁵ *U.S. v. Orito*. 413 U.S. 139. U.S. Supreme Court. 1973. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; *U.S. v. 12 200-Ft. Reels of Film*. 413 U.S. 123. U.S. Supreme Court. 1973. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁵⁰⁶ In the majority opinion, Chief Justice Warren Burger rejected the report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, as had the President and Congress, citing instead the dissenting report of Commissioner Charles Keating (yes, of CDL) in arguing that a state's interest in regulating commerce to safeguard against crime extends to obscenity because "there is at least an arguable correlation between obscene material and crime." While Burger admitted the lack of "scientific data" or "conclusive proof," he argued that "It is not for us to resolve empirical uncertainties underlying state legislation," except in rare cases where "legislation plainly impinges upon rights protected by the Constitution itself." Burger argued that in most cases states need to be given leeway to legislate in the absence of "scientifically certain criteria, and thus, "Although there is no conclusive proof of a connection between antisocial behavior and obscene material, the legislature of Georgia could quite reasonably determine that such a connection does or might exist." *Paris Adult Theater I v. Slaton*. 413 U.S. 49. U.S. Supreme Court. 1973. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

instead define the communities that would judge contemporary standards.⁵⁰⁸ The “Miller test,” as it became known, also further broadened the potential scope of obscenity by asking whether the work was “patently offensive” as defined by state law.

Police, prosecutors, and anti-pornography groups like CDL welcomed the *Miller* ruling enthusiastically. Charles Keating called it a “green light to combat smut.”⁵⁰⁹ But while some cities cracked down on adult bookstores and theaters, *Miller* hardly put an end to pornography’s golden age, having only a minor impact on the circulation of obscene materials, and actually inaugurating an era of increasing tolerance. The *New York Times* reported in 1974 that “Pornography is flourishing nationwide 17 months after the United States Supreme Court, unable to decide what is nationally obscene, told local communities to decide obscenity questions for themselves.” The problem, reported the *Times*, was that “local communities, including their judges, cannot decide either.” Moreover, “in most places residents appear to be apathetic,” while “police say they have more important crimes to fight,” and prosecutors “have neither the time nor money to spend cracking down on smut dealers.”⁵¹⁰ Nor were states enacting laws that would give definition to the term “patently offensive.”

A 1977 study found that *Miller* had had “little effect on the day-to-day regulation of obscene materials.”⁵¹¹ This was not quite true. Arrests, convictions, and prosecutions for obscenity continued as they had prior to *Miller*, but their numbers began to decline as cities and municipalities started using zoning laws to regulate pornography by relegating adult theaters and

⁵⁰⁷ *Kaplan v. California*. 413 U.S. 115. U.S. Supreme Court. 1973. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁵⁰⁸ *Miller v. California*. 413 U.S. 15. U.S. Supreme Court. 1973. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁵⁰⁹ Strub, *Perversion for Profit*, 171.

⁵¹⁰ Sterba, James P. “Pornography Fight Lags Across Nation.” *New York Times* 26 Nov. 1974: 1, 24. *ProQuest*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁵¹¹ New York University Obscenity Law Project. “An Empirical Inquiry into the Effects of *Miller v. California* on the Control of Obscenity.” *New York University Law Review* 52 (1977): 810-939. Print.

bookstores to marginal urban spaces.⁵¹² Rather than fighting smut, then, they worked out a truce, which had the effect of diluting the public presence of porn even while it proliferated. Moreover, though the public visibility of pornography was marginalized, it was legitimated as a public concern that could be managed through appropriate policy.⁵¹³

Miller certainly didn't have the chilling effect on the production of pornography for which Chief Justice Burger had hoped.⁵¹⁴ The churn in the adult magazine industry continued apace, with new titles coming and going every year — victims of hearty competition rather than censorship. And they only got more explicit, as their titles attest: *Asses and Snatches*, *Cocksure Teasers*, *Pussy Fever*, *Juggs*, *Another Fucking Magazine*. Larry Flint's *Hustler*, launched in 1974, made the "pubic wars" of a few years past seem quaint. Not only did the photo-spreads feature the fully exposed genitals of models in provocative poses, but the rest of the magazine targeted political and religious figures, anti-porn moralists and feminists, and the upscale pretensions of the *Playboy* crowd with scathing critiques and raunchy humor. By the end of the decade, *Hustler* had paved the way to simulated sex acts, and adult magazines were showing everything but actual penetration.

At the same time, the pornographic film industry, inspired by the popular successes of the early 1970s, was in the midst of a renaissance. Feature-length films like *The Private Afternoons of Pamela Mann* [1974], *Naked Came the Stranger* [1975], *The Opening of Misty Beethoven*

⁵¹² A Detroit ordinance, for example, zoned adult theaters and bookstores along with strip clubs, pawnshops, and pool halls, dispersing them in the marginal spaces outside residential areas and commercial shopping districts. A 1976 Supreme Court case upheld the ordinance, ruling that it did not violate the First because it did not ban sexual speech, and did not deny due process because numerous industries are subject to zoning laws. Toner, William. *Regulating Sex Businesses*. Chicago: American Society of Planning Officials, 1977. Print; *Young v. American Mini Theatres*. 427 U.S. 50. U.S. Supreme Court. 1976. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁵¹³ This wary legal tolerance of pornography was embraced by the Carter administration, as signaled by President Carter in a *Playboy* interview in which he argued, "You can't legislate morality." Scheer, Robert. "Playboy Interview: Jimmy Carter." *Playboy* Nov. 1986: 68. Print.

⁵¹⁴ During arguments for *Miller*, Burger circulated a memo suggesting that "a little 'chill' will do some of the ' pornos' no great harm and it might be good for the country. Woodward, Bob & Scott Armstrong. *The Brethren: Inside the Supreme Court*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979. 203. Print.

[1976], *Eruption* [1977], *Little Girls Blue* [1978], *Talk Dirty to Me* [1980], *Amanda by Night* [1981], and *Roommates* [1982] had well-developed scripts, complex yet coherent plots, decent acting, relatively large budgets, and high production values. They were taken seriously by the producers, directors, actors, and crew who made them, as well as by the critics and audiences who watched them. *Caligula* [1979] marked the peak, and, perhaps fittingly, the beginning of the decline, of this porn renaissance. Produced and financed by *Penthouse* founder Bob Guccione and Italian filmmaker Franco Rossellini, it had a budget of \$17 million (and ran \$5 million over), a script written by Gore Vidal, starred Malcolm McDowell, Helen Mirren, Peter O'Toole, and John Gielgud, and boasted an array of spectacular sets and detailed costumes reminiscent of the 'sword-and-sandal' epics of Hollywood's golden age. The final cut was almost three hours long. If ever a narrative justified pornographic representations, it is the tale of Caligula, rumored for his sexual perversity by Seneca, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio.⁵¹⁵ While the film was panned by critics, this was not because of its explicit scenes, but because Guccione's heavy hand in the production had rendered the tale unwieldy.

The golden age of pornography did not, then, end with *Miller v. California* in 1973. Rather, *Miller* inaugurated a decade of regulatory tolerance in which pornography continued to thrive. The public popularity of pornography that became apparent with the porno-chic phenomenon tempered the political backlash against media sex by the New Right, as evidenced in both the public's and officials' apathy about the issue. The elongated golden age produced increasingly explicit media sex, but it also manifested some of the most serious efforts to make pornography a form of art — in which representations of sexual pleasure were positioned within coherent narratives that gave pleasure itself meaning, rather than being contextualized and defined in terms

⁵¹⁵ See: Cassius Dio. *Roman History* Vol. VII. Trans. Earnest Cary. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924. 293-337. Print; Seneca, Lucius Annaeus. "An Essay On the Firmness of the Wise Man." *L. Annaeus Seneca, Minor Dialogs Together with the Dialog "On Clemency."* Trans. Aubrey Stewart. London: George Bell and Sons, 1889. 22-47. Print; C. Suetonius Tranquillus. "The Life of Caligula." *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars* Vol. I. Trans. J.C. Rolfe. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913. 437-443. Print.

of moral and social values. These efforts would dissolve in the 1980s when hardcore pornography would instead become an industry.

The Industrial Age: From Porno Chic to Porn Culture

The long golden age of pornography ended in the 1980s, seemingly the victim of an unlikely alliance between feminists, the New Right, and Christian fundamentalists. The New Right had helped put Ronald Reagan into the White House, gathering support by promising a return to traditional values that would resolve the social ills ostensibly brought on by the permissiveness of the 1960s and 1970s. The religious right had coalesced around Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority in the late 1970s, likewise advocating a return to traditional values, and in the 1980s they joined forces with the New Right in efforts to roll back sexual liberalism. Anti-porn feminism had emerged in the 1970s, rallying around Robin Morgan's claim that "Pornography is the theory, and rape is the practice." Activists like Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon, and groups like Women Against Pornography (WAP), argued that pornography was part of a systematic subordination of women that promoted violence and discrimination against them, and fought against it as a civil rights issue through protests and legal actions.

Together these three groups would ally in pushing for the criminalization of pornography. They pressured Reagan, who had initially shown little interest in the issue, to order an investigation into pornography, and they substantially shaped the ensuing work of the Meese Commission. Following the commission's 1986 report, which contradicted the findings of the earlier Lockhart Commission, the Reagan administration cracked down on porn. As recommended in the Meese report, a new Obscenity Unit was established in the Department of Justice, which rolled out "Project Porn" and "Operation Porn Sweep" to target producers and distributors of pornography with multiple prosecutions from conservative jurisdictions in a

process of “litigation by attrition.”⁵¹⁶ The Justice Department also began making use of The Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) to seize the assets of, and shut down, producers and distributors of allegedly obscene materials prior to any trial or conviction.⁵¹⁷ These high-profile operations demonstrated the Reagan administration’s commitment to fighting pornography, but worked more to put porn in the public spotlight than to eliminate it.

The end of the porn renaissance, then, was not due to the anti-pornography efforts of the political and religious right and anti-porn feminists. Rather, it was due to technological changes that radically reshaped how pornography was made. In a shift from the golden age to the industrial age of pornography, the video ‘revolution’ displaced the artistic ambitions of the renaissance with a drive toward mass commodity production. Video was substantially cheaper, easier, and quicker to produce than film, and thus involved significantly less risk.⁵¹⁸ Yet profit

⁵¹⁶ Between 1987 and 1991, the Department of Justice conducted 222 investigations and secured 135 convictions. Boyer, *Purity in Print*, 319; Brigman, William E. “Politics and the Pornography Wars.” *Wide Angle* 19.3 (1997): 149-170. Print.

⁵¹⁷ In 1984 Congress amended the 1970 Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act to include state and federal obscenity violations as predicate acts after senator Jesse Helms claimed a connection between crime and the pornography trade [P.L. 98-473]. Following recommendations of the Meese Report in 1986, an Obscenity Unit was established in the Department of Justice, and it began aggressively using RICO to shut down businesses thought to be affiliated with the porn trade. In *Fort Wayne Books v. Indiana* [1988], the Supreme Court upheld the use of RICO for prosecuting obscenity violations, but ruled that pre-trial seizure of ostensibly obscene material amounted to prior restraint of speech and was thus unconstitutional under the First Amendment. In *Alexander v. United States* [1993], the Court upheld the constitutionality of post-trial seizures of materials, obscene or not, associated with the porn trade, and denied that the severe penalties provided under RICO acted as prior restraint on future speech by shutting down and seizing the assets of businesses associated with obscenity convictions. *Fort Wayne Books v. Indiana*. 489 U.S. 46. U.S. Supreme Court. 1988. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; *Alexander v. United States*. 549 U.S. 544. U.S. Supreme Court. 1992. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; See: Aznavoorian, Vartan. “Using Racketeering Laws to Control Obscenity: *Alexander v. United States* and the Perversion of RICO.” *Boston College Law Review* 36.3.3 (1995): 553-586. Print; Bier, Bruno C. “RICO and the First Amendment: *Alexander v. United States*.” *Fordham Intellectual Property, Media and Entertainment Journal* 6.1 (1995): 369-425. Print; O’Donnell, John J. “RICO Forfeiture and Obscenity: Prior restraint or Subsequent Punishment?” *Fordham Law Review* 56.6 (1988): 1101-1128. Print.

⁵¹⁸ The cost of producing, printing, and distributing a feature-length porn film ranged from \$100,000 to millions of dollars, whereas a porn video could be made for under \$20,000 in the early 1980s, with the cost dropping as the decade progressed. Due to the exigencies of the market, a porn film might never see black. A porn video, on the other hand, with revenues spread over the broader and longer distribution life of the rental market, was a less risky investment. Moreover, unlike film, with which every shot needs to be processed, developed, and possibly retaken prior to post-production, the results of a video shoot are instantly available. Retakes can be done on the spot, and editing undertaken immediately. Arcand, Bernard.

was only thinly realized in post-sale rentals, so studios had to produce thirty to fifty videos per month. In this era of the “one-day wonder,” production practices developed along the efficient lines of the early Hollywood studio system.⁵¹⁹ There was an increased division and specialization of labor. Producers played a managerial role, keeping schedules and budgets tight. Cameramen, soundmen, technicians, prop artists, makeup artists, costume artists, grips, gaffers, editors, and actors were all contracted by the day, which often meant long hours working multiple shoots for different videos. Production was fast paced. Labor was expendable. Products were standardized. Pornography had finally become an industry, and porn a commodity.

Following the 1988 *People v. Freeman* ruling, in which the California Supreme Court effectively legalized the production of pornographic films and videos by distinguishing the paying of pornographic performers from pandering, hundreds of porn studios blossomed in the San Fernando Valley, the proximity of which to Hollywood provided easy access to equipment, skilled labor, and ‘talent’.⁵²⁰ By the end of the decade, thousands of porn videos were being produced per year, and sales and rentals had grown to \$1.6 billion.⁵²¹ They would hit \$4.2 billion by the end of the century. The most revolutionary aspect of pornography’s industrial revolution, however, was that it shifted consumption from the public spaces of adult theaters and bookstores to the private space of the home. The ability to view porn anonymously opened up a vast new market, which further fueled demand, while the disappearance of pornography from the public sphere distracted from its infusion into popular culture.

The Jaguar and the Anteater: Pornography Degree Zero. Trans. Wayne Grady. New York: Verso, 1993. 37. Print.

⁵¹⁹ O’Toole, *Pornocopia*, 180; Simpson, Nicola. “Coming Attractions: A Comparative History of the Hollywood Studio System and the Porn Business.” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 24.4 (2004): 635-652. Print.

⁵²⁰ The State of California appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, but the Court denied a stay of the lower court’s judgment and also denied the petition to review the case. *People v. Freeman*. 46 Cal. 3d 419. California Supreme Court. 1988. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; *California v. Freeman*. 488 U.S. 1311. U.S. Supreme Court. 1989. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁵²¹ Brigman, “Pornography Wars,” 162.

At the same time that pornography was withdrawing into the privacy of the home, mainstream media culture was becoming increasingly sexualized, even pornographic. Decades of self-regulated clean air overseen by the NAB and the FCC ended in the early 1970s with the advent of “topless radio.”⁵²² These talk shows, in which hosts exhorted callers to openly and explicitly discuss their sex lives, were popular but short lived, as their parent stations were subject to FCC fines and threats to their license renewal.⁵²³ Yet they sparked a struggle over “dirty discourse” on the air.⁵²⁴ When the FCC censured the Pacifica network’s New York station for broadcasting George Carlin’s “Filthy Words” — a comedic monologue about the seven words “you couldn’t say on the public airwaves” — the Pacifica Foundation sued on the grounds that the broadcast did not appeal to the prurient interest, and that the FCC’s broad interpretation of “indecent” encompassed much that was constitutionally protected. The U.S. Court of Appeals agreed, ruling that the FCC’s action “sweepingly forbids any broadcast of the seven words, irrespective of context, however innocent or educational they may be,” and that Carlin’s words were not obscene because they were not intended to “titillate.”⁵²⁵

The Supreme Court reversed, arguing that the anti-censorship clause of the Communication Act does not prevent review of broadcasts to determine whether they serve the public interest, and upholding indecency as a broadcast standard separate from obscenity, and thus not requiring a finding of prurient interest. Noting that “broadcasting is uniquely accessible to children, even those too young to read,” the Court ruled that the broadcast of “patently offensive, indecent material [...] confronts the citizen [...] in the privacy of the home, where the individual’s right to

⁵²² Talk radio, as John Semonche argues, took off in the 1960s, but as shows began to revolve more around the personality of the usually male host, they drew mostly male audiences. “Topless radio” was modeled on Bill Balance’s *Feminine Forum*, which first aired on KGBS in Los Angeles in 1970, and targeted young females with discussions of sexual relationships. Semonche, *Censoring Sex*, 189-190.

⁵²³ Carlin, John C. “The Rise and Fall of Topless Radio.” *Journal of Communication* 26.1 (1976): 31-37. Print.

⁵²⁴ As Hilliard and Keith show, both the FCC and Congress were looking for a test case that would provide judicial clarity about the FCC’s authority to regulate broadcast content. But the prohibitive cost of litigation made it more affordable for stations to pay the fines. Hilliard & Keith, *Dirty Discourse*, 18-19.

be left alone plainly outweighs the First Amendment rights of an intruder.” Yet the Court, perhaps paying heed to Justice Brennan’s warning of “a potential for reducing the adult population to hearing only what is fit for children,” was careful to rule narrowly, insisting that similar cases be considered on their own merits, and suggesting that indecency might not be actionable when children are not likely to be in the audience.⁵²⁶

As a result of both this ruling and the deregulatory climate of the FCC under Reagan-appointed chairman Mark Fowler, the FCC reverted to its hands-off mode of content regulation, particularly regarding broadcasts during the “safe harbor” hours of the evening.⁵²⁷ Sex on the radio thrived during the 1980s in shows like Dr. Ruth’s *Sexually Speaking* and Dr. Drew’s *Loveline*, which provided fora for serious, though light-hearted, discussions of sexual issues, often involving adolescents. Radio sex became positively pornographic in the hands of Howard Stern, especially following Infinity Broadcasting’s national syndication of *The Howard Stern Show*, which concerned itself almost exclusively with the exposition of sex for the sake of sex.

Broadcast television was also becoming more sexually explicit, while the rapidly developing medium of cable was becoming increasingly pornographic. In the 1970s, TV shows like CBS’s *All in the Family* and *Maude* had begun to take on sexual issues such as homosexuality, wife-swapping, rape, miscarriage, abortion, menopause, impotence, and venereal disease, while “jiggle TV” like ABC’s *Charlie’s Angels* and *Three’s Company* broke with the industry’s longstanding policies of “cleavage control” and restrictions on sexual innuendo.⁵²⁸

Amidst growing public criticism, the FCC proposed an amendment to the NAB Code reserving

⁵²⁵ *Pacifica v. FCC*. 556 Fed.2d 9. U.S. Court of Appeals. 1978. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁵²⁶ *FCC v. Pacifica*. 438 U.S. 726. U.S. Supreme Court. 1978. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013.

⁵²⁷ Heins, Marjorie, *Not In Front of the Children: “Indecency,” Censorship, and the Innocence of Youth*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2001. 109. Print.

⁵²⁸ Levine, Elana. *Wallowing in Sex: The New Sexual Culture of 1970s American Television*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. 37-40. Print; Semonche, *Censoring Sex*, 196-204.

the first hour of network programming for programs suitable for children.⁵²⁹ This “family hour” policy was voided by a U.S. District Court on the procedural grounds that the FCC had overstepped its authority and violated the anti-censorship provision of the Communication Act by persuading the NAB to adopt this policy, rather than holding public hearings. The NAB Code was itself dissolved several years later following an anti-trust suit, and the networks went into competition pushing explicitness against the line of indecency. A study on the sexual content of family hour programming conducted for the Kaiser Family Foundation found that from 1976 (the only season in which the NAB family hour policy was in effect) to 1996, programs containing sexual content increased from 43 to 75 percent, with sexual talk increasing from 39 to 59 percent, sexual behavior increasing from 26 to 61 percent, and with an overall trend toward more explicit talk and behavior.⁵³⁰ By the late 1990s, shows that recurrently focused on sex, like *Friends*, *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Melrose Place*, and *Seinfeld*, as well as shows that often depicted intimate sexual encounters and sometimes nudity, like *L.A. Law* and *NYPD Blue*, had become commonplace.

Cable television had been opened to pornographic material by the 1984 Cable Communications Policy Act. Although the act allowed franchising authorities to deny third party programming that was “in conflict with community standards in that it is lewd, lascivious, filthy or indecent,” it prohibited cable operators from exercising “editorial control” and protected them from liability under local and federal laws.⁵³¹ A 1992 Act that would have required all indecent programming be put on one channel to which access was blocked unless requested by the

⁵²⁹ The family hour was a particularly important time slot for the networks, as it drew the largest concentration of the highly valuable youth demographic. Cowan, Geoffrey. *See No Evil: The Backstage Battle Over Sex And Violence On Television*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979. 100-115. Print.

⁵³⁰ Kunkel, Dale, et al. *Sexual Messages on Family Television Hour: Content and Context*. Menlo Park: Kaiser Family Foundation, 1996. Print.

⁵³¹ Tiedrich, Lee J. & Cara E. Maggioni. “Obscenity and Indecency.” *The Communications Act: A Legislative History of the Major Amendments, 1934-1996*. Eds. Max D. Paglin, Joel Rosenbloom, & James R. Hobson. Silver Spring: Pike & Fischer, 1999. 138. Print.

subscriber was overturned by the Supreme Court.⁵³² Cable network pioneers like HBO, Showtime, and Cinemax started broadcasting softcore porn and sex-themed series such as *Eros America* and *Real Sex* after midnight in the 1980s. Channels dedicated to adult content like Playboy TV, Penthouse TV, and Hustler TV appeared in the 1990s as advances in digital signal processing allowed cable operators to offer more premium channels. Cable networks also began producing more original content in the 1990s, and highly popular primetime series like *Sex and the City* and *The Sopranos* showed full frontal nudity and took on a range of sexual issues. Following the sex lives of four young women in their quests for sexual gratification, *Sex and the City* was definitively about sex for the sake of sex.

Following the report of the Meese Commission and growing public backlash organized by the religious right's Morality in Media and the anti-pornography coalition National Decency Forum, the FCC had begun to crack down, expanding indecency to encompass anything that was "patently offensive," including sexual innuendo, and levying significant fines for offenses. Over a decade of legal struggles ensued as a coalition of industry and public interest groups led by Action for Children's Television (ACT) repeatedly challenged FCC rulings and Congressional legislation regulating indecency on the grounds that they tended to turn the FCC into a "superparent."⁵³³

⁵³² Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992. Pub. L. 102-385. 8 Oct. 1992. *Thomas*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; *Alliance for Community Media. v. FCC*, 95 U.S. 227. U.S. Supreme Court. 1996. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁵³³ In *ACT v. FCC* ("ACT I"), the DC Circuit court upheld the FCC's generic definition of indecency, but vacated several of their rulings on the grounds that they had no evidence of the efficacy of the "safe harbor," suggesting that the FCC "must endeavor to determine what channeling rule will most effectively promote parental — as distinguished from government — control." *ACT II* overturned a law pushed through Congress by Senator Jesse Helms that would have required the FCC to ban indecency twenty-four hours a day. *ACT III* upheld a subsequent Congressional law instituting a midnight-to-6 a.m. safe harbor, denying the need to evidence "clinically measurable injury" or "scientific demonstration of psychological harm" in legislating protection of youth from "sexually explicit, indecent, or lewd speech." *ACT IV* challenged the FCC's ability to impose sanctions with immediate bearing on broadcasts that could not get judicial review for years to come, but it was dismissed for procedural and jurisdictional issues. In a case related to the *ACT* series — *Sable Communications v. FCC* — the Supreme Court overturned a Congressional law against "dial-a-porn" on the grounds that a total ban was too broad, reiterating that indecency is protected by the First Amendment, and may only be regulated by the government when it

Protecting youth from media sex, as we have seen, has been a concern for centuries, but was long lumped together with concern about women and the poor. As the Courts increasingly recognized over the course of the twentieth century the right of consenting adults to even “concededly obscene” material, regulation of these materials began to focus specifically on youth. But at least since the Lockhart Commission’s report in 1970, the assumption that there is a harm from which to protect the young has been in question. As Marjorie Heins argues, the *ACT* cases effectively established a compelling government interest in protecting minors from indecency, regardless of a paucity of evidence that it could do them harm.⁵³⁴ This would define future rounds of legislation and judicial rulings regarding indecency on the air and online, starting with the 1996 Communication Decency Act (CDA). This will be taken up in chapter four. For now, suffice to say that ACT’s legal actions signaled the broadcasting industries’ active pursuit of more explicit content, and would help to refine the definition of indecency and the terms of its regulation, giving the industry broader leeway to produce and broadcast sexual material aimed at adults that would nonetheless be viewed by youth.

The sexualization of mainstream media culture went hand-in-hand with the legal efforts to regulate media sex, working to bring what were once obscene sexual representations on/scene and to normalize their public presence. Through decades of media-publicized trials and investigations, as well as the accompanying debate, the American public had become acclimatized not merely to “sex talk,” but more specifically, to “porn talk,” which began to appear, as Brian McNair has shown, “in every medium and genre, avant-garde and mainstream, fictional, scientific and

“chooses the least restrictive means to promote a compelling interest.” *ACT v. FCC*. 852 F.2d 1332. U.S. Court of Appeals. 1988. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; *ACT v. FCC*. 932 F.2d 1504. U.S. Court of Appeals. 1991. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; *ACT v. FCC*. 58 F.3d 654. U.S. Court of Appeals. 1995. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; *ACT v. FCC*. 59 F.3d 1249. U.S. Court of Appeals. 1995. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; *Sable Communications v. FCC*. 492 U.S. 115. U.S. Supreme Court. 1989. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁵³⁴ Heins, *Not In Front of the Children*, 126-131.

journalistic, which talked about, referred to, or assumed on the part of their audiences a quite sophisticated familiarity with and understanding of pornography.”⁵³⁵

This distinctly postmodern form of porno-chic manifested in the 1980s and 1990s as “meta-pornographies” that borrowed aesthetic conventions from the genre to parody, critique, comment on, explore, or investigate pornography. Keith Haring and Robert Mapplethorpe, for example, both acknowledged pornographic references in their sexually explicit works.⁵³⁶ Jeff Koons’s *Made in Heaven* series, commissioned by the Whitney Museum, used “standard pornographic vocabulary” to depict Koons engaging in various sex acts with his wife, Italian porn star Cicciolina.⁵³⁷ In the realm of popular culture, Madonna began incorporating porn conventions and imagery into her already highly sexualized repertoire, playing a striptease dancer in the video for *Open Your Heart*, bedecked in fetish gear while performing a sadomasochistic bisexual ménage à trois in *Justify My Love*, and fully engaging a soft-core aesthetic in the pairing of the album *Erotica* with the photographic exposé *Sex*. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the “pornographic mode of address” would be commonplace in music videos — particularly in the hip hop genre — but also amongst female pop stars following in Madonna’s footsteps, such as Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, and Jessica Simpson.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁵ McNair, *Striptease Culture*, 64.

⁵³⁶ McNair, Brian. “From Porn Chic to Porn Fear: The Return of the Repressed?” *Mainstreaming Sex: The Sexualization of Western Culture*. Ed. Feona Attwood. 57-58. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009. Print.

⁵³⁷ McNair, *Striptease Culture*, 64-65.

⁵³⁸ Railton, Diane & Paul Watson. “Sexed Authorship and Pornographic Address in Music Video.” *Pornification: Sex and Sexuality in Media Culture*. Eds. Susanna Paasonen, Kaarina Nikunen, & Laura Saarenmaa. New York: Berg, 2007. 115-125. Print.



A



B

Image 6: A) Jeff Koons: Porno-Chic B) Madonna: Porno-Chic

Hollywood, which had been trending toward greater explicitness of nudity and sexual themes since the end of the Code era, embraced porno-chic in a series of films in the 1990s. *Showgirls* [1996], *Striptease* [1996], and *The Full Monty* [1997] all worked to normalize strip dancing by contextualizing it within the often banal realities of its everyday performance, while shifting the image of sex workers from “exploited victims” to “feisty independent souls.”⁵³⁹ It is no mere coincidence that within several years pole dancing would emerge as a fitness fad and a competitive sport.⁵⁴⁰ *The People vs. Larry Flynt* [1996] and *Boogie Nights* [1997] glorified the porn industry, “repackag[ing] and remak[ing] the meanings of symbols and texts once viewed as beyond the ideological and semiological pale.”⁵⁴¹ The former portrayed *Hustler* founder Larry Flynt not as the ‘smut merchant’ that anti-pornography activists depicted him as, but rather as a free-speech hero fighting the morally conservative American establishment. The latter looked

⁵³⁹ McNair, *Striptease Culture*, 89-91.

⁵⁴⁰ Holland, Samantha & Feona Attwood. “Keeping Fit in Six Inch Heels: The Mainstreaming of Pole Dancing.” *Mainstreaming Sex: The Sexualization of Western Culture*. Ed. Feona Attwood. 167-171. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009. Print.

⁵⁴¹ McNair, *Striptease Culture*, 74.

nostalgically at the aesthetic ambitions of pornography's golden age, humanizing and romanticizing the porn industry. This pornographic reminiscence would continue in a number of documentaries and biopics: *Wadd: The Life & Times of John C. Holmes* [1998], *Rated X* [2000], *Pornstar: The Legend of Ron Jeremy* [2001], *Wonderland* [2003], *Debbie Does Dallas Uncovered* [2005], and *Inside Deep Throat* [2005].⁵⁴²

Marketers also took to porno-chic. 'Sex sells' has long been an industry maxim, but since the 1990s, advertising has increasingly incorporated the porn iconography. The fashion industry in particular favors a pornographic aesthetic. Ads appearing in magazines and on billboards for Tom Ford, Gucci, Sisley, Dolce & Gabbana, Calvin Klein, Abercrombie & Fitch, and American Apparel have all positioned models' bodies in poses suggestive of masturbation, fellatio, cunnilingus, cum shots, anal sex, orgies, and gang bangs, while using camera angles and lighting to establish the voyeuristic gaze of pornography. Porno-chic advertising is not limited only to fashion. A series of ads for Axe Day & Night deoderant products, for example, depicted common set-ups for porn scenes. In one, a woman in lingerie and spiked heels answers the door to the pizza delivery boy. The caption, made to fit in the speech bubble of either the woman or the boy: "Finally! My fingers are burning." The pitch: "New Axe Day & Axe Night. One is suitable for general audiences. The other one is not."

⁵⁴² Paasonen, Susanna & Laura Saarenmaa. "The Golden Age of Porn: Nostalgia and History in Cinema." *Pornification: Sex and Sexuality in Media Culture*. Eds. Susanna Paasonen, Kaarina Nikunen, & Laura Saarenmaa. New York: Berg, 2007. 23-32. Print.



Image 7: Axe: Postmodern Porno-Chic

The porn industry was quick to cash in on their cultural cachet. Playboy and Hustler both opened retail outlets in the upscale shopping districts of major cities across the globe, selling not only their magazines and videos, but also an ever-expanding line of branded merchandise ranging from sex toys and condoms to towels and sportswear to day planners and coffee mugs. Vivid Entertainment, one of a handful of studios that has come to dominate the hardcore porn industry using an upscale aesthetic, has also built their brand by licensing mainstream merchandise like vodka, snowboards, t-shirts, calendars, and comic books. *How to Have a XXX Sex Life*, co-authored by the ‘Vivid Girls’, was a bestseller. A reality show, *Porno Valley*, which aired on Playboy TV and the Independent Film Channel, followed the working lives of the actors, staff, and management of Vivid. A similar show, *Family Business*, produced for Showtime, focused on the small family-run porn studio that produces the ‘Seymore Butts’ line of videos. Porn stars Ron Jeremy and Jenna Jameson have crossed over to mainstream celebrity, appearing on radio and TV

talk shows, and in sitcoms, reality shows, music videos, popular magazines, Hollywood movies, advertisements, comic books, and video games. Both have written autobiographies; Jameson's *How to Make Love Like a Porn Star* spent six weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

With pornography a mainstream industry, and with porn a part of mainstream culture, it is no wonder that the American public itself is becoming pornified. Teen girls sport tight t-shirts with the words "Porn Star" emblazoned across their breasts, while babies are swaddled in "Porn Star" onesies. Fishnet stockings, stiletto heels, tight leather mini-skirts, corsets, and other fetishwear are now fashionable attire for a night on the town. Teens and even toddlers take classes in pole dancing at the local gym, while their parents take classes in bondage, domination, and sadomasochism at the local porn studio.⁵⁴³ Pornographic aesthetics tinge personal profiles on dating, hook-up, and social network sites.⁵⁴⁴ Congressman, judges, priests, and preteens sext scandalous words and pictures to their paramours. Mothers and young couples make amateur porn videos and share them on XTube and YouPorn. Welcome to the industrial age of pornography, in which porn has become a mainstream commodity, and anyone can acquire the cultural capital to be a porn star.

Pornotopia, or Learning to Make Love Like a Porn Star

In his study of pornographic Victorian literature, Steven Marcus defines pornography in terms of "pornotopia," a "no place" where "it is always bedtime." Characterized by a "relentless circumscription of reality," pornography tends "on the one hand, to exclude from itself everything that is not sexual and, on the other, to include everything into itself by sexualizing all of reality."⁵⁴⁵ For Marcus, pornography is, as the Supreme Court recognized, sex for the sake of sex,

⁵⁴³ "Kink.com Sexuality Workshop Series." *Armory Studios*. Armory Studios, LLC, n.d. Web. 6 Apr. 2014.

⁵⁴⁴ Mowlabocus, Sharif. "Gay Men and the Pornification of Everyday Life." *Pornification: Sex and Sexuality in Media Culture*. Eds. Susanna Paasonen, Kaarina Nikunen, & Laura Saarenmaa. Oxford: Berg, 2007. 61-71. Print.

⁵⁴⁵ Marcus, *Other Victorians*, 268-277.

sex abstracted from any context that would give it meaning and value. Writing of Victorian literature in the early 1960s, Marcus's descriptions of pornography's placeless places, timelessness, and mechanical rather than social relations of juxtaposed bodies, limbs, and organs seem to foretell of the 'one-day wonders' that would put an end to the pornographic renaissance in the 1980s, and that have characterized most pornography since. The concept of pornotopia, however, is more relevant today not as the ideal type of just pornography, but as that of media sex more generally.⁵⁴⁶ We dwell in a pornotopian media culture, in which sexual representations increasingly float free from meaningful contexts, becoming placeless and timeless abstractions that exclude everything not sexual and sexualize everything to which they attach.

The representation of sexual pleasure — once purged from the public sphere of popular culture and subjugated to a scientific knowledge consonant with the moral and social order subtending modernity — has reappeared and proliferated, thrust onto the public stage as a political linchpin that brings together diverse discursive threads in a struggle to define the meaning of sex within the shifting terms of morality. Paring down obscenity to the "hard core" established sexual pleasure — sex for the sake of sex — as a sort of hollow core at the center of the "vital problem of human interest and public concern." Having no meaning or value in and of itself, sex must be discursively framed within systems of representation that legitimate it as a public concern, and so the obscene has been brought on/scene through multifarious efforts to make it mean something, to place it in a context that would give it social value.

Paradoxically, bringing the obscene on/scene to evaluate it automatically establishes its value as a public concern. The work of the courts and commissions, then, as well as that of religious, feminist, and other social organizations, brought into the public arena and legitimated

⁵⁴⁶ Marcus starts his explanation of pornotopia from Weber's discussion of the ideal type as "a utopia which has been arrived at by the analytical accentuation of certain elements of reality" that "in its conceptual purity [...] cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality." Marcus argues that while the abstraction, accentuation, suppression, emphasis, and rearrangement of material being studied will always

the very materials they sought to condemn.⁵⁴⁷ Was the CDL distributing pornographic material in its films, newsletters, and pamphlets during the 1960s?⁵⁴⁸ Had the judicial system become a solicitor, purveyor, and consumer of pornography when cartoons of magazines and reels of film made their way through the courts as evidence in the obscenity trials of the 1960s and 1970s?⁵⁴⁹ Is Andrea Dworkin's *Pornography* pornographic?⁵⁵⁰ Was Women Against Pornography pandering with its pornographic slide shows and guided tours of Times Square adult theaters during the 1970s?⁵⁵¹ Were the public hearings and the final report of the Meese Commission pornographic?⁵⁵²

Rather than condemning the condemners for hypocrisy, these questions problematize the concept of obscenity by revealing how the decontextualization of sex — the separation of sexual

attain a utopian conception, “in the instance of pornography that material itself inclines to take the form of a utopia.” Marcus, *Other Victorians*, 266-268.

⁵⁴⁷ As Carole Vance argued, “in a culture where it was increasingly costly for feminists to present erotic images or speak in an erotic language, only the antipornography movement could publicly revel in the most graphic sexual images and lurid sexual language, all acceptable because their purpose was condemnation.” Vance, Carole S. “More Danger, More Pleasure: A Decade After the Barnard Sexuality Conference.” *New York Law School Law Review* 38.1-4 (1993): 289-317. Print.

⁵⁴⁸ Strub, *Perversion for Profit*, 85, 107, 110-112.

⁵⁴⁹ In *Roth*, Solicitor General J. Lee Rankin filed a cartoon of hardcore pornography with the Court to demonstrate the type of material that could freely be sent through the mail if they reversed Roth's conviction. As Edward de Grazia notes, this legal strategy “soon became a favored way for lawyers to improve the impression held by a judge or jury of a work charged with being obscene.” de Grazia, *Girls Lean Back*, 285, 297-303.

⁵⁵⁰ As sex activist and writer Susie Bright points out, *Pornography* reads in parts like Dworkin's rewriting of the Marquis de Sade's *Juliette* in her 1986 novel *Ice and Fire*. Legal scholar Nadine Strossen argues that Dworkin's writings “are laced with passages that would violate her own concept of prohibited pornography,” pointing to a University of Pennsylvania survey in which 63 percent of respondents found her work pornographic under her own criteria. Bright, Susie. “Andrea Dworkin Has Died.” *Susie Bright's Journal*. Susie Bright, 11 Apr. 2005. Web. 6 Apr. 2014; Dworkin, Andrea. *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*. New York: Putnam, 1981. Print; Dworkin, Andrea. *Ice and Fire: A Novel*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1986. Print; See also: Lindgren, James. “Defining Pornography.” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 141 (Apr. 1993): 1153-1275. Print; Strossen, Nadine. *Defending Pornography: Frees Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights*. New York: New York University Press, 2000. 158-159. Print.

⁵⁵¹ English, Dierdre, Amber Hollibaugh & Gayle Rubin. “Talking Sex: A Conversation on Sexuality and Feminism.” *Feminist Review* 11 (Summer 1982): 40-52. Print; Serrin, William. “Sex Is A Growing Multibillion Business.” *New York Times* 9 Feb. 1981: B1, B6. *ProQuest*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁵⁵² Edward de Grazia noted that 15 percent of the report was dedicated to detailed descriptions of hardcore pornography. *Newsweek* called the report “the Attorney General's dirty little book.” Pat Califia called it “obscene, disgusting, and vile.” Walter Kendrick described it as “blatantly pornographic.” Califia, Pat. “The Obscene, Disgusting, and Vile Meese Commission Report.” *Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex*.

pleasure from the contexts that give it meaning and value — forms an abstract sexual knowledge within which particular representations may be mobilized toward different ends by re-contextualizing them. The definition of obscenity attempts to outline the specific contexts in which sex can legitimately appear in public by judging whether “the average person, applying contemporary community standards,” would think that “the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest.” This specificity is undermined, however, by the abstraction of sex, whereby representations are not contained within a single “work,” and their “appeal” as they shift across contexts cannot be determined.⁵⁵³ Maybe “little old ladies in gym shoes” did get “sexual kicks” from *Perversion for Profit*.⁵⁵⁴ Couching judgment in terms of “the average person” and “community standards” further undermines the specificity of obscenity by defining it in terms of statistical and geographical abstractions. Who is “the average person”? What community?

This undoing of the specificity by which the meaning and value — and thus the legitimacy — of a sexual representation can be determined has been exacerbated by our ‘click’, ‘clip’, or ‘cut-and-paste’ culture. Sexual representations are frequently carved out of the texts in which they were produced, and inserted into others, or just as often left to drift across the postmodern media landscape. The myriad sexual moments of a million movies and TV shows are incorporated into the vast pastiche of YouTube, where they are curated, or merely coalesce, into a million montages with no more inherent meaning than a porno mixtape.⁵⁵⁵ Scenes from *Midnight Cowboy*, *Sex and*

San Francisco: Cleis, 1994. 42-53. Print; de Grazia, *Girls Lean Back*, 588-589; Kendrick, *Secret Museum*, 234.

⁵⁵³ ‘Appeal’ implies intent, so that the question of whether the work “appeals to the prurient interest” seems to ask whether the material in question was intended by its author to arouse sexual desire. Yet as Roland Barthes and others have recognized, authorial intent has no bearing on a work’s reception, meaning, or value. Representations of sexual pleasure, whether or not intended to arouse, may or may not be used to do so. Barthes, Roland. “The Death of the Author.” *Image-Music-Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Noonday, 1977. 142-148. Print.

⁵⁵⁴ Mark, Norman. “Censorship: Fanatics and Fallacies: The Anonymous Smut Hunters.” *Nation* 5 July 1965: 5-7. Print.

⁵⁵⁵ These compilations of the sex scenes from pornographic movies first appeared in the 1980s as porn consumers began using video technology to scan for, isolate, and curate collections of “the good bits.” The porn industry itself soon began producing these compilations, which would hasten a shift from the production of feature length pornography to the production of scenes that could be endlessly recycled in

the City, Last Tango in Paris, Girls, Beyond the Valley of the Dolls, Friends with Benefits, and Deep Throat, ripped from their textual frames, mingle freely with episodes of *Real Girls of Porn Valley*, an internet reality show that follows young women trying to get into the porn business, and *Ask My Girlfriend*, an instructional video series covering topics such as “How to Deepthroat” and “Eating Pussy.” And YouTube is but one facet of the online pornosphere, which includes not only an endless sprawl of adult sites, but also many mainstream sites that, like YouTube, are pornographic in their contextual abstraction of sexual representations. Indeed, the internet itself, at least in its function as a searchable database of images and information, is a distinctly pornotopian medium. Googling ‘sex’ sets in motion the algorithmic function of pornotopia, excluding everything that is not sexual, yet including everything — 4.98 billion hits — by sexualizing it.

American adolescents are awash in this increasingly pornotopian culture, flooded by a flow of decontextualized sexual representations from the multitude of screens that mediate their everyday lives. Abstract sex has become commonplace, and its banality has helped to foster a confessional culture that enables, encourages, and normalizes random practices of sexual exposure. As we will see in chapter four, moral panics over youth participation in the confessional culture of new media sex have produced new mechanisms for more tightly regulating access to the public sphere of sexual knowledge. These panics and the regulations they engender are fueled by a growing concern over what young people are learning from the pornotopian pastiche of media culture, and informed by the increasing scrutiny of the relationship between media sex and adolescent attitudes and behaviors that these concerns have prompted.

While the overarching message of this ever-shifting media sex collage seems simply to be that “sex is pleasure,” the repetition, convergence, and algorithmic clumping of particular

different video series. This production process would engender the genrefication of porn, as different series began to focus on particular fetishes.

representations work to normalize certain sexual practices while obscuring others. “This kind of iterative imagery,” argues Susanna Paasonen, “defines and shapes understandings of sexual acts: what they are and how they can be done,” which “implies a certain schooling of desire.”⁵⁵⁶ The money shot, women being choked, and a number of other “pornographic practices” are being normalized through this iterative media education.⁵⁵⁷ The fear underlying the worried findings of recent research into youth consumption of media sex is that they are learning to make love like porn stars, coming to see sex as recreational⁵⁵⁸ or instrumental,⁵⁵⁹ becoming more permissive,⁵⁶⁰ callous,⁵⁶¹ and aggressive,⁵⁶² developing positive attitudes toward casual sex⁵⁶³ and regressive

⁵⁵⁶ Paasonen, Susanna, Kaarina Nikunen, & Laura Saarenmaa. “Pornification and the Education of Desire.” *Pornification: Sex and Sexuality in Media Culture*. Eds. Susanna Paasonen, Kaarina Nikunen, & Laura Saarenmaa. Oxford: Berg, 2007. 13. Print; See also: Arthurs, Jane. *Television and Sexuality: Regulation and the Politics of Taste*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004. Print; Nikunen, Kaarina. “Cosmo Girls Talk: Blurring the Boundaries of Porn and Sex.” *Pornification: Sex and Sexuality in Media Culture*. Eds. Susanna Paasonen, Kaarina Nikunen, & Laura Saarenmaa. Oxford: Berg, 2007. 73. Print; Warner, *Trouble with Normal*.

⁵⁵⁷ Jeffreys, Sheila. *Beauty and Misogyny: The Harmful Cultural Practices in the West*. New York: Routledge, 2005. 67-86. Print.

⁵⁵⁸ Malamuth, Neil M. “Sexually Explicit Media, Gender Differences, and Evolutionary Theory.” *Journal of Communication* 46 (1996): 8-31. Print; Zillmann, Dolf & Jennings Bryant. “Effects of Prolonged Consumption of Pornography on Family Values.” *Journal of Family Issues* 9 (1988): 518-544. Print.

⁵⁵⁹ Peter, Jochen & Patti M. Valkenburg. “Processes Underlying the Effects of Adolescents’ Use of Sexually Explicit Internet Material: The Role of Perceived Realism.” *Communication Research* 37 (2010): 375-399. Print.

⁵⁶⁰ Braun-Courville, Debra & Mary Rojas. “Exposure to Sexually Explicit Web Sites and Adolescent Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors.” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 45 (2009): 156-162. Print; Brown & L’Engle, “X-Rated”; Lam, Chun & Darius Chan. “The Use of Cyberpornography by Young Men in Hong Kong: Some Psychosocial Correlates.” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 36 (2007): 588-598. Print; Lo, Ven-Hwei & Ran Wei. “Exposure to Internet Pornography and Taiwanese Adolescents’ Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors.” *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 49 (2005): 221-237. Print; Peter, Jochen & Patti M. Valkenburg “Adolescents’ Exposure to Sexually Explicit Online Material and Recreational Attitudes Toward Sex.” *Journal of Communication* 56 (2006): 639-660. Print; Peter, Jochen & Patti M. Valkenburg “Adolescents’ Exposure to Sexually Explicit Online Material, Sexual Uncertainty, and Attitudes Toward Uncommitted Sexual Exploration: Is There A Link?” *Communication Research* 35 (2008): 579-601. Print; Peter, Jochen & Patti M. Valkenburg. “Adolescents’ Exposure to a Sexualized Media Environment and Notions of Women as Sex Objects.” *Sex Roles* 56 (2007): 381-395. Print.

⁵⁶¹ Zillmann, Dolf. “The Effects of Prolonged Consumption of Pornography.” *Pornography: Research Advances and Policy Considerations*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1989. 127-158. Print; Zillmann, Dolf & Jennings Bryant. “Pornography, Sexual Callousness, and the Trivialization of Rape.” *Journal of Communication* 32.4 (1982): 10-21. Print.

⁵⁶² Brown & L’Engle. “X-Rated”; Hunter, John, et al. “Developmental Pathways into Social and Sexual Deviance.” *Journal of Family Violence* 25 (2010): 141-148. Print; Ybarra, Michele, et al. “X-Rated Material and Perpetration of Sexually Aggressive Behavior Among Children and Adolescents: Is There a Link?” *Aggressive Behavior* 37 (2011): 1-18. Print.

gender role attitudes,⁵⁶⁴ objectifying women,⁵⁶⁵ and engaging in risky behavior with multiple partners,⁵⁶⁶ paid sex, and extramarital sex,⁵⁶⁷ as well as other ‘delinquent’ behaviors such as substance abuse.⁵⁶⁸

As we will see in the next chapter, the studies that inform and are informed by this fear are structured by particular ways of conducting research that have developed within a specific research community. Grounded in a reductive media effects theory, informed by decades of research into the connection between media and juvenile delinquency, and exercised through the abstracted empiricism of surveys and statistical analyses, this research paradigm disaggregates the contextual experience of media sex into isolated variables which are put into causal relationships that define adolescence in terms of risk. Positioned as the subjects of an abstract knowledge about them, adolescents are cast as the innocent victims of media sex. As with anxiety about novels and the “Young Person” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, youth are assumed to uncritically receive and act upon, rather than actively and critically engage with, media sex. These assumptions are built into studies of the effects of media sex on youth, so that the results confirm the founding fears about what young people are being ‘taught’, calling forth regulatory and disciplinary measures that help maintain their position as innocent victims.

⁵⁶³ Braun-Courville & Rojas. “Explicit Web Sites”; Häggström-Nordin, Elisabet, et al. “Association Between Pornography Consumption and Sexual Practices Among Adolescents in Sweden.” *International Journal of STD & AIDS* 16 (2005): 102-107. Print; Häggström-Nordin, Elisabet, et al. “‘It’s Everywhere!’: Young Swedish People’s Thoughts and Reflections About Pornography.” *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Science* 20 (2006): 386-393. Print; Lo & Wei. “Exposure to Internet Pornography”; Peter & Valkenburg “Recreational Attitudes”; Peter & Valkenburg. “Is There A Link?”

⁵⁶⁴ Brown & L’Engle. “X-Rated”; Häggström-Nordin, “‘It’s Everywhere!’”

⁵⁶⁵ Peter & Valkenburg, “Women as Sex Objects”; Peter, Jochen & Patti M. Valkenburg. “Adolescents’ Exposure to Sexually Explicit Internet Material and Notions of Women as Sex Objects: Assessing Causality and Understanding Processes.” *Journal of Communication* 59 (2009): 407-433. Print.

⁵⁶⁶ O’Hara, Ross, et al. “Greater Exposure to Sexual Content in Popular Movies Predicts Earlier Sexual Debut and Increased Sexual Risk Taking.” *Psychological Science* 23.9 (2012): 984-993. Print.

⁵⁶⁷ Wright, Paul J. & Ashley K. Randall. “Internet Pornography Exposure and Risky Sexual behavior Among Adult Males in the United States.” *Computers in Human Behavior* 28 (2012): 1410-1416. Print.

⁵⁶⁸ Ybarra, Michele L. & Kimberly J. Mitchell. “Exposure to Internet Pornography among Children and Adolescents: A National Survey.” *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 8.5 (2005): 473-486. Print.

Chapter 3: Overexposed: The Science of Media Sex and the Abstract Adolescent

A study recently published in *Psychological Science* reported a relationship between adolescent exposure to sexual content in movies and sexual behavior.⁵⁶⁹ With funding from the National Institute of Health (NIH), researchers at Dartmouth coded the sexual content of over 500 top-grossing films from 1998 to 2003, and then surveyed thousands of adolescents aged ten to fourteen beginning in 2003, with follow-up surveys conducted five more times over the course of seven years. By asking which popular films they had seen, when they had first had sex, how many partners they had, and how often they used contraception, the researchers were able to correlate early Movie Sexual Exposure (MSE) with earlier sexual debut and risky sexual behavior.

The MSE study is one of dozens conducted in recent decades that draw a connection between exposure to media sex and the sexual behavior of adolescents. While this science of media sex has its origins in the Payne Fund Studies at the end of the 1920s, it has only really been developed since the 1980s, when government agencies like the NIH began funding studies into the role that increasingly sexualized media play in public health risks such as teen pregnancy, child exploitation, and AIDS. These studies were, however, informed by three areas of social science research that emerged earlier in the twentieth century. The child study movement, media effects research, and studies of sexual behavior have all significantly shaped research into the relationship between media sex and youth by contributing to what Karin Knorr-Cetina would call its epistemic culture — an “amalgam of arrangements and mechanisms” through which scientific research “make[s] up *how we know what we know*.”⁵⁷⁰ The Dartmouth MSE study is a product of a particular epistemic culture that emerged from these other areas of research, and it must be understood in terms of how this culture produces knowledge about youth, media, and sex.

⁵⁶⁹ O’Hara, “Greater Exposure.”

⁵⁷⁰ Knorr-Cetina, Karin. *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences Make Knowledge*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. 1. Print.

This chapter interrogates the MSE study by contextualizing it within the historical development of its epistemic culture. Child study, media effects research, and studies of sexual behavior provided theoretical orientations, methodological tools, and institutional alignments to the community of researchers that formed around the study of media sex and youth. These elements of the research culture shape assumptions researchers make about adolescent sexuality and about how the media works, while also focusing research on particular issues and determining how it will be conducted. The research paradigm that has taken root in this culture produces an abstract knowledge by disaggregating into a set of variables the complex contexts in which adolescents engage with media sex, and then reassembling these variables within statistical models. Through this process, the science of media sex constructs the *abstract adolescent* — a subject position articulated through the production of knowledge about youth and media sex.

The abstract adolescent is a subject at risk of exposure to sexual knowledge that threatens ‘healthy’ development. As a developing citizen — as a member of a population that must be governed “for the greater good of all” — the health of the adolescent is an issue of public health, and is thus subject to regulations, laws, and policies governing the knowledge whereby s/he is positioned as a sexual subject. Media sex research informs the exercise of these regulatory mechanisms, which in turn contour the dynamic of discourses and silences surrounding adolescent sexuality. The epistemic culture of the science of media sex thus needs to be examined as a “transfer point for relations of power” between adults and youth, between experts and laity, and between government and citizens.

As we saw in the first chapter, the invention of adolescence as a specific social category at the turn of the century coincided with the uptake of social science as a tool for informing and shaping public policy. Traditional institutions of socialization — family, community, church — were weakening as ongoing industrialization, urbanization, and im/migration reshaped the social landscape of the United States. With a gap growing between the social structure that these

institutions provided during childhood and the safe entrance into an adulthood structured by the institution of marriage, young people were seen to be at grave risk of falling prey to unsavory influences that would steer them off the path of hard work and temperance leading to upstanding citizenship. Thus perceived as a threat to not only the personal well-being of the developing child, but also to the progress of society as a whole, adolescence became the subject of an intense scientific scrutiny, which focused on its defining feature: sexuality. Training their attention on ‘aberrant’ youth behavior, psychologists and sociologists articulated adolescent sexuality as a social problem, and sought to reveal the causes of this problem in order to inform effective interventions.

The adolescent thus became both an object and a subject of sexual knowledge: to be observed, recorded, and reported, but also to be disciplined through a deployment of discourses and silences that structure the known, the unknown, and the unknowable of adolescent sexuality. We saw in the first chapter how this endeavor has shaped sex education policies and programs, producing an abstract sexual knowledge targeted at adolescents; the second chapter showed how it has also shaped media sex, bringing obscene sexual representations into the public sphere through the very efforts to regulate them, thus providing adolescents with an alternative yet equally abstract source of sexual knowledge. In this chapter we will see how the scientific study of media sex that emerged in the twentieth century produces an abstract knowledge *of* adolescent engagement with media sex that calls for regulatory and disciplinary measures.

The science of media sex begins with the Payne Fund Studies (PFS). Conducted between 1929 and 1932, these were the first attempt to bring scientific rigor to the critiques of motion pictures that had been simmering for decades. The complicated and contradictory findings of these studies downplayed the effects of media on youth, and suggested that motion pictures function as a potentially valuable form of social education. But at the behest of the Payne Fund directors and the association that organized the studies, who intended to sway public opinion and

shape public policy regarding movie censorship, the findings were cast in a popular publication as a condemnation of the effects of motion pictures on children.

Rather than seeing the PFS as failed science or as victims of media spin, they must be understood as a process of knowledge production within the historical context of a radical transformation of social science. Disciplinary fragmentation and the turn toward empirical methods divorced science from conceptualizations of social progress, leaving it to produce objective ‘facts’ that could be mobilized toward diverse social and political ends under the veneer of scientific neutrality. A new model of administrative policy research emerged, in which well-endowed private foundations and government agencies funneled money into research through public and private associations and institutes. By funding and organizing research into social issues, these institutions became key players in research communities and constituent parts of their epistemic cultures, helping to shape research and the knowledge it produced.

Although the PFS explored the effects of motion pictures, they were marginal to the field of communication emerging around the study of media effects. Developed out of the field of child study, the theoretical and methodological range of the PFS reflects the diversity of this field at the time. Different epistemic cultures were coalescing in three distinct areas of child study as the field was being institutionalized, and the disparate methods and the inconsistent and inconclusive findings of the PFS were products of the tensions between these cultures. The PFS were thus a kind of ‘abnormal science’ conducted at a point of epistemic rupture between the progressive and pragmatist social science of the early twentieth century and the administrative science that was displacing it.

Because they were marginal to the field of communication, and because they failed to ‘advance’ science by not articulating a clear theoretical or methodological framework, neither child study nor the PFS would have much immediate impact on the study of mass media. This was instead profoundly shaped by the work of Paul Lazarsfeld, the Rockefeller Foundation, and

the Bureau of Applied Social Research. The research community that developed around Lazarsfeld advanced an administrative research program, which enshrined a theory of limited media effects as the dominant model for understanding the social function of media, and established the ‘abstracted empiricism’ of surveys and statistical analysis as the preferred methodology. This research paradigm became a kind of ‘normal science’ that stifles innovation by forcing research findings into the media effects model. Absorbed into the epistemic cultures of internally referential research communities comprised of coalitions of foundations, associations, agencies, institutes, and scientists, this ‘normal science’ produces an authoritative knowledge of media effects that helps shape media policies.

By the 1960s, the diversity of child study had been reduced and consolidated into developmental psychology, and this was incorporated into media effects research when various agencies under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) began funding research into the effects of media violence on youth aggression in the 1970s. This work was expanded into research on the effects of media sex in response to growing concerns in the 1980s over the role of increasingly sexual media in teen pregnancy, child exploitation, and AIDS. To the theoretical focus on the developmental risks of media exposure, and to the methodological tools of the media effects paradigm, decades of research into sexual behavior added an orientation toward public health that had proven necessary for institutional legitimacy and support.

The research community that emerged in the 1980s around the study of media sex and youth thus evolved a particular epistemic culture shaped by decades of research on child development, media effects, and sexual behavior. Developmental psychologists channeled the tension between youth sexual impulsivity and sexual innocence into a cognitive theory of social learning that positioned youth as subjects of risk. Media effects researchers provided both a causal theory linking media exposure to risky behavior through cognitive factors, and a methodological toolbox for conceptualizing, counting, categorizing, and correlating these factors

and other variables involved in the youth-media-sex relationship. Finally, the problems encountered by sex researchers working within the institutional nexus of private foundations, universities, and government agencies shaped the problem of sex that research needed to address as one of public health. As such, a causal relationship between media sex and youth was constructed as a risk to public health, and research would be conducted along epidemiological and etiological lines.

The Dartmouth MSE study exemplifies this research. With teen pregnancy and STIs identified as a health issue within the youth population, movies were singled out as the source of exposure, a set of risk factors and covariates was defined, and researchers set out to determine the cause. A close analysis of the study reveals how this was done by constructing variables based on assumptions about the sexual content of movies, ‘normal’ sexuality, and ‘typical’ youth attitudes and behaviors; by building a statistical model to ‘fit’ the data and to ‘find’ correlations; and by theoretically framing the findings to express a causal relationship in terms of developmental and public health risks. In this process, adolescents’ experiences of seeing sex in movies is disaggregated from social context and reduced to a set of variables that are only brought to bear on the experience as part of the media effects equation. The adolescent is thus abstracted into a statistical sexual norm structured by the variables and the mathematical model for making correlations. This practice of ‘normal science’ neatly produces the results that the researchers set out to find by stifling anomalies and contingencies that might upset the premise that adolescent exposure to sex in movies results in risky sexual behavior.

Such research takes the adolescent as an object of knowledge and produces the abstract adolescent as a subject of knowledge, as an aggregate of scientific data that defines adolescents as immature, irrational, impulsive, and imitative. Adolescent sexuality is constructed through this production of scientific knowledge, and adolescents come to know themselves as sexual beings, to perform their sexuality, to construct their sexual subjectivity, through this knowledge. The

irony of the abstract adolescent is that even as adolescence is made to confess its sexual secrets through science, actual adolescents are silenced. Science speaks for them, producing the authoritative knowledge of adolescent sexuality to which their knowledge is subjugated.

Movie Made Children

In 1928, when sociologist Edward Ross identified the “drift of women’s fashionable dress toward disclosure,” the “rising tide of pornographic literature [and] sex-saturated stories,” and “provocative dances” as signs of motion pictures’ “sway of the erotic,” he was compelled to add, “This is not the place to cite evidence, and I am not going to cite any.”⁵⁷¹ There was none to cite. Such baseless speculations about the social impact of sexual representations that had fueled the rage for legal censorship for centuries now rang hollow. Progressive pragmatism had established the importance of positivist social science in addressing social issues, and the shift from ‘social purity’ to ‘social hygiene’ had marked a movement from morality to science as the rationale for regulating sexual behavior. But while both moral reformers and social scientists were certain that motion pictures were a social problem, they lacked the scientific proof that was becoming the benchmark for policy interventions.

The Rev. William H. Short drew attention to this lack in *A Generation of Motion Pictures*, writing that “the absence of an adequate and well-authenticated basis of fact has probably had much to do, hitherto, with preventing agreement of the civic-minded forces of the country on policies and programs of action for dealing with the problems of the screen.”⁵⁷² Short had come to this conclusion through his work with the National Committee for the Study of Juvenile Reading (NCSJR). Established by philanthropist Frances Payne Bolton to increase youth interest in reading, the NCSJR had implicated motion pictures and radio in the decline of reading amongst

⁵⁷¹ Ross, Edward Alsworth. *World Drift*. New York: The Century Company, 1928. 179. Print.

youth. Bolton created the Payne Study and Experiment Fund to finance research in this area, from which Short obtained a grant to establish the Motion Picture Research Committee (MPRC), which directed a program of scholarly study into the effects of motion pictures on children.⁵⁷³

What would become known as the Payne Fund Studies (PFS) comprised thirteen individual studies conducted by researchers at the University of Chicago, the University of Iowa, Penn State, Ohio State, Yale, Columbia, and New York University between 1929 and 1932, twelve of which were completed and published in the eight volume series *Motion Pictures and Youth*. This ambitious project was the first attempt to bring scientific rigor to the critiques of motion pictures that had been simmering for decades. While the project was shaped from the beginning by Short's desire to find "facts" that would condemn the movies, the breadth of the research confounded any foregone conclusions about "the problems of the screen."⁵⁷⁴ The PFS employed a wide range of methodologies for assessing numerous aspects of the relationship between motion pictures and youth: psychogalvanic measurements, control-group sleep studies, surveys, statistical data analyses, audience studies, case studies, content analysis, interviews, and life histories. Although some of the studies were able to draw specific conclusions about the effects of motion pictures, almost all of them went through several iterations as preliminary results refuted initial hypotheses. The overall assessment they produced was ambiguous, suggesting that while movies influenced children's attitudes, emotions, and knowledge, that influence was mitigated by a host of social and cultural factors. Moreover, some of the researchers concluded that movies actually have a practical educational function.

One study into how movies influence children's attitudes was frustrated by the lack of significant difference between frequent moviegoers and the control group of those who almost

⁵⁷² Short, William H. *A Generation of Motion Pictures: A Review of the Social Values in Recreational Films*. New York: The National Committee for the Study of Social Values in Motion Pictures, 1928. 69-70. Print.

⁵⁷³ Originally called the National Committee for the Study of Social Values in Motion Pictures.

never went, suggesting that the indirect influence of film through its presence in other forms of popular culture made it impossible to isolate and measure direct effects.⁵⁷⁵ A companion study suggested that although motion pictures could temporarily sway opinions, youth attitudes were more strongly shaped by their cultural background and social group, and mass media could not easily change them.⁵⁷⁶ Another study that attempted to compare American moral standards to values portrayed in films quickly realized there was no single standard of American values; when recast in the context of particular communities, the study found films to be more conservative than community standards.⁵⁷⁷

Potentially most damning to Short's and other reformers' critiques was a study on the relationship between motion pictures and sex attitudes and behaviors in youth. The researcher, Paul Cressey, set out to establish a direct link between movies and juvenile delinquency, but half way through conducting quasi-ethnographic research of the Boy's Club in East Harlem, realized that there was none. "I have been forced by the weight of evidence," Cressey reported to PFS director William W. Charters, "to see the motion picture not primarily in this relationship, but in its varied functions in the lives of different groups and individuals within this community."⁵⁷⁸ Cressey argued that theaters were important social hubs in poor neighborhoods, and that the movies they showed provided an informal but practical education to kids who were being failed

⁵⁷⁴ Records of the Motion Picture Research Council, quoted in: Jowett, *Children and the Movies*, 34; Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 134.

⁵⁷⁵ The study did find, however, that moviegoing children read more than those in the control group, much to the chagrin of Short. Jowett, *Children and the Movies*, 68.

⁵⁷⁶ The study attempted to gauge changes in attitudes towards Germans and Jews after showing films that portrayed them favorably to a group of kids in Chicago. Finding that the kids had already developed complex and contradictory attitudes toward these social groups that a single screening could not change, the researchers moved the study to small towns with homogenous populations, where they showed films like *The Birth of a Nation* [1915] and *Son of the Gods* [1930] and then assessed kids' attitudes toward African-Americans and Chinese, groups with whom they were unfamiliar. This revealed more significant and consistent effects. Peterson, Ruth & L.L. Thurstone. *Motion Pictures and the Social Attitudes of Children*. New York: Macmillan, 1933. Print.

⁵⁷⁷ While the study found that female film characters were more brazen than the community found appropriate, romantic and sexual representations jibed with community standards, and films actually portrayed less violence and more racial tolerance than the accepted community standard. Peters, Charles C. *Motion Pictures and Standards of Morality*. New York: Macmillan, 1933. Print.

by traditional institutions of social and cultural learning. Rather than directly influencing behavior, this informal education was always mediated by social context. “Instead of being considered a unilateral force whose influence can be described as ‘contribution’ or ‘effect,’” Cressey explained, “the motion picture is seen as one whose influence is everywhere modified by differentials in community and personality.”⁵⁷⁹

These research findings painted a complicated picture of the role of movies in the lives of youth, which countered many of the assumptions held by Short and other reformers. But this was not the picture revealed to the general public. Prior to the publication of the eight volumes of *Motion Pictures and Youth*, the publisher, Macmillan, released a ‘popularization’ of the studies titled *Our Movie Made Children*. In this trade book, author Henry James Forman sensationalized the ‘effects’ of motion pictures by downplaying the cautious claims of the researchers and focusing on details that seemed to confirm what the title intimated — that children were being ‘made’ by the movies, their knowledge, attitudes, emotions, and behaviors all products of what they saw on the screen.

Forman acknowledged that this capacity of films to “make children” could be put to good use in his introduction, pointing to films like *The Covered Wagon* [1923] and *Ben Hur* [1925] as bringing history to life and stirring patriotic and religious feelings, and noting that “as many as seventy per cent of a large sample of grade school children declared that pictures have at some time made them want to do ‘good things.’”⁵⁸⁰ But as he dug into the research, his spin on the findings made it clear that movies had deleterious effects on youth. Content analysis had revealed that 75 to 80 percent of movies were about love, sex, or crime. “To give crime and sex so large a representation in the motion picture,” Forman speculated, “is surely to threaten the morals and

⁵⁷⁸ Jowett, *Children and the Movies*, 86.

⁵⁷⁹ Jowett, *Children and the Movies*, 87.

⁵⁸⁰ Forman, Henry James. *Our Movie Made Children*. New York: Macmillan, 1933. 31-33. Print.

characters of our children and youth.”⁵⁸¹ Recasting the findings of a study on information retention and Cressey’s assessment of movies’ educational capacity, Foreman claimed that “what the screen becomes is a gigantic educational system with an instruction possibly more successful than the present text-book variety, but with a content which [...] makes us disturbingly reflective.”⁵⁸²

Downplaying the inconsistent results of several studies on emotional response as the “individual peculiarities” of children, Forman drew his own correlations between these studies to boldly state that “The seeing of a motion picture is for young children a powerful emotional experience that affects their young brains and nerves with almost the force of an electric charge.”⁵⁸³ He further muddied the PFS findings by incorporating anecdotal evidence, such as the testimony of an unnamed nurse who claimed that *The Phantom of the Opera* [1925] had caused “eleven faintings and one miscarriage in a single day,” as well as claims of ‘experts’ outside the PFS, such as that of one Dr. T.B. Homan, who found that a film like *The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu* [1929] “leaves a physical imprint upon the human being lasting as long as seventy hours,” and that of neurologist Frederick Peterson, who likened the effect of intense scenes in movies to shell shock and claimed that the repetition of such stimulation amounted to “emotional debauch” that “sow[ed] the seeds in the system for future neuroses and psychoses.”⁵⁸⁴ Likewise, Foreman selectively confused the specific methods and findings of studies on emotions and attitudes, suggesting they were “a way of writing upon virgin and unmarked slates with the

⁵⁸¹ Forman, *Movie Made Children*, 35.

⁵⁸² The information retention research found that children remember significantly more about movies they see than adults, and that unlike adults, children sometimes recall even more over time. The equally significant finding that things unfamiliar to kids were quickly forgotten, and the researchers’ conclusion that this prevented movies from imprinting on the mind any “sophisticated ideas,” were cast by Forman as an “interesting sidelight” that may offer a “crumb of comfort to parents.” Forman, *Movie Made Children*, 31-35, 64-65; Holaday, P.W. & George D. Stoddard. *Getting Ideas from the Movies*. New York: Macmillan, 1933. Print.

⁵⁸³ Forman, *Movie Made Children*, 98.

⁵⁸⁴ Forman, *Movie Made Children*, 91, 102-104.

assurance of being able to read scientifically what was written thereon,” and that they proved “the viewing of the movie may be a *cause* and the child's social attitude an *effect*.”⁵⁸⁵

While only a third of the autobiographies gathered for the *Motion Pictures and Conduct* study mentioned sexual behavior, Forman claimed that because of the “self-consciousness of adolescent girls and boys on this particular subject [...] it is reasonable to assume that the percentage of love-technique copyists from the movies is much higher,” and he focused on this topic in reporting on the research. He quoted liberally from the autobiographies, letting the words of the research subjects overshadow the more nuanced conclusions of the researcher. “It was directly through the movies that I learned to kiss a girl on her ears, neck and cheeks, as well as on her mouth.” “I have learned from the movies how to be a flirt, and I found out that at parties and elsewhere the coquette is the one who enjoys herself the most.” “A young couple sees the art of necking portrayed on the screen every week for a month or so, and is it any wonder they soon develop talent?” “Movies are a liberal education in the art of making love.” When it was suggested that in providing such an education “the movies are performing a real service,” Forman discounted this as an attempt at humor.⁵⁸⁶

Such was the impression the general public received of the Payne Fund Studies: Motion pictures had been put under the microscope of science, and had been revealed to cause emotional, mental, and physical damage to *our* children, to inscribe unhealthy attitudes and ideas upon the blank slates of their unformed minds, and to educate them in immoral sexual knowledge. *Our*

⁵⁸⁵ The metaphor of the child’s mind as a blank slate, used here in a rebuttal to a proclamation by MPPDC president William H. Hays, functions to obscure the very specific conditions under which the research was able to produce very specific results. Forman ignored the conclusion of the researchers that youth attitudes are more strongly shaped by their social group and cultural background, and discarded the findings of the PFS attitude study that showed there was no significant difference between the attitudes of “movie children” and “non-movie children.” “With technique not so sensitive, under conditions not so clear-cut,” Forman disdained, this study was “able to discover few implications illuminating the problem.” Forman did acknowledge that the researchers concluded that movies are but one influence amongst many, such as peers, family, school, and other forms of media, which all react upon each other. But he then quickly disregard this in favor of the “blank slate” study, with its “finely devised technique” and its “carefully chosen cases.” Forman, *Movie Made Children*, 126, 133-134.

Movie Made Children was a bestseller, going through multiple printings in its first year. Heavily promoted, it quickly became a hot topic in the news media and popular press. Forman and Short wrote articles and toured the country giving speeches — not just to promote the book, but to try to sway public opinion about the movies. The PFS researchers' own monographs, published in the eight volumes of *Motion Pictures and Youth*, received little public attention, being reviewed only in social science journals and the periodical press. Sales were tepid. Only *Movies and Conduct* — the volume most condemnatory of the movies — sold well; the others were eventually remaindered.⁵⁸⁷

Rather than seeing the Payne Fund Studies as a failed attempt to produce definitive 'facts' about the effects of movies on children, or seeing *Our Movie Made Children* as mere media sensationalism that distorted the cautious conclusions of the research, the PFS must be understood as a discursive process of producing knowledge about youth and media. This process was not limited to the studies themselves, but also included the work of William Short and the MPRC, the Payne Fund, Macmillan, and Henry James Forman, who, along with the researchers, brought their ideas and agendas to bear on the PFS. Understanding the discursive production of knowledge by the PFS requires attention to the particular institutional formation through which the studies were organized and conducted, including the various actors other than the researchers themselves, as well as their positions in relation to emerging scientific fields and disciplines that shaped the theories and methods upon which the studies were based.

Just the Facts?

Facts do not organize themselves into concepts and theories just by being looked at; indeed, except within the framework of concepts and theories, there are no scientific facts but only chaos.

— Gunnar Myrdal⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁶ Forman, *Movie Made Children*, 147-151.

⁵⁸⁷ Jowett, *Children and the Movies*, 94-95.

⁵⁸⁸ Myrdal, Gunnar. *Objectivity in Social Research*. New York: Pantheon, 1969. 18. Print.

The Payne Fund Studies were conducted at the tail end of a radical restructuring of social science. The idea of a unified science working toward the solution of social problems by discovering the laws of what Comte had called “social physics”⁵⁸⁹ — an idea institutionalized in the United States by the 1865 founding of the American Social Science Association — was disintegrating in the early twentieth century as a plurality of social sciences had begun to stake out areas of expertise and to claim legitimacy for their methods of inquiry.⁵⁹⁰

The professionalization and institutionalization of new social science disciplines was part of a process of seeking status and power by “claiming license to or, if possible, a monopoly over a defined body of knowledge,” which was reshaping the relationship between science and social policy as the Progressive era drew to a close.⁵⁹¹ The normative model of Progressive social reform, in which the expert opinions of individual scientists mingled with those of lay philosophers and religious leaders to authorize the moral agendas of reform groups, was being displaced by an ostensibly more objective model, in which well-endowed private foundations like Russell Sage, Carnegie, and Rockefeller funneled money into social science research through public and private associations and research institutes such as the National Bureau of Economic

⁵⁸⁹ In *The Course in Positive Philosophy* [1830-1842] and in *A General View of Positivism* [1848], Comte argued that there was a social and epistemological evolution from the theological to the metaphysical to the positive, or scientific stage, which is characterized by an empirical process of producing knowledge about the world through observation, experimentation, and classification. For Comte, sociology was the final frontier of science, as it would incorporate the findings of all other sciences into a cohesive whole. Comte, Auguste. *A General View of Positivism*. Trans. J.H. Bridges. Stanford: Academic Reprints, 1953. Print; Comte, Auguste. *Social Physics: From the Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*. Trans. Harriet Martineau. New York: C. Blanchard, 1856. Print.

⁵⁹⁰ For an historical account of the formation of American social sciences told through the rise and fall of the American Social Science Association, see: Haskell, Thomas L. *The Emergence of Professional Social Science: The American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth Century Crisis of Authority*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976. Print.

⁵⁹¹ Cravens, Hamilton. “History of the Social Sciences.” *Osiris* 2.1 (1985): 193. Print. See also: Ben-David, Joseph. *The Scientist’s Role in Society*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1971. Print; Larson, Magali Sarfatti. *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. Print.

Research, the Brookings Institution, and the Social Science Research Council.⁵⁹² This allowed social scientists to avoid direct participation in the advocacy of particular public policies, which would have revealed their political biases and undermined the positivist claims to objectivity that were anchoring their disciplines in the realm of ‘real’ science, deserving of public respect, and, more importantly, the institutional support granted to the natural sciences.⁵⁹³ But it also divorced their research from interpretive frameworks for understanding the social relevance of their findings. This shift from a *normative social science* to a set of *descriptive and positivist social sciences* would have a number of interrelated consequences for the production of knowledge about society, as well as the political mobilization of this knowledge in the shaping of public policy.

First, disciplinary fragmentation would result in a number of disjunctures between both the theoretical models and the methodological tools of distinct fields. Looking at the same social phenomenon through different lenses, so to speak, is potentially productive, but only to the extent that there is interdisciplinary dialogue. Too often, though, definition and justification of a discipline’s institutional position was performed through a strict demarcation of theory and method that made interdisciplinary collaboration both difficult and undesirable. Political economy, for example, long the epistemological province for understanding complex relations of social institutions, forces, and actors, split into political science and economics. Political science would continue to look at institutions and actors, but the study of underlying economic forces was taken over by the economists, who would abstract these forces into a self-contained world governed by intrinsic laws ‘discovered’ and described through arcane mathematical and statistical

⁵⁹² Anderson, Lisa. *Pursuing Truth, Exercising Power: Social Science and Public Policy in the Twenty-first Century*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003. 19-25. Print; For a detailed account of this process of social science professionalization, particularly its bearing on the discipline of economics, see: Furner, Mary O. *Advocacy and Objectivity: A Crisis in the Professionalization of American Social Science, 1865-1905*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1975. Print.

models.⁵⁹⁴ Likewise, the once intertwined studies of cultures, social relations, and individuals were separated into the discrete disciplines of anthropology, sociology, and psychology, each with their own sets of theories and tools for producing knowledge of particular valences of social phenomena.

These types of disjunctures were exacerbated by a second consequence of the shift toward positivist social sciences: the dismissal of particular modes of inquiry as unscientific. History, as an interpretation of events, was now seen to be about as useful as literature or music for discovering the laws that govern society, and was thus relegated to the humanities. Marxist historical materialism, for example, as philosopher Karl Popper would argue, was not science because it only worked to find evidence that confirmed preconceived laws of how societies historically develop.⁵⁹⁵ Social science research could no longer proceed inductively from such a priori conceptions of a social totality or social teleology. Consequently, historical conditions, as a basis for understanding society, were displaced by a pervasive presentism. Social issues, whether taken up as political, economic, cultural, relational, or individual, were to be explored, unraveled, and addressed as contemporary problems with contemporary solutions.

A third consequence was that the progress of the social sciences, which could no longer be measured in the historically informed and value-laden terms of social progress, became defined

⁵⁹³ Furner, *Advocacy and Objectivity*, 1-8; For a similar argument specifically about sociology, see: Gouldner, Alvin W. *For Sociology: Renewal and Critique in Sociology Today*. London: Allen Lane, 1973. Print.

⁵⁹⁴ Furner, *Advocacy and Objectivity*, 81-107.

⁵⁹⁵ In *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* [1934], Popper argued that neither Marxism nor psychoanalysis are valid science, as they are both based on underlying rules or laws that are not falsifiable. For Popper, the accumulation of any number of observations that confirm a hypothetical law does not prove its general truth because they do not rule out the possibility of one observation eventually disproving it. Thus it is the possibility of the hypothesis being disproved that makes it valid, and scientific method should be geared toward disproving hypotheses rather than confirming them. Popper would later extend this critique, first in a talk given in 1936 that was later updated and published as *The Poverty of Historicism*, to social science historicism in general, arguing against the idea “that it is the task of the social sciences to lay bare the law of evolution of society in order to foretell its future.” Popper, Karl. *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. New York: Basic Books, 1959. Print; Popper, Karl. *The Poverty of Historicism*. New York: Basic Books, 1960. Print.

by the refinement of methodological tools for discovering ‘facts’.⁵⁹⁶ The better the tools, the better the facts, the better the science. As the ‘observation of phenomena’ shifted to the more rigorously objective ‘collection of data’, techniques were honed for gathering information. Economists constructed new indicators through closer scrutiny of market trends and government reports; psychologists crafted and conducted experiments, and collected and collated case studies; sociologists developed structured interviews and surveys for producing comparable data sets. To ensure that these components of their research were relevant to both their hypotheses and to each other, variables were identified, characteristics categorized, and typologies constructed. Finally, to rule out subjective interpretation in the process of analysis, data were quantified and put into statistical relationships. Even as methodological differences emerged between diverging disciplines, then, categorizing, counting, and correlating came to form the basis for a core social science methodology through which the ‘facts’ that indicated general laws of society were ‘discovered’.

Finally, a fourth consequence was that the ‘discovery’ of ‘facts’ could be operationalized toward social and political ends under a veneer of scientific neutrality. Facts, once discovered, needed to be interpreted. When such interpretation was the work of other scientists in the process of formulating new hypotheses, science ‘progressed’ dialectically, as new methods were developed for testing these hypotheses and new theories articulated to explain new findings. But the interpretation of scientific facts by laypeople could be used to shape public perspectives. In divorcing scientific research from an interpretive framework, the social sciences freed up their findings for such *ex post facto* mobilizations in society.

Moreover, the ‘discovery’ of ‘facts’ could also be mobilized *ex-ante* through the institutional organization of research agendas. As Gunnar Myrdal observed, facts do not exist

⁵⁹⁶ Rule, James B. *Theory and Progress in Social Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Print.

outside the theories that frame them, and these theories start with questions subtended by a priori valuations.⁵⁹⁷ The questions and the underlying values that shape scientific research are products of the particular institutional formations through which research takes place. Private foundations and the public organizations through which they worked played a guiding role in these formations during the first half of the twentieth century, shaping research interests, theoretical frameworks, and methodological designs by providing the financial means to pursue them.⁵⁹⁸ As the twentieth century progressed, government agencies increasingly took over this role of steering research through funding decisions.

These consequences would manifest distinct epistemic cultures in different disciplines and fields of social science, as “arrangements and mechanisms” for producing knowledge — theories, methods, and institutional formations — solidified within particular research communities. Of course these cultures are specific at the level of any given research project, but commonalities stabilize in particular disciplines, fields, and areas of research that share resources over time.⁵⁹⁹ As we will see, research into the effects of media sex on youth would develop its own distinct epistemic culture out of particular elements of earlier research into child development, media effects, and sexual behavior. At the time of the Payne Fund Studies, however, the consequences of the fragmentation of social science were still unfolding and these areas of research were in their infancy, their cultures amorphous and shifting. None held claim to the type of work the PFS sought to conduct, but the field of child study was best tuned to address the problem, which, as

⁵⁹⁷ Myrdal, *Objectivity in Social Research*, 18.

⁵⁹⁸ Braman, Sara. “Facing Out: Researchers and Policy Makers.” *Communication Researchers and Policy-Making*. Ed. Sandra Braman. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003. 221-241. Print; See also: Neilson, Waldemar A. *The Big Foundations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1972. Print; Seybold, Peter. “The Ford Foundation and the Triumph of Behavioralism in American Political Science.” *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism: The Foundations at Home and Abroad*. Ed. Robert F. Arnove. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1980. 269-303. Print.

⁵⁹⁹ As Knorr-Cetina argues, looking at the “machineries” of technology and practice through which scientific knowledge is constructed allows us to see both the “disunity” of science and the “relatedness” and “clustering” of epistemic culture, which together reveal the disjunctures between scientific “findings”

constituted by the Payne Fund and the MPRC, was not motion pictures per se, but rather how they affected children. As such, the research community and culture of the PFS emerged largely from the field of child study, and the disparate theories and methods of the studies that produced such inconsistent and inconclusive findings reflected the cultural instability of this field.

The Science of Children

By the late 1920s, a majority of Americans were concerned about the role of motion pictures in a perceived upsurge of ‘delinquent’ juvenile behavior, yet there was no established method for scientifically studying this connection. Mass media research was in its infancy. Walter Lippmann’s *Public Opinion* had drawn attention to the role of the media in shaping behavior, suggesting that in an increasingly complex and connected world, in which it was becoming impossible to have direct knowledge of all the information and events bearing on one’s choices and actions, people necessarily acted upon the “pseudoenvironments” created by the media.⁶⁰⁰ The propaganda campaigns of the Great War had made evident the power of media, as Harold Lasswell had shown by analyzing how symbols were used to control opinion and influence actions in *Propaganda Technique in the World War*.⁶⁰¹ Both Lippmann and Lasswell were founding figures in the nascent field of communication, and their work shaped an empirical approach to communication research that sought “scientifically measurable behavioral effects.”⁶⁰² Though these early media studies undoubtedly helped catalyze public anxiety about the effects of motion pictures on youth, the theoretical and methodological orientations of the Payne Fund Studies owe more the field of child study.

and “real-world” objects and events. Knorr-Cetina, Karin. “Epistemic Cultures: Forms of Reason in Science.” *History of Political Economy* 23 (1991): 107. Print.

⁶⁰⁰ Lippman, Walter. *Public Opinion*. New York: Macmillan, 1960. Print.

⁶⁰¹ Lasswell, Harold D. *Propaganda Technique in the World War*. New York: Garland, 1972. Print.

⁶⁰² Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind*, 122.

G. Stanley Hall had launched the American child study movement in the late nineteenth century. Like William James and John Dewey, who rejected the experimental psychology of the discipline's founder, Wilhelm Wundt, Hall favored naturalistic methods and lay participation in the gathering of data. By enlisting the help of parents and teachers in observing children and adolescents, he popularized the idea that science could be applied to childrearing. Organizing these observations under the theory of recapitulation, Hall proposed childhood as a series of developmental stages that reflected human evolution.⁶⁰³ This developmental model would become the basis for the study of children as it was institutionalized in the twentieth century, carrying with it the assumption that childhood was fraught with risks from which children needed to be protected so they could develop the moral, rational, and aesthetic capacities that defined the civilized races.

Following the first White House conference on children in 1909 — which had been financed by the Russell Sage Foundation — three institutional formations emerged in the developing field of research on American youth.⁶⁰⁴ The United States Children's Bureau was established in 1912 to “investigate and report [...] upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and child life among all classes of our people.”⁶⁰⁵ This first federal welfare agency used social survey techniques in the sociological study of children, conducting research in such diverse areas as infant mortality, orphanage, delinquency, and childhood accidents and diseases, and reported directly to the American people through childcare literature and by responding to letters

⁶⁰³ Hall, *Adolescence*.

⁶⁰⁴ Smuts, Alice Boardman. *Science in the Service of Children, 1893-1935*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006. Print.

⁶⁰⁵ Robert Bremner, et al, have reproduced the text of the 1912 act that established the Children's Bureau in their collection of historical documents pertaining to American youth. Bremner, Robert, et al, eds. *Children and Youth in America: A Documentary History, 1866-1932*, Vol. 2. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971. 774. Print.

from concerned mothers. The Children's Bureau was instrumental in shifting the emphasis of child study toward preventative care — treating “the well child” rather than only the sick.⁶⁰⁶

The second formation was the child guidance movement, which undertook the psychiatric study and treatment of children's emotional and behavioral problems within urban communities. Prompted by pioneering research at Chicago's Hull House and funded by wealthy philanthropist Ethel Dummer, William Healy's study of 832 youths referred to Chicago's juvenile court jumpstarted the child guidance movement.⁶⁰⁷ Shifting away from the emphasis on poverty as the determinant of criminality, Healy found delinquency to be a learned behavior, a product of the individual psyche's response to its social environment, which could only be understood through psychometrics and the study of individual life histories.⁶⁰⁸ Healy brought his study of the “child's own story” and focus on the individual “mind at risk” to the Judge Baker Foundation clinic in Boston, which would become the model for numerous child guidance clinics.

Finally, the child development movement was born of the efforts of social reformer Cora Bussey Hillis to establish the Child Welfare Research Station at the State University of Iowa, upon which a network of child development institutes were modeled. Child development sought to integrate research from such diversifying disciplines as psychology, psychiatry, sociology, pediatrics, home economics, and education in order to understand the physical, mental, and

⁶⁰⁶ Smuts, *Service of Children*, 81-102.

⁶⁰⁷ Healy, *Individual Delinquent*.

⁶⁰⁸ Jane Addams' research at Hull House, Healy's subsequent studies of juvenile delinquency, and the child development movement they spawned were shaped by the “psychobiology” of American psychiatrist Adolph Meyer. Influenced by the pragmatism, instrumentalism, and pluralism of William James, John Dewey, and Charles Pierce, Meyer rejected the generalizations of psychoanalysis and the hereditary determinists in favor of “the accessible facts” that would allow for an understanding of how genetic, social, and psychic factors made each individual a “unique experiment of nature.” Smuts, *Service of Children*, 109-11. See also: Meyer, Adolph. *The Commonsense Psychiatry of Adolph Meyer: Fifty-Two Selected Papers*. Ed. Alfred Lief. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1948. Print; Meyer, Adolph. “The Role of the Mental Factors in Psychiatry.” *American Journal of Insanity* 65 (1908): 39-56. Print.

emotional development of “the everyday child with everyday problems,” rather than the delinquent or disadvantaged.⁶⁰⁹

World War I, along with an infusion of funding from the federal government and wealthy philanthropic foundations following the armistice, propelled these three child study formations forward. Public concern had been further aroused by an increase in juvenile delinquency during the war, while the psychiatric screening of young recruits and the post-combat treatment of ‘shell shock’ had both popularized the practical application of psychological research and normalized the notion that mental disturbances were the result of environmental conditions beginning at a young age.⁶¹⁰ Moreover, the discovery that one-third of all war recruits had physical defects resulting from poor conditions during childhood emphasized children as a national concern, helping to shift “prewar Progressive efforts to reform society for the benefit of the child into postwar efforts to reform the child for the benefit of society.”⁶¹¹

As other Progressive reform campaigns wound down during and after the war, the “crusade for children” gained momentum, spurred on by President Woodrow Wilson’s proclamation of 1918 as Children’s Year and by the 1919 White House Conference on Child Welfare Standards. These charged the coming decade with the struggle to regulate child labor and to protect children’s physical and mental health, as well as the advancement of research to inform future policies and programs addressing these issues.⁶¹² The 1921 Sheppard-Towner Act substantially increased funding for the Children’s Bureau, allowing it to expand both its social survey research

⁶⁰⁹ Thom, Douglas A. *The Everyday Problems of the Everyday Child*. New York: Appleton, 1927. Print.

⁶¹⁰ Thomas Salmon, who, prior to the war was an influential proponent of children’s clinics, medical director of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, and board member of the Rockefeller Foundation, led the Section of Neurology and Psychiatry in the Office of the Surgeon General during the war, where he established the screening process for recruits. Salmon attributed shell shock to prior environmental influences, and argued that “there is no essential difference between the mechanisms shown in much of the ‘nervousness’ of children and those of the war neuroses, for even at a very early age a flight from the facts of life into the fancied security of ‘nervousness’ is possible.” Smuts, *Service of Children*, 111-113. See also: Bond, Earl Danford. *Thomas W. Salmon, Psychiatrist*. New York: Norton, 1950. 108. Print.

⁶¹¹ Smuts, *Service of Children*, 4.

and its publications aimed at educating parents in childcare and in the socio-psychology of childrearing.⁶¹³ The Commonwealth Fund, founded by Anna Harkness — the widow of a major stockholder in Rockefeller’s Standard Oil — was endowed with \$20 million to fund a Program for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency. This program was modeled on the Judge Baker clinic and sought to shift the treatment of juvenile delinquency “away from the entanglements of prison reform,” “criminal law,” and “social relief work,” and toward “preventive social hygiene undertaken with sound scientific direction.”⁶¹⁴ By the end of the 1920s there were over 300 child guidance clinics nationwide. Finally, the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial was established by John D. Rockefeller in memory of his wife and endowed with \$74 million to continue her work on child and family welfare, but shifted the focus of investments from the charities she had supported to social science research.⁶¹⁵ The Memorial established a national network of child development institutes modeled on the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, as well as creating and supporting numerous other child study and parent education programs.⁶¹⁶

The Payne Fund Studies, conducted at the height of the crusade for children, reflected the diverse theoretical and methodological approaches to child study that manifested in these three institutional formations, as well as their limitations. Social survey techniques employed by both

⁶¹² Chambers, Clark A. *Seedtime of Reform: American Social Action, 1918-1933*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963. 29-58. Print.

⁶¹³ The annual budget of the Bureau was capped by Congress at \$25,640 as a condition of passing the 1912 act through which it was established. The Bureau subsequently received an additional \$50,000 for administering the Child Labor Act of 1916. The Sheppard-Towner Act, in contrast, provided an initial annual appropriation of \$1,240,000. By 1929, when the provisions of Sheppard-Towner expired, the Bureau had conducted over 150 studies of children, published numerous books and pamphlets on child rearing, and answered thousands of letters from concerned mothers. Smuts, *Service of Children*, 81-102, 226-251.

⁶¹⁴ Smuts, *Service of Children*, 193.

⁶¹⁵ The Memorial provided extensive grants, for example, to the Social Science Research Council, the Brookings Institution, the Institute of Pacific Relations, and the National Bureau of Economic Research.

⁶¹⁶ Child development institutes were established by the Memorial at Columbia, the University of Minnesota, the University of Toronto, Yale, and the University of California at Berkeley. In addition, the Merrill-Palmer Institute was established in Detroit with a \$4 million trust left by Lizzie Merrill-Palmer, the childless widow of a Michigan Senator; and The Fels Research Institute for Human Development was established at Antioch College by wealthy Philadelphia financier Samuel Fels. Smuts, *Service of Children*, 144-148.

PFS sociologists and Children's Bureau social workers emerged from the "Chicago School" of sociology co-developed at Hull House and the University of Chicago.⁶¹⁷ The social survey method was theoretically oriented to human ecology, which sought to understand the relationship between people and material environment, and was grounded in the intent to inform so as to promote social action or shape public policy.⁶¹⁸ This explains the focus on the urban environment by PFS researchers like Paul Cressey and Frederick Thrasher, and it also reveals the roles of James Forman and Macmillan in publicizing the research findings as an integral part of the project.⁶¹⁹ The child guidance movement shaped the methodology of Ruth Peterson and Louis Thurstone, who used psychometrics to evaluate changes in children's social attitudes in response to movies, and also influenced Herbert Blumer and Philip Hauser, who collected life histories in their research into movies and delinquency.⁶²⁰ The integrative methods of child development were imported into the PFS in research on how youth get ideas from the movies, conducted by Iowa Child Welfare Research Station director George Stoddard, and in research on how movies

⁶¹⁷ Mary Jo Deegan documents the close affiliations and shared research endeavors between the pioneers of sociology at the University of Chicago, including Albion Small, Robert Park, and Ernest Burgess, and the sociologists and social workers at the Hull House Settlement, including Children's Bureau director Julia Lathrop and her successor, Grace Abbott. Most of the PFS sociologists were of, or influenced by, the Chicago School, as was the director of the studies, William W. Charters. Park was also significantly involved in the planning of the PFS. Deegan, Mary Jo. *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School, 1892-1918*. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1988. Print.

⁶¹⁸ The importance of studying "the relation of social world to material environment" was first articulated by the founder of sociology at the University of Chicago, Albion Small. The term "human ecology" was first defined by chemist, ecofeminist, and home economics pioneer Ellen Richards in *Sanitation in Daily Life* as "the study of the surroundings of human beings in the effects they produce on the lives of men." The term was then used by Robert Park and Ernest Burgess in *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* to describe the sociological orientation of the University of Chicago. Park insisted that the social survey, as a method of conducting human ecology, functioned as a form of publicity rather than disinterested research. Bulmer, Martin, et al. "The Social Survey in Historical Perspective." *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective, 1880-1940*. Eds. Martin Bulmer, Kevin Bales, & Kathryn Kish Sklar. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. 1-49. Print; Gross, Matthias. "Human Geography and Ecological Sociology: The Unfolding of Human Ecology, 1890 to 1930 — and Beyond." *Social Science History* 28.4 (2004): 578. Print; Park, Robert Ezra & Ernest W. Burgess. *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921. Print; Richards, Ellen H. *Sanitation in Daily Life*. Boston: Whitcomb & Barrows, 1910. v. Print.

⁶¹⁹ Cressey and Thrasher studied with Robert Park, who developed the field of human ecology at the University of Chicago.

effect children's attitudes and conduct, conducted by Frank Shuttleworth and Mark May of the Yale Institute of Human Relations.⁶²¹ In their exhaustive analysis of documents related to the PFS, Jowett, Jarvie, and Fuller show that contentions over the relative merits of these different theoretical and methodological approaches were endemic to the research, and ultimately led to the inconsistency and inconclusiveness of the findings.⁶²²

As broad and diverse as the PFS were, they were united, as was child study, by the underlying assumption of childhood and adolescence as developmental stages fraught with risk. Under the social science spell of presentism, they neglected the relevance of history to understanding youth. Failing to see the relatively recent vintage of the models of childhood and adolescence that informed their research, they unwittingly reproduced the idea of children as blank slates in need of protection and the idea of adolescence as a time of turmoil that threatens the innocence of youth. So while their findings problematized the popularly assumed dangers of motion pictures that had prompted the studies, the research was limited in advance to evaluating their potential for risk. The research was further limited by its institutional blindness to the role of the motion picture industry in monopolizing the production of popular culture, which was due to the desire of Payne Fund managers to avoid political conflict with the powerful Hays office.⁶²³

⁶²⁰ Blumer, Herbert & Philip M. Hauser. *Movies, Delinquency, and Crime*. New York: Macmillan, 1933. Print; Peterson, Ruth C. & L. L. Thurstone. *Motion Pictures and the Social Attitudes of Children*. New York: Macmillan, 1933. Print.

⁶²¹ With Rockefeller Foundation grants, the Institute of Human Relations was formed as an interdisciplinary research center in 1929. One of four research units within it was the Clinic of Child Development, which would later be reorganized as the Child Study Center. Holaday, Perry W. & George D. Stoddard. *Getting Ideas from the Movies*. New York: Macmillan, 1933. Print; May, Mark A. "A Retrospective View of the Institute of Human Relations at Yale." *Cross-Cultural Research* 6 (1971): 141-172. Print; Shuttleworth, Frank K. & Mark A. May. *The Social Conduct and Attitudes of Movie Fans*. New York: Macmillan, 1933. Print.

⁶²² Jowett, *Children and the Movies*, 64-65, 89-90.

⁶²³ By providing the financial means for social science research, private foundations could help shape research agendas; as they were established by wealthy industrialists who were economically and politically aligned with the emerging media industries, these foundations tended to avoid research critical of these industries. Marston Seabury, a one-time attorney in the motion picture industry, who, along with William Short, was a foundational figure in MPRC precursor the National Committee for the Study of Social Values in Motion Pictures, had argued in his book *The Public and the Motion Picture Industry* that the problem of movie morality was linked to the monopolization of the industry through the practices of blind and block

The rapid expansion of, and the diversity of approaches to child study reached an apogee in the third White House conference on children in 1930, which drew over 2,000 researchers and practitioners from a range of disciplines, was documented in thirty-two volumes reporting the findings of 175 committees and subcommittees, and spawned numerous state and local conferences.⁶²⁴ In the following decades, due in part to the redirection of resources and interests toward first the depression and then the Second World War, and in part to the solidification of social science disciplines, the field of child study would shrink and consolidate. The Children's Bureau was shuffled between various federal departments, losing funding and power as it became lost amidst adult programs,⁶²⁵ while the social survey methods it favored were displaced by more empirical techniques.⁶²⁶ Child guidance was subsumed by psychiatry, with psychotherapy displacing clinical research as the influence of Freud swept the field following World War II.⁶²⁷ Rockefeller support for child study was shifted from social science to educational programs

booking. Seabury's public stance against the movie industry was seen as a liability by both Short and Payne Fund managers. The Fund wished to avoid any political kerfuffle with the powerful Hays Office. For Short, not only was Seabury's criticism "unscientific," but the possibility of antagonizing the movie industry before the "facts" were established would undermine the studies and any hope of their use in organizing broad support for reform. Seabury was pressured out of the project, and as a result, research on the movie industry itself was absent from the PFS. Jowett, *Children and the Movies*, 32-47; Seybold, "The Ford Foundation," 269-303; See also: Neilson, *Big Foundations*.

⁶²⁴ Cravens, "Child Saving," 15; Sealander, Judith. *The Failed Century of the Child: Governing America's Young in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 106-107. Print.

⁶²⁵ While Children's Bureau director Grace Abbott charged the White House with engineering the conference to disassemble the bureau, as Judith Sealander shows, it was more a victim of President Hoover's strategy to strengthen the Department of the Interior by reorganizing agencies under it. Subsequently, the Children's Bureau's special status as "the only agency in any modern democratic country organized exclusively on a population age-group basis" was attacked repeatedly during the depression and WWII. In 1946, the bureau was shifted from the Labor Department to the Federal Security Administration, where it became "one of a number of administrative units under a non-cabinet level." In 1953, it became a minor unit of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and in 1963, part of the Welfare administration. In 1969, President Nixon divested the bureau of its power to administer child health programs. Sealander, Judith. *Private Wealth and Public Life: Foundation Philanthropy and the Reshaping of American Social Policy from the Progressive Era to the New Deal*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. 155. Print; Smuts, *Service of Children*, 264.

⁶²⁶ Bulmer, Martin. "The Decline of the Social Survey Movement and the Rise of American Empirical Sociology." *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective, 1880-1940*. Eds. Martin Bulmer, Kevin Bales, & Kathryn Kish Sklar. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. 291-315. Print.

⁶²⁷ Smuts, *Service of Children*, 207-225, 259.

during the depression, and by the 1950s child development research was “near death.”⁶²⁸ Child development would be resurrected in the 1960s as developmental psychology, which would come to dominate the study of American youth. This theoretically and methodologically impoverished descendent of child study would significantly influence research into the effects of media on youth, beginning with studies on media violence in the 1970s and continuing in studies on media sex in the 1980s.

Neither child study nor the PFS would have much immediate impact on the development of media studies as communication research was being institutionalized in the 1930s and 1940s. This was due in part to the “tainting” of the “academic purity” of the PFS by Forman’s popular book, as well as by other scholars’ attacks on the mingling of facts and values in the research reports themselves.⁶²⁹ It was also because the PFS were not in fact media studies, but rather child study, developing out of, and contributing to, a different line of research. Most significantly, because they lacked a “clearly articulated framework in which to present their results as advances in science,” the PFS functioned as ‘abnormal science.’⁶³⁰ The theoretical and methodological diversity brought to the PFS from the field of child study and the ‘failure’ to produce empirical facts made the research incompatible with the turn toward positivism, an increasingly disjunct disciplinarity, and the emerging administrative model of social science research. As a result, the contributions of the PFS to an understanding of the relationship between media sex and youth were marginal to the study of mass media and communication as they developed.

⁶²⁸ Smuts, *Service of Children*, 164-165, 252; Quote by: White, Sheldon. “The Rise in Developmental Psychology: Retrospective Review of Cognitive Development in Children: Five Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development.” *Contemporary Psychology* 36 (1991): 469-473. Print.

⁶²⁹ University of Chicago philosopher Mortimer Adler, for example, was commissioned by the Hays Office to defend motion pictures against detractors such as the Payne Fund, and in his *Art and Prudence* excoriated PFS researchers (and others) for attempting to subject the realm of culture to the positivist scrutiny of science. Adler, Mortimer. *Art and Prudence*. New York: Longmans, 1937. Print; Polan, Dana. “North America.” *The SAGE Handbook of Film Studies*. Eds. James Donald & Michael Renov. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2008. 16-17. Print; See also: Moley, Raymond A. *Are We Movie Made?* New York: Macy-Masius, 1938. Print.

⁶³⁰ Jowett, *Children and the Movies*, 111.

The Normal Science of Media Effects

As the social sciences solidified in the decades following the Payne Fund Studies, and as the commercial development of radio and television rekindled debates about the social role of media, the study of mass media was shaped by efforts to organize a coherent research strategy in the emerging field of communication. These efforts were in turn shaped by private foundational support and tended to serve the interests of media industries. Early communication research developed a theoretical framework around the idea of ‘media effects’, adopted surveys and statistical analysis as methodological tools, and — reflecting earlier work by Lippmann and Lasswell, as well as mounting political tension about New Deal leadership on the domestic front and surging National Socialism on the foreign front — took propaganda and public opinion as its objects of study.

Paul Lazarsfeld — “the founder of modern empirical sociology” — was largely responsible for this consolidation of the field through his work with the Rockefeller Foundation and CBS’s Frank Stanton, first at the Princeton Radio Project and then at its Columbia successor, the Bureau of Applied Social Research (BASR).⁶³¹ In *Radio and the Printed Page* [1940], one of the publications to come out of his research at Princeton, Lazarsfeld absolved the broadcasting industry of manipulating the public for commercial gain, and blamed the failure of the educational radio reform movement on their inability to anticipate, as commercial broadcasters had, how to serve the needs of ordinary people.⁶³² This shifted attention toward media reception,

⁶³¹ Jeřábek, Hynek. “Paul Lazarsfeld — The Founder of Modern Empirical Sociology: A Research Biography.” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 13.3 (2001): 229-244. Print.

⁶³² As Theodor Adorno noted, the Rockefeller Foundation’s charter of the Princeton Radio project “expressly stipulated that the investigations must be performed within the limits of the commercial radio system prevailing in the United States,” and “It was thereby implied that the system itself, its cultural and sociological consequences and its social and economic presuppositions were not to be analyzed.” Yet the Princeton Radio Project was developed as a research arm of the FCC’s Federal Radio Educational Committee, and had a mandate to study “the use of radio for educational or cultural purposes.” As William Buxton shows, under the direction of the Rockefeller Foundation’s John Marshall, CBS’s Frank Stanton,

while also gearing the communication research agenda toward discovering the means by which media shape opinions and attitudes, rather than the political and social ends for which they do so.⁶³³

Having dispatched the media industries as significant vectors of influence on anything less trivial than consumer choice, Lazarsfeld focused on the role of social groups in media reception. *The People's Choice* [1944] — also funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, as well as *Life* magazine and pollster Elmo Roper — began to sketch out a new theoretical model for framing media studies: a “limited effects” paradigm that saw media influence flowing through the “personal influence” of “opinion leaders.”⁶³⁴ This germinal model, argues Dan Schiller, was not the organic product of a disinterested science, but was rather “the result of dialogue between academics and anxious executives at philanthropic foundations and major corporations,” who were seeking “to identify and isolate the continuous range of channels that needed to be brought within a single focus for persuasion to be effective.”⁶³⁵ Rooted in “an administrative point of view” consonant with the “institutional *rapprochement* with major foundations and corporations,” which was characteristic of the professionalization of social sciences in a capitalist society, the “personal influence” or “limited effects” model responded to the media industries’ need for a predictive science of audience behavior.⁶³⁶ This particular model would allow them to

and Paul Lazarsfeld, the Project morphed from a study of how radio could be put to educational and cultural uses to a study of the effects of radio listening, which effectively shifted the focus of research from the broadcast industry to the audience. This reorientation of research was reflected in Lazarsfeld’s *Radio and the Printed Page*. Adorno, Theodor. “Scientific Experiences of a European Scholar in America.” *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930-1960*. Eds. D. Fleming & B. Bailyn. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969. 343. Print; Buxton, William. “From Radio Research to Communications Intelligence: Rockefeller Philanthropy, Communications Specialists, and the American Policy Community.” *Communication Researchers and Policy-Making*. Ed. Sandra Braman. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003. 295-346. Print; Lazarsfeld, Paul F. *Radio and the Printed Page*. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1940. Print.

⁶³³ Schiller, *Theorizing Communication*, 53.

⁶³⁴ Lazarsfeld, Paul F., Bernard R. Berelson & Hazel Gaudet. *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1948. Print.

⁶³⁵ Schiller, *Theorizing Communication*, 52.

⁶³⁶ Gitlin, Todd. “Media Sociology: The Dominant Paradigm.” *Theory and Society* 6.2 (1978): 205-253. Print.

operationalize scientific research to assure advertisers that mass media was an effective persuader if properly focused, while also downplaying their effective role to critics, reformers, and regulatory agencies such as the FTC and FCC.⁶³⁷

The limited effects model would become what Todd Gitlin dubbed the “dominant paradigm” of media studies.⁶³⁸ Through the continued cooperation of Lazarsfeld, Stanton, and the Rockefeller Foundation at the BASR, “there emerged a structure for the pursuit of audience research in the United States rooted firmly in [...] empirical social science methodology, practical marketing research experience, and broadcast industry commercial and political needs.”⁶³⁹ Despite flirting with a more critically theoretical approach to media,⁶⁴⁰ Lazarsfeld insisted on

⁶³⁷ The Bureau for Applied Social Research attempted to address these paradoxical concerns, as William Rowland claims, by, on the one hand, developing “a better ratings research capacity that would demonstrate radio’s ability to compete with the print media as an effective advertising tool,” and, on the other hand, showing that “this privately-held, commercially-motivated, and network dominated medium was in fact exercising its public trust obligations under the law and was providing a socially responsible service.” As the broadcasting industry developed, writes media historian Daniel Czitrom, it would have to “continually reaffirm the power of television to influence consumption behavior to its private customers, the commercial advertisers [...] Yet on issues concerning the welfare of public consumers of television, such as the impact of violent programming on children, the industry stresses research literature that touts the negligible effects of the media. Public hearing on such questions as television violence or advertising aimed exclusively at children inevitably degenerate into a parade of scientific experts testifying for either the ‘exaggerated’ or ‘proven’ effects of the media.” Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind*, 145-146; Rowland, Willard D., Jr. “The Symbolic Uses of Effects: Notes on the Television Violence Inquiries and the Legitimation of Mass Communication Research.” *Communication Researchers and Policy-Making*. Ed. Sandra Braman. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003. 126. Print.

⁶³⁸ Gitlin, “Media Sociology.”

⁶³⁹ Rowland, “The Symbolic Uses of Effects,” 126.

⁶⁴⁰ Lazarsfeld’s critical approach is evidenced in an article co-authored with Robert K. Merton that seemed to contradict its own claims of limited media influence by suggesting that the “business concerns” supporting the mass media “contribute to the maintenance” of “the current social and economic system” by “restrain[ing] the cogent development of a genuinely critical outlook.” Katz also shows that Lazarsfeld had a much more comprehensive model of communication in earlier work than was articulated in later work. “In an important but forgotten paper,” writes Katz, “he cross-tabulates a typology of effects — immediate, short-term, long-term, and institutional — with the probable causes of such effects — single units (a radio broadcast, for example), general type (soap opera), economic and social structure of the medium (private vs. public ownership, for example), and technological nature of the medium. He then exemplifies each of these ‘16 kinds of communications studies.’ Under institutional changes, for example, he discusses the possible effect of a single unit such as Uncle Tom’s Cabin on North-South relations before the Civil War; a generic effect such as the live broadcasting of Parliament on Australian politics; a structural effect such as the self-censorship of controversial issues in American films, because of private ownership; a technological effect such as the influence of the permanence of print or the speed of radio on Western civilization. He goes a step beyond those critical theorists who think the history of media technology begins and ends with the capture of a new medium by a ruling elite, by pointing out that there may be a further moment, as when

media's limited effects, and continued to develop empirical tools for isolating the variables of personal influence.⁶⁴¹ Further research at the BASR fleshed out the limited effects model and generalized its application.⁶⁴² A 1960 survey of hundreds of media effects studies from the 1920s to the 1950s, conducted by the BASR's Joseph Klapper, recast the effects that these studies had found as mere reinforcement of existing attitudes and opinions, cementing this model as the dominant paradigm.⁶⁴³ Theoretically based in behaviorism, this paradigm was methodologically blinded to broad structural social forces by reducing all players to commensurate roles in "the general influence chain" and focusing on immediate correlations between a proscribed set of local variables.⁶⁴⁴ As the dominant paradigm, the limited effects model marginalized as radical more critical theories of mass media first articulated by Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, and Herbert Marcuse, who advanced the method of negative dialectics to counter the prevailing positivism of social research, and to expose the underlying technological rationality of

the penny press ushered in Jacksonian democracy. In the meantime, he admits that at this moment 'the mass media tend to reinforce the status quo rather than influence change in the institutions of this country.'" Katz, Elihu. "Communication Research Since Lazarsfeld." Annenberg School for Communication, Departmental Papers. University of Pennsylvania, 1987. Print; Lazarsfeld, Paul F. & Robert K. Merton. "Mass Communication, Popular Taste and Organized Social Action." *Mass Communication and American Social Thought: Key Texts, 1919-1968*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004. 230-242. Print.

⁶⁴¹ Lazarsfeld developed some of the foundational tools for quantitative methods in social research, including survey sampling, multivariate statistical analysis, the elaboration formula, latent structure analysis, and the algebra of dichotomous systems. Jeřábek, "Paul Lazarsfeld."

⁶⁴² This research is represented in a number of anthologies, two presidential campaign studies, the "People Look at..." series, and Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz's *Personal Influence*. See: Lazarsfeld, Paul F. & Frank N. Stanton, eds. *Radio Research, 1941*. New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1941. Print; Lazarsfeld, Paul F. & Frank N. Stanton, eds. *Radio Research, 1942-1943*. New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1944. Print; Lazarsfeld, Paul F. & Frank N. Stanton, eds. *Communications Research, 1948-1949*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949. Print; Lazarsfeld, *The People's Choice*; Berelson, Bernard R., Paul F. Lazarsfeld, & William N. McPhee. *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954. Print; Lazarsfeld, Paul F. & Harry Field. *The People Look at Radio*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946. Print; Lazarsfeld, Paul F. & Patricia L. Kendall. *Radio Listening in America: The People Look at Radio — Again*. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1948. Print; Katz, Elihu & Paul Felix Lazarsfeld. *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communication*. Glencoe: Free Press, 1955. Print; Steiner, Gary A. *The People Look at Television: A Study of Audience Attitudes*. New York: Knopf, 1963. Print.

⁶⁴³ Klapper, Joseph T. *The Effects of Mass Communication*. New York: Free Press, 1960. Print.

⁶⁴⁴ Gitlin, "Media Sociology."

mass media and its cultural function of inducing conformity to the needs of consumer capitalism.⁶⁴⁵

Moreover, the “abstracted empiricism” of this paradigm, as C. Wright Mills called it, displaced the “radical empiricism” of William James and the “immediate empiricism” of John Dewey. These pragmatist principles at the foundation of American social science took meanings and values as constitutive parts of social reality with which the researcher needed to engage, rather than subjective interpretations to be controlled for and explained away.⁶⁴⁶ This displacement reflects the broad consequences of the fragmentation of social science laid out above. Isolated from the value-oriented “grand theory” of sociology, stripped of history or any “substantive propositions” about “the nature of society,” and rooted in a “psychologism” that denies social structure by explaining social phenomenon in terms of “facts” about individual attitudes and opinions, abstracted empiricism, as Mills argued, reduced social science to methodology in the service of administration.⁶⁴⁷ Abstracted empiricism operationalized media science: Rather than locating media within a set of institutions, actors, and forces in society, *empirical media science made media research administrable* — a scientific means eminently

⁶⁴⁵ In “Traditional and Critical Theory,” Horkheimer argued against positivism in social science because it both fails to account for and obscures the researcher’s positions within the same historical and ideological context as the social phenomenon observed. Critical theory, in the Kantian tradition of critique, requires a reflexive understanding of the production of knowledge. In Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, this critique is expanded to encompass the instrumental rationality of Western civilization, which has manifested in new forms of technological domination, including National Socialism and the industrialization of cultural production through the mass media. Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man* fleshes out the negative dialectical method as a “great refusal” of the instrumental rationality and technological domination that have produced the “unfreedom” of consumer capitalism. Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics* justifies this method of contradictory thinking as a counter to idealism’s prioritization of the knowing subject over the merely observed object. Adorno, Theodor. *Negative Dialectics*. Trans. E.B. Ashton. New York: Seabury, 1973. Print; Horkheimer, Max. “Traditional and Critical Theory.” *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*. New York: Continuum, 2002. 188-243. Print; Horkheimer, Max & Theodor Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002. Print; Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Boston: Beacon, 1968. Print.

⁶⁴⁶ Dewey, John. “The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism.” *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 2.15 (1905): 393-399. Print; James, William. *Essays in Radical Empiricism*. Eds. Fredson Bowers & Ignas K. Skrupskelis. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976. Print.

⁶⁴⁷ Mills, C. Wright. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959. Print.

open to being conducted toward diverse ends by different assemblages of institutions, actors, and forces.

The administration of media science works through the organization of empirical media effects research by coalitions of private foundations, government agencies and committees, public and private associations, research institutes and think tanks, universities and particular research programs therein, and independent researchers. Together they identify an issue presumably affected by the media, propose hypotheses about the relationship between the media and the issue at hand, establish a set of methods for studying this relationship and a set of theories for explaining it, generate funding, conduct research, and publish their findings.

They thus function as a sort of scientific community, as Thomas Kuhn identified, but one more integrally connected to supposedly ‘external’ social, economic, and political forces. For Kuhn, scientific communities are insular: The “rigorous and rigid” education that prepares and authorizes one to do research perpetuates a set of “received beliefs,” which suppress innovations that might subvert foundational principles. “Normal science,” as Kuhn calls it, is not, then, about discovering the unknown, but is rather “a strenuous and devoted attempt to force nature into the conceptual boxes supplied by professional education.”⁶⁴⁸ Administered media science is similarly insular, and has the same effect of limiting innovation by forcing research findings into received conceptual models. Assemblages of institutions and actors form research communities that function as internally referential systems “in which participants orient themselves more toward one another and previous system-states than toward the outside.”⁶⁴⁹ Foundations, agencies, and associations are also constitutive components of the research process, parts of the “amalgams of arrangements and mechanisms” that are “bonded through affinity, necessity, and historical coincidence” to constitute the epistemic cultures of research communities. The epistemic cultures

⁶⁴⁸ Kuhn, *Scientific Revolutions*, 4-5.

⁶⁴⁹ Knorr-Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures*, 2.

of administered media science “create and warrant knowledge”⁶⁵⁰ through the media effects paradigm in which the research community has a vested interest.

Gitlin distanced his usage of the concept of a paradigm from Kuhn’s use in his theory of scientific revolution, yet Kuhn’s conceptualization of the paradigm is useful for understanding empirical media science. For Kuhn, science does not progress teleologically through an accumulation of discoveries toward an eventual unveiling of truth. Rather, scientific communities become invested in a particular theory, which they defend despite mounting evidence that it’s wrong by writing this evidence off as anomalous. Scientific revolutions happen when a new theory that accommodates the anomalies replaces an old theory that had become increasingly untenable due to these anomalies. The theoretical paradigm thus shifts, as exemplified by Kuhn in the shift from a Ptolemaic to a Copernican cosmology.⁶⁵¹ For Kuhn, social science does not experience similar revolutions because in the social sciences multiple theories can simultaneously and coherently explain the same phenomenon, and thus there is no single paradigm to shift. But even though different media theories are advanced, the empirical study of media effects is still paradigmatically proscribed.⁶⁵² In the natural sciences a single *theoretical paradigm* is produced and maintained by a scientific community, which develops new methods for testing the theory — methods that may eventually find anomalies that disprove it. In empirical media science, a single theoretical premise — that media have effects — has been wed to an overarching quantitative methodology — count, categorize, and correlate — to form a unifying *theoretical-methodological paradigm*, into which new theoretical postulates are incorporated to fine-tune the methodology and to explain the findings. The strength of this research model, as William Melody and Robin

⁶⁵⁰ Knorr-Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures*, 1.

⁶⁵¹ Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957. Print.

⁶⁵² Indeed, Bruno Latour refuses to distinguish between the natural and social sciences as Kuhn does, arguing that research in both tends toward a problematic theoretical and methodological neatness that frustrates innovative inquiries. See: Latour, Bruno. “When Things Strike Back: A Possible Contribution of ‘Science Studies’ to Social Sciences.” *The British Journal of Sociology* 51.1 (2000): 107-123. Print.

Mansell argue, “lies in the logical consistency of theoretical postulates and its ability to excuse failures of predictive accuracy by the continuing absence of complete information.”⁶⁵³ The media effects paradigm is thus unassailable — incapable of shifting, as theory is used to adjust the methodology in order to account for anomalies, rather than the anomalies disproving the theory.

As new media theories developed over the course of the twentieth century, then, rather than displacing the media effects paradigm, they were incorporated into it. The complicated findings of the PFS, for example, challenged the then current hypodermic model of media effects, suggesting that local social situations and the psychological dispositions of audience members play an important role in media reception.⁶⁵⁴ But rather than disproving media effects, this social-psychological theory was brought into the media effects paradigm by Lazarsfeld as the “two-step flow,” and the core methodology was adjusted to account for the variable of personal influence. The same holds true for “uses and gratifications,” an early audience research model for discovering what people actually do with media, rather than what media do to people. As this concept was adapted to the media effects paradigm, the qualitative method of open-ended interviews — used for example in Herta Herzog’s 1940s study of radio soap opera listeners — was displaced by the quantitative use of factor analysis to propose causal connections between the dependent variables of various uses and gratifications and such independent variables as needs and expectations — as exemplified by Elihu Katz’s later research on different media audiences.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵³ Melody, William H. & Robin E. Mansell. “The Debate over Critical vs. Administrative Research: Circularity or Challenge.” *Journal of Communication* 33.3 (1983): 108. Print.

⁶⁵⁴ Jowett, *Children and the Movies*, 11.

⁶⁵⁵ Pieilä, Veikko. *On the Highway of Mass Communication Studies*. Cresskill: Hampton, 2005. 128-132. Print; See also: Herzog, Herta. “Motivations and Gratifications of Daily Serial Listeners.” *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*. Ed. Wilbur Schramm. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961. 50-55. Print; Katz, Elihu. “Mass Communication Research and the Study of Popular Culture.” *Studies in Public Communication* 2 (1959): 1-6. Print; Katz, Elihu & David Foulkes. “On the Use of Mass Communication as ‘Escape’: Clarification of a Concept.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 26.3 (1962): 377-388. Print; Katz, Elihu, Jay G. Blumler & Michael Gurevitch. “Utilization of Mass Media by the Individual.” *The Uses of Mass Communication: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research*. Eds. Jay G. Blumler & Elihu Katz. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1974. 19-32. Print; Katz, Elihu, Michael Gurevitch, & Hadassah Haas. “On the Use of Mass Media for Important Things.” *American Sociological Review* 38.2 (1973): 164-181. Print.

The incorporation of new theories shifted the orientation of the media effects paradigm from a simple behaviorism to a more complex cognitivism. This shift was driven early on by the work of social psychologists Carl Hovland, Kurt Lewin, and Leon Festinger. Working in the Department of Psychology at Yale, and in the U.S. Department of War during World War II, Hovland developed a neo-behaviorist model of media effects, which suggested that rather than a media stimulus leading directly to a behavioral response, the response was a learned behavior enforced by reward or punishment.⁶⁵⁶ Kurt Lewin, who worked at Cornell and the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station before moving to MIT, drew on Gestalt psychology in developing the line of enquiry known as group dynamics, which examines psychological processes and behaviors as functions of a social group rather than the individual.⁶⁵⁷ Leon Festinger, a student of Lewin's at Iowa and later a faculty member of Lewin's Center for Group Dynamics at MIT, applied group dynamics and his own theory of cognitive dissonance to the study of media effects, suggesting that in order to avoid or alleviate the uncomfortable feeling of dissonant ideas, people will, on the one hand, seek out media that confirm their views, and on the other hand, adopt the contradictory views of prevalent media messages.⁶⁵⁸ These cognitive models of media effects allowed for the insertion of numerous psychological variables into the equation. Media were still assumed to shape human behavior, but only indirectly by acting on opinions, attitudes, emotions,

⁶⁵⁶ Lowery, Shearon & Melvin L. DeFleur. *Milestones in Mass Communication Research: Media Effects*. New York: Longman, 1995. 105-161. Print; Rogers, Everett M. *A History of Communication Study: A Biographical Approach*. New York: Free Press, 1994. 358-383. Print; See also: Hovland, Carl I., Arthur A. Lumsdaine, & Fred D. Sheffield. *Experiments on Mass Communication*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949. Print; Hovland, Carl I., Irving L. Janis, & Harold H. Kelley. *Communication and Persuasion: Psychological Studies of Opinion Change*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953. Print.

⁶⁵⁷ Gestaltism is a holistic theory of mind that seeks to understand perception as a complex and interactive process. It is opposed to structuralism, in that it proposes a whole cannot be understood merely as a collection of its parts, and opposed to behaviorism, in that it studies the organization of cognitive processes rather than the elements of which they are composed. Carlson, Neil, et al. *Psychology: The Science of Behavior*. Ontario: Pearson, 2010. 20-22. Print; Hothersall, David. *The History of Psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003. 207-248. Print; See also: Marrow, Alfred J. *The Practical Theorist: Life and Work of Kurt Lewin*. New York: Basic Books, 1969. Print.

⁶⁵⁸ McGuire, William. "The Yale Communication and Attitude-Change Program in the 1950s." *American Communication Research: The Remembered History*. Eds. Everette E. Dennis & Ellen Wartella. Mahwah:

knowledge, or worldview. Rather than measuring behavioral responses, which has always been difficult outside a laboratory environment and problematic within, media effects research could now take these cognitive effects as their dependent variables. Of course these are no easier to measure than behavior. Indeed, while behavior can be observed, cognition cannot. New theories were thus proposed to explain cognitive media effects, while new ways of counting, categorizing, and correlating them were developed.

As research in the latter half of the twentieth century elaborated more complicated cognitive processes of media reception, then, such as selective exposure, cultivation, framing, agenda setting, priming, and polysemy,⁶⁵⁹ these have also been incorporated into the media effects paradigm by expanding the set of variables (e.g. exposure, attention, comprehension, acquisition, intention, disposition), by adopting new research protocols (e.g. reception studies,

Erlbaum, 1996. 39-59. Print; See also: Festinger, Leon. *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957. Print.

⁶⁵⁹ See for example: Bauer, Raymond. "The Obstinate Audience: The Influence Process from the Point of Social Communication." *American Psychologist* 19.5 (1964): 319-328. Print; Corner, John. "Meaning, Genre and Context: The Problematics of 'Public Knowledge' in the New Audience Studies." *Studying Media: The Problems of Theory and Method*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998. 109-131. Print; Freedman, Jonathon L. & David O. Sears. "Selective Exposure." *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*. Ed. Leonard Berkowitz. New York: Academic Press, 1965. 58-98. Print; Gerbner, George. "Cultural Indicators: The Third Voice." *Communications Technology and Social Policy*. Eds. George Gerbner, et al. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973. 555-573. Print; Gerbner, George, et al. "Growing Up with Television: Cultivation Processes." *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*. Eds. Jennings Bryant & Dolf Zillmann. Hillsdale: Erlbaum, 2002. 43-67. Print; Gitlin, Todd. *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980. Print; Hall, Stuart. "Encoding and Decoding in Television Discourse." *Culture, Media, Language*. Eds. Stuart Hall, et al. London: Hutchinson, 1981. 128-138. Print; Iyengar, Shanto. *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. Print; Liebes, Tamar & Elihu Katz. *The Export of Meaning: Cross-Cultural Readings of Dallas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. Print; McCombs, Max & Donald Shaw. "The Agenda Setting Function of the Mass Media." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36 (1972): 176-187. Print; Morley, David. *The "Nationwide" Audience*. London: British Film Institute, 1980. Print; Rogers, Everett M. et al. "A Paradigmatic History of Agenda Setting Research." *Do the Media Govern? Politicians, Voters, and Reporters in America*. Eds. Shanto Iyengar & Richard Reeves. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1997. 225-236. Print; Roskos-Ewoldsen, David R. et al. "Media Priming: An Updated Synthesis." *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*. Eds. Jennings Bryant & Mary Beth Oliver. New York: Routledge, 2009. 74-93. Print; Shanahan, James & Michael Morgan. *Television and Its Viewers: Cultivation Theory and Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Print; Smythe, Dallas W. *Dependency Road: Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness, and Canada*. Norwood: Ablex, 1981. Print; Tuchman, Gaye. *Making News: A Study of the Construction of Reality*. New York: Free Press, 1978. Print; Zillmann, Dolf & Jennings Bryant. "Affect, Mood, and

content coding, longitudinal surveys, cognitive response assessment), and by modifying statistical models (e.g. structural equation modeling, functional analysis, path analysis, propensity score modeling). This interplay of theory and method functions as a kind of ‘normal science’ that forces both research findings and explanations of these findings into the media effects model. The cognitive model of media effects and the ‘normal science’ of its research paradigm would become the theoretical and methodological ground for studies into the relation between media and youth behavior that began in the 1960s. Prompted by concerns over the effects on children of increasing violence and sex in the media, this research started with experiments in developmental psychology, which shared a common cognitive orientation with media effects research. The media effects paradigm would allow this research to move out of the lab, and to thus generalize its limited findings by incorporating large samples and a wider range of environmental variables.

Making Media Youth

In the 1950s, when the Kefauver Committee investigated suspected links between juvenile delinquency and, first comic books, and then ‘dirty’ magazines, there was no empirical evidence to support their assumptions or conclusions. Neither was there evidence to refute them. Despite continued research in the areas of child development and media effects in the decades following the Payne Fund Studies, there was no further research into the effects of media sex on youth.⁶⁶⁰ Research had shown increasing sex and violence in the genres of print media the Kefauver Committee investigated, and a parallel increase in behavior considered delinquent, but the argument that the former caused the latter was still pure speculation. Criminologist Sheldon Glueck, who had been studying the predictors of delinquency since the 1930s and had recently published the findings of a ten year longitudinal study, could only tell the committee, “A

Emotion as Determinants of Selective Exposure.” *Selective Exposure to Communication*. Eds. Dolf Zillmann & Jennings Bryant. Hillsdale: Erlbaum, 1985. 157-190. Print.

consistent hammering-away influence of an exciting or salacious crime, day-in-day-out, *must* have an erosive effect on the mind of youth.”⁶⁶¹ Though lacking in evidence, the committee’s reports stoked public anxiety about the effects of media on youth, while also calling attention to the need for more research.

Such government investigations of media effects on youth would become commonplace in the latter half of the twentieth century, functioning as lightning rods that absorbed public concerns about both the power of media and the problems of youth, and grounded and discharged these concerns through the authoritative knowledge of experts. As part of a game of “symbolic politics,” argues Keisha Hoerrner, instigators of these investigations gained political capital, threatened constraints on the media were deflected, and the public was assured that both the government and the media industries were concerned about youth.⁶⁶² In turn, this political opportunism, suggests Tom Grimes, “science-tized” media effects: Public investigations begat a body of scientific research by channeling resources into the production of experts and evidence that can be called on to “settle” controversial claims about the effects of media.⁶⁶³ Such “scientization of politics,” argues Steven Epstein, in which political issues are transmuted into technical disputes, “simultaneously brings about a ‘politicization of science.’”⁶⁶⁴ Calling forth

⁶⁶⁰ Of course, due to industry self-regulation, there was very little sex in the media with which to be concerned.

⁶⁶¹ Glueck’s study, supported by the Commonwealth Fund, had concluded that juvenile delinquents could be differentiated from non-delinquents by their physical, temperamental, attitudinal, psychological, and sociocultural constitution. The only indication that media might play a role in delinquency was as part of the “exciting, stimulating, but little controlled and culturally inconsistent environment of the underprivileged area” that tends to precipitate behavioral tendencies. Glueck, Sheldon & Eleanor. *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency*. New York: Commonwealth Fund, 1950. 281-282. Print. Emphasis mine.

⁶⁶² Hoerrner uses Murray Edelman’s theory of “symbolic politics” to describe a half century of recurrent Congressional hearings on television violence. Edelman argued that much political action is symbolic rather than substantive — staged dramas that play on the emotions of the public to assure them that issues too complex to be resolved are nonetheless being addressed. Edelman, Murray. *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970. Print; Hoerrner, Keisha L. “Symbolic Politics: Congressional Interest in Television Violence from 1950 to 1996.” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 76.4 (1999): 684-698. Print.

⁶⁶³ Grimes, Tom, James A. Anderson & Lori Bergen. *Media Violence and Aggression: Science and Ideology*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2008. 31. Print.

⁶⁶⁴ Epstein, *Impure Science*, 6.

experts to settle controversies undercuts the authority of expertise, claims Dorothy Nelkin, as their participation in political life “highlights their fallibility, demystifies their special expertise and calls attention to non-technical and political assumptions that influence technical advice.”⁶⁶⁵ Rather than settling claims about the effects of media on youth, then, government investigations of these claims engendered what Epstein calls “credibility struggles,” whereby different claim-makers “enroll supporters behind their arguments, legitimate those arguments as authoritative knowledge, and present themselves as the sort of people who can voice the truth.”⁶⁶⁶ Through such struggles, a scientific community emerged that claimed authority for the production of knowledge about youth and media effects.

Concerns with violent and sexual media that had been put on the back burner in the 1930s and had begun to simmer in the 1950s were further stoked during the 1960s by the moral outrage of groups like Citizens for Decent Literature and Morality in Media, who linked increasing sexual ‘delinquency’ and crime to the proliferation of obscene magazines, increasing sex and violence in movies, and violence on television. In response, President Lyndon Johnson established two investigative commissions: The National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, and the United States Commission on Obscenity and Pornography.

Two of the volumes produced by the Commission on Violence were concerned specifically with the effects of television on children, but like the work of the Kefauver Committee, the commission’s summary report could only draw parallels between violence in society and media violence, while suggesting that because TV was a primary source of child socialization, it was likely a contributing factor in the development of aggressive behavior.⁶⁶⁷ Upon the commission’s

⁶⁶⁵ Nelkin, Dorothy. “The Political Impact of Technical Expertise.” *Social Studies of Science* 5.1 (1975): 54. Print; See also: Brint, Steven. *In An Age of Experts: The Changing Role of Professionals in Politics and Public Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. Print.

⁶⁶⁶ Epstein, *Impure Science*, 3; See also: Shapin, Steven. “Cordelia’s Love: Credibility and the Social Studies of Science.” *Perspectives on Science* 3.3 (1995): 255-275. Print.

⁶⁶⁷ The summary report of the Commission on Violence noted a 100 percent increase in violent crime over the past decade, and referred to research finding that 81 percent of primetime TV entertainment, and 94

recommendation, an Advisory Committee on Television and Behavior was organized under the auspices of the Surgeon General and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) to fund and evaluate further research.⁶⁶⁸ This committee's summary report of the five volumes detailing the research projects, literature reviews, and subcommittee hearings conducted under their charge found "a modest association between viewing of violence and aggression among at least some children," but noted that the "evidence is not conclusive," and that "TV is only one of the many factors which in time may precede aggressive behavior."⁶⁶⁹

The Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, also given a substantial budget to fund and evaluate new research, was less circumspect in their conclusions. Although a minority report claiming liberal bias was issued by commissioners Charles Keating, founder of Citizens for Decent Literature, and the Rev. Morton Hill, president of Morality in Media, the majority of the eighteen-member commission agreed that "extensive empirical investigation [...] provided no evidence that exposure to or use of sexual materials play a significant role in the causation of

percent of children's cartoons, contained violence. National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. *To Establish Justice, to Ensure Domestic Tranquility: Final Report of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969. Print; See also: Baker, Robert K. & Sandra J. Ball, eds. *Violence and the Media: A Staff Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, Vol. 9*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969. Print; Briand, Paul L., ed. *Mass Media Hearings: A Staff Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, Vol. 9A*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969. Print.

⁶⁶⁸ The NIMH provided \$1 million to fund 23 projects involving 60 researchers, while the Surgeon General's advisory committee held hearing and evaluated the findings of the research.

⁶⁶⁹ Several of those involved in the process suggested that the broadcasting industry played a significant role in the selection of committee members, the awarding of research grants, and the editing of reports, and that this biased the research in their favor. The U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Communications held hearings several months after publication of the committee's summary report, at which Albert Bandura, a psychologist who had been excluded from the committee due to prior research he had conducted on the social learning of aggressive behavior, testified that "The Surgeon General's Report demonstrates that the TV industry is sufficiently powerful to control how research bearing on the psychological effects of televised violence is officially evaluated and reported to the general public." Boffey, Philip M. & John Walsh. "Study of TV Violence: Seven Top Researchers Blackballed from Panel." *Science* 168.3934 (1970): 949-952. Print; Bogart, Leo. "Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined that TV Violence Is Moderately Dangerous to Your Child's Mental Health." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36.4 (1972): 491-521. Print; Cater, Douglass & Stephen Strickland. *TV Violence and the Child: The Evolution and Fate of the Surgeon General's Report*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1975. Print; Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior. *Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972. 5-7. Print.

social or individual harms such as crime, delinquency, sexual or nonsexual deviancy or severe emotional disturbances.”⁶⁷⁰ The commission recommended decriminalization of pornography and more comprehensive sex education for children.

The contentious hearings and controversial reports of these committees and commissions jumpstarted research into media effects on youth. Beginning in the 1970s, studies on the effects of television proliferated. A 1982 NIMH report following up on the 1972 Report of the Surgeon General’s Advisory Committee, noted approvingly that “90 percent of all research on television’s influence on behavior have appeared within the past 10 years — more than 2,500 titles.”⁶⁷¹ Most of this research, however, was on the effects of violent representations on aggression, and the NIMH suggested the need for more studies into the effects of other representations, including sex, on not only behavior, but also attitudes and emotions. Shortly thereafter, the NIMH began providing grants for research into the effects of media sex on youth.

This impetus for research was strengthened by the cultural climate of the 1980s. The Moral Majority was waging war against sexual liberalism and its presumed contribution to the corruption of youth. The 1977 Sexual Exploitation of Children Act, which criminalized the production and sale of child pornography, the 1982 Supreme Court ruling in *New York v. Ferber* that child pornography need not meet the constitutional test of obscenity, the Child Protection Act of 1984, which criminalized the purchase and possession of child pornography, and the hearings and final report of the Meese Commission, all worked together to link media sex to violent behavior and child abuse, giving credence to public fears that the proliferation of pornography and sexual representations in mainstream media was harmful to youth, while also discharging these fears through the appropriate channels of expertise. On top of this, the country was still

⁶⁷⁰ United States Commission on Obscenity and Pornography. *The Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography*. New York: Bantam, 1970. Print.

⁶⁷¹ National Institute of Mental Health. *Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1982. Print.

reeling from the teen pregnancy panic when the AIDS crisis hit, and once the myth of HIV being a gay disease was dispelled, it fueled further anxiety over adolescent sexual behavior and representations of casual sex in music, movies, and on television. In response, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, who was taking heat for the Reagan administration's inadequate response to the crisis, prompted the PHS, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the CDC to begin funding, amongst other things, research into the relationship between the media and 'safe sex', in order to both evaluate popular portrayals and help produce prophylactic public service announcements.⁶⁷²

Research into the relationship between media violence and child and adolescent aggression built upon the foundations of child study and media effects research. The once theoretically and methodologically complex field of child study had withered by the 1950s.⁶⁷³ Its last vestige, developmental psychology, is based in child study theories of social learning and development through stages, but locates these processes specifically in the mind.⁶⁷⁴ Social and cultural factors play a role, but only as triggers for the propagation of certain cognitive functions. Exposure to particular environmental stimuli at the right time helps the young mind mature, but exposure at an

⁶⁷² Freimuth, Vicki S. "Theoretical Foundations of AIDS Media Campaigns." *AIDS: A Communication Perspective*. Eds. Timothy Edgar, Mary Anne Fitzpatrick, & Vicki S. Freimuth. Hillsdale: Erlbaum, 1992. 91-110. Print; Kim, Nina, et al. "Effectiveness of the 40 Adolescent AIDS Risk-Reduction Interventions: A Quantitative Review." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 20.3 (1997): 204-215. Print; Wilcox, Brian L. "Federal Policy and Adolescent AIDS." *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 50 (1990): 61-70. Print.

⁶⁷³ Smuts, *Service of Children*, 164-165, 252; White, "Developmental Psychology," 469-473.

⁶⁷⁴ Although G. Stanley Hall had proposed that youth develop in progressive stages at the turn of the twentieth century, it was Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget who first clearly articulated these stages in terms of cognitive development. Piaget began researching and developing his theory in the 1920s, but did not become influential in the United States until the 1960s, just as Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory of development was also coming into vogue. For Erikson, social factors function as challenges that instigate psychic crises, which need to be properly resolved within the stage to which they correspond for successful development into a fully functional adulthood. Piaget and Erikson established, and continue to dominate, the field of developmental psychology, while models of continuous and situational development such as Lev Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, have been marginalized. Erikson, Erik H. *Childhood and Society*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1963. Print; Piaget, Jean. *The Essential Piaget: An Interpretive Reference and Guide*. Eds. Howard E. Gruber & J. Jacques Vonèche. New York: Basic Books, 1977. Print; Vygotsky, Lev S. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978. Print.

inappropriate stage poses a risk to proper development. This cognitive model of child development fit well with the cognitive model of media effects deriving from social psychology, which was also interested in the propagation of cognitive processes in response to external stimuli. The foundational association between these is reflected in the founding figures of this new area of study into the effects of media violence on youth: psychologist Albert Bandura and communication scholar George Gerbner.

Bandura theorized that in early stages of development children learn through imitating the behavior of others, and thus that exposure to unhealthy or antisocial behaviors was a developmental risk. This social learning theory emerged from studies of child and adolescent aggression, including his highly influential Bobo doll experiments.⁶⁷⁵ In the first of these NIH-funded experiments, a group of young boys and girls were individually exposed to an adult physically and verbally abusing an inflatable doll, and then observed imitating this aggressive behavior toward the doll after being given another play activity and left alone; a control group not exposed to adult abuse of the doll did not exhibit such aggressive behavior.⁶⁷⁶ This was followed up by another experiment of similar design, but in which different groups were individually exposed to a ‘real-life’ adult abusing a Bobo doll, a film of an adult abusing a Bobo doll, and a TV cartoon of a cat abusing a Bobo doll; those kids who saw the film and the cartoon behaved even more aggressively than those who saw the abuse in person.⁶⁷⁷ These experiments became the model for dozens of other studies on the behavioral effects of media.

Gerbner began studying television violence under contract to first the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, and then the Surgeon General’s Advisory

⁶⁷⁵ Bandura, Albert. *Social Learning Through Imitation*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962. Print; Bandura, Albert & Richard H. Walters. *Adolescent Aggression: A Study of the Influence of Child-Training Practices and Family Interrelationships*. New York: Ronald Press, 1959. Print.

⁶⁷⁶ Bandura, Albert, Dorothea Ross, & Sheila A. Ross. “Transmission of Aggression Through Imitation of Aggressive Models.” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 63.3 (1961): 575-582. Print.

⁶⁷⁷ Bandura, Albert, Dorothea Ross, & Sheila A. Ross. “Imitation of Film-Mediated Aggressive Models.” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 66.1 (1963): 3-11. Print.

Committee on Television and Behavior. He produced a series of “Violence Profiles” that began with content analysis of network programming. Following a conference of NIMH consultants organized by Albert Bandura, this series was “broadened to encompass a number of additional dimensions linked with viewers’ perceptions of violence and its effects.”⁶⁷⁸ Through this work, Gerbner developed, along with Larry Gross, the Cultural Indicators Project. Grounded in Gerbner’s cultivation theory — which proposed that the effects of media were not so much immediate and specific as cumulative and overarching, working over time to shape the way we see the world in which we live — the Cultural Indicators Project established a research method based on analyses of both content and cultivation.⁶⁷⁹ TV programs were sampled and coded for prevalence, rate, and role of violent actions, which established a set of independent variables that could be factored separately and also combined into a Violence Index and plotted across different programs, networks, and programming hours. TV viewers were then surveyed about various views on life, such as whether people can be trusted, or how likely they thought they would be involved in violence in any given week, and the responses — the dependent variables — were categorized by demographics such as age, race, gender, class, education level, and TV viewing habits. The research revealed a “cultivation differential,” whereby heavier viewers responded to questions with more of a “television answer” — one more consistent with the world portrayed on

⁶⁷⁸ Quote from a report by Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Caspar W. Weinberger to Senator John O. Pastore, who had been instrumental in forming the Surgeon General’s Advisory Committee on Television and Behavior, in: Gerbner, George & Larry Gross. “Living With Television: The Violence Profile.” *Journal of Communication* 26.2 (1976): 174. Print. See also: Gerbner, George. “Dimensions of Violence in Television Drama.” *Violence and the Media: A Staff Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence* (Vol. 9). Eds. Robert K. Baker & Sandra J. Ball. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969. 311-340. Print; Gerbner, George. “Violence in Television Drama: Trends and Symbolic Functions.” *Television and Social Behavior: Media Content and Control*. Eds. John P. Murray, Eli Abraham Rubinstein, & George A. Comstock. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972. 28-187. Print.

⁶⁷⁹ Earlier work on the Cultural Indicators Project also suggested the need for institutional analysis of the organization, production, and management of media messages, but this seems to have fallen by the wayside as the project progressed. See: Gerbner, George. “The Structure and Process of Television Program Content Regulation in the United States.” *Television and Social Behavior: Media Content and Control*. Eds. John P. Murray, Eli Abraham Rubinstein, & George A. Comstock. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing

TV than the one in which they lived — and this differential was exaggerated in those of lower class, lower education level, and lower age.⁶⁸⁰

Cultivation theory complicated yet complemented Bandura's social learning theory: one revealed short term effects of media on behavior, and the other long term effects on attitudes, values, and worldview, which ultimately shaped future behaviors. Both are extensively cited in not only the media violence literature, but also in the literature on media sex.⁶⁸¹ Due to the ethical issues of conducting experiments that expose youth to sexual representations, however, and also to the difficulty of generalizing experimental findings beyond the lab, Gerbner's content/cultivation analysis became the preferred method for studying the effects on youth of media sex when various government agencies began sponsoring this research in the 1980s.⁶⁸² Other theoretical orientations than cultivation were introduced, such as sexual script theory, but the model of coding content, surveying viewers, and establishing statistical correlations became standard. Developmental psychology, with its theory of staged progress and risky exposure, and the media effects paradigm, with its method of coding, counting, categorizing, and correlating, were thus imported into media sex research through Bandura and Gerbner. To these were added an orientation toward public health that decades of research into sexual behavior had proven necessary for institutional support.

Office, 1972. 386-414. Print; Gerbner, George. "Toward 'Cultural Indicators': The Analysis of Mass Mediated Message Systems." *AV Communication Review* 17.2 (1969): 137-148. Print.

⁶⁸⁰ Gerbner & Gross "Living With Television."

⁶⁸¹ Anderson, James A. "The Production of Media Violence and Aggression Research." *American behavioral Scientist* 51.8 (2008): 1260-1279. Print; Wartella, Ellen & Byron Reeves. "Historical Trends in Research on Children and the Media: 1900-1960." *Journal of Communication* 35.2 (1985): 118-133. Print.

⁶⁸² Gerbner had himself made forays into sex and television studies in the late 1970s, giving lectures and writing several proposals for research grants through the Cultural Indicators Project. Larry Gross and Nancy Signorielli, also members of the project, would continue to study the effects of televised sexual representation. See: Gerbner, George, Larry Gross, & Nancy Signorielli. *Adolescent Sexual Patterns and Television*. Grant proposal to the Center for Population Research, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. 1976. *George Gerbner Archive*. Annenberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Gerbner, George, et al. *Television's Contribution to Sex Role Stereotypes and Public Morality: Toward a Theory of Conditional Effects*. Grant proposal to the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation. 1981. *George Gerbner Archive*. Annenberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

The Problem of Sex (Research)

In 1913, physician Max Exner, Director of Sex Education for the International Committee of the YMCA, began distributing questionnaires to young men at the universities around the country where he lectured. This “pioneer attempt to secure statistical data on American sexual behavior,” as Alfred Kinsey later referred to it, was inspired by an “urgent need of facts which would enable us to speak with reasonable definiteness about the problem.”⁶⁸³ Fifteen years prior, a study on “the moral and religious life” of adolescent boys conducted by a secretary of the college department at the YMCA, Fletcher S. Brockman, and published in G. Stanley Hall’s quarterly *The Pedagogical Seminary*, had unwittingly revealed “the problem”: the extent to which young men fell prey to sexual temptation.⁶⁸⁴ Exner’s survey in turn revealed the role of “unwholesome sources” of sexual knowledge in yielding to temptation. While Brockman had been trying to elucidate challenges facing Christian institutions, Exner, as part of the education reform and social hygiene movements, sought to unveil adolescent sexuality as a public problem to be dealt with through education policy. Exner’s study was no less influenced than Brockman’s by the moral stance of the YMCA that problematized youth sexuality, but it marked a shift — typical of the Progressive era — toward addressing this issue through science and education. In this shift, the moral beliefs subtending received knowledge about sex became coded into the mechanisms whereby a new, scientific sexual knowledge was produced.

Like child study and research into media effects, the social studies of sexual attitudes and behavior that emerged in early twentieth century America were shaped by the underlying values of the particular institutional formations in which they developed. The first sex survey was as

⁶⁸³ Exner, Max J. *Problems and Principles of Sex Education: A Study of 948 College Men*. New York: Association Press, 1915. 3. Print; Kinsey, Alfred C. et al. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. New York: W.B. Saunders, 1948. 24-25. Print.

⁶⁸⁴ Brockman’s study was not a sex survey. The set of questions that evoked responses about sex were in regard to problems of religious conversion, asking “What was your severest temptation?” “Did you yield?” and “To what extent?” Brockman, Fletcher S. “A Study of the Moral and Religious Life of 251 Preparatory School Students in the United States.” *The Pedagogical Seminary* 9 (1902): 255-273. Print.

much a product of the YMCA and the American Social Hygiene Association (ASHA) — which worked closely together in the production and dissemination of sexual knowledge — as it was of Exner and the young men who filled out questionnaires, and it reflected in the sample, in the questions asked, and in the interpretation of data, assumptions about ‘normal’ sexuality linked to the values of these institutions.⁶⁸⁵ Exner’s study, as well as those conducted in the following few decades, assumed heterosexuality, monogamy, marriage, and gender, class, and race based distinctions to be natural characteristics of sexual behavior.⁶⁸⁶ These surveys of white, middle-class, college-educated, young men seemed to confirm these assumptions, which in turn worked to construct and maintain these behaviors as normal.⁶⁸⁷ Although assumptions about normal

⁶⁸⁵ Exner was on the executive committee of the American Federation for Sex Hygiene (AFSH), one of three organizations that merged to form ASHA in 1913. He would later serve as the director of ASHA’s Department of Educational Activities.

⁶⁸⁶ See: Burgess, Ernest W. & Leonard S. Cottrell. *Predicting Success and Failure in Marriage*. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1939. Print; Davis, Katharine Bement. *Factors in the Sex Lives of Twenty-Two Hundred Women*. New York: Harper and Borthor, 1929. Print; Dickinson, Robert Latou & Lura Beam. *The Single Woman*. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1934. Print; Dickinson, Robert Latou & Lura Beam. *A Thousand Marriages*. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1931. Print; Hamilton, Gilbert. *A Research in Marriage*. New York: A.C. Boni, 1929. Print; Peck, Martin W. & Frederick L. Wells. “On the Psycho-Sexuality of College Graduate Men.” *Mental Hygiene* 7 (1923): 697-714. Print; Peck, Martin W. & Frederick L. Wells. “Further Studies in the Psycho-Sexuality of College Graduate Men.” *Mental Hygiene* 9 (1925): 502-520. Print; Robie, Walter F. *Rational Sex Ethics*. Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1916. Print; Taylor, William S. “A Critique of Sublimation in Males.” *Genetic Psychology Monographs Vol. XIII*. Worcester: Clark University, 1933. Print; Terman, Lewis. *Psychological Factors in Marital Happiness*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1938. Print; Terman, Lewis M. & Catharine Cox Miles. *Sex and Personality*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936. Print.

⁶⁸⁷ “Normal did not mean that which is common to large numbers of people,” writes Julia Ericksen, “but that which was morally acceptable.” Neurologist Walter Robie, for example, surveyed “the better part of the middle class,” as the upper class was prone to decadence and corruption, and the cramped quarters of the “submerged tenth” bred early precocity. Psychologist William Sentman Taylor excluded “rakes, morons, neurotics, and other abnormal personalities” from his study of male masturbation, including only “moral” men with a “great capacity for physical and mental work.” Psychiatrist Martin W. Peck and psychologist Frederick Lyman Wells surveyed college graduates from “one of the more favored social groups” in their study of continence, attributing sexual mixing between social classes to the wanton behavior of lower-class women. Katherine Bement Davis’s survey of 2,200 married and single women broke the mold by not assuming women’s sexual practices were self-evident, unproblematic, and thus not in need of study, but she and those who subsequently took up the study of female sexual behavior, continued to assume class and gender based distinctions in sexual behavior. Davis’s finding that homosexual behavior among women was “common in boarding-schools and colleges exclusively for girls and women and in penal institutions of all types” was largely ignored. Davis, Katharine Bement. *Factors in the Sex Lives of Twenty-Two Hundred Women*. New York: Harper and Borthor, 1929. Print; Ericksen, Julia A. *Kiss and Tell: Surveying Sex in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. 22.

sexual behavior would change over the course of the twentieth century, the assumption that there was a normal sexuality continued to frame sex studies. Indeed, it was the need to know what was normal and what was deviant that justified research, and the idea that normalcy and deviancy were inherent characteristics of sex to be discovered by science obfuscated how science constructed these categories.

Exner, ASHA director William Snow, and Katharine Bement Davis — a social reformer, sex researcher, and director of the Rockefeller-funded research arm of ASHA, the Bureau of Social Hygiene (BSH) — helped establish the Committee for Research in Problems of Sex (CRPS) under the National Research Council's (NRC) Division of Medical Sciences in 1921.⁶⁸⁸

With substantial support from the Rockefeller Foundation — which also backed through the BSH studies of the relationships between prostitution and venereal disease, and between sex and marriage⁶⁸⁹ — the CRPS funded over a hundred sex research projects from the 1920s until the early 1960s.⁶⁹⁰

Print; Robie, *Rational Sex Ethics*, 21-25; Taylor, "Sublimation in Males," 17; Peck, "Psycho-Sexuality," 710-711. Print.

⁶⁸⁸ The NRC was formed as part of the National Academy of Sciences in 1916 at the Request of President Wilson to recruit specialists from the scientific community to provide advice to the military. Recognizing the continued value of this service in times of peace, Wilson issued an executive order at the end of World War I that perpetuated the NRC. As Aberle and Corner show, the initial proposal for a project dedicated to sex research was rejected by the Division of Anthropology and Psychology, which was uncomfortable taking on the sensitive subject given its only recently granted divisional status within the NRC, in which they had yet to prove themselves as serious science. Aberle, Sophi D. & George W. Corner. *Twenty-Five Years of Sex Research: History of the National Research Council Committee for Research in Problems of Sex, 1922-1947*. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1953. 10-11. Print.

⁶⁸⁹ Rockefeller philanthropy was first linked to sex research following the involvement of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. in a New York City grand jury investigation of "white slave traffic." Rockefeller established the Bureau of Social Hygiene for "the study, amelioration, and prevention of those social conditions, crimes, and diseases which adversely affect the well-being of society." While the Bureau initially focused on prostitution, it began investing in the study of marital problems following a Census Bureau report of a 31 percent increase in divorce between 1916 and 1922, as well as growing eugenic concerns about the declining birth rate in the upper and middle classes. A new model of "companionate marriage" was upheld, in which, as Ben Lindsey and Wainright Evans argued, equality, love, affection, and sexual pleasure sustained the conjugal bond, and social scientists began to research marriage in these terms. University of Chicago sociologist Ernest Burgess conducted several surveys "to bring love and marriage within the purview of science, of prediction, and control." Physician Gilbert Hamilton interviewed two hundred "highly cultured" women and men in New York City about sexual problems and marital success, from which he identified women's "orgasm inadequacy" as the most important factor in failing marriages. Both Burgess and Hamilton's work was supported by Rockefeller's Bureau of Social Hygiene. However,

Though the CRPS had been developed out of a social science interest in human sexual behavior, they directed the bulk of their grants toward natural science research.⁶⁹¹ Moreover, the committee argued that while “our program should be directed toward man as our object of study [...] in a phenomenon so universally organic as sex we must not lose sight of the fact that other organisms may furnish the first and best clue to problems of sex in man.”⁶⁹² Thus, as Sophi Aberle and George Corner document, most of the research supported by the CRPS in their first twenty-five years was in endocrinology, sexual anatomy, sex cycle physiology, and the general biology of sex in lower life forms.⁶⁹³

These biological studies of sexual behavior, most often conducted on rodents, would have a profound impact on the understanding of human sexuality, especially as the “golden age of endocrinology” unfolded.⁶⁹⁴ As Anne Fausto-Sterling shows, experiments by biologists such as Edgar Allen, Herbert Evans, Frank Lillie, Carl Moore, and Charles Stockard — which received the most extensive funding from the CRPS — established hormones as the basis of sexual

when Hamilton’s suggestions that “matrimonial incompetents” (impotents, homosexuals, lesbians, and the frigid) should divorce and that women should masturbate during copulation to help achieve orgasm were reported in *Redbook*, *Harpers*, and *Women’s Home Companion*, the Bureau asked him to remove his name from the study. Bullough, Vern L. “The Rockefellers and Sex Research.” *Journal of Sex Research* 21.2 (1985): 113-125. Print; Burgess, *Predicting Success*; Groves, Ernest R. *Social Problems of the Family*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1927. Print; Hamilton, *Research in Marriage*; Lindsey, Ben B. & Wainright Evans. *The Revolt of Modern Youth*. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925. Print.

⁶⁹⁰ The CRPS was funded through the Bureau of Social Hygiene until 1933, when the Rockefeller Foundation began funding it directly. In addition, a number of research projects initially funded through the CRPS were later funded directly by the Rockefeller Foundation when their financial demands put a burden on the CRPS to the detriment of other research projects. Aberle & Corner, *Twenty-Five Years of Sex Research*, 24, 70-76.

⁶⁹¹ As Anne Fausto-Sterling notes, the committee was “hijacked” by embryologist Frank Lillie, who “took advantage of an intellectual and strategic vacuum” to articulate his own vision, which benefitted his intellectual community but ultimately limited the initial vision of the CRPS. Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body*, 174, 337; See also: Clarke, Adele. *Disciplining Reproduction: Modernity, American Life Sciences and the “Problem of Sex.”* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. Print.

⁶⁹² Aberle & Corner. *Twenty-Five Years of Sex Research*, 24.

⁶⁹³ Appendix 7 of Aberle and Corner’s history of the CRPS lists all the grants made between 1922 and 1947. Aberle & Corner. *Twenty-Five Years of Sex Research*, 114-131.

⁶⁹⁴ Parkes, A.S. “The Rise of Reproductive Endocrinology, 1926-1940.” *Journal of Endocrinology* 34.3 (1966): xx. Print.

differentiation.⁶⁹⁵ Although what were eventually called “androgens” and “estrogens” have a wide range of effects on physiological development, are synthesized by a variety of bodily organs, and appear in varying quantities at different stages of development in both males and females, through a process of purifying, measuring, and naming, these were defined as “sex hormones” that, when properly balanced in a process of “normal” development, produce men and women.⁶⁹⁶ Gender differences such as aggression and passivity, as well as what would become known as sexual preference, were mapped onto these hormones, which became the basis for explaining sexual behavior as a natural outcome of biological processes.

The prominence of both the NRC and the Rockefeller Foundation conferred high status on research that the CRPS funded, and consequently denigrated that which they did not, which helped steer the trajectory of twentieth century sex research.⁶⁹⁷ Physician Gilbert Hamilton’s proposed study of sexual activity in marriage, for example, was rejected by the NRC “on the

⁶⁹⁵ Allen, Edgar & Edward A. Doisy. “An Ovarian Hormone: Preliminary Report on its Localization, Extraction, and Partial Purification and Action in Test Animals.” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 81.10 (1923): 819-821. Print; Allen, Edgar, et al. *Sex and Internal Secretions*. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1939. Print; Evans, Herbert M. “Endocrine Glands: Gonads, Pituitary, and Adrenals.” *Annual Review of Psychology* 1 (1939): 577-652. Print; Evans, Herbert M. & Miriam E. Simpson. “A Sex Difference in the Hormone Content of the Anterior Hypophysis of the Rat.” *American Journal of Physiology* 89 (1929): 375-378. Print; Evans, Herbert M. & Olive Swezey. *The Chromosomes in Man: Sex and Somatic*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1929. Print; Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body*, 170-194; Lillie, Frank R. “Growth Rate and Hormone Threshold With Reference to Physiology of Development.” *American Naturalist* 66 (1932): 171-179. Print; Lillie, Frank R. “The Present Status of the Problem of Sex-Inversion in the Hen.” *Journal of Experimental Zoology* 48 (1927): 175-196. Print; Moore, Carl R. “Properties of the Gonads as Controllers of Somatic and Psychological Characteristics.” *American Journal of Anatomy* 34 (1924): 269-316. Print; Moore, Carl R. “Sex Determination and Sex Differentiation in Birds and Mammals.” *American Naturalist* 59 (1925): 177-189. Print; Moore, Carl R. & D. Price. “Gonad Hormone Functions, and the Reciprocal Influence Between Gonads and Hypophysis with its Bearing on the Problem of Sex-Hormone Antagonism.” *American Journal of Anatomy* 50 (1932): 13-71. Print; Stockard, Charles R. “The Gonads and Sex Physiology.” *Transactions of the Congress of Physicians and Surgeons*. New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse, and Taylor, 1925. 22-30. Print; Stockard, Charles R. “Hormones of the Sex Glands, or the Biology of the Gonads.” *Hormones and Structural Development*. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1928. 62-74. Print.

⁶⁹⁶ Fausto-Sterling argues that a more biochemically appropriate term than “sex hormones” would be “steroid hormones,” as they are “powerful growth hormones” that “govern the process of cell growth, cell differentiation, cell physiology, and programmed cell death” in “most, if not all, of the body’s organ systems.” Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body*, 193.

⁶⁹⁷ As Vern Bullough argues, Rockefeller funding through the CRPS created a kind of “sex establishment” — a dominant group of researchers who set the agenda for future study. Bullough, “The Rockefellers,” 118.

grounds that the research was social science.”⁶⁹⁸ The BSH subsequently financed Hamilton’s work, but withdrew support when he decided to report some of his findings in *Redbook*, *Harpers*, and *Women’s Home Companion*. His 1929 book *A Research in Marriage* was essentially “a forerunner of the Kinsey report in that it records a wider range of sexual activity of various kinds than had been thought to occur.” Exiled from the institutional center of sex research, though, this work was largely ignored.⁶⁹⁹ The CRPS did fund a few small social science studies of sex prior to their major investment in Alfred Kinsey’s work during the 1940s. These early studies’ methods and findings were similar to Hamilton’s — surveys that revealed a wide range of sexual activities which often manifested in couples’ sexual incompatibility — but whereas Hamilton problematized the institution of marriage, the CRPS-funded researchers pinned the problem on psychobiological differences between men and women.⁷⁰⁰ “Hamilton,” suggests Vern Bullough, “was apparently trying to be too sociological.”⁷⁰¹ His work not only challenged matrimony as the only appropriate forum for sexual relations — at the height of the marital adjustment movement,

⁶⁹⁸ The general principle established at an early meeting of the CRPS was to “endorse biological and physiological studies as the foundation of sex research and other divisions of the field should be erected upon these.” Social science would thus only be invested in after a substantial base of sexual knowledge had been established by the natural sciences. Yet several social science projects were funded early on, such as psychiatrist Adolf Meyer’s survey of his medical students’ sex lives, psychiatrist Martin Peck and psychologist Frederick Wells’ study of the sexual practices of college-educated men, and psychologist Lewis Terman’s investigation of the relationship between sex and personality. Aberle & Corner, *Twenty-Five Years of Sex Research*, 24, 46-48.

⁶⁹⁹ Aberle & Corner, *Twenty-Five Years of Sex Research*, 47; Bullough, “The Rockefellers,” 120.

⁷⁰⁰ Psychiatrist Martin Peck and psychologist Frederick Wells’ two studies of college-educated men blamed their proclivity toward sexual experimentation on the innate depravity of lower-class women. Separate studies by psychologists Carney Landis and Lewis Terman on the relationship between sexual factors and personality development, and a later study by Terman on the psychosexuality of marital happiness, upheld conventional gender distinctions as inherent products of differential sexual development, and blamed female “orgasm inadequacy” — which Hamilton had documented as a lack of clitoral stimulation — on women’s inability to achieve the abandon necessary for sexual pleasure. Funding provided to psychiatrist Adolf Meyer to organize medical student questionnaires and extensive records of the sex behavior of patients failed to produce any results, as Meyer “was always troubled about the dangers which he saw in statistics detached from the flesh-and-blood individual.” Aberle & Corner, *Twenty-Five Years of Sex Research*, 46-51; Erickson, *Kiss and Tell*, 26-28, 38-48; Landis, Carney & M. Marjorie Bolles. *Personality and Sexuality of the Physically Handicapped Woman*. New York: Paul B. Hoeber, 1942. Print; Landis, Carney, et al. *Sex in Development*. New York Paul B. Hoeber, 1940. Print; Peck, “Psycho-Sexuality”; Peck, “Further Studies”; Terman, Lewis & Catharine Cox Miles. *Sex and Personality*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936. Print; Terman, *Marital Happiness*.

⁷⁰¹ Bullough, “The Rockefellers,” 120.

no less, which was attempting to ameliorate the increasing divorce rate in part by celebrating the pleasures of conjugal sex — but it also did not adhere to the accepted framing of sexual behavior in terms of natural, biological gender differences.

Alfred Kinsey's training as a biologist played a significant role in gaining CRPS support of his research. His early work on the variable sexual behavior of gall wasps jibed with the focus on non-human sex shared by much of the research the committee funded in its first two decades, and his new work on the variability of human sexual behavior built upon his older work, as well as on both the biological and social research already backed by the CRPS. His rigorously quantitative methodology would later come under fire as probability sampling and more objective data gathering techniques became the norm of such statistical studies, but reviews of his methods by the CRPS at the time were so favorable as to yield exponential increases in funding.⁷⁰²

Kinsey's findings, published in the bestsellers *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* [1948] and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* [1953], evoked a public outcry, yet they reflected extant research into both animal and human sexual behavior.⁷⁰³ Backlash to Kinsey's work, then,

⁷⁰² For example, when Kinsey applied for a second year of funding, CRPS chair Robert Yerkes, committee member George Corner, and prominent statistician Lowell Reed personally visited Kinsey in Bloomington and were so impressed by his methods, records, and staff that his funding was quadrupled. In 1948, when Kinsey was receiving almost all of the funding available to the CRPS, the NRC asked the American Statistical Association to review his methods. The panel of statisticians who conducted the review praised the coverage of material, the broad sample, the interview techniques, the methodological checks, and the sophisticated statistical analysis, suggesting only that the absence of random sampling made it impossible to generalize the results. Aberle & Corner, *Twenty-Five Years of Sex Research*, 48-49; Cochran, William G., Frederick Mosteller, & John W. Tukey. "Statistical Problems of the Kinsey Report." *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 48.264 (1953): 673-716. Print.

⁷⁰³ The great variability of human sexual behavior, including bisexuality, had already been documented by Peck and Wells, Landis, Davis, Hamilton, and Terman. Ethologist Frank Beach conducted numerous studies funded by the CRPS that revealed the common bisexuality of lab rats to be neither hardwired nor a hormonal effect, but rather resulting from the complex interactions of neuronal, hormonal, psychic, and social factors, which led him to suggest a "phylogenetic interpretation of human sex life." Beach, who worked as an interviewer for Kinsey's study, was influenced by the early findings; Kinsey, in turn, cited Beach's work "in order to locate human behavior within the panoply of normal mammalian biology." Beach, Frank A. "Analysis of Factors Involved in the Arousal, Maintenance, and Manifestation of Sexual Excitement in Male Animals." *Psychosomatic Medicine* 4 (1942): 173-198. Print; Beach, Frank A. "A Review of Physiological and Psychological Studies of Sexual Behavior in Mammals." *Psychological Review* 27 (1947): 240-307. Print; Beach, Frank A. "Sex Reversal in the Mating Pattern of the Rat." *Journal of Genetic Psychology* 53 (1938): 329-334. Print; Davis, *Factors in the Sex Lives*; Fausto-Sterling,

was likely due to his outspoken sexual libertarianism.⁷⁰⁴ Kinsey was pro-marriage from a functionalist perspective, arguing for the role of sex in maintaining the conjugal bond, and for the role of this bond in maintaining society. But while he sought “to accumulate an objectively determined body of fact about sex which strictly avoids social or moral interpretations of the fact,” his background in taxonomy led him to preach tolerance of all sexual behavior, including pre-marital and extra-marital sex.⁷⁰⁵ “Individual variations,” argued Kinsey, “shape into a continuous curve on which there are no sharp differences between normal and abnormal, between right and wrong.”⁷⁰⁶

Kinsey’s insistence that all sexual behavior was normal undermined his institutional support. At the height of McCarthyism, which saw homosexuality and other ‘perversions’ as part of a communist assault on the American way of life, Kinsey argued that premarital sex and masturbation were crucial to female sexual autonomy, and showed that homosexuality was not only acceptable, but was a fairly common behavior amongst all classes of people, rather than a deviant behavior that defined a specific type of person.⁷⁰⁷ Sociologists A.H. Hobbs and Richard

Sexing the Body, 206-211; Hamilton, *Research in Marriage*; Peck, “Psycho-Sexuality”; Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*; Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*; Landis, *Sex in Development*; Peck, “Further Studies”; Terman, *Sex and Personality*; Terman, *Marital Happiness*.

⁷⁰⁴ Richard Udry argues that public outcry was framed by three concerns with Kinsey’s work: 1) It exposed the frequency of disapproved sexual behaviors, 2) It overestimated the frequency of these behaviors due to flawed research design, and 3) It revealed a permissive moral stance toward these behaviors. This is true, but it was the third concern that fueled uproar over the other two. Udry, Richard J. “The Politics of Sex Research.” *The Journal of Sex Research* 30.2 (1993): 104-105. Print.

⁷⁰⁵ Taxonomists are concerned with discovering and categorizing variations rather than tabulating the frequency with which variations occur. “As a taxonomist,” writes Julia Ericksen, “Kinsey viewed the range of human sexual behavior as more important than the relative frequency with which any particular behavior occurred. This led him to argue that normality included anything found in the normal distribution.” Ericksen, *Kiss and Tell*, 50; Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 5.

⁷⁰⁶ Christenson, Cornelia V. *Kinsey: A Biography*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971. 8-9. Print.

⁷⁰⁷ The accepted explanation of homosexuality at the time was as a developmental problem in which the individual, due to an improper upbringing, failed to adopt the proper gender, and thus “failed to achieve and maintain adult heterosexual modes of sexual behavior.” This explanation was influenced by Freud, and was lent credence by the work of the Committee for the Study of Sex Variants (CSSV), which was formed in 1935 “to undertake, support and promote investigations and scientific research touching upon and embracing the clinical, psychological, and sociological aspects of variations from normal sexual behavior.” Due to the nature of their research, the CSSV was unsuccessful in attempts to acquire funding from the CRPS, the Commonwealth Fund, and the National Committee on Maternal Health. Committee members,

Lambert attacked Kinsey for suggesting these behaviors were normal, claiming that this view dangerously destabilized necessary social mores.⁷⁰⁸ Urged by Hobbs and other conservative academics, ministers, and members of the news media,⁷⁰⁹ who protested foundation support of Kinsey's research, Congressman B. Carroll Reece formed the House Committee to Investigate Tax Free Foundations.⁷¹⁰ This committee initiated an investigation into Rockefeller funding of Kinsey's work, calling a series of witnesses, including Hobbs, to testify against Kinsey. Although the final report of the committee, submitted amidst Senate censure proceedings against McCarthy, was discredited as redbaiting, the Rockefeller Foundation withdrew support for Kinsey's research under threat of having their tax-exempt status revoked.⁷¹¹ Such heightened political scrutiny

including such leading sex researchers of the time as Robert Dickinson, Adolf Meyer, Carney Landis, George Henry, Karl Lashley, Catharine Cox Miles, and Lewis Terman, worked gratis. With a single charitable contribution of \$7,500 from an anonymous "private citizen," the CSSV sponsored George Henry to conduct the first American study of the "problem of homosexuality," which sought to index physiological and psychological characteristics of homosexuals. Henry, George William. *Sex Variants: A Study of Homosexual Patterns*. New York: P.B. Hoeber, 1941. Print; For a history of the CSSV and a detailed analysis of George Henry's study, see: Terry, Jennifer. *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in American Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999. 178-219. Print.

⁷⁰⁸ Hobbs, A.H. & Richard D. Lambert. "An Evaluation of 'Sexual Behavior in the Human Male.'" *American Journal of Psychiatry* 104.12 (1948): 758-764. Print.

⁷⁰⁹ Including prominent New York minister Harry Fosdick, Princeton president Harold Dodds, president of Union Theological Seminary and Rockefeller Foundation member Henry Van Dusen, and Clare Booth Luce, wife of *Time* and *Life* publisher Henry Luce. Bullough, "The Rockefellers," 122-123.

⁷¹⁰ The Reece Committee, as it was called, was the successor of the Cox Committee, which had been formed in 1952 "to determine which such foundations and organizations are using their resources for un-American activities and subversive activities or for purposes not in the interest or tradition of the United States." After the Cox Committee reported that "there is little basis for the belief expressed in some quarters that foundation funds are being diverted from their intended use," Reece pushed for a more comprehensive inquiry into both the motives for establishing foundations and their influence on public life. Ott, J. Steven. *The Nature of the Non-Profit Sector*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2001. 114-115. Print.

⁷¹¹ The Dodd report found a "monopolistic" effort on the part of foundations to "dominate" American scholarship by linking together national education agencies such as the NRC, the National Education Association, and the Committee for Economic Development in order to steer government policy making. After withdrawing support for Kinsey's work, the Rockefeller Foundation made one of its largest grants ever to the Union Theological Seminary, the president of which, Henry Van Dusen, had been one of the most vocal protesters of Kinsey. Bullough, Vern L. *Science in the Bedroom: A History of Sex Research*. New York: Basic Books, 1994. 181-183. Print; Dodd, Norman. *The Dodd Report to the Reece Committee on Foundations*. New York: The Long House, 1954. Print; See also: Gideonse, Harry D. "A Congressional Committee's Investigation of the Foundations." *The Journal of Higher Education* 25.9 (1954): 457-463. Print; Pomeroy, Wardell B. *Dr. Kinsey and the Institute for Sex Research*. New York: Harpers, 1972. Print.

would have a long-lasting impact on the funding decisions of both private foundations and public agencies, steering them away from controversial research.

The Kinsey reports opened up public discussion and debate about sex, which helped liberalize views on sexual behavior, as well as helping to normalize sex surveys as tools for producing public knowledge about sex.⁷¹² But they also had the effect of limiting future sex research. The openness to discovering what people actually do in the interest of enriching public knowledge, for which the broad scope of Kinsey's research allowed, was closed down by the need to link sexual behavior to particular public problems so as to avoid scrutiny and accusations of impropriety.⁷¹³

Almost all studies of sexual behavior receiving federal or foundation funding since Kinsey have been specifically framed in terms of public health, and have focused on various "high risk" groups.⁷¹⁴ Government agencies such as the Public Health Service (PHS), the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Office of the Surgeon General, the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH),⁷¹⁵ along with associations and organizations like the NRC, the American Public Health Association, the Public Health Foundation (PHF), the YMCA, and Planned Parenthood, as well as private foundations such as the Carnegie Corporation, the

⁷¹² Ericksen, *Kiss and Tell*, 59.

⁷¹³ A notable exception to the focus on risk issues in institutionally supported sex research was John Gagnon and William Simon's 1967 survey of college students. Commissioned by the Institute of Sex Research, funded by the NICHD, with data gathered through probability sampling by the National Opinion Research Center, this study covered a variety of sexual topics, including masturbation, pornography, arousal, dating, petting, orgasm, same-sex sexual experiences, and sex education. While Gagnon and Simon's theory that sexual behavior was learned through the acquisition of social scripts would become a model for explaining youth sexuality, the study itself had little influence on sex research. Ericksen, *Kiss and Tell*, 79-81; Gagnon, John H. & William Simon. *Sexual Conduct: The Social Sources of Human Sexuality*. Chicago: Aldine, 1973. Print.

⁷¹⁴ A notable exception was the work of the NIMH Task Force on Homosexuality. Established in 1967 to study the sexual behavior of homosexuals, in its final report it recommended establishing an NIMH Center for the Study of Sexual Behavior to help locate their research "within the context of the study of a broad range of sexuality, both normal and deviant." The center was never established. National Institute of Mental Health. *National Institute of Mental Health Task Force on Homosexuality: Final Report and Background Papers*. Ed. J.M. Livingood. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972. Print.

Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Ford, Rockefeller, and Kaiser Foundations, have worked together in the latter half of the twentieth century to organize and support numerous studies on human sexual behavior and sexuality.⁷¹⁶ In the 1960s, with the widespread adoption of the pill for birth control and growing controversy over abortion, the focus of this research was on risk issues for fertility and reproduction; in the 1970s, with fertility decreasing in the middle and upper classes but holding steady in the poor and working classes, focus shifted toward fertility in the context of family planning.⁷¹⁷ With the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and 1990s, the focus of research shifted to groups with a higher risk of contracting AIDS — homosexuals, drug users, prisoners, runaway adolescents, and prostitutes. Research that fit within these contemporary frameworks of risk, at least nominally, tended to avoid the heightened scrutiny of sexual research that followed in the wake of Kinsey. To receive institutional support, sexual research had to be framed in terms of public health, and sexual behavior had to be defined in terms of risk.⁷¹⁸

Even when studies frame sexual behavior as a public health risk they are still susceptible to political censure. As with Kinsey, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Reece Committee, the position as public servants of institutions involved in research creates a channel for political forces to shape research agendas. Research that is either morally controversial or about youth

⁷¹⁵ NIH funding for sex research moves through particular subsidiaries — the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD), and the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA).

⁷¹⁶ Vern Bullough's work shows the extensive involvement of philanthropic foundations in sex research, while Audrey Lord's shows the involvement of numerous government agencies. Bullough, *Science in the Bedroom*; Lord, *Condom Nation*.

⁷¹⁷ A good example of this shift is the replacement of the NICHD funded National Fertility Studies, begun in 1965, with the National Survey of Family Growth in 1973.

⁷¹⁸ For example, the "Longitudinal and Related Psychohormonal Studies" of Johns Hopkins' sexologist John Money, whose work explored the relationship between hormones, gender roles, and sexual behavior, received NICHD funding for forty years beginning in 1962 because Money and his colleagues always framed this research in terms of contemporary risk issues. Whereas Southern Illinois University psychologist Harris Rubin's 1970s research on the effects of alcohol and marijuana on sexual arousal had its National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) funding withdrawn by Congress after drawing media attention. While alcohol and drug abuse is a public health issue obviously relevant to the NIDA charter, because the research looked at their effects on arousal rather than risky sexual behavior, it was denounced as "obscene." Hunt, Morton. *The New Know-Nothings: The Political Foes of the Scientific Study of Human Nature*. New

sexual behavior tends to draw attention. For example, two national sex studies commissioned by the CDC and the NIH in the 1980s to gather data on the relationship between sexual behavior, contraception, teen pregnancy, and AIDS, had their NICHD funding withdrawn after being attacked by conservative congressmen. The Survey of Health and AIDS Risk Prevalence (SHARP) and the American Teenage Study (ATS) came under congressional scrutiny upon receiving media attention — particularly the attention of the Christian Broadcasting Network, which organized public protest and appeals to both Congress and the government agencies involved in these projects.

Both studies were framed in terms of public health risk, but got into trouble because they threatened to undermine traditional sexual mores, particularly in relation to youth. As Senator Jesse Helms explained to the Senate, “These sex surveys have not — have not — been concerned with legitimate scientific inquiry as much as they have been concerned with a blatant attempt to sway public attitudes in order to liberalize opinions and laws regarding homosexuality, pedophilia, anal and oral sex, sex education, teen pregnancy and all down the line.”⁷¹⁹ While a proposed amendment to the NIH Revitalization Bill that would have prohibited all future funding of sexual behavior research was rejected, Helms was able to push through an amendment to a Senate budget bill that redirected the NICHD funding for SHARP and ATS into the Adolescent Family Life Program, an outgrowth of the abstinence-promoting AFLA. In his argument before Congress, Helms claimed the amendment “presents a clear choice [...] between support for sexual restraint among our young people or, on the other hand, support for homosexuality and sexual decadence.”⁷²⁰ These two surveys were not related in any way other than their federal

Brunswick: Transaction, 1999. 182-183. Print; See also: Rubin, Harris B. & Donald E. Henson. “Effects of Alcohol on Male Sexual Responding.” *Psychopharmacology* 47 (1976): 123-134. Print.

⁷¹⁹ Senator Helms (NC). “Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriation Act, Fiscal Year 1992.” *Congressional Record*. 12 Sep. 1991. S12862. *Thomas*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁷²⁰ For an account of SHARP, see: Laumann, Edward O., et al. “A Political History of the National Sex Survey of Adults.” *Family Planning Perspectives* 26.1 (1994): 34-38. Print; For an account of ATS, see:

source of funding, but the Congressional investigation's conflation of teen sex with the risk behaviors associated with AIDS would forever link these as a set of cues that would trigger heightened political scrutiny.

This scrutiny has intensified in the twenty-first century. In 2003, NIH director Elias Zerhouni revealed what Congressman Henry Waxman later dubbed a "hit list" of 157 sex researchers and their research projects, which had been provided to Congress by the Christian fundamentalist group Traditional Values Coalition. The list of suspect objects of scientific inquiry, Steven Epstein argues, clearly targeted not just sex research, "but its complex articulation with the broader politics of difference and inequality in the United States, including questions of gender, race, ethnicity, and nation."⁷²¹ Given the inclusion on the list of research that "promotes a 'sex positive' attitude among teens" and "queries 9th graders on their 'current and past sexual behavior,'" youth are also part of the politics of inequality enacted by this "hit list." Moreover, youth are subject to double jeopardy, as their sexuality is targeted both generally and more specifically where it intersects with particular identity categories such as race, gender, class, and sexual orientation.

It is within this political climate that research into the effects of media sex on youth has developed. To acquire institutional support and to avoid censorious public scrutiny, such research must be articulated in terms of public health risks and must steer clear of questions that might challenge traditional sexual mores. Sexual norms, assumptions about sexual health and risky behaviors, and their subtending social values are thus coded into studies, and are reproduced when these studies 'find' — through the media effects model and cognitive developmental theories — links between media sex exposure and deviant or risky sexual behaviors that are seen to threaten public health.

Udry, "The Politics of Sex Research"; For more general accounts and contextualization of the political process through which these research projects were defunded, see: Ericksen, *Kiss and Tell*, 180-189; Hunt, *The New Know-Nothings*, 185-191.

The Case of Movie Sexual Exposure

The only justifiable conclusion from a correlational study with consistent data is that the data do not contradict the model.

— Paul Games⁷²²

The title of the Dartmouth study with which this chapter opened makes a straightforward claim: “Greater Exposure to Sexual Content in Popular Movies Predicts Earlier Sexual Debut and Increased Sexual Risk Taking.” But the careful wording of this staid claim begs questions that demand a deeper reading. What is exposure? What is considered sexual content? What is sexual risk taking? These variables are not extant social facts that have merely been measured and put into a correlational equation; rather, they are constructs that allow complex social phenomena to be quantified. Variables are produced within the epistemic culture of a particular scientific community, which has established a set of methodological tools for counting, coding, and correlating observations, as well as a set of theories for recontextualizing these numerical abstractions and explaining their otherwise mute mathematical products. The tools structure the production of knowledge, and the theories frame its reception. As such this study needs to be read not so much for the claims it makes, but rather in terms of the scientific endeavor subtending these claims — an endeavor of which this study is only one part.

Movie Sexual Exposure (MSE) — the independent variable in the Dartmouth study — was measured using the Beach method. This process was developed by another Dartmouth researcher — clinical physician and statistician Michael Beach — to study the relationship between teen smoking and the representation of smoking in movies.⁷²³ Previous research had been confounded either by indirect measurements, e.g. averaging the amount of smoking in movies and applying this figure to the number of movies subjects have seen, or by the inaccurate self-reporting of

⁷²¹ Epstein, “The New Attack,” 5.

⁷²² Games, Paul A. “Correlation and Causation: A Logical Snafu.” *The Journal of Experimental Education* 58.3 (1990): 241. Print.

⁷²³ Sargent, James D. et al. “Exposure to Smoking Depictions in Movies: Its Association with Established Adolescent Smoking.” *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* 161 (2007): 849-856. Print.

subjects on their own exposure.⁷²⁴ In the Beach method, a large catalogue of movies is coded for content, and then subjects are asked if they have seen movies from a randomly generated subset of the catalogue.

This supposedly ‘direct’ measurement of exposure is, however, contingent on coding. Whereas depictions of smoking are relatively unambiguous, what constitutes sexual content is less clear-cut. The authors of the MSE study define it as “heavy kissing or intercourse,” and offer assurance that an inter-rater agreement of $r=.92$ on a random subsample of movies validates the coding metric of the MSE variable.⁷²⁵ Yet the agreement of two like-minded researchers working on the same project hardly constitutes a general consensus about sexual content. It is neither clear what makes kissing “heavy,” nor is it clear what representations are considered intercourse, given that “top-grossing” films never actually show coitus. Nor is it clear why these two particular activities are singled out as sexual, or what bearing other sexual activities that have been excluded — or indeed, the context in which these activities take place — might have on the experience of Movie Sexual Exposure. The coding of the MSE variable exerts a flattening effect on sexual content, as exemplified by the reduction of the radically different portrayals of sex in *American Pie* [1999] and in *40 Days and 40 Nights* [2002] to almost the same coefficient: 206 and 207 seconds of sexual content respectively. Moreover, the assumption that having seen a movie containing sexual content equates with exposure does not account for actual viewing practices, which are increasingly mediated, especially for adolescents, by other activities.⁷²⁶

⁷²⁴ Sargent, James D. et al. “Population-Based Assessment of Exposure to Risk Behaviors in Motion Pictures.” *Communication Methods and Measures* 2.1 (2008): 134-151. Print.

⁷²⁵ O’Hara, “Greater Exposure,” 986.

⁷²⁶ Indeed, as Itzhak Yanovitsky and Kathryn Greene argue, there is a lack of conceptual clarity in media effects research as to what constitutes exposure. Mimi Ito, et al, provide evidence of the partial attention paid to various media by adolescents in a constant state of distracted multi-tasking. W. James Potter attempts to provide more clarity by proposing variable “exposure states” that mediate the effects of media. Ito, Mimi, et al. *Living and Learning with New Media: Summary of Findings from the Digital Youth Project*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009. Print; Potter W. James. “Conceptualizing the Audience.” *The SAGE Handbook of Media Processes and Effects*. Eds. Robin L. Nabi & Mary Beth Oliver. Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2009. 24-27. Print; Yanovitzky, Itzhak & Kathryn Greene. “Quantitative Methods and Causal

The dependent variable of “risky sexual behavior” is likewise constructed from assumptions. It is based on the number of vaginal or oral sex partners and instances of casual sex — “defined as vaginal sex not with a ‘serious or steady dating partner’” — without a condom.⁷²⁷ Multiple partners *are* statistically a risk factor for STIs, as is sex without a condom. But the reduction of risk to these metrics fails to account for the social interactions and negotiations involved in sexual decision-making that constitute significant vectors of risk mitigation. It is also unclear why anal sex partners have not been included, why casual sex is restricted to vaginal intercourse, and how “serious or steady dating” is to be interpreted. The definition of risky sexual behavior seems to be biased by particular ideas about what is ‘normal’ sexual behavior.

Furthermore, the set of selected covariates in which risk is contextualized sheds light on the presuppositions of the study. Gender, race, and age are typical — although this trio of identity categories begs the question of why sexual orientation is not included. Religion seems a logical factor given its moral sway over sexual matters, but how this metric can be made sense of by measuring only church attendance and not affiliation or allegiance is unclear. Television viewing habits also seems a logical metric, in terms of trying to rule out TV’s influence on the dependent variables, yet for all the careful (if problematic) consideration given to specific content of movies, television viewing is measured only in daily hours and the presence or absence of a TV in the subject’s bedroom. Querying with whom the subject lived to code family structure as intact or divided, as well as the assignment of standardized maternal-responsiveness and maternal-demandingness measures, suggest assumptions about traditional family structure and its relation to ‘normal’ sexual behavior. Finally, “sensation seeking” was measured by inventorying thrill, adventure, and intensity seeking behaviors, as well as boredom susceptibility, via the Arnett

Inference in Media Effects Research.” *The SAGE Handbook of Media Processes and Effects*. Eds. Robin L. Nabi & Mary Beth Oliver. Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2009. 46. Print; See also: Livingstone, Sonia. *Young People and New Media: Childhood and the Changing Media Environment*. London: Sage, 2002. Print; McDonald, Daniel G. “Media Use and the Environment.” *The SAGE Handbook of Media Processes and Effects*. Eds. Robin L. Nabi & Mary Beth Oliver. Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2009. 261-262. Print.

Inventory of Sensation Seeking, as a way of predicting indirect influences of MSE on sexual behavior.⁷²⁸ The measurement of sensation seeking behavior is a common social-psychological strategy for assessing the assumed irrational behavior of adolescents. All of these biases and suppositions behind covariate selection do not reflect the researchers' personal dispositions; rather, they are the products of a broader scientific community, which through a body of research on youth media effects has constructed these 'received beliefs' about 'risky behavior', and has built a set of tools for measuring it.

Obviously, correlation of these variables does not equate with causation, although the longitudinal design of the study allows for 'causal inference'. It should also be noted that correlation is not a matter of simple correspondence. Statistical modeling involves making qualitative causal assumptions and building a mathematical model that represents probable relationships between variables. Data is then tested, using other mathematical methods, for its 'fit' into the proposed model. If the fit is poor, i.e., it does not show significant correlation, then the model must be reconfigured. A slew of statistical tools is available for 'tweaking' the model until it expresses correlations in the data. Statistical models are thus complex assemblages of those tools found to 'reveal' the most significant correlations.

In the Dartmouth study, researchers used Cox proportional-hazards regression to regress the complex relationship between covariates bearing on the dependent variable of sexual debut. Every covariate was isolated from their influence on each other — i.e., made independent — by modeling this influence as a probability that can be factored into their correlation with the dependent variable. Thus, sensation seeking, gender, family structure, and TVs in the bedroom can be shown to be significant predictors of sexual debut, while the complex interdependency of these variables is assumed to be accounted for despite that it was neither observed nor measured.

⁷²⁷ O'Hara, "Greater Exposure," 986.

Structural equation modeling was then used to ‘reveal’ the relationship between these covariates, MSE, sexual debut, and risky sexual behavior. This involved, amongst other tools, factor analysis, which allowed the correlational variability of risky sexual behavior to be ‘fixed’ by introducing into the model the probability that the number of partners and instances of casual sex without a condom is an effect of unknown latent variables, as well as a path analysis that allowed for direct and indirect causal inferences to be made. With a little “tweaking,” these models “provided an excellent fit to the data,” as measured by the root mean square error of approximation, the confirmatory fit index, and the Tucker-Lewis index.⁷²⁹

This is not the place for a full discussion of statistical methods. The main concern here is with the construction of variables and the theories adopted for giving meaning to correlations between these variables. But the brief sketch above shows, as Karin Knorr-Cetina argues, that “results are always the results of specific methodological selections.”⁷³⁰ Just as the “tinkering” of neuroendocrinologists in the lab that Knorr-Cetina observed shaped the biological “facts” that they “discovered,” so too does the “tweaking” of statistical models by social scientists shape the correlations “found” in data. Moreover, as we have just seen, with statistical modeling, methodological selection is always geared toward finding the correlations hypothesized. The point is not to say that these correlations do not exist, but rather to expose the methodological process by which they are produced as knowledge. For example, an earlier version of the statistical model did not find the significant correlation between gender and sexual debut that the final model allowed the researchers to claim as a ‘fact’. To ‘find’ significant correlations, both unknown variables and the interdependencies of known and unknown variables must be either

⁷²⁸ The Arnett Inventory of Sensation Seeking “has been validated for predicting adolescent’s tobacco and alcohol use.” This conflation of different risk behaviors to validate the methods and findings of other research as relevant is typical of media sex science.

⁷²⁹ O’Hara, “Greater Exposure,” 987-989.

⁷³⁰ Knorr-Cetina, *Manufacture of Knowledge*, 122.

factored out or factored in, and the model that results from this factoring produces a specific knowledge of the relationships between the variables.

The knowledge the model produces is purely mathematical, and it must be translated into social theory to have any functional meaning or relevance. The finding that early MSE predicts risky sexual behavior does not explain why or how this inferred causal relationship works, nor does it explain why we should care. As with the construction of variables and the selection of methodological tools, how the findings are framed is part of the process of producing scientific knowledge.

The Dartmouth researchers draw on sexual script theory to suggest that the sexual contents of movies “provide behavioral options in social situations [...] that may lead to sexual behavior.” First introduced by sociologists John Gagnon and William Simon, this social learning theory is often used to explain media effects by suggesting that behavior is a cognitive process entailing the social and cultural acquisition of scripts, the reinforcement and activation of these scripts by media, and the application of these scripts in related situations.⁷³¹ But the Dartmouth study neither accounts for the broad social and cultural influences that this theory entails, nor does it seek to observe or measure in any way the functioning of sexual scripts. Nor is the noted fact that other research has shown that “movies generally offer permissive and risky sexual messages to viewers” taken into account: Despite meticulously coding the sexual content of movies, this study

⁷³¹ Gagnon & Simon. *Sexual Conduct*; Laws, Judith L. & Pepper Schwartz. *Sexual Scripts: The Social Construction of Female Sexuality*. Hinsdale: Dryden, 1977. Print; Wright, Paul J. “Mass Media Effects on Youth Sexual Behavior: Assessing the Claim for Causality.” *Communication Yearbook* 35 (2011): 343-386. Print; See also: Huesmann, L. Rowell. “An Information Processing Model for the Development of Aggression.” *Aggressive Behavior* 14 (1988): 13-24. Print; Huesmann, L. Rowell. “Psychological Processes Promoting the Relation Between Exposure to Media Violence and Aggressive Behavior by the Viewer.” *Journal of Social Issues* 42 (1986): 125-139. Print; Huesmann, L. Rowell. “The Role of Social Information Processing and Cognitive Schema in the Acquisition and Maintenance of Habitual Aggressive Behavior.” *Human Aggression: Theories, Research, and Implications for Policy*. Eds. Russell G. Geen & Edward Donnerstein. New York: Academic Press, 1998. Print.

did not code for “permissive and risky” messages.⁷³² But stitched together, these ideas offer an explanation of the ‘fact’ that MSE predicts risky sexual behavior, while at the same time, this ‘fact’ seems to support these ideas. Finally, in referencing other research that suggests that delaying sexual debut could reduce incidents of STI and unplanned pregnancy,⁷³³ the research is framed in terms of a public health risk issue for which a prescription can be made: “Restricting adolescents’ MSE would delay their sexual debut and also reduce their engagement in risky sexual behaviors later in life.”⁷³⁴

This process of knowledge production through constructing variables, building statistical models, and theoretical framing produces an abstract and normative conception of adolescent sexuality against which risky behavior can be posed. The adolescent is reproduced as a sexual innocent, a blank slate that must be protected from exposure to sexual representations in movies. The abstraction of complicated social phenomena into isolated variables disaggregates the actual experience of seeing sex in movies from the adolescent’s social context and life history, bringing social and cultural influences to bear on the experience only through the abstracted empiricism of the media effects equation. Despite accounting for some of the factors that will make any individual adolescent’s MSE unique, these factors have not been allowed to ‘speak’ for themselves from within the specific contexts of their relations to each other, but have been made to speak as variables within the context of an abstract equation. Moreover, these variables have been factored into the predetermined framework of risky sexual behavior, rather than being

⁷³² O’Hara, “Greater Exposure,” 988; See also: Gunasekera, Hasantha, et al. “Sex and Drugs in Popular Movies: An Analysis of the Top 200 Films.” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 98.10 (2005): 464-470. Print; Nalkur, Pria, et al. “The Effectiveness of the Motion Picture Association of America’s Rating System in Screening Explicit Violence and Sex in Top-Ranked Movies from 1950 to 2006.” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 47.5 (2010): 440-447. Print.

⁷³³ Guttmacher Institute. *U.S. Teen Pregnancies, Births, and Abortions: National and State Trends and Trends by Race and Ethnicity*. Guttmacher. Web. 30 Jun. 2013; Weinstock, Hillard, et al. “Sexually Transmitted Diseases Among American Youth: Incidence and Prevalence Estimates, 2000.” *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 36 (2000): 6-10. Print.

allowed to show the ways in which they might mitigate risk, or even problematize the construction of risk. The ‘normal science’ of building statistical models and fitting data into them does not allow for such contingencies.

The Abstract Adolescent

This chapter has shown how the science of media sex that emerged beginning in the 1980s has evolved a particular epistemic culture shaped by decades of research on child development, media effects, and sexual behavior. These areas of study provide data that informs hypotheses and research trajectories in the early stages of project development, as well as methodological models for conducting research, and theoretical orientations for framing and interpreting findings. Developmental psychology channels the centuries-old blank slate model of sexual innocence into a cognitive theory of social learning that positions youth as subjects of risk. Media effects researchers provide both a causal theory linking media exposure to risky behavioral outcomes through a slew of cognitive factors, and a methodological toolbox for conceptualizing, counting, categorizing, and correlating these factors and other variables involved in the youth-media-sex relationship. Finally, the problems encountered by sex researchers working within the institutional nexus of private foundations, universities, and government agencies shapes the problem of sex that research needs to address as one of public health.

This epistemic culture maintains a ‘normal science’ of media sex. The relationship between youth and media sex has been constructed as a public health issue, and research is conducted along empirical, epidemiological, and etiological lines. A health problem such as pregnancy, STIs, or abuse is identified within a population of youth, media are singled out as the source of exposure, a set of risk factors and covariates is defined, and researchers set out to determine the

⁷³⁴ The researchers do note that “limiting youths’ MSE may be a difficult task” and suggest that “incorporating media literacy training into sexual education” is a promising approach. O’Hara, “Greater Exposure,” 990.

cause. This model is not the self-evident product of empiricism, but is rather the product of the particular culture of an administered media science, which needs to fulfill the expectations of its various institutional stakeholders by articulating research findings in causal terms.⁷³⁵ Under the guise of scientific neutrality, political pressures exerted through these institutional channels — part of the “amalgam of arrangements and mechanisms” that constitute this research culture — shape a normative idea of youth as sexual innocents in need of protection from the effects of exposure to media sex, which informs and is reflected in research.

The Dartmouth MSE study is but one of dozens conducted over the past two decades that claim adolescent exposure to sexual media content — in movies, on TV, online — has behavioral or attitudinal effects. Many of the more recent studies focus specifically on Sexually Explicit Material (SEM).⁷³⁶ These studies tell us that:

- Exposure to SEM has become a normative experience among adolescents.⁷³⁷
- Early exposure to SEM correlates with less progressive gender role attitudes⁷³⁸ and with more permissive sexual norms.⁷³⁹
- Adolescent exposure to SEM increases “sexual callousness”⁷⁴⁰ and contributes to sexual aggression.⁷⁴¹
- Delinquent behavior and substance abuse correlate with adolescents seeking SEM.⁷⁴²

⁷³⁵ Hornik, Robert. *Public Health Communication: Evidence for Behavior Change*. Mahwah: Erlbaum, 2002. Print; Nabi, Robin L. ““And Miles to Go...”: Reflections on the Past and Future of Mass Media Effects Research.” *Mass Media Effects Research: Advances Through Meta-Analysis*. Eds. Raymond W. Preiss, et al. Mahwah: Erlbaum, 2007. 137-144. Print; Yanovitzky & Greene, “Quantitative Methods,” 36.

⁷³⁶ The term is deployed consistently in the literature, but what constitutes Sexually Explicit Material varies widely.

⁷³⁷ Sabina, Chiara, et al. “The Nature and Dynamics of Internet Pornography Exposure for Youth.” *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 11 (2008): 691-693. Print; Ybarra & Mitchell, “Exposure to Internet Pornography.”

⁷³⁸ Brown & L’Engle, “X-Rated”; Häggström-Nordin, ““It’s Everywhere!””.

⁷³⁹ Brown & L’Engle. “X-Rated.”

⁷⁴⁰ Zillmann, “Prolonged Consumption”; Zillmann, Dolf & Jennings Bryant. “Pornography, Sexual Callousness.”

⁷⁴¹ Brown & L’Engle. “X-Rated”; Hunter, “Developmental Pathways”; Ybarra, “X-Rated Material.”

⁷⁴² Ybarra & Mitchell, “Exposure to Internet Pornography.”

- More frequent exposure to SEM increases adolescents' perceptions of the social realism and the sexual utility of SEM, which fosters an instrumental attitude toward sex.⁷⁴³
- Increased exposure to SEM increases the likelihood that adolescents, regardless of gender, will view women as sex objects.⁷⁴⁴
- The more frequently adolescents are exposed to SEM, the greater their sexually permissive attitudes.⁷⁴⁵
- Adolescents who consume SEM have positive attitudes toward casual sex.⁷⁴⁶
- Adolescents may believe SEM is source of knowledge, but expectations and demands conveyed by SEM distort the image of sexuality.⁷⁴⁷
- Exposure to SEM increases likelihood of adolescents engaging in sexually permissive behavior.⁷⁴⁸
- Frequent exposure to SEM by adolescents equates with earlier first experience of sexual intercourse.⁷⁴⁹
- Consumption of SEM correlates with social maladjustment.⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴³ Peter, Jochen & Patti M. Valkenburg. "Processes Underlying the Effects of Adolescents' Use of Sexually Explicit Internet Material: The Role of Perceived Realism." *Communication Research* 37 (2010): 375-399. Print.

⁷⁴⁴ Peter & Valkenburg, "Women as Sex Objects"; Peter, Jochen & Patti M. Valkenburg. "Assessing Causality."

⁷⁴⁵ Braun-Courville & Rojas, "Exposure to Sexually Explicit Web Sites."

⁷⁴⁶ Braun-Courville & Rojas, "Exposure to Sexually Explicit Web Sites"; Lo & Wei "Exposure to Internet Pornography"; Häggström-Nordin, "Association Between Pornography"; Häggström-Nordin, "'It's Everywhere!'" ; Peter & Valkenburg, "Recreational Attitudes Toward Sex"; Peter & Valkenburg, "Is There A Link?"

⁷⁴⁷ Häggström-Nordin, "'It's Everywhere!'"

⁷⁴⁸ Braun-Courville & Rojas, "Exposure to Sexually Explicit Web Sites"; Brown & L'Engle. "X-Rated"; Lam & Chan, "The Use of Cyberpornography"; Lo & Wei "Exposure to Internet Pornography"; Peter & Valkenburg, "Recreational Attitudes Toward Sex"; Peter & Valkenburg, "Women as Sex Objects"; Peter & Valkenburg, "Is There A Link?"

⁷⁴⁹ Brown & L'Engle. "X-Rated"; Häggström-Nordin, "Association Between Pornography"; Krauss, Shane & Brenda Russell. "Early Sexual Experiences: The Role of Internet Access and Sexually Explicit Material." *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 11 (2008): 162-168. Print.

⁷⁵⁰ Mesch, Gustavo S. "Social Bonds and Internet Pornographic Exposure Among Adolescents." *Journal of Adolescence* 32 (2009): 601-618. Print; Tsitsika, Artemis, et al. "Adolescent Pornographic Internet Site Use: A Multivariate Regression Analysis of the Predictive Factors of Use and Psychosocial Implications." *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 12 (2009): 545-550. Print.

- SEM is positively associated with risky sexual behavior: multiple partners, paid sex, and extramarital sex.⁷⁵¹

All of these studies, whether looking at instances of mainstream or pornographic sexual exposure, function within a shared epistemic culture. All begin with the premise — necessary for their institutional support — that adolescent sex is a problem of public health. All are informed by a developmental theory that articulates adolescence as inherently risky. All work through the media effects paradigm to code, count, categorize, and correlate a set of variables so as to reveal a statistically significant relationship. All frame their findings in a theory that explains the statistical correlations in the causal terms of psychological or cognitive processes. And all prescribe the same thing: the regulation of access to media sex. Together they produce an authoritative knowledge of adolescents as sexual innocents in need of protection from the risks of media sex exposure. This knowledge is mobilized in arguments for regulating sexual media made by religious organizations, political pundits, parents, congressmen, academics, and educators from across the political spectrum. Indeed, it has become a kind of ‘common sense’, a hegemonic discourse of adolescence constructed over the course of a century of scientific endeavors to understand youth, media, and sexual behavior.

Indeed. Even adolescents know it. They may not act upon this knowledge, but this just supports the claim that they are prone to risky behavior because they do not act rationally.⁷⁵² Adolescents may not be sexual innocents, but they know they should be. They learn the risks of temptation that carnal knowledge poses — not necessarily from moral or religious teachings, but from the scientific research highlighted in headline news. This message comes not only from social science; biologic, cognitive, and neurologic sciences tell the same story. Because they are controlled by hormones, or because their brains are not fully developed, adolescents act upon

⁷⁵¹ Wright & Randall, “Internet Pornography Exposure.”

⁷⁵² Wolff, Jennifer M. & Lisa J. Crockett. “The Role of Deliberative Decision Making, Parents, and Friends in Adolescent Risk Behaviors.” *Journal of Youth & Adolescence* 40 (2011): 1607-1622. Print.

desires and emotions, and they mimic what they see.⁷⁵³ As objects of scientific knowledge, adolescents have been coaxed to confess their media transgressions and sexual sins to the survey, had their glandular secretions sampled, measured, and monitored, and had their brains scanned and mapped. As subjects of knowledge they take up the position of *the abstract adolescent*, an aggregate of scientific data that defines them as immature, irrational, uninhibited, impulsive, and imitative. From this position, they know they are prone to desire, to raging hormones, to the temptations of carnal knowledge; and they know when they have taken risks, when they have transgressed, when they have sinned against the norm of sexual innocence. The unfortunate irony of the abstract adolescent is that even as adolescence is made to confess its sexual secrets, even as it is surveyed, sampled, and scanned, actual adolescents are silenced. Science speaks for them, producing the authoritative knowledge of adolescent sexuality to which their own knowledge is subjugated.

The continued reproduction of the abstract adolescent in so much recent research seems at odds with the discourse of digital youth, which posits young people as active and critical users of media technologies, rather than passive consumers, or even victims of media messages.⁷⁵⁴ The normal science of media sex research has of course absorbed interactivity and adolescent agency into the variable sets of new studies, much as ‘uses and gratifications’ were made into variables

⁷⁵³ Casey, “Braking and Accelerating”; Casey, “The Adolescent Brain”; Casey, B.J. & Kristina Caudle. “The Teenage Brain: Self Control.” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 22.2 (2013): 82-87. Print; Committee on the Science of Adolescence. *The Science of Adolescent Risk-Taking*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2011. Print; Steinberg, Laurence. “A Social Neuroscience Perspective on Adolescent Risk-Taking.” *Developmental Review* 28 (2008): 78-106. Print; For critiques of the endocrinological and neuroscience models of adolescent risk, see: Bessant, Judith & Rob Watts. “The Mismeasurement of Youth: Why Adolescent Brain Science is Bad Science.” *Contemporary Social Science* 7.2 (2012): 181-196. Print; Kelly, “Brain in the Jar.”

⁷⁵⁴ For examples of the discourse of digital youth, see: Ito, Mizuko, et al. *Living and Learning with New Media: Summary of Findings from the Digital Youth Project*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009. Print; McPherson, Tara, ed. *Digital Youth, Innovation, and the Unexpected*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008. Print; Subrahmanyam, Kaveri & David Šmahel. *Digital Youth: The Role of Media in Development*. New York: Springer, 2011. Print.

of earlier media effects research.⁷⁵⁵ However, a small number of studies conducted outside the bounds of this normal science has begun to reveal a different picture. This research is premised on the ideas that effects-centered studies do not account for contextual factors specific to adolescents,⁷⁵⁶ that the focus on risky sexual behavior as a public health issue “biases” the empirical “data” that these studies produce,⁷⁵⁷ that most adolescents are capable of reasoning and understanding risks associated with their behaviors,⁷⁵⁸ and that qualitative research is more suited to the study of the complex social, cultural, and political constructions of sexuality.⁷⁵⁹ Lacking the empirical aura of quantitative science and thus overlooked in policy debates — yet because of this, unconstrained by the media science paradigm — this research offers a different understanding of the relationship between youth and media sex. Suggesting that an adult discourse of sex and sexuality defines youth as uncritical and incompetent receivers of sexual media content, these youth-centered studies reveal that children value media as sources of sex information, and that they are actually literate and critical consumers of media.⁷⁶⁰ More specifically, they find that exposure to sexually explicit material functions as “an occasion for

⁷⁵⁵ Pascoe, C.J. “Resource and Risk: Youth Sexuality and New Media Use.” *Sex Research & Social Policy* 8.1 (2011): 5-17. Print

⁷⁵⁶ Weber, Mathias, et al. “Peers, Parents and Pornography: Exploring Adolescents’ Exposure to Sexually Explicit Material and Its Developmental Correlates.” *Sexuality & Culture* 16.4 (2012): 408-427. Print.

⁷⁵⁷ Longo, Robert, et al. “Effects of Internet Sexuality on Children and Adolescents.” *Sex and the Internet: A Guidebook for Clinicians*. Ed. Al Cooper. New York: Brunner-Rutledge, 2002. 87-105. Print.

⁷⁵⁸ Reyna, Valerie F. & Frank Farley. “Risk and Rationality in Adolescent Decision Making: Implications for Theory, Practice, and Public Policy.” *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 7 (2006): 1-44. Print.

⁷⁵⁹ Attwood, Feona. “What Do People Do With Porn? Qualitative Research into Consumption, Use and Experience of Pornography and Other Sexually Explicit Media.” *Sexuality and Culture* 9.2 (2005): 65-86. Print; Hardy, Simon. “Reading Pornography.” *Sex Education* 4.1 (2004): 3-18. Print; Segal, Lynn. “False Promises: Anti-Pornography Feminism.” *The Woman Question*. Ed. Mary Evans. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994. 353-365. Print.

⁷⁶⁰ Bragg, Sarah & David Buckingham. “Too Much Too Young? Young People, Sexual Media and Learning.” *Mainstreaming Sex: The Sexualization of Western Culture*. Ed. Feona Attwood. London: I.B. Tauris, 2009. 129-146. Print; Buckingham, David & Sarah Bragg. *Young People, Media and Personal Relationships*. London: ASA/BBFC/BBC/BSC/ITC, 2003. Print; Peter, Jochen & Patti M. Valkenburg. “The Influence of Sexually Explicit Internet Material on Sexual Risk Behavior: A Comparison of Adolescents and Adults.” *Journal of Health Communication* 16 (2011): 750-765. Print; Steele, Jeanne & Jane D. Brown. “Adolescent Room Culture: Studying Media in the Context of Everyday Life.” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 24 (1995): 551-576. Print.

individuals to scrutinize their own desires, conduct and responses,⁷⁶¹ and that media texts act as symbolic resources for producing and performing gender and sexuality.⁷⁶²

This research suggests that rather than trying to protect adolescents from media sex through regulatory mechanisms, media sex can be taken up as a valuable resource and a site for sexual education. Research conducted in the UK has shown that sexual media content can be successfully integrated into the classroom as educational resources.⁷⁶³ The use of new media technologies such as websites, texting, and YouTube as sites of sex education has also had some success, although these efforts have largely been limited to the provision of information about sexual health, and rarely reflect on media sex itself. In the next chapter, we will see how youth engagement with new forms of media sex reveals both the possibility and the necessity of using these media as pedagogical sites and resources. Young people are already using new media to not only learn about sex, but also to participate in the production of sexual knowledge to which they are subjects. Yet moral panic over their participation — informed by the ‘common sense’ knowledge of media sex science — has mobilized new discursive and regulatory mechanisms for protecting adolescent innocence. While this response has largely failed to limit youth engagement with new media sex, it has obscured how they actually do so, which increases their vulnerability by maintaining their status as innocent victims, while also working to constrain the pedagogical potential of media sex.

⁷⁶¹ Buckingham & Bragg, *Young People*, 76.

⁷⁶² Ang, Ien. *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences for a Postmodern World*. New York: Routledge, 1996. Print; Bragg, Sarah & David Buckingham. *Young People and Sexual Content on Television: A Review of the Research*. London: Broadcasting Standards Commission, 2002. Print; Buckingham & Bragg, *Young People*; Durham, Meenakshi G. “Girls, Media and the Negotiation of Sexuality: A Study of Race, Class and Gender in Adolescent Peer Groups.” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 76.2 (1999): 193-216. Print; Kehily, Mary. “More Sugar? Teenage Magazines, Gender Displays and Sexual Learning.” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 2.1 (1999): 65-89. Print.

⁷⁶³ Buckingham & Bragg, *Young People*.

Chapter 4: Innocence or Ignorance? New Media Sex and Adolescent Sexual Subjectivity

Children are inexperienced, but they are not innocent.
— Judy Blume

Millions more kids are abused by silence than by leering pedophiles, and kids who are kept ignorant are kept exploitable.
— Eurydice⁷⁶⁴

In March of 2009, the *Today* show reported on the tragic death of Ohio teen Jessica Logan.⁷⁶⁵ A year before, ‘Jesse’ had snapped a nude photo of herself with her cell phone and sent it to her boyfriend. When they broke up soon after, he sent the photo to several of his friends, who then sent it to several of their friends. Soon, hundreds of teens in several local high schools had the nude ‘selfie’ of Jessica. In the following months, she was harassed by students at school and via phone, text, and email, being called a whore, a slut, and a skank. The harassment only escalated after she told her story on local television. Socially isolated and depressed, her grades plummeted, and she stopped going to school. On July 3, Jessica hanged herself in her bedroom.

Jessica Logan’s story is one of many tracing the consequences of teen ‘sexting’ that began making headlines in the late 2000s. A group of high school students in Pennsylvania were hit with child pornography charges after exchanging ‘semi-nude’ pictures via cell phone. Only through a long legal struggle played out in the media spotlight were these students able to avoid convictions.⁷⁶⁶ Florida teen Phillip Alpert was not so fortunate. After sending a naked photo of his high school sweetheart to her friends and family during an argument, he was charged and

⁷⁶⁴ Eurydice is the pen name of a columnist for the music magazine *Spin*. Quoted in: Giroux, Henry A. “Teenage Sexuality, Body Politics and the Pedagogy of Display.” *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 18.3 (1996): 307-331. Print.

⁷⁶⁵ For the video segment and accompanying story, see: Celizic, Matt. “Her Teen Committed Suicide Over ‘Sexting.’” *Today*. NBCNews.com, 6 Mar. 2009. Web. 30 Nov. 2013.

⁷⁶⁶ In *Miller v. Mitchell*, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals upheld an injunction on the prosecution of three of the Pennsylvania teens who refused to undergo a “re-education program” designed to teach girls “what it means to be a girl in today’s society.” The Court agreed with the ACLU, which had come to the girls’ defense, that the prosecution amounted to retaliation for the girls’ and their parents’ exercising of their first and fourteenth amendment rights, but did address whether the sexting images constituted child pornography or whether they were protected under the first amendment. *Miller v. Mitchell*. 539 F.3d. 139. U.S. Court of Appeals. 2010. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Nov. 2013.

convicted for distributing child pornography, sentenced to five years probation, and required to register as a sex offender — a brand that has already gotten him kicked out of college, and will continue to impact his employment and housing prospects for the next twenty years.⁷⁶⁷ Such stories about teen sexting have proliferated since.

Sensational media coverage such as that by *Today* fueled a moral panic over sexting.⁷⁶⁸ Informed by both the received wisdom of decades of media sex science and recent research exaggerating the prevalence of sexting, anecdotal accounts were broadly framed in terms of the risks new media technologies pose to all adolescents.⁷⁶⁹ The *Today* show segment on Jessica Logan unfolded through the tearful testimony of her grieving mother, video clips from Jessica's appearance on local television warning other teens about the dangers of sexting, and friends' accounts of her "downward spiral," which were framed by the authoritative voices of medical, psychology, legal, and technology experts, and peppered with statistics from a recent survey commissioned by CosmoGirl and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. The survey, which would be cited de rigueur in a subsequent profusion of news media stories on sexting, reported that 39 percent of teens send or post sexually suggestive messages, and 48 percent have received such messages.⁷⁷⁰ Twenty percent reported sending sexually explicit images.⁷⁷¹ These shocking numbers were explained by experts as resulting from the confluence of

⁷⁶⁷ Feyerick, Deborah & Sheila Steffen. "'Sexting' Lands Teen on Sex Offender List." *CNN*. 8 Apr. 2009. Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. Web. 30 Nov. 2013; Richards, Robert D. & Clay Calvert. "When Sex and Cell Phones Collide: Inside the Prosecution of a Teen Sexting Case." *Hastings Communication & Entertainment Law Journal* 32 (2009): 1-39. Print.

⁷⁶⁸ Through discourse analysis of numerous news segments about sexting aired on major US television networks and channels, Nora Draper reveals consistent patterns of representing the relationship between youth and technology through which the media both informed and fueled public reaction. Draper, Nora R.A. "Is Your Teen at Risk? Discourses of Adolescent Sexting in United States Television News." *Journal of Children and Media* 6.2 (2012): 221-236. Print.

⁷⁶⁹ This is typical of how the media construct patterns and degrees of risk by focusing on similarities among a wide range of individual incidents while ignoring evidence that problematizes the pattern of risks. Stallings, Robert A. "Media and the Social Construction of Risk." *Social Problems* 31.1 (1990): 81-95. Print.

⁷⁷⁰ Draper, "Is Your Teen at Risk?"

⁷⁷¹ National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. *Sex and Tech: Results from a Survey of Teens and Young Adults*. 2008. Web. 30 Nov. 2013.

adolescent immaturity, impulsivity, and irrationality, the sexualization of culture, and the increasing prevalence of new media technologies in young people's lives. With the media as a vector for transmitting such information and ideas via emotionally charged discourses of danger, a "teen sexting epidemic" spread through the public imaginary, leading to an "outbreak of 'curative' legislation" and palliative courtroom care.⁷⁷²

This chapter examines how discourses about youth and new media technologies position young people as particular kinds of sexual subjects. In the last chapter we saw how research into the relationship between youth and media sex has constructed an abstract knowledge of adolescents as subjects at risk. Stripped of the social context and lived experience of actual engagement with media sex, the abstract adolescent is a statistical rendering of the Romantic child in a pornotopian era, an innocent victim in need of protection from an increasingly sexualized media culture. Yet as we saw in chapter two, efforts to protect young people from media sex have helped bring sex into the public sphere as a floating signifier, promoting a confessional culture by normalizing the circulation of decontextualized sexual representations. New media technologies have further fostered this confessional culture by enabling, encouraging, and normalizing participation in the process of producing, circulating, and consuming sexual representations such as sext messages. Adolescents who actively participate in the confessional culture of new media sex challenge the discourse of innocence by which they have been positioned as victims of media sex. Such adolescents are seen not only as corrupted innocents, but also as knowing perpetrators of child pornography, cyberstalking, or cyberbullying. Dominant discourses about teen sexting — and more broadly about the relationship between youth,

⁷⁷² While state legislatures struggled to design laws that would criminalize specific sexting behaviors, local courts attempted to interpret how different behaviors fit within federal child pornography law and relevant jurisprudence. Podlas, Kimberlianne. "The 'Legal Epidemiology' of the Teen Sexting Epidemic: How the Media Influenced a Legislative Outbreak." *Pittsburgh Journal of Technology, Law, and Policy* 12.1 (2011): 1-49. Print.

sexuality, and new media technology — thus create two contradictory subject positions for adolescents who engage with new forms of media sex: the victim and the villain.

Positioning sexting adolescents as victims and villains is in part an effect of the law.⁷⁷³ The legal response to teen sexting is a legacy of numerous legislative and juridical proceedings since the ‘discovery’ of child pornography in the 1970s.⁷⁷⁴ In the United States, the 1977 Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation Act, the Child Protection Act of 1984, the Child Pornography Prevention Act of 1996, and a host of legal cases since the Supreme Court carved out child pornography as a category of speech unprotected by the constitution in 1982’s *New York v. Ferber*, have all worked to expand the definition of child pornography.⁷⁷⁵ Even non-nude images of minors can now be found pornographic if they are deemed to be defined by the vague concepts of lewdness or lasciviousness.⁷⁷⁶ Such was the case with several of the girls charged in Pennsylvania.⁷⁷⁷

While the expanded definition of child pornography has come to encompass the emerging practice of teen sexting, it is the propagation of an imagined epidemic through media panic that has driven the “prosecutorial vigilance” which has swept up numerous teens in a sexting

⁷⁷³ Albury, Kath, et al. “The Politics of Sexting: Young People, Self-Representation and Citizenship.” *Proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association Conference: Media, Democracy and Change*. 7-9 July 2010. *Anzca*. Web. 30 Nov. 2013; Levine, Judith. *Decent Exposure*. 1 May 2009. Web. 30 Nov. 2013.

⁷⁷⁴ Karaian, Lara. “Lolita Speaks: ‘Sexting,’ Teenage Girls and the Law.” *Crime, Media, Culture* 8.1 (2012): 57-73. Print.

⁷⁷⁵ Adler, Amy. “The Perverse Law of Child Pornography.” *Columbia Law Review* 101 (2001): 209-273. Print.

⁷⁷⁶ In *United States v. Knox*, for example, the Third Circuit Court upheld convictions of Stephen Knox for possessing videotapes that zoomed in on the genital region of clothed children. Most courts, including the *Knox* court, weigh what are called the Dost factors in determining whether images constitute “lascivious exhibition” under federal law, inquiring not only about, 1) the degree of nudity, but also if, 2) the focal point of the image is the child’s genitals, 3) the setting is sexually suggestive, 4) the child depicted is in an “unnatural” pose or “inappropriate attire” for his or her age, 5) the image suggests sexual “coyness” or “willingness,” and 6) whether the image was intended to elicit a sexual response from the viewer. *United States v. Stephen A. Knox*. 977 F.2d 815. U.S. Court of Appeals. 1992. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Nov. 2013; *United States v. Dost*. 636 F. Supp. 828. U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California. 1986. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Nov. 2013.

⁷⁷⁷ *Miller v. Mitchell*. 539 F.3d. 139. U.S. Court of Appeals. 2010. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Nov. 2013.

dragnet.⁷⁷⁸ This panic was primed by over a century of public anxiety about the effects of media sex on young people, which had been reshaped in the previous decade by mounting concern over youth engagement with new media technologies. Even as the young were being heralded in the 1990s as ‘Generation Next’ — as natives in a digitally networked world whose natural facility with technology would bring about revolutionary changes in politics, culture, and the economy — anxiety emerged over this ‘always on’ world that youth seemed more proficient at navigating than adults. Youth access to, and participation in, a digital realm of shared knowledge threatened the key distinction between child and adult: innocence. News media exposés played up the loss of innocence accompanying youth access and participation in what were considered adult knowledge and practices, focusing particularly on violence and sex. In the ensuing moral panics, adolescent engagement with new media sex aroused fears about the dissolving distinctions between child and adult, and also stood in for broader social anxieties about shifting sexual norms and gender roles. Efforts to protect youthful innocence that this panic eventuated were thus implicitly concerned with protecting a social order threatened by female, gay, and youth empowerment.

Sensationalist media coverage fueled fears over a scourge of ‘cyberporn’ in the 1990s. This reportage was informed by faulty studies that greatly exaggerated the prevalence of pornographic imagery online, and pandered to a public who were gullible in their ignorance of this new medium. The ensuing outcry led directly to the first attempt by the U.S. Congress to regulate the internet: the Communication Decency Act. Over the next ten years, online pornography would be the source of increasing anxiety from the public, the news media, legislatures, and the courts, who focused their attention particularly on its impact on youth. At the same time, as the internet’s potential for interactivity (rather than the passive provision of content) was better realized, concern grew over ‘cyberstalking’, particularly the sexual predation of the young by adults. As

⁷⁷⁸ Adler, “The Perverse Law,” 240.

with online pornography, sensationalist reportage such as the popular NBC series *To Catch a Predator* fanned public fear and prompted new legislation geared toward regulating the internet.

In this “panic-stricken production of the real,” the mythos of cyberpornography, online predators, and imminently imperiled adolescent innocence was realized in the public imaginary, which manifested in the mobilization of discursive mechanisms — legal, juridical, technological, and pedagogical — for bounding off from youth the emerging online sexual sphere. While these have largely failed to exclude young people from accessing and participating in new media sex, they have indiscriminately posed limits that put useful resources out of the reach of those who may need them the most. Moreover, these efforts have furthered the dominance of discourses about innocence, dependence, risk, and the need to protect adolescents, by denying and delegitimizing their agency as sexual subjects even as they actively engage with new media to explore sexuality.

In delegitimizing their sexual agency, efforts to protect adolescents from the risks of lost innocence have actually participated in their victimization. On the one hand, they are victimized by being made victims: As innocents, adolescents have no sexual agency, and thus must be the hapless casualties of accidental exposure to media sex. On the other hand, they are victimized by being made villains: As illegitimate, adolescent agency in engaging with new media sex necessarily constitutes deviant behavior, and is thus prone to sanctions ranging from harassment to criminal prosecution. These two forms of victimization play out along lines of gender, class, race, and sexuality, as entrenched ideas about sexually passive females and aggressive males, the promiscuity of the poor, hypersexualized or asexual racial Others, and libertine homosexuality work to position young people at the intersections of these identity categories differently within the victim/villain binary. Finally, in being made to occupy these positions, adolescents are also victimized by having their voices silenced, their knowledge disparaged, and their experiences rendered unintelligible.

By victimizing adolescents, by delegitimizing their sexual agency, by devaluing their knowledge, silencing their voices, and framing their experiences as incomprehensible, dominant discourses obfuscate the complicated ways in which they actually engage with new media sex. Many young people actively participate in a reflexive process of producing their sexual subjectivities by using new media to explore sexuality and experiment with sexual identity. In this process, they construct socio-technical networks through which they negotiate diverse sexual discourses and establish sophisticated practices for navigating risks, managing privacy, conducting intimate relationships, and pursuing pleasure. This suggests that rather than passive victims or active perpetrators of media sex, adolescents are empowered participants in the production of sexual knowledge to which they are subjects.

Yet this process of reflexive subject formation is by no means ubiquitous amongst adolescents. Unequal access to technologies, knowledge, and skills associated with social, cultural, and economic differences prevents or limits the extent to which many young people can actively, reflexively, and critically engage with new media sex. As such, social structures grounded in gender and sexual norms, class privilege, and racial difference are often reproduced within the new media spaces where youth articulate their sexual subjectivities. Moreover, those young people who do actively engage with new media sex do not always do so critically, and thus end up ‘speaking’ in the terms of dominant discourses, performing the roles these discourses describe, and producing the subjectivities they define.

Adolescent precociousness with new forms of media sex indicates that they are not innocent, but that they may well be ignorant. Within a pornotopian culture, most youth come to sexual knowledge at an early age. Deluged with often decontextualized sexual representations, they must make meaning of this postmodern montage within and through the discursive system in which they are situated. A growing number of young people have access to technologies that allow them to navigate this discursive terrain, to actively engage with the representations and

discourses that constitute sexual knowledge. Yet they often lack the experience through which critical skills and a reflexive capacity are developed. They may thus ‘have’ knowledge, and yet be ignorant of how to use it effectively to construct their sexual subjectivities.

Sexual Subjectivity

Research conducted since the CosmoGirl survey has found sexting to be much less prevalent than it showed. In a study of digital abuse conducted by MTV and the Associated Press, 33 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds and 24 percent of 14- to 17-year-olds reported sexting, but only one in ten had actually sent naked images of themselves.⁷⁷⁹ A survey commissioned by Cox Communications and conducted by Harris Interactive found 20 percent of teens engaged in sexting — either text or image — but only 9 percent produced and sent sexts, and only 3 percent forwarded them.⁷⁸⁰ A Pew survey found only 4 percent of teens sent such sexual messages, and only 15 percent received them.⁷⁸¹

As the Crimes Against Children Research Center suggests, inconsistencies in methods, terminology, and samples between these and other studies make it impossible to estimate the true prevalence of sexting. Yet the media have consistently focused on the most shocking statistics — often taken from the most problematic studies, or presented out of context — to portray sexting as an epidemic.⁷⁸² Moreover, while recent research has also revealed a more complicated picture of teens who sext, the issue continues to be reductively portrayed, not only in the media, but also in

⁷⁷⁹ Associated Press & MTV. *AP-MTV Digital Abuse Study: Executive Summary*. 2009. Web. 30 Nov. 2013.

⁷⁸⁰ Cox Communications. *Teen Online and Wireless Safety Survey: Cyberbullying, Sexting, and Parental Controls*. Atlanta: Cox Communications, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 2009. Web. 30 Nov. 2013.

⁷⁸¹ Lenhart, Amanda. *Teens and Sexting*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2009. *Pew Research Internet Project*. Pew Research Center. Web. 30 Nov. 2013.

⁷⁸² Lounsbury, Kaitlin, Kimberly J. Mitchell & David Finkelhor. *The True Prevalence of “Sexting”*. Durham: Crimes Against Children Research Center, 2011. Web. 30 Nov. 2013.

legal and policy debates.⁷⁸³ Judith Levine notes that sexting adolescents are framed by the law as both perpetrators and victims of child pornography, both the producers of images that are seen to victimize their subjects due to their inability to legally consent, and the victimized subjects themselves.⁷⁸⁴ Much of the debate about teen sexting has focused on trying to distinguish one from the other. This has worked to reify the complex social and cultural contexts in which sexting occurs.

Lara Karaian draws attention to how the representation of, and response to, teen sexting has functioned largely in the interest of “‘protecting’ white, middle and upper class, heterosexual, ‘good girls gone wild.’”⁷⁸⁵ Girls who sext are seen to have made an innocent mistake that has opened them to teasing, bullying, blackmail, and abuse; boys are seen as the perpetrators who run afoul of the law for soliciting and distributing sexts from girls.⁷⁸⁶ Girls are more ‘at risk’ of victimization because they bear the unfair burden of a sexual double standard that defines most public display of female sexuality in terms of ‘sluttiness’ or ‘hypersexualization’, but other than

⁷⁸³ Legal and policy debates focus on how to fit the issue of sexting into existent child pornography laws, often trying to distinguish the intent behind producing or sharing a sexual message in trying to determine the innocence or complicity of the sexter. See: Arcabascio, Catherine. “Sexting and Teenagers: OMG R U Going 2 Jail???” *Richmond Journal of Law and Technology* 16.3 (2010): 1-42. Print; Calvert, Clay. “Sex, Cell Phones, Privacy, and the First Amendment: When Children Become Child Pornographers and the Lolita Effect Undermines the Law.” *Catholic University of America CommLaw Conspectus* 18.1 (2009): 1-72. Print; Goldstein, Leigh. “Documenting and Denial: Discourses of Sexual Self-Exploitation.” *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* 51 (2009): n.p. Web. 30 Nov. 2013; Humbach, John A. “‘Sexting’ and the First Amendment.” *Hastings Constitutional Law Quarterly* 37 (2010): 433-467. Print; Kimpel, Amy F. “Using Laws Designed to Protect as a Weapon: Prosecuting Minors Under Child Pornography Laws.” *New York University Review of Law and Social Change* 34 (2010): 299-338. Print; Leary, Mary. “Self Produced Child Pornography: The Appropriate Societal Response to Juvenile Self-Sexual Exploitation.” *Virginia Journal of Social Policy and the Law* 15.1 (2008): 1-50. Print.

⁷⁸⁴ Levine, *Decent Exposure*.

⁷⁸⁵ This is likely related to what Christopher Ferguson calls “Missing White Girl Syndrome,” whereby media coverage of girls who go missing attends almost exclusively to those who are attractive, affluent, white, and morally upstanding — “qualities which are representative of innocence.” Henry Giroux has also noted that “white middle-class children are often protected by the myth of innocence and are considered incapable of exhibiting at-risk behavior.” Ferguson, Christopher J. *Adolescents, Crime, and the Media: A Critical Analysis*. New York: Springer, 2013. 54-55. Print; Giroux, Henry. *Stealing Innocence: Corporate Culture’s War on Children*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001. 8. Print; Karaian, “Lolita Speaks,” 58.

⁷⁸⁶ Draper, “Is Your Teen at Risk?” 226; Salter, Michael, et al. “Beyond Criminalisation and Responsibilisation: ‘Sexting,’ Gender and Young People.” *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 24.3 (2013): 301-316. Print.

the handful of oft cited incidents, evidence does not show that girls who sext *are* more victimized than boys.⁷⁸⁷ And while girls may be slightly more likely to create sext messages, and boys more likely to receive them, there is no significant difference in the number of boys and girls who forward them, nor between the number of boys *or* girls who solicit and those who volunteer sexual messages.⁷⁸⁸ Girls are also more likely to be the perpetrators of the cyberbullying that is the most common form of victimization accompanying sexting.⁷⁸⁹

Class, race, and sexuality, as Karaian suggests, also figure into dominant discourses about sexting, if only through their absence. Certainly there are class and race based differences in access to, and use of, mobile and texting technologies; indeed, research has consistently shown that non-white and less privileged youth use them *more*.⁷⁹⁰ Research has also revealed the extent to which LGBTQ youth use these media technologies in the negotiation and performance of sexuality.⁷⁹¹ Some recent studies have also begun to show that these ‘Other’ youth are more likely to engage in sexting behavior than their white, privileged, and heterosexual peers.⁷⁹² Presumably,

⁷⁸⁷ Albury & Lumby, “Too Much? Too Young?”; Egan & Hawkes, *Theorizing the Sexual Child*.

⁷⁸⁸ Lenhart, *Teens and Sexting*.

⁷⁸⁹ Snell, Patricia A. & Elizabeth K. Englander. “Cyberbullying Victimization and Behaviors Among Girls: Applying Research Findings in the Field.” *Journal of Social Sciences* 6.4 (2010): 510-514. Print.

⁷⁹⁰ Non-white and less privileged youth rely more on mobile media for communication and access to information than their white, middle- and upper- class counterparts, who tend to turn first to the internet, to which they have better access. Lenhart, Amanda, et al. *Social Media and Mobile Internet Use Among Teens and Young Adults*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2010. Print; Rice, Ronald E. & James E. Katz. “Comparing Internet and Mobile Phone Usage: Digital Divides of Usage, Adoption, and Dropouts.” *Telecommunications Policy* 27.8-9 (2003): 597-623. Print; Wareham, Jonathon, et al. “Wireless Diffusion and Mobile Computing: Implications for the Digital Divide.” *Telecommunications Policy* 28.5-6 (2004): 439-457. Print; Zickuhr, Kathryn & Aaron Smith. *Digital Difference*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2012. Print.

⁷⁹¹ Alexander, Jonathan. *In Their Own Words: LGBT Youth Writing the World Wide Web*. New York: GLAAD Center for the Study of Media & Society, 2004. Print; Driver, Susan. “Virtually Queer Youth Communities of Girls and Birls: Cultural Spaces of Identity Work and Desiring Exchanges.” *Digital Generations*. Ed. Rebekah Willett. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006. 229-246. Print; Gray, Mary L. *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America*. New York: New York University Press, 2009. Print; Laukkanen, Marjo. “Young Queers Online: The Limits and Possibilities of Non-Heterosexual Self-Representation in Online Conversations.” *Queer Online: Media Technology and Society*. Eds. Kate O’Riordan & David J. Phillips. New York: Peter Lang, 2007. 81-100. Print; Macintosh, Lori & Mary Bryson. “Queer (Re)presentations: Youth, MySpace, and the Interstitial Spaces of Becoming and Belonging.” *Journal of LGBT Youth* 5 (2008): 133-142. Print.

⁷⁹² Bauermeister, Jose A., et al. “Sexting Among Young Men Who Have Sex With Men: Results From a National Survey.” *Journal of Adolescent Health* (in press). Web. 30 Nov. 2013; Dake, Joseph A., et al.

race, class, and sexual differences in media use intersect with the gendered dynamics of teen sexting, yet none of the nationwide surveys have taken these factors into account. And so the widespread citation of the statistics these studies produce as evidence of a general epidemic amongst teens works to further the abstraction of adolescents, obscuring crucial cultural and social differences behind the unnamed markers of whiteness, class privilege, and heterosexuality.

As Karaian argues, dominant discourses about sexting produce particular “sexting subjects.” Discourse, according to Foucault, creates particular subject positions. In the discursive production of knowledge, people are defined, named, sorted, and categorized; they become the subjects of discourse, located within fields of knowledge about them, and it is only from their positions within these fields that they can both ‘make sense’ of themselves and speak intelligibly.⁷⁹³ They are thus interpellated into the subject positions defined by discourses that produce knowledge about them.⁷⁹⁴ Medical discourses about sexting displace adolescent agency with ‘raging hormones’; media discourses portray teens who sext as dupes of a highly sexualized and technological culture; feminist and anti-pornography discourses frame young sexters as unwitting and unknowing victims suffering from false consciousness; legal discourses define sexting as a form of exploitation, whether of others or the self; and parental discourses insist on

“Prevalence and Correlates of Sexting Behavior in Adolescents.” *American Journal of Sexuality Education* 7 (2012): 1-15. Print; Gordon-Messer, Deborah, et al. “Sexting Among Young Adults.” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 52.3 (2013): 301-306. Print; Hilinski-Rosick, Carly M. & Tina L. Freiburger. “An Exploratory Analysis of the Prevalence of Teen Sexting.” *Journal of Law and Social Deviance* 4 (2012): 120-149. Print; Klettke, Bianca, et al. “Sexting Prevalence and Correlates: A Systematic Literature Review.” *Clinical Psychology Review* 34.1 (2014): 44-53. Print; Peskin, Melissa Fleschler, et al. “Prevalence and Patterns of Sexting Among Ethnic Minority Urban High School Students.” *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 16.6 (2013): 454-459. Print; Rice, Eric, et al. “Sexually Explicit Cell Phone Messaging Associated With Sexual Risks Among Adolescents.” *Pediatrics* 130.4 (2012): 667-673. Print; Ringrose, Jessica, et al. *A Qualitative Study of Children, Young People, and ‘Sexting’: A Report Prepared for the NSPCC*. London: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 2012. Print.

⁷⁹³ Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*.

⁷⁹⁴ Laclau, Ernesto. *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*. London: Verso, 1979. 101. Print; Morley, David. “Texts, Readers, Subjects.” *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-1979*. New York: Routledge, 1991. 140-153. Print.

the innocent nature of sexting.⁷⁹⁵ Through these, sexting teens are “interpellated as always already disempowered and duped victims of the sexualization of youth, as self-sexually exploiting or as asexual subjects.”⁷⁹⁶

Whether asexual innocents incapable of seeing the potentially sexual meanings of messages, or exploitative or self-exploiting victims of youth sexualization, adolescent sexters are subject to gendered, raced, and classed norms that position them differently as subjects. The white, middle-class, heterosexual teen girls at the center of sexting discourses are positioned as innocent and pure, at risk of contamination through exposure to media sex, and responsible for upholding the female virtue seen to underpin sexual morality.⁷⁹⁷ The argument that they sext because they are victims of media sexualization obscures broader underlying gender issues of sexism, harassment, and sexual objectification.⁷⁹⁸

Other youth who sext are positioned — often implicitly as the Other of morally upstanding, middle-class, white, heterosexuality — as the perpetrators of deviant, if not criminal, sexual behavior. When explicitly the subject of discourse, the sexting of these Others is rationalized in

⁷⁹⁵ For examples of these discourses, see: Bauerlein, Mark. *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupifies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future (Or, Don't Trust Anyone Under 30)*. New York: Penguin, 2008. Print; Durham, M. Gigi. *The Lolita Effect: The Media Sexualization of Young Girls and What We Can Do About It*. New York: Penguin, 2008. Print; Leary, “Self Produced Child Pornography”; Papadopoulus, Linda. *Sexualization of Young People Review*. Web. 30 Nov. 2013; Zurbriggen, Eileen, et al. *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2008. Print.

⁷⁹⁶ Karaian, “Lolita Speaks,” 62.

⁷⁹⁷ Diamond, Lisa M. & Rich C. Savin-Williams. “Adolescent Sexuality.” *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology Volume 1*. Eds. Richard M. Lerner & Laurence Steinberg. Hoboken: Wiley, 2009. 479-523. Print; Egan, R. Danielle. *Becoming Sexual: A Critical Appraisal of the Sexualization of Girls*. New York: Polity, 2013. Print; Renold, Emma & Jessica Ringrose. “Schizoid Subjectivities? Re-Theorizing Teen Girls’ Sexual Cultures in an Era of ‘Sexualization.’” *Journal of Sociology* 47.4 (2011): 389-409. Print; Ringrose, Jessica, et al. “Teen Girls, Sexual Double Standards and ‘Sexting’: Gendered Value in Digital Image Exchange.” *Feminist Theory* 14.3 (2013): 305-323. Print; Salter, “Beyond Criminalisation”; Tolman, Deborah L. “Female Adolescents, Sexual Empowerment and Desire: A Missing Discourse of Gender Inequity?” *Sex Roles* 66.11-12 (2012): 746-757. Print; Valenti, Jessica. *The Purity Myth: How America’s Obsession with Virginity is Hurting Young Women*. Berkeley: Seal, 2010. Print.

⁷⁹⁸ Egan & Hawkes, “Endangered Girls”; Gill, Rosalind. “Beyond the ‘Sexualization of Culture’ Thesis: An Intersection Analysis of ‘Sixpacks,’ ‘Midriffs,’ and ‘Hot Lesbians’ in Advertising.” *Sexualities* 12.2 (2009): 137-160. Print; Hasinoff, “Sexting as Media Production,” 456; For more on how media

terms of prescribed identity characteristics. Boys are seen to be acting on a hard-wired sexual aggression that makes their behavior problematic but ‘normal.’⁷⁹⁹ Ethnic, racial, and underprivileged youth are either hyper-sexualized or desexualized, so that their sexual behavior is read as either deviant in relation to white or middle-class youth, or deviant in relation to their own socio-cultural background.⁸⁰⁰ Gay youth sexting is seen as a reflection of a normatively promiscuous gay culture.⁸⁰¹ Often the ‘deviancy’ of these others is coded as risky or pathological sexual behavior, with which sexting is correlated.⁸⁰²

sexualization obscures underlying gender issues in contexts other than sexting, see: Heins, *Not In Front of the Children*.

⁷⁹⁹ DeLamater, John. “Gender Differences in Sexual Scenarios.” *Females, Males, and Sexuality: Theories and Research*. Ed. Kathryn Kelley. Albany: State University of New York, 1987. 127-139. Print; Tolman, *Dilemmas of Desire*.

⁸⁰⁰ Archer, Louis, et al. “Class, Gender, (Hetero)sexuality and Schooling: Paradoxes Within Working-Class Girls Engagement with Education and Post-16 Aspirations.” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 28.2 (2007): 165-180. Print; Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print; Davis, James Earl. “Forbidden Fruit: Black Males’ Construction of Transgressive Sexualities in Middle School.” *Queering Elementary Education: Advancing the Dialogue about Sexualities and Schooling*. Eds. William J. Letts IV & James T. Sears. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999. 49-60. Print; Giroux, Henry A. “Teenage Sexuality, Body Politics, and the Pedagogy of Display.” *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 18.3 (1996): 307-331. Print; Hollingworth, Sumi & Katya Williams. “Constructions of the Working-Class ‘Other’ Among Urban, White, Middle-Class Youth: ‘Chavs’, Subculture and the Valuing of Education.” *Journal of Youth Studies* 12.5 (2009): 467-482. Print; Kumashiro, Kevin K. “Reading Queer Asian American Masculinities and Sexualities in Elementary School.” *Queering Elementary Education: Advancing the Dialogue about Sexualities and Schooling*. Eds. William J. Letts IV & James T. Sears. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999. 61-70. Print; Ramirez-Valles, Jesus, et al. “Sexual Risk Behavior Among Youth: Modeling the Influence of Prosocial Activities and Socioeconomic Factors.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 39.3 (1998): 237-253. Print; Weis, Lois. “Constructing the ‘Other’: Discursive Renditions of White, Working-Class Males in High School.” *Silenced Voices and Extraordinary Conversations: Re-Imagining Schools*. Eds. Michelle Fine & Lois Weiss. New York: Teachers College Press, 2003. 68-87. Print.

⁸⁰¹ Cohler, Bertram J. “The Psychological World of the Gay Teenager: Social Change, Narrative, and ‘Normality.’” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 36.1 (2007): 47-59. Print; Cover, Rob. “Object(ive)s of Desire: Romantic Coupledness Versus Promiscuity, Subjectivity and Sexual Identity.” *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 24.2 (2010): 251-263. Print; Kless, Christian. *The Spectre of Promiscuity: Gay Male and Bisexual Non-Monogamies and Polyamories*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2007. Print; Mowlabocus, Sharif. *Gaydar Culture: Gay Men, Technology and Embodiment in the Digital Age*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2010. Print; Reisman, Judith A. “Crafting Bi/Homosexual Youth.” *Regent University Law Review* 14 (2001): 283-342. Print; Rubin, Gayle. “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality.” *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011. 137-181. Print; Savin-Williams, Ritch C. *The New Gay Teenager*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006. Print.

⁸⁰² Morrow, Deana F. “Social Work Practice with Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Adolescents.” *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services* 85.1 (2004): 91-99. Print; Rice, “Sexually Explicit Cell Phone”; Stevens, Robin, et al. “Social Environment and Sexual Risk-Taking Among Gay and Transgender African American Youth.” *Culture, Health & Sexuality: An International Journal for Research, Intervention and Care* 15.10 (2013): 1148-1161. Print.

Dominant discourses about teen sexting marry these assumptions about adolescent sexual behavior to the technological determinism typical of media panics. Some suggest that increased accessibility of new technologies merely facilitates existent sexual impulses. For example, correspondent Gigi Stone argued on *Good Morning America* that “while the dangerous combination of teenagers behaving badly, provocatively, and impulsively is not new, the accessibility to technology is.”⁸⁰³ Others suggest that these technologies are directly responsible for problematic sexual behavior. As Dr. Keith Ablow told Bill O’Reilly, “Clearly, [it] is that technology is urging, if you will, it’s eliciting this increasing sexual behavior from kids.”⁸⁰⁴ Such technologically deterministic discourses work to protect the image of adolescent innocence by displacing their active role in sexting with the power of new media technology.

These dominant discourses about teen sexting are all produced by adults and targeted at teens. Adults have always monopolized discourses about youth by controlling the contexts in which they can speak and the responses they can invoke.⁸⁰⁵ Danielle Egan and Gail Hawkes point out that dominant discourses about young people’s sexuality are “ideologically dependent on what adults deem to be socially acceptable.”⁸⁰⁶ These discourses are designed to protect and control children; in doing so, they produce particular forms of subjectivity and repress others.⁸⁰⁷ “Discourses which constitute youth as sexually innocent and any expression of their sexuality as ‘deviant’ or ‘promiscuous,’” argues Louisa Allen, “deny them a positive discursive space from which to be legitimately sexual.”⁸⁰⁸ Dominant, adult discourses of youth sexuality position young

⁸⁰³ Muir, David, Anchor. *Good Morning America*. New York: American Broadcasting Companies, 13 Dec. 2008. Television Broadcast.

⁸⁰⁴ O’Reilly, Bill, Anchor. *The O’Reilly Factor*. New York: Fox News Network, LLC, 27 May 2009. Television Broadcast.

⁸⁰⁵ Buckingham, David. *After the Death of Childhood: Growing Up in the Age of Electronic Media*. Cambridge: Polity, 2000. 12-13. Print.

⁸⁰⁶ Egan, Danielle R. & Gail Hawkes. “The Problem With Protection: Or Why We Need to Move Toward Recognition and the Sexual Agency of Children.” *Continuum* 23.3 (2009): 393. Print.

⁸⁰⁷ Buckingham, *After the Death*, 12.

⁸⁰⁸ Allen, Louisa. *Sexual Subjects: Young People, Sexuality and Education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 91. Print.

people as asexual innocents or sexual deviants, thus denying their own articulations of sexual subjectivity.

Drawing on Judith Butler, Karaian argues that dominant discourses about sexting foreclose the domain of the sayable about teen sexuality, silencing the voices of those who are actually involved and rendering them unintelligible as sexual subjects.⁸⁰⁹ “To become a subject,” writes Butler, “means to be subjected to a set of implicit and explicit norms that govern the kind of speech that will be legible as the speech of the subject.”⁸¹⁰ Explicit norms have been established through legal and juridical sanctions on sexting, and also through campaigns to warn adolescents of its dangers. Implicit norms emerge from discourses that define teen sexting in terms of raging hormones, irrationality, impulsivity, media sexualization, and technological facilitation or elicitation of sexual behavior. These norms govern not only sexting, as a form of speech, but also adolescent speech *about* sexting, working “to preclude and disavow [teens’] own narratives about the complex social, psychological, and sexual/erotic dimensions of their experiences.”⁸¹¹ Because “the voice of young people themselves has been silenced in the public, political, and media discourse about sexting,” writes Alyce McGovern, “any understanding about the differing behaviors and subsequent harms that constitute teen sexting has been lost.”⁸¹² Karaian argues that the practice of teen sexting is thus reified, reducing teens who sext to “sexual objects, to be seen and not heard,” and consequently helping to bring about the very harm with which everyone is so concerned.⁸¹³

To be heard as subjects within discourses about sexting to which they are subject, adolescents must speak from the positions of victims and villains — they must speak in terms of an asexual innocence corrupted by hormones, irrational and exploitative behavior, media sex, and

⁸⁰⁹ Karaian, “Lolita Speaks,” 63-64.

⁸¹⁰ Butler, Judith. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge, 1997. 133. Print.

⁸¹¹ Karaian, “Lolita Speaks,” 62.

⁸¹² McGovern, Alyce. “‘Let’s Get Sexting’: Risk, Power, Sex and Criminalisation in the Moral Domain.” *International Journal for Crime and Justice* 2.1 (2013): 35-49. Print.

technology. This can be seen by reading more closely the studies of teen sexting for the details that are omitted by the media and policy makers in public discourse. In the CosmoGirl survey, for example, two-thirds of teens said they sexted to be ‘fun or flirtatious’, one-third did it to be ‘sexy’, 40 per cent did it as ‘a joke’, and only 12 per cent reported feeling ‘pressured’ to sext. And while 61 per cent found sexting ‘flirty’ and 49 per cent found it ‘exciting’, 67 per cent thought it was ‘dangerous’ and 57 per cent thought it ‘stupid’. Seventy-five per cent knew that sexting “can have seriously negative consequences,” and 79 per cent that sext messages “may end up being seen by more than just the intended recipient.”⁸¹⁴ Supporting this diversity of perspectives, the MTV study reported that “young people have complex views of sexting.” As in the CosmoGirl survey, they characterized it as fun, flirty, exciting, and stupid, but also expressed sexting as a method and measure of trust in relationships.⁸¹⁵ Pew research included focus groups, in which the voices of young sexters further complicated survey results. Some indicated concern with the risks and dangers; others suggested sexting was a normative part of romantic relationships, particularly for younger adolescents, and particularly in the early stages of these relationships.⁸¹⁶ While adolescents thus express a wide range of motivations for sexting and a complex understanding of the risks and pleasures involved, this has been absent from public discourse. It is only when they speak as victims or perpetrators of media sex that their voices are heard.

As we saw in chapters two and three, the discursive positioning of young people as victims of media sex has a long history. But it is only with the development of interactive, networked, digital technologies that they begin to also be interpellated as villains, as knowing perpetrators who exploit either themselves or others by participating in the production and distribution of media sex. Though celebrated for their empowering potential, the agency and autonomy that these technologies afford has aroused anxiety about youth accessing and participating in adult

⁸¹³ Karaian, “Lolita Speaks,” 57-59.

⁸¹⁴ National Campaign, *Sex and Tech*.

⁸¹⁵ Associated Press, *AP-MTV Digital Abuse Study*.

realms of knowledge, experience, and practice, which threatens the social order by dissolving the distinction between child and adult. The dominant discourses of innocence and precocity work to maintain this distinction by subjecting young people to knowledge of themselves as at risk and in need of adult protection and control.

Digitally Divided

Efforts to develop and promote the “information superhighway” in the early 1990s dovetailed with the Clinton administration’s “Children’s Crusade.”⁸¹⁷ In 1991, then-Senator Al Gore’s High Performance Computing Act began funding the National Information Infrastructure (NII), a proposed web of public and private communication networks that would provide information and interactive services by linking computers, databases, and consumer electronics.⁸¹⁸ This act was followed by an ambitious plan to divert billions of dollars from Pentagon defense research into the direct development of network infrastructure. A key plank in the 1992 Clinton-Gore campaign, this plan became central to the Clinton administration’s “Agenda for Action,” which fleshed out a strategy for realizing the NII.⁸¹⁹ As part of his focus on child welfare, Clinton had run as the “education president,” and this was reflected in the Agenda for Action, which began by asking Americans to imagine “the dramatic changes in your life” if “the best schools, teachers, and courses were available to all students” and “the vast resources of

⁸¹⁶ Lenhart, *Teens and Sexting*.

⁸¹⁷ As *Time*’s White House correspondent Jef Mcallister argues, both the 1992 and 1996 Clinton campaigns strategically appealed to “the Cult of the Child” to unite the Democratic party and to deflect attention from Republican attacks on other areas of policy. Mcallister, J.F.O. “The Children’s Crusade.” *Time* 25 Aug. 1997: 36. Print; See also: Kinder, Marsha. “Kid’s Media Culture: An Introduction.” *Kid’s Media Culture*. Ed. Marsha Kinder. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999. 12-16. Print.

⁸¹⁸ Among other mandates and provisions, the “Gore Act,” as it was known, directed and funded DARPA, the NSF, and NASA — which had already substantially developed their own network technologies — to prioritize the organization and rollout of a public communication network. High Performance Computing Act of 1991. Pub. L. 102-194. *Thomas*. Web. 26 Sep. 2013.

⁸¹⁹ Broad, William J. “Clinton to Promote High Technology, With Gore in Charge.” *New York Times*. The New York Times Company. 10 Nov. 1992. Web. 27 Sep. 2013; “Technology: The Engine of Economic Growth.” Clinton-Gore campaign press release 21 Sep. 1992. *ibiblio*. University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. Web. 27 Sep. 2013.

art, literature, and science were available everywhere.”⁸²⁰ It called for all schools and libraries to be connected to the internet by the end of the decade, and Clinton made this a promise in his 1996 reelection campaign. Under Clinton, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) further touted the benefits of getting young Americans online by funding a number of demonstration projects that showed “how access to the Internet creates opportunities to tap the creativity of children and youth, to nurture their artistic talents, to engage them in civic enterprises, and to create bonds across generations.”⁸²¹

As with earlier communication technologies, the internet has been heralded as a tool for empowering individuals and democratizing societies. Utopian visions of the printing press, the telegraph, motion pictures, telephony, radio, and television all projected the dream of a world made better by universal access to information, ideas, and education.⁸²² While the promise of these earlier technologies rested on their ability to bring to the masses knowledge that was once the province of the elite, the network architecture of the internet has the potential to allow more people to participate in the social production of knowledge.⁸²³

⁸²⁰ “The Administration’s Agenda for Action.” Washington, DC: The White House, 15 Sep. 1993. *ibiblio*. University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. Web. 27 Sep. 2013.

⁸²¹ Conte, Christopher. “How Access Benefits Children: Connecting Our Kids to the ‘World of Information’: The Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program.” Washington, DC: National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 1999. *Eric*. Web. 27 Sep. 2013.

⁸²² This long tradition of utopian visions and projections of technology is part of what Leo Marx called “the rhetoric of the technological sublime,” in which powerful new technologies are cast as the harbingers of the future of humanity and the destiny of the world. Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964. Print; Morley, David. *Media, Modernity, and Technology: The Geography of the New*. New York: Routledge, 2007. 235-272. Print; See also: Carey, James W. “Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph.” *Communication and Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. New York: Routledge, 2009. 155-177. Print; Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind*; Wartella, Ellen & Nancy Jennings. “Children and Computers: New Technology-Old Concerns.” *The Future of Children, Children and Computer Technology* 10.2 (2000): 31. Print.

⁸²³ Benkler, Yochai. *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006. Print; Negroponte, Nicholas. *Being Digital*. New York: Knopf, 1995. Print; Rheingold, Howard. *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. Boston: Addison Wesley, 1993. Print.

More so than with previous media, public attention to this empowering potential of the internet has focused on youth.⁸²⁴ This is to some extent due to changing conceptions of childhood. Increasing emotional and economic investment in children has been accompanied by an increasing investment of hopes, dreams, and aspirations.⁸²⁵ Children are seen as ‘the future’, not so much of the family anymore — not as the labor and blood that would sustain life and lineage — but of society, the nation, the world. While this investment of futurity in children prompted numerous efforts to protect them during the twentieth century, the resurgence of the Children’s Rights Movement in the 1980s and the emergence of the “new sociology of childhood” in the 1990s recast youth as “people in their own right,” as active agents of social transformation rather than passive objects needing shelter from a fast-changing world.⁸²⁶ As the internet was becoming more widely accessible to the American public during the 1990s, the utopianism characteristic of new communication technologies was wed to the promise of renewal being invested in an empowered “Generation Next,” positioning youth at the center of the “digital revolution.”⁸²⁷

The “digital generation” was thus “defined in the public mind by its relationship to technology,” and this relationship was invested with dreams of cultural flourishing, economic

⁸²⁴ Montgomery, Kathryn C. *Generation Digital: Politics, Commerce, and Childhood in the Age of the Internet*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007. 4. Print; Sefton-Green, Julian. “Youth, Technology, and Media Culture.” *Review of Research in Education* 30.1 (2006): 282. Print.

⁸²⁵ Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child*.

⁸²⁶ King, Michael. “The Sociology of Childhood as Scientific Communication: Observations from a Social Systems Perspective.” *Childhood* 14.3 (2007): 197-213. Print; For the early corpus of the new sociology of childhood, see: Corsaro, William A. *The Sociology of Childhood*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1997. Print; James, Alison & Alan Prout, eds. *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*. London: Routledge, 1990. Print; James, Alison, et al. *Theorizing Childhood*. Oxford: Polity Press, 1998. Print; Jenks, Chris. *Childhood*. London: Routledge, 1998. Print; Qvortrup, *Childhood Matters*.

⁸²⁷ Also known as Generation Y (following Generation X), Generation We, the Millennial Generation, and the Net Generation, “Generation Next” was the name given by PBS in an eponymous documentary series that followed the first youth cohort who “grew up online.” “Generation Next.” *PBS Newshour*. Web. 30 Sep. 2013; Greenberg, Eric & Karl Weber. *Generation We: How Millennial Youth Are Taking Over America and Changing Our World Forever*. Emeryville: Pachatusan, 2008. Print; Pirie, Madsen & Robert M. Worchester. *The Millennial Generation*. London: Adam Smith, 1998. Print; Strauss, William & Neil Howe. *Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584 to 2069*. New York: William Morrow, 1991. Print; Tapscott, Don. *Growing up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998. Print.

prosperity, and renewed civic engagement.⁸²⁸ Imagined and portrayed as having a natural facility with new digital media, youth were constructed as savants and saviors whose innate technological prowess would bring revolutionary changes to the world. The “net-geners,” as Don Tapscott dubbed them, “possess an intuitive, spontaneous relationship” with digital technologies, the use of which comes “as natural as breathing.” This was allowing them to “break free from the one-way centralized media of the past.” Whereas the “television generation” had passively *experienced* the world through the media, the net generation was using media to actively *create* the world. Tapscott’s influential book *Growing up Digital* rallied evidence to suggest that “the world will be a better place as a result.”⁸²⁹ The insurrection of these “young Turks of technology” was already revolutionizing cultural commerce, finance, and social activism as the millennium drew to a close.⁸³⁰ Examples seemed to abound. Self-taught “computer guru” and “netpreneur” Shawn Fanning made millions and radically reshaped the music industry after launching his peer-to-peer music-sharing platform Napster at the age of eighteen.⁸³¹ Thirteen-year-old Jonathan Lebed made a killing in the stock market after setting up an online brokerage account.⁸³² Young “smart mobs” used networks of laptops, cellphones, and radio scanners to mobilize public action against entrenched political powers, as exemplified in the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle.⁸³³

These high-profile examples of the potential of digital media facilitated mass internet connectivity while also establishing youth as the technological avant-garde. When the World Wide Web launched in 1993, only 3 million Americans were online; by the turn of the millennium, there were more than 150 million. This number skewed heavily toward the young. A

⁸²⁸ Montgomery, *Generation Digital*, 2-3.

⁸²⁹ Tapscott, *Growing up Digital*, 33.

⁸³⁰ Bunn, Austin. “The Rise of the Teen Guru.” *Brill’s Content* Jul./Aug. 2000: 64-69, 123-129. Print.

⁸³¹ Greenfeld, Karl Taro. “Meet the Napster.” *Time* 02 Oct 2000. Time, Inc. Web. 26 Sept 2013; See also: Menn, Joseph. *All the Rave: The Rise and Fall of Shawn Fanning’s Napster*. New York: Crown Business, 2003. Print; Merriden, Trevor. *Irresistible Forces: The Business Legacy of Napster and the Growth of the Underground Internet*. Oxford: Capstone Publishing, 2001. Print.

⁸³² Lewis, Michael. *NEXT: The Future Just Happened*. New York: Norton, 2001. 87-117. Print.

⁸³³ Rheingold, Howard. *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution*. New York: Basic Books, 2002. Print.

2001 report by the NTIA revealed that households with children were far more likely to be connected, and that young people were far more likely to use the internet than adults.⁸³⁴ Research for the Pew Internet and American Life Project found three quarters of American adolescents online at the time, compared with less than half of all adults.⁸³⁵ The perceived disparity between youth and adult connectivity manifested in the popular trope of children teaching adults how to go online, which was propagated through touching media exposés of cross-generational bonding over the new “digital hearth,” and through the gags of comic strips, comedians, and television sitcoms.⁸³⁶ Pew research supported this perception, showing that “Teens often are the instigators of the family’s first foray onto the Internet and end up teaching other family members how to use it.”⁸³⁷ As “early adopters” of new media technologies, youth were forging the way into a networked future, leading adults... or sometimes leaving them behind.⁸³⁸

As the celebration of the net generation carried into the twenty-first century, it became tempered by fears of the autonomy, agency, and power that the digital generation’s knowledge and skills seemed to give them. These fears were rooted in growing concern over a generational divide between whom Marc Prensky dubbed “digital natives” and “digital immigrants.”⁸³⁹ The former were young people born into and immersed in a world of digital technologies, with which

⁸³⁴ National Telecommunications and Information Administration. “The Digital Generation: How Young People Have Embraced Computers and the Internet.” *A Nation Online: How Americans Are Expanding Their Use of the Internet*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, 2002. *nita.doc.gov*. Web. 30 Sep. 2013.

⁸³⁵ Lenhart, Amanda. *Who’s Not Online*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2000. *Pew Research Internet Project*. Pew Research Center. Web. 30 Sep. 2013; Lenhart, Amanda, et al. *Teenage Life Online: The Rise of the Instant-Message Generation and the Internet’s Impact on Friendship and Family Relationships*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2001. *Pew Research Internet Project*. Pew Research Center. Web. 30 Sep. 2013; Zickuhr, Kathryn & Aaron Smith. *Digital Differences*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2012. *Pew Research Internet Project*. Pew Research Center. Web. 30 Sep. 2013.

⁸³⁶ Kolodinsky, Jane, et al. “Bridging the Generation Gap Across the Digital Divide: Teens Teaching Internet Skills to Senior Citizens.” *Journal of Extension* 40.3 (2002): n.p. *joe.org*. Extension Journal, Inc. Web. 30 Sep. 2013.

⁸³⁷ Lenhart, Amanda. *Teenage Life Online*.

⁸³⁸ Lenhart, Amanda, et al. *Teens and Technology: Youth Are Leading the Transition to a Fully Wired and Mobile Nation*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2005. *Pew Research Internet Project*. Pew Research Center. Web. 30 Sep. 2013.

they had a natural fluency; the latter were adults born prior to the development of the digital world, who would have to put in concerted and continuous effort to acculturate themselves to this world and to develop the skills required to use its new technologies. The sense that adults were newcomers to a world in which children had been born threatened the edifice of experience and knowledge that maintains a distinction between childhood and adulthood, provoking fears of what youth were doing with technologies of which adults had little knowledge or control.

Thirty years earlier, Seymour Papert had predicted that computer technologies would be “something the child himself will learn to manipulate [...] thereby gaining a greater and more articulate mastery of the world, a sense of the power of applied knowledge and a self-confidently realistic image of himself as an intellectual agent.”⁸⁴⁰ In his work at the MIT Logo Lab during the 1970s, Papert sought to counter contemporary fears about “computers turning people into robots” by demonstrating what kids could do with them.⁸⁴¹ But as computers were being integrated into American homes and classrooms a decade later, concern refocused precisely on what “mastery of the world” would look like if children’s acquisition of skills outpaced adults. A 1982 industry trend report warned that, “Like the children of immigrants learning the language of the new land,” first generation computer users “may develop a literacy and an ability to communicate that

⁸³⁹ Prensky, Marc. “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants.” *On the Horizon* 9.5 (2001): 3. Print.

⁸⁴⁰ Papert first articulated his vision of children’s empowerment through computational technologies in a 1970 talk titled “Teaching Children Thinking,” which drew on research being conducted in his newly established Logo Lab at MIT. Logo is a programming language that was developed by Papert, Wallace Feurzeig, Dan Bobrow, and Cynthia Solomon at Bolt, Beranek, and Newman, a research and development consultancy sometimes called “the third university in Cambridge.” “Logo was fueled,” wrote Papert, “by a Robin Hood vision of stealing programming from the technologically privileged [...] and giving it to the children.” “The hope,” Feurzeig said, “was that Logo would really get kids to think in a more fundamental way about thinking in all kinds of contexts, to become strategic thinkers, to become more involved in designing and building knowledge.” Johnstone, Bob. *Never Mind the Laptops: Kids, Computers, and the Transformation of Learning*. Lincoln: iUniverse, 2003. 87-95. Print; Papert, Seymour. *The Children’s Machine: Rethinking School in the Age of the Computer*. New York: Basic Books, 1993. 180. Print; Papert, Seymour. “Teaching Children Thinking.” *The Computer in School: Tutor, Tool, Tutee*. Ed. Robert Taylor. New York: Teachers College Press, 1980. 161. Print.

⁸⁴¹ McElheny, Victor. “Giving Power to the People.” *Boston Globe* 26 July 1976: 4-A. Print.

their parents cannot match or even understand.”⁸⁴² The following year, the popular film *War Games* captured and propagated public anxiety about the dangers of kids’ computer skills, telling of a teen who hacks into a NORAD supercomputer and almost starts a nuclear war. In the wake of *War Games*, “it seemed that every kid in America had demanded and gotten a modem,” and they rushed to connect with the “digital underground” of bulletin board systems, where young hackers shared pirated software, pornography, and codes for sneaking into computers and telecommunication systems.⁸⁴³ Drawn by sensational stories in the news media, public attention riveted on incidents of youth hacking that came to light following the passage of legislation against computer fraud and a subsequent crackdown by federal prosecutors and the U.S. Secret Service.⁸⁴⁴

As the loose and shady network of the digital underground was being overshadowed by the explosive growth of more mainstream networked technologies in the 1990s, fear of the teen hacker was compounded by a fear of teen aggression linked to video game violence. These fears coincided in the Columbine massacre, when the up-to-then abstractly threatening activities of adolescents in the emerging ‘other world’ of digital technologies overflowed into the everyday reality of a suburban public high school. In the aftermath, attention focused on the two student perpetrators’ devotion to the ‘modding’ culture of the video game *Doom*, wherein hackers designed and shared online custom ‘levels’. This game popularized the first-person-shooter genre, which puts the player in the point of view of a protagonist moving through and ‘clearing’ multiple ‘levels’ by slaughtering enemies. *Doom* was heavily criticized for its graphic violence

⁸⁴² Cherlin, Andrew J. & Frank F. Furstenberg. *The Shape of the American Family in the Year 2000*. Washington, DC: American Council of Life Insurance, 1982. Print.

⁸⁴³ Sterling, Bruce. *The Hacker Crackdown: Law and Disorder on the Electronic Frontier*. New York: Bantam, 1992. 84-85. Print.

⁸⁴⁴ In 1984, Congress passed the Comprehensive Crime Control Act, which gave the U.S. Secret Service jurisdiction over credit card and computer fraud. In 1986, they passed the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, which clarified and increased the scope of what were considered criminal acts under the 1984 law. In 1987, federal prosecutors in Chicago formed the Computer Fraud and Abuse Task Force, which began

and was dubbed a “mass murder simulator.”⁸⁴⁵ In videos made prior to the massacre, the killers said it would be just “like playing *Doom*” and one of them boasted that his shotgun was “straight out of the game.”⁸⁴⁶ They had also supposedly developed game level mock-ups of their high school and played out their fantasies of killing their peers.⁸⁴⁷ As we saw in the last chapter, concerns about the effects on youth of media violence date back at least a century, and the 1970s and 1980s saw a profusion of research into this issue. But the connection between Columbine and *Doom* suggested the active use of media by youth as a training tool for violent behavior, revealing a darker side of the empowering potential of interactive digital media.

As the digital world was expanding and integrating into everyday life, then, the dangers of the generational digital divide began to appear. Because the rollout of the ‘information superhighway’ was paved with promises banked on the wiring of libraries and classrooms, tech pundits like Papert, Prensky, and Tapscott primarily problematized this divide in terms of education. The disparity between educators’ unsophisticated use of technology and students’ technological aptitude — which was seen to make them active, experiential, multitasking learners who depend on communication technologies for accessing information and interacting with others — was creating alienation and disaffection.⁸⁴⁸ But as Columbine demonstrated, even if the supposed alienation and disaffection of the digital divide had roots in the classroom, it had more

working with the Secret Service to track down and arrest hackers, many of whom turned out to be teenagers. Sterling, *Hacker Crackdown*, 87-89.

⁸⁴⁵ Grossman, Dave & Gloria DeGaetano. *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill: A Call to Action Against TV, Movie & Video Game Violence*. New York: Crown, 1999. 65-77. Print.

⁸⁴⁶ “Basement Tapes.” *Internet Archive*. 23 Feb. 2006. Web. 30 Sep. 2013.

⁸⁴⁷ Block, Jerald J. “Lessons from Columbine: Virtual and Real Rage.” *American Journal of Forensic Psychiatry* 28.2 (2007): 5-33. Print.

⁸⁴⁸ Frand, Jason. “The Information-Age Mindset: Changes in Students and Implications for Higher Education.” *EDUCAUSE Review* 35 (2000): 14–24. Print; Levin, Douglas & Sousean Arafeh. *The Digital Disconnect: The Widening Gap Between Internet-savvy Students and Their Schools*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2002. *Pew Research Internet Project*. Pew Research Center. Web. 30 Sep. 2013; Oblinger, Diana & James Oblinger. “Is It Age or IT: First Steps Towards Understanding the Net Generation.” *Educating the Net Generation*. Eds. Diana Oblinger & James Oblinger. Boulder: EDUCAUSE, 2005. 2.1-2.20. Print; Prensky, “Digital Natives”; Prensky, Marc. “Engage Me or Enrage Me.” *EDUCAUSE Review* 40.5 (2005): 61–64. Print. Tapscott, Don. “Educating the Net Generation.” *Educational Leadership* 56.5 (1999): 6–11. Print; Tapscott, *Growing up Digital*, 33.

far-reaching repercussions. Kids were using their technological skills to educate themselves outside the classroom, and their agency and autonomy in acquiring and using knowledge threatened the ideas of innocence, passivity, and dependence that had distinguished them from adults. Columbine confirmed in the public imaginary the danger to society of such youth empowerment.

Across the generational digital divide, then, the distinction between childhood and adulthood blurred. The so-called digital natives were engaging with adult knowledge and experiences that had largely been foreclosed to them by the relatively well-regulated mass media. Anxiety in the 1980s about the ‘full disclosure medium’ of television, and about the effects on children of the cartoonish violence in shows like *The A-Team* and *Miami Vice*, seemed quaint in comparison to *Doom* and Columbine. Likewise with concern over the sexualization of media evidenced in shows like *Charlie’s Angels* and *Dallas*, as compared with the pornography that kids were beginning to access online. Fear over the dissolution of childhood in a networked world flared into a full-blown media panic in the late 1990s, engendering efforts to regulate young people’s access and participation in the growing online sexual sphere.

Bounding the Online Sexual Sphere

The cover of the July 3, 1995 issue of *Time* magazine pictured a young boy in front of a computer keyboard, his face lit by the ghostly glow of a monitor, his eyes and mouth agape. Big, bold letters below the boy’s face read: CYBERPORN. Under that, the tagline expounded, “A new study shows how pervasive and wild it really is,” and then asked, “Can we protect our kids — and free speech?”⁸⁴⁹ The Carnegie Mellon study referenced in the cover article claimed that 83.5

⁸⁴⁹ Elmer-Dewitt, Philip. “Cyberporn.” *Time* 3 Jul. 1993: cover. Print.

percent of online images were pornographic, and that these images were far more extreme than print and video pornography.⁸⁵⁰

The day after this issue of *Time* hit the newsstands, Senator Charles Grassley brought it to the attention of Congress, who had been asking themselves the same question about protecting both kids and free speech in the process of debating the Communication Decency Act (CDA). After repeatedly citing the study's 83.5 percent figure, Grassley urged Congress "to help parents who are under assault in this day and age." Echoing the timeworn apocalyptic metaphor for the proliferation of media sex, Grassley claimed "There is a flood of vile pornography," and argued that "we must act to stem this growing tide, because [...] it incites perverted minds."⁸⁵¹

The Carnegie Melon study was fraught with conceptual, logical, and methodological flaws.⁸⁵² When subject to close scrutiny, the 83.5 percent figure turned out to be a statistical fiction, an extrapolation based on an unrepresentative sample.⁸⁵³ But for a parenting public who had come of age during the explosive growth of the porn industry and the public spectacle of the anti-pornography movement, 83.5 was a scary fact that confirmed their worst fears about this new medium in which their children were becoming immersed. These fears manifested in a moral panic over cyberporn, and through what Jean Baudrillard would call "a panic-stricken production of the real," led the representatives of this public to vote overwhelmingly in favor of the CDA,

⁸⁵⁰ Rimm, Marty. "Marketing Pornography on the Information Superhighway: A Survey of 917,410 Images, Descriptions, Short Stories, and Animations Downloaded 8.5 Million Times by Consumers in over 2000 Cities in Forty Countries, Provinces, and Territories." *Georgetown Law Journal* 83.5 (1995): 1849–1943. Print.

⁸⁵¹ Senator Grassley (IA). "Cyberporn." *Congressional Record*. 26 June 1995. S9017–S9023. *Thomas*. Web. 12 Sep. 2013.

⁸⁵² Hoffman, Donna L. & Thomas P. Novak. "A Detailed Analysis of the Conceptual, Logical, and Methodological Flaws in the Article: 'Marketing Pornography on the Information Superhighway.'" 2 Jul. 1995. *SICS*. Swedish ICT. Web. 20 Sep. 2013.

⁸⁵³ The sample was drawn from a very thin slice of the internet: a narrow subset of thirty-two Usenet newsgroups called "alt.binaries." Alt.binaries allowed users to efficiently post and download binary files of images, video, and music that are considered "alternative" because they are not easily classified under Usenet subheadings. Much of Usenet pornography can be found in alt.binaries; the sample is skewed because it neither represents Usenet nor the broader internet of which Usenet is a part. Mullin, Dorothy I. "First Amendment Issues and the Web: The Internet Porn Panic and Restricting Indecency in Cyberspace." *Untangling the Web*. University of California, Santa Barbara. 26 Apr. 1996. Web. 20 Sep. 2013.

which was then signed into law by President Bill Clinton as part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.⁸⁵⁴ The CDA and subsequent rounds of legislation and litigation would make real in the public imaginary the mythic proportions of cyberporn and its inherent harm to children, while also working to draw age-based boundaries around the emerging online sexual sphere.

Reflecting both legal precedent on obscenity and the more nebulous notion of broadcast indecency, the CDA was the first attempt to regulate the internet. It criminalized the “knowing” transmission of anything “obscene or indecent” to anyone under eighteen. More specifically, it outlawed the use of an “interactive computer service” to either send or “display in a manner available” to anyone under eighteen “any comment, request, suggestion, proposal, image, or other communication that, in context, depicts or describes, in terms patently offensive as measured by contemporary community standards, sexual or excretory activities or organs.”⁸⁵⁵

A coalition headed by the ACLU challenged these provisions of the CDA on the grounds that they abridged First Amendment free speech protection. A federal district court agreed and imposed an injunction on the law, and upon review, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed. The government’s defense of the CDA built upon the precedence of several landmark obscenity cases to argue that the CDA enacted a “sort of ‘cyberzoning’ on the internet” in the interest of protecting minors from the unwanted intrusion of indecency into the home.⁸⁵⁶ The court argued that these precedents did not apply:

⁸⁵⁴ Baudrillard, Jean. *Selected Writings*. Ed. Mark Poster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988. 171. Print.

⁸⁵⁵ A section of the law introduced by the House of Representatives as the Internet Freedom and Family Empowerment Act provided “safe harbor” to service providers and end users. 47 U.S.C. § 230. 1996. *Thomas*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013.

⁸⁵⁶ The government cited three previous Supreme Court decisions as precedent. In *Ginsberg v. New York* [1968], the court had upheld the conviction of a New York man for selling “girlie magazines” to two sixteen year old boys because the state had a legitimate interest in protecting minors, even from material not considered obscene for adults. In *FCC v. Pacifica* [1978], the court determined that the state also had a legitimate interest in protecting minors from broadcasts of “indecent but not obscene” materials that can enter into the home unwanted. Finally, in *Renton v. Playtime Theatres* [1986], the court had held that localities may prohibit adult theaters in particular areas because it was a form of “time, place, and manner” regulation that did not specifically target adult theaters or the content of adult films, but rather “the secondary effects of such theaters on the surrounding community. *Ginsberg v. New York*. 390 U.S. 629.

The CDA differs from the various laws and orders upheld in those cases in many ways, including that it does not allow parents to consent to their children's use of restricted materials; is not limited to commercial transactions; fails to provide any definition of "indecent" and omits any requirement that "patently offensive" material lack socially redeeming value; neither limits its broad categorical prohibitions to particular times nor bases them on an evaluation by an agency familiar with the medium's unique characteristics; is punitive; applies to a medium that, unlike radio, receives full First Amendment protection; and cannot be properly analyzed as a form of time, place, and manner regulation because it is a content based blanket restriction on speech.⁸⁵⁷

While the court affirmed that obscenity was not protected by the First Amendment, they argued that the "patently offensive" provision of the CDA was not consonant with the definition of obscenity established in *Miller v. California* because the three prongs of the *Miller* test that "critically limit the uncertain sweep of the obscenity definition" had not been met.⁸⁵⁸ And while they also affirmed that the government had a compelling interest in protecting children from potentially harmful materials that were not considered obscene for adults, they argued that the CDA "pursues that interest by suppressing a large amount of speech that adults have a constitutional right to send and receive." The court thus held that "the CDA's 'indecent transmission' and 'patently offensive display' provisions abridge 'the freedom of speech' protected by the First Amendment."⁸⁵⁹

Reno v. ACLU did establish that the internet, unlike broadcasting, is entitled to the highest level of First Amendment protection. Chatrooms, reasoned the court, allow any individual to become "a town crier with a voice that resonates farther than it could from any soapbox," while

U.S. Supreme Court. 1968. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013; *Renton v. Playtime Theatres*. 475 U.S. 41. U.S. Supreme Court. 1986. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013.

⁸⁵⁷ *Reno v. ACLU*. 521 U.S. 844. U.S. Supreme Court. 1997. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013.

⁸⁵⁸ In terms of the *Miller* test, 1) Though the CDA required that online communications in question be judged by contemporary community standards, these were not defined in terms of appealing to the prurient interest; 2) "Patently offensive" was not required to be defined by applicable state law; and 3) There was no requirement to interrogate whether the questionable communication, when "taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value." *Miller v. California*. 413 U.S. 15. U.S. Supreme Court. 1973. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁸⁵⁹ In *New York v. Ferber*, the Supreme Court had rejected constitutional challenges to the special standards of indecency applied in child pornography cases, establishing that the government had "compelling" and

with web pages, email, and newsgroups, “the same individual can become a pamphleteer.” The potential of these technologies for sharing information and ideas, and for fostering discussion and debate, made them invaluable tools of democracy. But *Reno* left open the possibility of regulations more narrowly tailored to protecting children. Indeed, as Justice O’Connor elaborated in her concurring opinion, this “attempt by Congress to create ‘adult zones’ on the Internet” was both sound in purpose and supported by precedent, and had only been undermined by the vagueness of the act and the unique characteristics of online geography and identity. Citing testimony from Lawrence Lessig, O’Connor held out hope for “gateway” technologies such as content filtering and age verification that would transform cyberspace “from a relatively unzoned place to a universe that is extraordinarily well zoned.”

This dream of a well-zoned public sphere is the legacy of over a century of legal actions responding to the increasing on/scenity of media sex. As we saw in chapter two, a key part of the proliferation of sexual discourses beginning in the Victorian era was the discursive bounding of a public authorized to participate in these discourses. The sexual public sphere was constituted along lines of race, class, gender, and age, excluding whom Walter Kendrick identified as “The Young Person” — those seen as rationally undeveloped and thus prone to reacting to sexual discourse in emotionally, physically, and socially harmful ways.⁸⁶⁰ As women, minorities, and the poor became accepted as rational actors and were admitted into the public sphere, and as childhood was increasingly institutionalized as a space bracketed off from adulthood, the boundaries of the sexual sphere were drawn ever more tightly around age.

The cyberporn panic of the 1990s responded to the crumbling of these boundaries. Moral panics are prompted by perceived threats to the social order; the specific objects — the “folk

“surpassing” interests in protecting children from harmful media sex. *New York v. Ferber*. 458 U.S. 747. U.S. Supreme Court. 1982. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 30 Jun. 2013.

⁸⁶⁰ Kendrick, *Secret Museum*.

devils” — around which panics coalesce are proxies for these threats.⁸⁶¹ Sexuality itself is “a fertile source of moral panic,” argues Jeffrey Weeks, because it touches on “crucial social boundaries” that act as “crossover point[s] for a number of tensions whose origins lie elsewhere,” including gender relations, intergenerational conflict, and the moral acceptability of certain sexual behaviors.⁸⁶² “Media panics” in particular — which Kirsten Drotner defines as those in which “the media are both source and the medium of public reaction” — position young people as symbols of broader social struggles over ideological values.⁸⁶³ Such panics attempt to “re-establish a generational status quo that the youthful pioneers seem to undermine” through their media use.⁸⁶⁴

Cyberporn stood in for broader concerns about the dissolving distinction between childhood and adulthood, which had manifested in paradoxical discourses about the “Peter Pan syndrome” and the “disappearance of childhood” during the 1980s.⁸⁶⁵ On the one hand, adults weren’t “growing up” fast enough in a culture of narcissistic individualism that celebrated youth and was promoted by celebrity and consumer cultures. On the other hand, children were “growing up too fast too soon” in a media culture saturated with sex and violence, which required little to none of the literacy skills that had previously maintained barriers between child and adult knowledge. With the development and uptake of more interactive media technologies such as video, computer games, and the internet, youth became active participants in their rapid maturation, rather than passive victims of mass media culture, and thus began to be perceived as

⁸⁶¹ Cohen, *Folk Devils*; Hall, Stuart, et al. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. London: Macmillan, 1978. Print; Goode, Erich & Nachman Ben-Yehuda. *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 36. Print.

⁸⁶² Weeks, Jeffrey. *Sexuality and Its Discontents: Meanings, Myths, and Modern Sexualities*. New York: Routledge, 1985. 44. Print.

⁸⁶³ Drotner, Kirsten. “Modernity and Media Panics.” *Media Cultures: Reappraising Transnational Media*. Eds. Michael Skovmand & Kim Christian Schröder. New York: Routledge, 1992. 42-62. Print.

⁸⁶⁴ Drotner, “Modernity and Media Panics,” 57.

⁸⁶⁵ Elkind, David. *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon*. Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1981. Print; Kiley, Dan. *The Peter Pan Syndrome: Men Who Have Never Grown Up*. New York: Dodd, Mead,

part of the problem. By targeting youth use of sexual entertainment, as John Springhall argues, media panics like that over cyberporn work to maintain generational divisions threatened by “the technical and cultural competence young people gain as spin-offs of media use.”⁸⁶⁶

Cyberporn was also a proxy for a complex of social anxieties about gender and sex.⁸⁶⁷

During the 1980s, feminists had drawn attention to the role of pornography in the sexual subjugation of women and the maintenance of patriarchal power. Their unlikely alliance with the New Right, which was otherwise hostile to feminist concerns, had made pornography a battlefield in the culture wars. Relatedly, the “crisis of masculinity” that emerged in the early 1990s was largely a conservative backlash to the shifting gender roles attending social, economic, and political changes effected through decades of feminist activism, as well as to a perceived threat to heterosexuality prompted by the increasing public presence of gay culture in the wake of Stonewall.⁸⁶⁸ The psycho-spiritual branches of the new men’s movement that grew out of this “crisis” identified pornography as both cause and effect of a distorted and debased masculinity, even as they projected either fundamentalist or new age conceptions of hetero-patriarchy.⁸⁶⁹ The

1983. Print; Postman, Neil. *The Disappearance of Childhood*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1982. Print; Winn, Mary. *Children Without Childhood*. New York: Pantheon, 1983. Print.

⁸⁶⁶ Springhall, John. *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics*. New York: St Martin’s, 1996. 7. Print. See also: Shevory, Thomas. *Notorious HIV: The Media Spectacle of Nushawn Williams*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004. Print.

⁸⁶⁷ As Gayle Rubin has argued about the social politics of gender and sexuality, “disputes over sexual behavior often become the vehicles for displacing social anxieties” and “no tactic for stirring up erotic hysteria has been as reliable as the appeal to protect children.” Rubin, “Thinking Sex,” 138.

⁸⁶⁸ Collier, Richard. “‘Coming Together?’: Post-Heterosexuality, Masculine Crisis and the New Men’s Movement.” *Feminist Legal Studies* 4.1 (1996): 3-48. Print.

⁸⁶⁹ As Richard Collier shows, the men’s movement of the 1970s and 1980s was committed to a pro-feminist politics that challenged sexism, homophobia, and male power, exemplified in John Snodgrass’s *A Book of Readings for Men Against Sexism*. This was displaced in the 1990s by a new men’s movement, which in its mytho-poetic reclaiming of a traditional masculinity and its assertion of men’s familial rights, was ambiguous about, if not hostile to, feminism. While this new movement was initiated by Robert Bly’s tremendously popular book *Iron John* and spurred on by Warren Farrell’s *The Myth of Male Power* and Andrew Kimbrell’s *The Masculine Mystique*, it had roots in Herb Goldberg’s *The Hazards of Being Male*. Bly, Robert. *Iron John: A Book About Men*. Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1990. Print; Collier, Richard. “‘Coming Together?’: Post-Heterosexuality, Masculine Crisis and the New Men’s Movement.” *Feminist Legal Studies* 4.1 (1996): 3-48. Print; Farrell, Warren. *The Myth of Male Power: Why Men are the Disposable Sex*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993. Print; Goldberg, Herb. *The Hazards of Being Male: Surviving the Myth of Masculine Privilege*. New York: Signet, 1977. Print; Kimbrell, Andrew. *The*

AIDS crisis further exacerbated these anxieties about gender and sex: for many it suggested either a Godly or natural vindication for the liberalization of sexual mores associated with feminism, gay culture, and pornography.⁸⁷⁰ As Philip Jenkins shows, moral entrepreneurs often use children in a “politics of substitution” to gain attention and support for their causes.⁸⁷¹ The moral panic over cyberporn substituted concern with its harm to children for a tangle of fears about the “social decay” associated with changing gender roles, homosexuality, and sexual liberalism — which had all been indexed to pornography — and this was used to mobilize forces in the culture wars.⁸⁷²

The harm to children of cyberporn was forefronted in subsequent legislation designed to fill in for the provisions of the CDA that the Supreme Court struck down in *Reno*. The Child Online Protection Act (COPA) of 1998 specifically targeted online material that was “harmful to minors.”⁸⁷³ After a federal district court immediately imposed an injunction on the law, COPA bounced between the district court, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, and the U.S. Supreme Court in a series of cases trying to determine whether its restriction on speech was overly broad.⁸⁷⁴ In the final appeal, the Circuit Court found that COPA failed to meet the strict scrutiny

Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity. New York: Ballantine, 1995. Print; Snodgrass, John. *A Book of Readings for Men Against Sexism*. Albion: Times Change Press, 1977. Print; See also: Messner, Michael A. *Politics of Masculinities: Men in Movements*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997. Print; Schwalbe, Michael. *Unlocking the Iron Cage: The Men’s Movement, Gender Politics, and American Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.

⁸⁷⁰ Weeks, *Sexuality and Its Discontents*, 44.

⁸⁷¹ Jenkins, Philip. *Intimate Enemies: Moral Panics in Contemporary Britain*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1992. 10. Print.

⁸⁷² David Buckingham and Sara Bragg expound on Jenkins’ “politics of substitution,” arguing that “campaigns against homosexuality are redefined as campaigns against paedophiles” and that “campaigns against pornography become campaigns against child pornography.” Both Gayle Rubin and Roger Lancaster have documented how anxieties about gender and sexuality have been mapped onto outrage about child pornography and pedophilia. Buckingham & Bragg, *Young People*, 4; Lancaster, Roger N. *Sex Panic and the Punitive State*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011. 39-72. Print; Rubin, “Thinking Sex.”

⁸⁷³ COPA was often referred to as either CDAIL by its proponents, or the “Son of CDA” by its opponents. “Harmful to minors” was defined as “matter of any kind” that, judged by “contemporary community standards,” appeals to “the prurient interest” by representing sex acts or lewd nudity “in a manner patently offensive with respect to minors,” and that when “taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.” 47 U.S.C. § 231. 1998. *Thomas*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013.

⁸⁷⁴ In *ACLU v. Reno*, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the district court’s injunction on the grounds that “community standards was impossible to apply to the internet. This decision was vacated in

standard for restrictions on constitutionally protected speech because, while it served the compelling government interest of protecting children, it was not narrowly tailored to serve this interest by the least restrictive means available.⁸⁷⁵ Throughout these cases, a central concern was whether filtering technologies, which had advanced significantly since *Reno*, might be considered as less restrictive methods for achieving what COPA attempted.⁸⁷⁶ The Circuit Court argued that not only was such technology less restrictive, but was also more effective at preventing minors from accessing sexually explicit materials online.

While the CDA had secured a place for the sexual public sphere online by establishing, via *Reno*, strong First Amendment protection for the internet, the legacy of COPA was to extend the boundaries around this sphere into cyberspace. Although this legislation failed, litigation established that there was a compelling government interest in protecting children from potentially harmful sexual materials, and that such ‘speech’ could be curtailed if the means of doing so was narrowly enough tailored. Thus the next law restricting access to materials deemed harmful to minors, the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA), specifically targeted schools

the initial ruling of *Ashcroft v. ACLU*, in which the Supreme Court found that the reliance on community standards “does not *by itself* render the statute substantially overbroad,” and remanded the case to the Circuit Court, suggesting that it examine whether COPA could survive the strict scrutiny required of First Amendment jurisprudence. The Circuit Court again upheld the injunction in *ACLU v. Ashcroft*, this time on the grounds that it would restrict protected speech among adults. Upon appeal, the Supreme Court found that COPA likely violates the First Amendment and sent the case back to the district court for trial, where it was found to be unconstitutional, and the government permanently enjoined from enforcing it. *ACLU v. Reno*. 31 F. Supp. 2d 473. U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. 1999. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013; *ACLU v. Reno*. 217 F. 3d 162. U.S. Court of Appeals. 2000. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013; *Ashcroft v. ACLU*. 535 U.S. 564. U.S. Supreme Court. 2002. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013; *ACLU v. Ashcroft*. 322 F. 3d 240, 251-271. U.S. Court of Appeals. 2004. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013; *Ashcroft v. ACLU*. 542 U.S. 656, 670. U.S. Supreme Court. 2004. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013; *ACLU v. Gonzales*. 478 F. Supp. 2d 775. U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. 2007. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013.

⁸⁷⁵ In 2009, the Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal of *Mukasey*, effectively ending over a decade of litigation and shutting down COPA. *ACLU v. Mukasey*. 534 F.3d 181. U.S. District Court. 2008. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013.

⁸⁷⁶ The Congressional Commission on Online Child Protection, established by COPA to study various methods of protecting children from harmful material online, had found filtering and blocking technologies to be an effective part of a broader strategy that included public education, law enforcement, and industry action. *Final Report of the COPA Commission on Online Child Protection*. 20 Oct. 2000. *copacommission.org*. Web. 19 Sep. 2013.

and libraries: public spaces in which boundaries could be drawn around the sexual sphere so as to exclude youth in particular. CIPA required that for these public institutions to receive so-called “E-Rate” discounts, they had to establish an internet safety policy that included “a technology protection measure” against “visual depictions that are obscene, child pornography, or harmful to minors.”⁸⁷⁷

The American Library Association (ALA), backed by the ACLU, challenged the act on the grounds that filtering technologies would block a substantial amount of constitutionally protected speech, and a federal district court ruled in their favor.⁸⁷⁸ Upon appeal, however, the Supreme Court reversed.⁸⁷⁹ Congress has wide latitude to attach conditions to federal assistance in order to further its policy objectives, noted the Court. Because the objective was to help libraries “fulfill their traditional role of obtaining material of requisite and appropriate quality for educational and informational purposes,” and “because public libraries have traditionally excluded pornographic material from their other collections,” CIPA’s requirement of filtering technology was not a constitutionally problematic imposition on speech, but was rather an aid in libraries’ discretionary capacity to maintain “collections” by excluding certain categories of content. Yet the Court insisted that filters be disabled “without significant delay on an adult user’s request.”⁸⁸⁰ This undermined the very notion of “discretionary collections,” further bolstering the legal standing of the online sexual sphere and effectively extending its reach into the public space of libraries, even as its assumed harm to minors bounded this sphere by excluding them from the option of access for “bona fide research” that was granted to adults.

⁸⁷⁷ 47 U.S.C. § 254. 2000. *Thomas*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013.

⁸⁷⁸ *United States v. American Library Association*. 201 F. Supp. 2d 401. U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. 2002. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013.

⁸⁷⁹ *United States v. American Library Association*. 539 U.S. 194, 200. U.S. Supreme Court. 2003. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013.

⁸⁸⁰ CIPA had provided an exception for adults engaged in “bona fide research or other lawful purpose,” for whom institutions could disable filters upon request, but had left the definition of such research to local judgment. This would have allowed for an overly broad limit on access to constitutionally protected speech.

The Supreme Court's ruling in *ALA* reflects a limited view of the internet that is at odds with the extension of First Amendment protection to this sphere in *Reno*. In *Reno*, the Court recognized that the democratic potential of the internet hinged on its function as a public forum, but declared in *ALA* that the internet functions merely as "another method for making information available," being "no more than a technological extension of the book stack."⁸⁸¹ This impoverished view of the internet has become increasingly problematic with the development and uptake of so-called 'Web 2.0' technologies, which forward the function of the internet as a public forum over that of a content provider. As youth began to use networked media technologies to not just access information, ideas, and images, but to also participate in their production and circulation, protecting them from media sex would not be as simple as regulating access to content. No longer mere innocents in need of protection from the corrupting influence of sexual representations, adolescents, as active agents in their own loss of innocence, as perpetrators of media sex, would need to be protected from themselves.

⁸⁸¹ Because publicly funded venues of expression do not necessarily constitute public fora, the Court argued that forum analysis and heightened judicial scrutiny were incompatible with the discretion public libraries must have to fulfill their mission of providing "collections" of "information." In *Perry v. Perry*, the Court divided government-owned property into three types of "forums" relevant to the regulation of speech: traditional public, limited public, and non-public. Traditional public forums are spaces such as streets and parks that have an established tradition as spaces for public speech, which the government can only restrict, in a narrowly tailored way, to serve a compelling state interest. Limited public forums are spaces such as museums and libraries that are reserved for a particular type of expression, in which "reasonable time, place and manner regulations are permissible, and a content-based prohibition must be narrowly drawn to effectuate a compelling state interest." But later cases found this type of analysis inappropriate for cases involving editorial or curatorial discretion. In *Arkansas v. Forbes*, the Court ruled that public television stations could not be designated public fora because of the editorial discretion required to fulfill their journalistic purpose and statutory obligations. In *NEA v. Finley*, the court likewise denied the designation of public art as public forum in upholding the use of content-based criteria in the NEA's selection of grant recipients because it is the "NEA's mandate... to make esthetic judgments." John Gathegi argues that the focus of forum analysis on either traditional or designated public spaces blinds the Court to the evolution of both libraries and the internet into de facto public fora. *Arkansas Educational Television Association v. Forbes*. 523 U.S. 666. U.S. Supreme Court. 1998. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013; Gathegi, John N. "The Public Library as Public Forum: The (De)Evolution of a Legal Doctrine." *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 75.1 (2005): 1-19. Print; *National Endowment for the Arts v. Finley*. 524 U.S. 569 U.S. Supreme Court. 1998. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013; *Perry v. Perry*. 460 U.S. 37. U.S. Supreme Court. 1983. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013; *United States v. American Library Association*. 539 U.S. 194, 200. U.S. Supreme Court. 2003. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 20 Sep. 2013; See also: Bell, Bernard W. "Filth, Filtering, and the First

Victim or Villain?

In 2005, the *New York Times* published an investigative report on a then eighteen-year-old Justin Berry, who had become involved in the “sordid” world of online cam sex five years prior as “a gangly 13-year-old with saucer eyes.”⁸⁸² The lengthy article and a set of accompanying video interviews posted on the *Times* website painted Berry as an innocent victim of media sex. New technologies — cheap webcams, fast broadband, and a network of apps for sharing video chat and exchanging gifts and money online — had opened Berry’s bedroom to the prying eyes of pedophiles. These predators had then “groomed” Berry with “praise, attention and gifts,” drawing him into live, online pornographic performances, and in some cases, to offline sexual encounters.

The *Times* inquiry led to a criminal investigation by the FBI after reporter Kurt Eichenwald persuaded Berry to contact the Justice Department and assist in tracking down the perpetrators. By the time the report was published, several of those implicated had been arrested and indicted on child pornography charges. For Eichenwald, however, new media technologies were equally to blame.⁸⁸³ The once “smallish trade” in child pornography had boomed in the 1990s as pedophiles “honed their computer skills, finding advanced ways to meet online and swap illegal photos.” By 2000, cheap webcams had realized the dreams of these technologically adept pedophiles, who had been “fantasizing of the day they would be able to reach out to children directly, through instant messaging and live video, to obtain the pornography they desired.” In the hands of “computer-savvy minors,” webcams created “a bountiful selection of potential targets.”

Amendment: Ruminations on Public Libraries’ Use of Internet Filtering Software.” *Federal Communications Law Journal* 53 (2001): 191-237. Print.

⁸⁸² Eichenwald, Kurt. “Through His Webcam, A Boy Joins a Sordid Online World.” *New York Times*. 19 Dec 2005. *ProQuest*. Web. 25 Sep. 2003.

⁸⁸³ A sidebar accompanying Eichenwald’s article foregrounded the role of technology by illustrating the use of tools like computers, webcams, instant messaging, networking sites, payment platforms, and wish lists to produce child pornography. “An Easy Path to Trouble.” *New York Times*. The New York Times Company. 19 Dec. 2005. Web. 25 Sep. 2013.

Berry's story, unfolding at the beginning of the new millennium, fed into the media panic about sex on the internet that had emerged in the 1990s. With the development of more interactive and participatory 'Web 2.0' technologies, and particularly with the growing popularity amongst youth of social network sites, the panic over cyberporn began shifting to a panic over online stalkers and predators. This was presaged by growing anxiety over sexual predators amidst a flurry of high-profile investigations and media exposés during the 1980s and 1990s, which had indiscriminately linked child pornography to "organized pedophilia."⁸⁸⁴ Media coverage like the *New York Times* story on Justin Berry and NBC's popular reality show *To Catch a Predator* relocated this concern to cyberspace, recasting children's online risk in terms of interactive participation rather than passive consumption, and invoking the need for increased surveillance and regulation.

To Catch a Predator began in 2004 as a segment on *Dateline* titled *Dangerous Web*, which was followed by eleven stand-alone specials that aired between 2005 and 2007. Following the controversial tactics of online anti-pedophile activist group Perverted-Justice, the series framed men by luring them into meeting underage girls using decoys in online chatrooms.⁸⁸⁵ Shortly after meeting the decoy 'in real life', the men were confronted by *Dateline* host Chris Hansen, who would begin to interrogate them before revealing both his identity and the hidden camera crew who were capturing the entire encounter. *Dateline* boasts that the show led to the arrest of over two hundred "potential" child molesters, but this has been the subject of numerous critiques: vigilantism, entrapment, blurring the line between journalism and law enforcement, conflict of

⁸⁸⁴ Jenkins, Philip. *Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. 145-163. Print; Levine, *Harmful to Minors*, 20-44; Zilney, Laura J. & Lisa Anne Zilney. *Perverts and Predators: The Making of Sexual Offending Laws*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009. 77-80. Print.

⁸⁸⁵ Grigoriadis, Vanessa. "To Catch a Predator: The New American Witch Hunt for Dangerous Pedophiles." *Rolling Stone* 1032 (2007): 64-71. Print.

interest, and, most significantly, making rather than reporting news.⁸⁸⁶ Indeed, *To Catch a Predator* — and the *Times* story on Berry — are exemplary instances of Baudrillard’s “panic-stricken production of the real,” working to manifest through the media the fear of online predators as a real social problem needing immediate address.

In 2006, then, as *To Catch a Predator* was peaking in popularity, and as Justin Berry was making the rounds of *Oprah*, *Larry King*, and the *Today* show, and testifying before Congress in hearings on child exploitation, a wave of “MySpace Madness” swept the nation, fueled by sensationalized news media stories of minors being sexually assaulted by men they had met on the popular social network site MySpace.⁸⁸⁷ President Bush responded by signing into law the Child Protection and Safety Act, aka the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act, which requires those convicted of sexual offenses against minors — including, for example, teen sexter Philip Alpert — to register in a publicly available database for a minimum of fifteen years.⁸⁸⁸ Congress responded by introducing the Deleting Online Predators Act (DOPA). In Congressional hearings on DOPA, Rep. Mike Fitzpatrick (R-Penn.) cited the news media stories of MySpace assaults, Justin Berry’s testimony, and *To Catch a Predator* as “evidence” of the “disturbing regularity” with which “child predators are ready and willing and able to approach the prey they

⁸⁸⁶ *Dateline* paid millions of dollars in “consulting fees” to the “civilian watchdog” group Perverted-Justice, who did much of the show’s legwork of luring *potential* pedophiles into meetings where they were confronted with cameras and then arrested. Members of the group had been deputized by law enforcement officials, leading to accusations that NBC was effectively paying the police to entrap victims in a crime sting in order to boost ratings. This ethically and legally dubious scenario was extensively parodied by the popular media, including *Adult Swim*, *Boondocks*, *MADtv*, *Howard Stern*, *The Simpsons*, *Arrested Development*, and *South Park*. Cook, John. “Perverted Payday.” *Radar* 7 Nov. 2007. Web. 25 Sep. 2013; Farhi, Paul. “‘Dateline’s Pedophile Sting: One More Point.’” *Washington Post* 9 Apr. 2006. Web. 25 Sep. 2013.

⁸⁸⁷ In reporting on the mother of a 14-year-old girl who was suing MySpace and its owner NewsCorporation following a sexual assault on the girl by a nineteen-year-old man she met on MySpace, the *New York Times* likened the “popular hysteria” over MySpace predators to the “Reefer Madness” of the 1930s. Andrews, Michelle. “Decoding MySpace.” *U.S. News and World Report*. U.S. News & World Report LP. 10 Sep. 2006. Web. 24 Sep. 2013; Zeller, Tom. “A Lesson for Parents on ‘MySpace Madness.’” *New York Times*. The New York Times Company. 26 Jun. 2006. Web. 24 Sep. 2013.

⁸⁸⁸ Nathan, Debbie. “The New York Times, Kurt Eichenwald and the World of Justin Berry: Hysteria, Exploitation, and Witch-Hunting in the Age of Internet Sex.” *Counterpunch* 14.7 (2007): 1-13. Print

stalk online.” Fitzpatrick argued that sites like MySpace “have become a haven for online sexual predators who have made these corners of the Web their own virtual hunting ground.”⁸⁸⁹

DOPA would require schools and libraries receiving E-rate discounts to restrict or block minors from accessing social network sites and chatrooms. While seemingly similar to CIPA, rather than requiring content filtering DOPA would mandate the blocking of a particular type of technology.⁸⁹⁰ The proposed law has thus been vigorously opposed for threatening to not only restrict access to a wide swath of constitutionally protected speech, but also to deny participation in a promising new communication medium that enables social practices such as support groups, distance education, community building, and political activism.⁸⁹¹ This restriction would unduly burden both youth without internet access at home — those on the other side of a digital divide drawn along lines of class and race — and LGBTQ youth, for whom these technologies have proven invaluable in navigating social life as sexual “others.”⁸⁹²

Moreover, DOPA is part of an increasing attention to so-called “stranger danger” since the 1980s, which distracts from the fact that the vast majority of sexual assaults on youth are perpetrated not by strangers but by people known to the victim: parents, siblings, relatives, friends, teachers, or priests.⁸⁹³ The displacement of this very real proximal threat to the vague and much less likely threat of online predators signifies an unwillingness to deal with the reality of

⁸⁸⁹ Rep. Fitzpatrick (PA). “Deleting Online Predators Act of 2006.” *Congressional Record*. 26 July 2006. H5883–H5889. *Thomas*. 25 Sept 2013.

⁸⁹⁰ Kibble, Mary B. “Fear Mongering, Filters, the Internet and the First Amendment: Why Congress Should Not Pass Legislation Similar to the Deleting Online Predators Act.” *Roger Williams University Law Review* 13 (2008): 521. Print.

⁸⁹¹ Kibble, “Fear Mongering,” 523-525.

⁸⁹² Adler, “To Catch a Predator”; Guo, Richard M. “Stranger Danger and the Online Social Network.” *Berkeley Technology Law Journal* 23 (2008): 617-644. Print; Holt, David Brian, “LGBTIQ Teens - Plugged in and Unfiltered: How Internet Filtering Impairs Construction of Online Communities, Identity Formation, and Access to Health Information.” *SSRN*. Social Science Electronic Publishing, Inc. 2009. Web. 30 Sep. 2013.

⁸⁹³ The term is attributed to Carol Cope’s book of the same name, which helped fuel predator panic in the 1990s. Cope, Carol Soret. *Stranger Danger: How to Keep Your Child Safe*. New York: Cader Books, 1997. Print; Levine, *Harmful to Minors*, 24-29.

child abuse within the intimate spaces of family and community.⁸⁹⁴ It also signifies a fear of new media technologies — particularly of the autonomous online spaces they foster and the potential agency they grant to the young, which threaten the distinction between child and adult.

Blaming the media for disrupting the social order — especially by dissolving age-based barriers protecting the young from ‘adult knowledge’ — is typical of media panics.⁸⁹⁵ Precocity has always threatened the line between child and adult, and youth access to knowledge through new forms of media has long been a source of anxiety.⁸⁹⁶ But while children have often been the locus of concern in media panics, and protecting them a proxy for maintaining the status quo, they have become increasingly suspect of sharing in the blame.⁸⁹⁷ This is due in part to a reconceptualization of child sexual abuse since the 1980s, whereby the origins of adult offenses have been traced back to abusive behavior in childhood, recasting the sexually ‘deviant’ child as both a victim *and* a potential perpetrator of abuse, who thus needs to be all-the-more closely surveilled and disciplined.⁸⁹⁸ In the new millennium, growing fear of the young sexual deviant has merged with fear of the digital native, creating new monsters in the public imaginary. The child pornographer and the child predator that have fueled panics since the 1970s have been joined by the child *as* pornographer and the child *as* predator.⁸⁹⁹

With the shifting focus of media panic over internet sex, young people have been discursively repositioned as “*both* sophisticated enough to master new technologies *and yet*

⁸⁹⁴ Jenkins, *Moral Panic*, 206-214.

⁸⁹⁵ Drotner, “Modernity and Media Panics,” 56-57.

⁸⁹⁶ Buckingham, *After the Death*, 14; Hill, Malcom & Kay Tisdall. *Children and Society*. London: Longman, 1997. 36. Print.

⁸⁹⁷ As Sue Scott notes, “despite the prevalence of the idea of the innocent child, this has never fully subsumed an alternative, older view of the child as sinful and unruly.” Scott, Sue, et al. “Swings and Roundabouts: Risk Anxiety and the Everyday Worlds of Children.” *Sociology* 32.4 (1998): 695. Print; See also: Jackson, Stevi. “Demons and Innocents: Western Ideas on Children’s Sexuality in Historical Perspective.” *Handbook of Sexology, Vol. 7: Childhood and Adolescent Sexuality*. Eds. John Money, et al. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1990. 23-49. Print.

⁸⁹⁸ Brownlie, Julie. “The ‘Being-Risky’ Child: Governing Childhood and Sexual Risk.” *Sociology* 35.2 (2001): 519-537. Print.

⁸⁹⁹ Hanson, Ellis. “The Child as Pornographer.” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 110.3 (2011): 673-692. Print.

innocent enough to require protection.”⁹⁰⁰ The discourse of *corrupted innocence* that has long defined the effects of media sex on youth has been complicated by a discourse of *prodigious precocity*.⁹⁰¹ The hyper-sexualization of culture in the late twentieth century, argues Anne Higonnet, displaced the idealized innocence of the “Romantic Child” with the problematic precociousness of the “Knowing Child.”⁹⁰² While still seen as pure and in need of protection, the Knowing Child is sexually aware beyond her years, and thus a threat to her own innocence, as well as to the social and moral order.⁹⁰³ In the 1980s, the Knowing Child prompted hand wringing over “the disappearance of childhood” in the face of the “full disclosure medium” of television.⁹⁰⁴ Exposed through TV to the mature themes and images of the adult world — sex and violence — kids were seen to be growing up too soon. As we have seen, though, the discourse of digital nativism in the 1990s shifted the concern over “what media do to children” to “what children do with media.”⁹⁰⁵ Seen as having an innate gift of technological skill that imbues them with a media fluency conducive to the discovery and use of ‘adult knowledge’, young people have become potentially complicit in their own loss of innocence and in the corruption of others.⁹⁰⁶ These

⁹⁰⁰ Payne, Robert. “Virtual Panic: Children Online and the Transmission of Harm.” *Moral Panics Over Contemporary Children and Youth*. Ed. Charles Krinsky. Burlington: Ashgate, 2008. 34. Print.

⁹⁰¹ In coining this term, I invoke the full gamut of meanings of the word prodigious: 1) Of the nature of an omen; portentous; 2) That [which] causes wonder or amazement; marvellous, astonishing. Also in an unfavourable sense: appalling; 3) Of a person: exceptionally or precociously talented. 4) Unnatural, abnormal; freakish. “Prodigious, adj. (and int.) and adv.” OED Online. Dec. 2013. Web. 28 Jan. 2014.

⁹⁰² Higonnet, Anne. *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1998. 7-8. Print.

⁹⁰³ Jackson, Louise. “Childhood and Youth.” *The Modern History of Sexuality*. Eds. Harry Cocks & Matt Houlbrook. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 321-350. Print.

⁹⁰⁴ Postman, *Disappearance of Childhood*.

⁹⁰⁵ This shift was also due to the development of audience studies and the new sociology of childhood during the 1980s, both of which focused on their subjects of study as active agents in the use of cultural materials. Lemish, Dafna. “How Do Researchers Study Young People and the Media?” *20 Questions About Youth and the Media*. Ed. Sharon R. Mazzarella. New York: Peter Lang, 2007. 73-86. Print; Vered, Karen Orr. “Critical Studies: Practice Not Discipline.” *The Routledge International Handbook of Children, Adolescents and the Media*. Ed. Dafna Lemish. London: Routledge, 2013. 61-67. Print.

⁹⁰⁶ “The computer literate child,” suggests Feona Attwood, “has become a potent symbol of both vulnerability and seduction.” Attwood, Feona. “Pornography and the Internet: Rereading Pornography.” *Ideologies of the Internet*. Eds. Katharine Sarikakis & Daya K. Thusso. Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2006. 184. Print.

precocious prodigies are an active threat to the edifice of childhood, necessitating new ways of protecting them from themselves, protecting others, and protecting the social order.

Both Justin Berry and Kurt Eichenwald were at pains to construct and maintain a narrative of corrupted innocence in the face of significant evidence that Berry was aware of what he was doing all along. The Justice Department was never so sure of his innocence: Only after a deal was negotiated between prosecutors and Berry's attorney was Berry granted immunity in exchange for turning state's evidence. An accumulation of such clues in Eichenwald's article undercuts his narrative with an emerging image of Berry as a precocious prodigy.⁹⁰⁷ As the story unfolds, we discover the many ways that Berry parlayed his precocious knowledge, his business acumen, and his technological skills into a successful career as a child pornographer, enlisting hundreds of subscribers as well as dozens of other underage performers to his cam-sex site, establishing business partnerships with some of his "perpetrators," earning hundreds of thousands of dollars, and eventually relocating his operation to Mexico to avoid prosecution when he turned eighteen. Rather than a corrupted innocent, the Justin Berry who appears between the lines of Eichenwald's story is the embodiment of the Knowing child in the digital age: a sexually precocious young prodigy with technological skills and an entrepreneurial spirit. "It's a job, and I enjoy it," Berry told his girlfriend when she confronted him, "I guess you don't see what I'm trying to accomplish with my cam."⁹⁰⁸

Of course, as Ellis Hanson points out, it was to Berry's advantage to embrace the position of the Romantic Child. The Knowing Child could be prosecuted; the Romantic Child could be

⁹⁰⁷ As evidence of the predatory practice of tutelage and grooming, for example, Eichenwald relates how one of Berry's "new friends" explained to him how to put together a wish list on Amazon through which he could ask for and receive gifts. But why would Berry, who was "so adept at the computer" that he had already established a web development business prior to his foray into the world of cam sex, need help with such a mundane task as creating an Amazon wish list?

⁹⁰⁸ Moreover, "a review of chat logs from that period suggests he was especially precocious," points out David France. "He sends school-exam questions to his fans for them to answer and sometimes brazenly stiffes subscribers after they paid for shows." Berry was also "using his subscribers' credit cards to buy

saved. Eichenwald helped, by first convincing Berry that he was a victim, and by then publishing a story of his victimhood. Congress and the popular media, likewise invested in the myth of childhood innocence, supported, maintained, and contributed to this story. This worked through what Hanson calls “the logic of erotic innocence,” whereby the more knowledgeable and savvy a young person appears, the more insidious must be the agents of corruption.⁹⁰⁹ Berry claimed no “attempt to avoid responsibility,” but in the *Times*, in Congressional hearings, and on *Oprah*, *Larry King*, and the *Today* show, he blamed his corruption on the seduction of the criminal world, on the persistence of child predators, on the invasiveness of new technologies, and even on the irresponsibility of the Justice Department for failing to protect him. His interlocutors in Congress and the media, even when more critical than Eichenwald, bolstered Berry’s image of innocence by likewise fingering invasive technologies and corrupt or irresponsible adults as the culprits.

Yet comments on blogs and message boards during Berry’s media blitz reveal a public equally conversant in the discourse of prodigious precocity.⁹¹⁰ For example, as Hanson notes, while many comments on Oprah’s website following Berry’s appearance on her show praised Berry for his courage and virtue, just as many others called him out as a con-artist. “I think he knew all along what he was doing,” wrote trishwms, for example, then “got busted [...] and decided to play ‘victim.’” Another commenter, cpotans, worried about the broader implications of maintaining a belief in innocence in the face of such obvious precocity: “What we have done essentially is told every teenager across the world that they are not accountable for their actions if they claim they were naive.”⁹¹¹ On MetaFilter, moonbiter wrote, “Berry successfully scammed everyone else involved, and was helped by the fact that everyone else involved was a chump.”⁹¹²

unauthorized things for himself, plotting insurance scams, and even smuggling aliens over the border.” France, David. “Saving Justin Berry.” *New York Magazine*. 28 Oct. 2007. Web. 25 Sep. 2013.

⁹⁰⁹ Hanson, “The Child as Pornographer,” 688.

⁹¹⁰ Hanson, “The Child as Pornographer,” 683; See also: Soderlund, Gretchen. “Journalist or Panderer? Framing Underage Webcam Sites.” *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* 5.4 (2008): 62-72. Print.

⁹¹¹ Hanson, “The Child as Pornographer,” 683.

⁹¹² “Saving Justin Berry.” *Metafilter*. 30 Oct. 2007. Web. 25. Sep. 2013.

Responding to a blog post by Dan Savage on *The Stranger*, Andrew wrote “he knew what he was doing all along and just wanted to have sex sex sex!” Steve Brack gave Berry “credit for the sheer mercenary zeal with which he approached this,” adding later that, “Had he been a Fortune 500 CEO, his stockholders would have voted him a bonus.”⁹¹³

Berry was caught in the binary logic of these two discourses. On the one hand he was the Romantic Child, the corrupted innocent, the victim of media sex; on the other, he was the Knowing Child, the sexually precocious adolescent, the media prodigy and perpetrator. What was perhaps most disturbing about Justin Berry’s foray into cam sex, though, was not the virtual incarnation of virtue defiled, nor the manifestation of a new media sex monster, but was rather that it rendered ambiguous the distinction between the two. Zygmunt Bauman has noted the “acute discomfort” and anxiety aroused by ambiguity. Order is central to modernity, and “the other of order is the miasma of the indeterminate and unpredictable [...] that source and archetype of all fear.”⁹¹⁴ The dedication of the mainstream media to maintaining Berry’s innocence and the fervor with which sides were taken in online forums reveal the need for Berry to be one or the other, to occupy the position of victim or villain. Either would do for propping up the edifice separating child from adult: innocence would be preserved, or precociousness punished. But ambiguity — the possibility that Berry’s behavior fit neither of these positions — challenged the binary logic of youth sexuality as either imperiled innocence or perilous precocity. As what Bauman would call an “undecidable,” Berry would “poison the comfort of order with the suspicion of chaos.”⁹¹⁵

Within the logic of these dichotomous discourses there is no room for the possibility that Justin Berry was just a typical teenager exploring and expressing sexuality. The story of corrupted innocence “makes great grist for conservatives, technophobes, and witch hunters” to

⁹¹³ Savage, Dan. “Re: The Justin Berry Story: Webcam Porn.” *The Stranger*. 21 Dec. 2005. Web. 25 Sep. 2013.

⁹¹⁴ Bauman, Zygmunt. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991. 7. Print.

mobilize mechanisms for protecting youth innocence, argues Debbie Nathan, while the story of prodigious precocity effectively insists on their innocence by suggesting teens like Berry are “not really exploring their erotic impulses,” but are “just doing it for money.” These stories “say nothing about Justin’s or other teens’ actual lives.”⁹¹⁶ To maintain the ideal of innocence, to avoid the chaos of ambiguity, Berry’s and other teens’ actual engagement with new media sex — their motivations, desires, pleasures, practices, and experiences — must disappear as they are put into discourse.

This is not to suggest that Berry — or Jessica Logan or Philip Alpert or any other young people who use new media for sexual exploration and experimentation — are not ‘at risk’ of harm in doing so. Nor is it to suggest that they do not bear some responsibility for their actions. But by conceptualizing and characterizing them only in the terms of dominant discourses, the actual experiences of adolescents as they explore sexuality become subjugated knowledge. Discounted as irrational, impulsive, and imitative behavior fueled by hormones, prompted by a pornotopian culture, and enabled by technology, their own experiences do not inform or constitute the ‘truth’ of their sexuality. Conceived of as victims and villains, their active role in becoming sexual subjects — their navigation through a complex network of technologies, discourses, institutions, and relationships in which they learn and ‘do’ sex — is effaced.

New Media Sex, New Media Subjects

Adolescence, as we saw in the first chapter, has been defined by sexuality. Beginning with the awakening of the ‘sexual impulse’ in puberty, and characterized by the ‘storm and stress’ of the myriad biological and psychological changes puberty brings, adolescence is the process of becoming a sexual being. First articulated by G. Stanley Hall at the turn of the twentieth century,

⁹¹⁵ Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*. 56.

⁹¹⁶ Nathan, “The New York Times,” 5.

this understanding of adolescence has since been incorporated into cognitive, psychological, and pedagogical models of development that emphasize this ‘stage’ as crucial to identity formation. Psychologist Erik Erikson’s extension of Jean Piaget’s cognitive theory of development has been particularly influential.⁹¹⁷ While individuation begins with the elimination of egocentrism in what Piaget defined as the “concrete operational stage,” self-identity can only begin to form with the development of abstract thought in the “formal operational stage.”⁹¹⁸ Erikson proposed that adolescence, which coincides with the formal operational stage, is characterized by a “normative crisis” in which youth explore abstract facets of identity, including sexual desires, and integrate them into a coherent sense of self.⁹¹⁹

Media are seen to play a role in this developmental process by exposing and reflecting different identity formations that enable adolescents to imagine “possible selves.”⁹²⁰ While mass media merely make available possible facets of identity, new media technologies engage interactive and participatory forms of “identity play.”⁹²¹ This changing function of media technology in adolescent identity formation can be seen through Sherry Turkle’s early work. In *The Second Self* [1984], Turkle had mapped developmental psychology onto the use of “smart machines,” arguing, amongst other things, that computers functioned as a mirror that allowed adolescents to “find themselves” through problem-solving.⁹²² In *Life on the Screen* [1995], Turkle

⁹¹⁷ Burman, Erica. *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*. London: Routledge, 1994. 151. Print.

⁹¹⁸ Piaget, Jean. *The Essential Piaget*. Eds. Howard E. Gruber & J. Jacques Vonèche. New York: Basic Books, 1977. Print.

⁹¹⁹ Erickson, Erik H. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1968. Print.

⁹²⁰ Marcus, Hazel & Paula Nurius. “Possible Selves.” *American Psychologist* 41.9 (1986): 954-969. Print.

⁹²¹ Buckingham, David, ed. *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008. Print; Ito, *Hanging Out*; Kendall, Lori. “Meaning and Identity in ‘Cyberspace’: The Performance of Gender, Class, and Race Online.” *Symbolic Interaction* 21.2 (1998): 129-153. Print; Turkle, Sherry. “Cyberspace and Identity.” *Contemporary Sociology* 28.6 (1999): 643-648. Print; Wilbur, Shawn P. “An Archaeology of Cyberspaces: Virtuality, Community, Identity.” *The Cybercultures Reader*. Eds. David Bell & Barbara M. Kennedy. New York: Routledge, 2000. 45-55. Print.

⁹²² In Part I of *The Second Self*, titled “Growing Up With Computers: The Animation of the Machine,” Turkle draws on Jean Piaget’s developmental model to explain young children’s interactions with educational toys like Speak & Spell, the “holding power” of video games for youth, the role of programming in cognitive development, and how adolescents find their identity through analogy to

charted a shift from the “modernist culture of calculation” to a “postmodernist culture of simulation,” whereby computers have become “psychological objects” that encourage identity play. Designed as “romantic machines,” they are imbued with the semblances of personality, intelligence, and emotion, which opens up virtual spaces of intimacy even as the machines themselves have become opaque “black boxes.”⁹²³ *Life on the Screen* documented how users experimented with multiple and fluid identities in the intimate spaces of early computer networks, including the exploration of sexual identity by young people.⁹²⁴

The developmental model allows us to see how adolescents use media in identity play, but it tends to emphasize individual, internal, innate, and teleological processes through which adolescents eventually ‘achieve’ a stable sexual identity.⁹²⁵ This focus on identity forwards a humanistic conceptualization of an autonomous subject, which obscures how the subject is shaped within diverse discourses and institutions and specific social and cultural contexts. “Although sexuality is experienced by subjects as personal and emanating from within,” argues Louisa Allen, “it is actively constructed in particular contexts through various discursive [and] social practices.”⁹²⁶ In focusing on supposedly universal cognitive and psychological aspects of identity formation, developmental discourses often contribute to the abstraction of adolescence by

algorithms. Turkle, Sherry, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984. Print.

⁹²³ Turkle, Sherry. *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995. 19-26. Print.

⁹²⁴ As Richard Lancaster notes, minors who fail to conform to adult discourses of youth sexual innocence may be labeled SACY — Sexually Aggressive Children and Youth. Such adult discourses are embedded with normalizing conceptualizations of the ‘problem’ child, argues Erica Burman, which are based in hegemonic values of gender, race, class, and ethnicity. When children assert themselves as active social agents, observes Sue Scott, they are often judged by these values and defined as problems. Due to child pornography laws and heightened attention to sexual predators, those identified as SACY may be subject to criminal sanctions. Burman, *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*, 229-233; Karaian, “Lolita Speaks,” 60-63; Lancaster, *Sex Panic*, 63; Scott, “Swings and Roundabouts,” 696-697.

⁹²⁵ Diamond, Lisa M. *Sexual Fluidity: Understanding Women’s Love and Desire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008. Print; Savin-Williams, *New Gay Teenager*; Walkerdine, Valerie. “Beyond Developmentalism?” *Theory & Psychology* 3.4 (1993): 451-469. Print.

⁹²⁶ Allen, *Sexual Subjects*, 8.

obscuring both social and cultural specificity, as well as their own discursive role in the construction of adolescent sexual subjectivity.

We saw in the last chapter how such developmental discourses have contributed to the construction and maintenance of the *abstract adolescent* — the normative subject position from which adolescents only ‘make sense’ as innocents in need of protection from the risks of exposure to media sex. By obscuring how youth actually engage with sexual representations, media sex science positions adolescents as passive victims. In this chapter, we have seen that despite the celebration of the empowering potential of new media technologies, emergent forms of sexual communication that these technologies foster have engendered moral panic, which through medical, media, legal, and other discourses position youth as both innocent victims *and* knowing perpetrators of new forms of media sex such as cyberpornography, sexting, and cam sex. In order to be heard, in order to be intelligible, in order to ‘make sense’, young people must occupy these positions and speak in terms of the discourses to which they are subject.

Subjectivity, according to Judith Butler, is not merely about *occupying* discursive positions from which one makes sense, but is rather a performative process: People *become* subjects by internalizing and acting out the roles defined by their positions within fields of knowledge.⁹²⁷ Justin Berry performed the role of innocent victim in which he was positioned by dominant discourses about new media sex, as did Jessica Logan, both becoming the victims they had to be to ‘make sense’ to themselves and others. Demonstrating an intentional and active engagement with new media sex subjects young people to the discourse of prodigious precocity, whereby their actions play into the role of villain, as revealed in public sentiment about Berry, and in the legal response to teens like Phillip Alpert who have been branded sex offenders. Those who suggest a more ambiguous engagement with media sex that does not fit within dominant discourses, like

⁹²⁷ Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990. Print.

many of the teen subjects of sexting surveys, are either rendered unintelligible, or silenced as their voices and actions are resolved into the hegemonic discourse in which they do ‘make sense’. Either way, adolescents are victimized: as innocents corrupted, they are made to perform victimhood, and thus become victims; as precocious prodigies, their every action signifies deviance, and they become the victims of social and legal sanctions; as ambiguous, they are disempowered as their own knowledge and experiences are subjugated by dominant discourses.

The problem with this postmodern and poststructuralist notion of subjectivity, as Dorothy Smith argues, is that the subject is often seen as entirely the effect of discourse — as a victim of discourse — which ignores “people’s intentions to mean” within local and social practices of knowledge production.⁹²⁸ It obscures the intersubjectivity of discursive meaning-making, whereby the subject is not “a mere place on intersecting grids” of knowledge, but is rather “constituted through its ongoing relations to others.”⁹²⁹ The postmodern subject is seen as a product of discourse, lacking agency and autonomy even as a participant in the performative production of her own subjectivity.⁹³⁰ From this perspective, there is little room for resistance to dominant discourses, as speaking or acting outside of them renders one unintelligible or invisible.⁹³¹

But as Stuart Hall notes, “we are subject to discourse, not simply subjects through discourse.” Hall’s reading of Foucault suggests a more reflexive notion of subjectivity, in which

⁹²⁸ Smith, Dorothy. *Writing the Social: Critique, Theory, and Investigations*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. 89-99. Print.

⁹²⁹ Anderson, Amanda. “Cryptonormativity and Double Gestures: The Politics of Post-Structuralism.” *Cultural Critique* 13.1 (1992): 78. Print.

⁹³⁰ McNay, Lois. *Gender and Agency: Reconfiguring the Subject in Feminist and Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity, 2000. Print.

⁹³¹ Butler suggests that the repeated inscription of “symbolic norms” through performativity produces a stable subject with the capacity to resist these norms, if only as an “excluded and delegitimated” sexual other. But as Lois McNay argues, for Butler agency is a “property of sedimented symbolic structures rather than [...] an anticipatory element inherent in praxis.” Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. New York: Routledge, 1993. Print; McNay, *Gender and Agency*; See also: Bryant, Joanne & Toni Schofield. “Feminine Sexual Subjectivities: Bodies, Agency, and Life History.” *Sexualities* 10.3 (2007): 321-340. Print; Speer, Susan & Jonathan Potter. “From Performatives to Practice: Judith Butler,

we have “the ability to turn around, contemplate, and rework our subjectivity at will.”⁹³² On this view, subjectivity is a process of constructing and reconstructing the self through the multiple discourses available to the subject, through ongoing discursive interactions in which the subject assesses, invests, and participates in particular discourses.⁹³³

Such a reflexive understanding of subjectivity helps to avoid positioning young sexual subjects in accord with the hegemonic discourses of corrupted innocence and prodigious precocity. Children experience desire from an early age, and they engage these desires in an active process of learning about sex, performing sexual identity, and constructing their sexual subjectivities.⁹³⁴ Louisa Allen found that “this complexity in the discursive formation of sexual subjectivity is captured by young people’s simultaneous accommodation and resistance of dominant discourses.”⁹³⁵ They occupy and perform what Emma Renold and Jessica Ringrose, drawing on Deleuze, dub “schizoid subjectivities,” through which they navigate the dominant discursive binaries of sexual innocence and carnal knowledge, empowerment and danger,

Discursive Psychology and the Management of Heterosexist Talk.” *Talking Gender and Sexuality*. Ed. Paul McIlvenny. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2002. 151-180. Print.

⁹³² Hall, Stuart. “Foucault: Power, Knowledge and Discourse.” *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*. Eds. Margaret Wetherell, et al. London: Sage, 2004. 127. Print.

⁹³³ Ball, Stephen J. *Foucault and Education: Disciplines and Knowledge*. London: Taylor & Francis, 1990. Print; Burr, Vivien. *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*. London: Routledge, 1995. Print; Hollway, Wendy. “Gender Difference and the Production of Subjectivity.” *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity*. Eds. Julian Henriques, et al. London: Routledge, 1984. 223-261. Print; Robinson, Kerry H. & Criss Jones Díaz. *Diversity and Difference in Early Childhood: Issues for Theory and Practice*. Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2006. Print.

⁹³⁴ Blaise, “Kiss and Tell”; Boldt, Gail. “Sexist and Heterosexist Responses to Gender Bending.” *Making Place for Pleasure in Early Childhood Education*. Ed. Joseph Tobin. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997. 188-213. Print; Chrisman, Kent & Donna Couchenour. *Healthy Sexual Development: A Guide for Early Childhood Education and Families*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2002. Print; Davies, Criss & Kerry H. Robinson. “Hatching Babies and Stork Deliveries: Constructing Sexual Knowledge and Taking Risks in Early Childhood Education.” *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 11.3 (2010):249-260. Print; Goldman, Ronald & Juliette Goldman. *Children’s Sexual Thinking: A Comparative Study of Children Aged 5 to 15 Years in Australia, North America, Britain, and Sweden*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982. Print; Jackson, *Childhood and Sexuality*; Plummer, Ken. *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Intimacy and Social Worlds*. London: Routledge, 1995. Print; Renold, *Girls, Boys*; Robinson, *Innocence, Knowledge*, 87-110; Ryan, Gail. “Childhood Sexuality: A Decade of Study.” *Child Abuse and Neglect* 24.1 (2000): 33-48. Print; Thorne, Barrie. *Gender Play: Boys and Girls in School*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993. Print; Tobin, Joseph. “Introduction: The Missing Discourse of Pleasure and Desire.” *Making Place for Pleasure in Early Childhood Education*. Ed. Joseph Tobin. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997. 1-38. Print.

victimhood and villainy.⁹³⁶ Through this negotiation of different sexual discourses, kids come to understand themselves and others as sexual beings, which is a key part of constructing sexual subjectivity.⁹³⁷ This reflexive process of discursive subject formation is crucial to the development of self-esteem and agency, to becoming a “self-motivated sexual actor,” to developing a sense of entitlement to sexual pleasure and sexual safety, and to “making responsible choices about sexual behavior.”⁹³⁸

Media play a key role in the discursive construction of adolescent sexual subjectivity. As we saw in chapter two, media function in the “education of desire.” As “sexual super peers,” media provide youth with sexual images, ideas, messages, and scenarios that teach them how to act in intimate situations.⁹³⁹ But as both Sonia Livingstone and Ellen Seiter have shown, youth engage sexual media in far more complicated ways than we often think.⁹⁴⁰ Rather than passive receivers of media, adolescents actively “appropriate and transform media messages and images to help them make sense of their lives.”⁹⁴¹ Through the media, they encounter, interact with, and negotiate multiple sexual discourses in a process of learning, performing, and producing sexuality. A reflexive theory of subjectivity is crucial for hearing the voices of adolescents who engage in new media sex, and for understanding the complicated process through which they explore, play with, and participate in the construction of their sexual subjectivities.

⁹³⁵ Allen, *Sexual Subjects*, 63.

⁹³⁶ Renold & Ringrose. “Schizoid Subjectivities?” 402.

⁹³⁷ Tolman, *Dilemmas of Desire*, 20.

⁹³⁸ Impett Emily A. & Deborah L. Tolman. “Late Adolescent Girls’ Sexual Experiences and Sexual Satisfaction.” *Journal of Adolescent Research* 21.6 (2006): 628-646. Print; Phillips, Lynn M. *Flirting with Danger: Young Women’s Reflections on Sexuality and Domination*. New York: New York University Press, 2000. Print; Martin, Karin. *Puberty, Sexuality, and the Self: Boys and Girls at Adolescence*. New York: Routledge, 1996. 10. Print; Tolman, *Dilemmas of Desire*, 20.

⁹³⁹ Brown, Jane, et al. “Mass Media as a Sexual Super Peer for Early Maturing Girls.” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 36.5 (2005): 420-427. Print.

⁹⁴⁰ Livingstone, *Young People and New Media*; Seiter, Ellen. *The Internet Playground: Children’s Access, Entertainment, and Mis-Education*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. Print.

⁹⁴¹ Steele & Brown, “Adolescent Room Culture,” 551.

Sociology offers a reflexive model of subjectivity that complements the discursive model by drawing attention to the social, contextual, collective, and emergent nature of subject formation.⁹⁴² George Herbert Mead argued that the social self — the “me” — emerges reflexively from symbolic interactions through which one learns to see oneself from the perspective of the “generalized other.”⁹⁴³ Children’s self-identity is created intersubjectively through language and role-play. Rather than being merely passive products of either socialization or discourse, children are instrumental in collectively constructing their own subjectivities in the process of meaning-making.⁹⁴⁴ Erving Goffman’s dramaturgical theory, whereby the subjective experience of self is constituted through performances shaped by the ‘felicity conditions’ of social interactions, also suggests subjectivity as emergent, contextual, reflexive, and intersubjective.⁹⁴⁵ These conceptualizations of social subjectivity are central to William Simon and John Gagnon’s characterization of the emergence of the sexual self in adolescence through the acquisition, activation, and application of sexual scripts. More than just adopting and performing a role, as Stevi Jackson explains, this is “a self ‘in process’” who is “constantly constructed and reconstructed in interactions with others [by] actively ‘doing sex,’ not only in terms of sexual acts, but also as making and modeling sexual meaning.”⁹⁴⁶ The “confessional culture” of new

⁹⁴² Gray, *Out in the Country*, 19-21.

⁹⁴³ Mead, George Herbert. *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Ed. Charles W. Morris. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934. Print.

⁹⁴⁴ Davies, Bronwyn. *Poststructuralist Theory and Classroom Practice*. Geelong: Deakin University Press, 1994. Print.

⁹⁴⁵ Brickell, Chris. “Masculinities, Performativity and Subversion: A Sociological Reappraisal.” *Men and Masculinities* 8.1. (2005): 24-43. Print; Goffman, Erving. “Felicity’s Condition.” *American Journal of Sociology* 89.1 (1983): 1-51. Print; Goffman, Erving. *Frame Analysis*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974. Print; Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Penguin, 1990. Print; Hacking, Ian. “Between Michel Foucault and Erving Goffman: Between Discourse in the Abstract and Face-to-Face Interaction.” *Economy and Society* 33.3 (2004): 277-302. Print; Jenkins, Richard. “Erving Goffman: A Major Theorist of Power?” *Journal of Power* 1.2 (2008): 157-168. Print.

⁹⁴⁶ Jackson, Stevi. “The Sexual Self in Late Modernity.” *The Sexual Self: The Construction of Sexual Scripts*. Ed. Michael Kimmel. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2007. 4. Print.

media sex, argues Jackson, provides “copious resources for fashioning a sexual self — for drawing on others’ sexual stories in order to tell one’s own.”⁹⁴⁷

For Anthony Giddens, this “reflexive project of the self,” which “consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives,” liberates one from the institutional structuring of self via traditional knowledge. Through a process of “chronic revision in light of new information,” individuals constantly re-appropriate bits of knowledge produced by “expert systems” and organize them into a coherent sense of self.⁹⁴⁸ Ulrich Beck sees this not as liberatory but as a necessary response to the “risk society” developing reflexively out of the fragmentation and dissolution of the social institutions that provided a sense of ontological security during the social upheavals of the industrial era. The “quasi-subject” of “reflexive modernity” has multiple boundaries that shift in relation to the networks of affiliation and knowledge that one patches together to mitigate risk. This subject is both the agent and the product of these networks — “a constitutive part of a context that determines its subjectivity” within “a situation of socially constructed autonomy.”⁹⁴⁹ Scott Lash argues that modern networks of reflexive subjectivity are “profoundly socio-technical,” and involve not just cognitive and rational organization, but also aesthetic and sensual responses to the culture of risk.⁹⁵⁰

On this view, the modern adolescent sexual subject is neither a mere effect of discourse nor a modeled reflection of (mediated) others, but is rather an emergent characteristic of the social and technological networks through which the adolescent engages sexual discourses. This subject has agency in terms of cobbling together a network of friends, family, peers, machines, and media

⁹⁴⁷ Jackson, “The Sexual Self,” 12.

⁹⁴⁸ Giddens, Anthony. *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991. 5, 20. Print.

⁹⁴⁹ Beck, Ulrich, et al. “The Theory of Reflexive Modernization: Problematic, Hypotheses, and Research Programme.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 20.2 (2003): 24-26. Print.

⁹⁵⁰ Lash, Scott. “Postmodernity and Desire.” *Theory & Society* 14.1 (1985): 1-33. Print; Lash, Scott. “Risk Culture.” *The Risk Society and Beyond: Critical Issues for Social Theory*. Eds. Barbara Adam, et al. London: Sage, 2000. 47-62. Print; Lash, Scott & John Urry. *Economies of Signs and Spaces*. London: Sage, 1994. Print.

through which s/he engages various sexual discourses, but is not completely autonomous as s/he is still subject to the discourses engaged, which often traffic in ‘risk knowledge’ produced by the ‘expert systems’ of reflexive modernity. Research into adolescent use of new media technologies supports this complex view of a network subjectivity reflexively constituted in relation to risk knowledge.

Numerous studies have examined young people’s use of websites, webpages, blogs, and social network platforms in the exploration, performance, and construction of sexual subjectivity.⁹⁵¹ dana boyd’s ethnographic research of social network sites finds such “identity work” to be a socio-technical endeavor involving ongoing interactions with others in the network in a process of navigating and negotiating the technological architecture of the site in order to articulate a particular identity.⁹⁵² Niels Van Doorn’s analysis of MySpace shows that through often sexualized interactions young people construct and reconstruct subjectivities that are

⁹⁵¹ boyd, danah. “Why Youth ♥ Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life.” *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media*. Ed. David Buckingham. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008. 119-142. Print; Grisso, Ashley D. & David Weiss. “What Are gURLS Talking About? Adolescent Girls’ Construction of Sexual Identity on gURL.com.” *Girl Wide Web: Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 31-50. Print; Harper, Gary W. et al. “The Role of the Internet in the Sexual Identity Development of Gay and Bisexual Male Adolescents.” *The Story of Sexual Identity: Narrative Perspectives on the Gay and Lesbian Life Course*. Eds. Phillip L. Hammack & Bertram J. Cohler. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. 297-326. Print; Huffaker, David A. & Sandra L. Calvert. “Gender, Identity, and Language Use in Teenage Blogs.” *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication* 10.2 (2005): n.p. Web. 30 Sep. 2013; McKenna, Katelyn & John Bargh. “Coming Out in the Age of the Internet: Identity ‘Demarginalization’ Through Virtual Group Participation.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 75.33 (1998): 681-694. Print; Ringrose, Jessica. “Are You Sexy, Flirty, or a Slut? Exploring ‘Sexualization’ and How Teen Girls Perform/Negotiate Digital Sexual Identity on Social Networking Sites.” *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*. Eds. Rosalind Gill & Christina Scharff. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 99-116. Print; Stern, Susannah. “Sexual Selves on the World Wide Web: Adolescent Girls’ Home Pages as Sites for Sexual Self-Expression.” *Sexual Teens, Sexual Media: Investigating Media’s Influence on Adolescent Sexuality*. Eds. Jane D. Brown, et al. Mahwah: Erlbaum, 2002. 265-286. Print; Stern, Susannah. “Producing Sites, Exploring Identities: Youth Online Authorship.” *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media*. Ed. David Buckingham. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008. 95-117. Print; Subrahmanyam, “Constructing Sexuality”; Subrahmanyam, Kaveri, David Smahel & Patricia Greenfield. “Connecting Developmental Constructions to the Internet: Identity Presentation and Sexual Exploration in Online Teen Chat Rooms.” *Developmental Psychology* 42.3 (2006): 395-406. Print.

⁹⁵² boyd, dana. “Friendster and Publicly Articulated Social Networks.” *Proceedings of ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, (CHI 2004), Vienna, 24-29 April*. New York: ACM Press, 2004. 1279-1282. Print; boyd, “Why Youth ♥ Social Network Sites.”

temporary and contingent upon their position in the network, and that these shifting subject positions often transgress, destabilize, or render ambiguous norms of gender and sexuality.⁹⁵³

Through this social process of figuring out technological affordances and articulating positions within the socio-technical networks of new media that they engage, adolescents develop a complicated and reflexive subjectivity that belies their positioning within dominant discourses as innocent, irrational, and impulsive. This is revealed in practices that reflect a critical awareness of the ramifications of media use, for example, the emergence of a shared “media ideology” governing how new media are used to form and negotiate intimate relationships.⁹⁵⁴ Youth are particularly attentive to issues of risk, tending to develop “a sophisticated sense of the ‘safety’ of different online spaces.”⁹⁵⁵ They are especially guarded about sexual self-disclosure.⁹⁵⁶ They show an awareness of privacy issues and refrain from posting personal information.⁹⁵⁷ Several studies have revealed that the majority of youth who participate in online social network sites deploy privacy settings to limit access to their profiles.⁹⁵⁸ dana boyd describes the even more sophisticated practice of “social steganography,” whereby young people encode publicly accessible messages through abbreviations and references that only particular friends will understand.⁹⁵⁹ Through such practices, youth effectively broker the terms of privacy within networked publics, which is a crucial part of managing the socio-technical network through which they constitute their subjectivities.

⁹⁵³ Van Doorn, Niels. “The Ties that Bind: The Networked Performance of Gender, Sexuality, and Friendship on MySpace.” *New Media & Society* 12.4 (2010): 583-602. Print.

⁹⁵⁴ Gershon, Ilana. *The Breakup 2.0: Disconnecting Over New Media*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010. Print.

⁹⁵⁵ Pascoe, “Resource and Risk,” 14.

⁹⁵⁶ Bobkowski, Piotr S., et al. “Hit Me Up and We Can Get Down.” *Journal of Children and Media* 6.1 (2012): 119-134. Print.

⁹⁵⁷ Hinduja, Sameer & Justin W. Patchin. “Personal Information of Adolescents on the Internet: A Quantitative Content Analysis of MySpace.” *Journal of Adolescence* 31.1 (2008): 125-146. Print.

⁹⁵⁸ Hinduja & Patchin, “Personal Information”; Lenhart, Amanda & Mary Madden. *Social Networking Website and Teens: An Overview*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2007. Print; Patchin, Justin W. & Sameer Hinduja. “Trends in Online Social Networking: Adolescent Use of MySpace Over Time.” *New Media & Society* 12.2 (2010): 197-216. Print.

The discursive positioning of adolescents as media sex victims and villains often obfuscates this more complicated reality of particular youth media practices. For example, in their research on teen conflict in networked publics, Alice Marwick and dana boyd found that much of what adults label cyber-bullying is called “drama” by young people.⁹⁶⁰ Teens use this empowering discursive strategy of defining aggressive behavior as drama to assert agency by disengaging from adult discourses and creating and participating in their own. This discursive practice also mitigates risk by deflecting potentially harmful behavior. Sexual communication is often part of this drama. Marwick and boyd show that through the techno-social networks of Formspring, Twitter, and Facebook, teens “frame their own engagement in social conflict in ways that are distinct from the perpetrator/victim subjectivities” of dominant discourses.⁹⁶¹

Cell phones in particular, because of the intimate connection established through their bodily proximity, perpetual presence, and constant connectivity, are a crucial part of the techno-social network through which adolescents construct subjectivity.⁹⁶² Research on the sexual uses of mobile media show that these technologies are integral to the formation of sexual identities and

⁹⁵⁹ boyd, dana. “Living a Networked Public Life.” *Digital Media and Learning Conference*. Long Beach. 4 Mar. 2011.

⁹⁶⁰ While “drama” is gendered female, Marwick and boyd also found a similar discursive strategy whereby teen males negotiate a liminal subject position by using the terms “pranking” and “punking” rather than bullying. Marwick, Alice E. & danah boyd. “The Drama! Teen Conflict, Gossip, and Bullying in Networked Publics.” *A Decade in Internet Time: Symposium on the Dynamics of the Internet and Society*. Oxford. 22 Sep. 2011. SSRN. Web. 30 Sep. 2013.

⁹⁶¹ Marwick & boyd. “The Drama!” n.p.

⁹⁶² Katz, James E. & Mark Aakhus, eds. *Perpetual Contact: Mobile Communication, Private Talk, and Public Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Print; Licoppe, Christian. “Connected Presence: The Emergence of a New Repertoire for Managing Social Relationships in a Changing Communication Technoscape.” *Environment and Planning: Society and Space* 22 (2004): 135-156. Print; Ling, Rich. “Teen Emancipation, Peer Group Integration and Deviance.” *The Inside Text: Social, Cultural and Design Perspectives on SMS*. Eds. Richard Harper, et al. Norwell: Springer, 2004. 175-192. Print; Ling, Rich & Jonathon Donner. *Mobile Communication*. Cambridge: Polity, 2009. Print; Ling, Rich & Leslie Haddon. “Children, Youth and the Mobile Phone.” *International Handbook of Children, Media and Culture*. Eds. Kirsten Drotner & Sonia Livingstone. London: SAGE, 2008. 137-151. Print; Stald, Gitte. “Mobile Identity: Youth, Identity, and Mobile Communication Media.” *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media*. Ed. David Buckingham. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008. 143-164. Print.

relationships, and that youth are competent at navigating the attendant hazards and pleasures.⁹⁶³ Behaviors defined abstractly as sexting are often complicated forms of communication — which may or may not be sexual — through which teens manage identity and relationships. Indeed, as with ‘bullying’, youth don’t often use the term ‘sexting’ within their peer groups, describing it as a word used by the news media that generalizes a diverse set of practices.⁹⁶⁴ “For some young people,” Kath Albury notes, “the exchange of sexual texts and images is embedded in wider systems of friendship, courtship and social bonding.”⁹⁶⁵ Even when sexual, these “new norms of digital flirtation [...] may or may not be coercive.”⁹⁶⁶ Young people often find such digital flirtation pleasurable, exciting, and fun.⁹⁶⁷ Jessica Ringrose has found in her research that being asked for a “special photo” was considered a compliment, and that teens had become proficient in negotiating these requests.⁹⁶⁸ Albury argues that young people are well aware of the risks of malicious sexting behaviors and are developing their own norms and ethics based on consent.⁹⁶⁹

While research thus shows that young people can be active agents in the socio-technical construction of their networked sexual subjectivities, this does not suggest that new media technologies inherently empower youth in an autonomous process of reflexive subject formation. As Scott Lash notes, many people lack the resources and skills necessary to engage with

⁹⁶³ Bond, Emma. “The Mobile Phone = Bike Shed? Children, Sex and Mobile Phones.” *New Media & Society* 13.4 (2011): 587-604. Print; Cupples, J & L Thompson. “Heterotextuality and Digital Foreplay: Cell Phones and the Culture of Teenage Romance.” *Feminist Media Studies* 10.1 (2011): 1-17. Print; Lenhart, *Teens and Sexting*; Ringrose, Jessica, et al. *A Qualitative Study of Children, Young People, and ‘Sexting’: A Report Prepared for the NSPCC*. London: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 2012. Print.

⁹⁶⁴ Goggin, Gerard & Kate Crawford. “Moveable Types: Youth and the Emergence of Mobile Social Media in Australia.” *Media Asia Journal* 37.4 (2011): 224-232. Print.

⁹⁶⁵ Albury’s argument is supported by research conducted by Gerard Goggin and Kate Crawford. Albury, Kath, et al. “The Politics of Sexting: Young People, Self-Representation and Citizenship.” *Proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association Conference: Media, Democracy and Change*. 7-9 July 2010. *Anzca*. Web. 30 Nov. 2013; Goggin & Crawford. “Moveable Types.”

⁹⁶⁶ Ringrose, Jessica, et al. “Teen Girls,” 312.

⁹⁶⁷ boyd, “Why Youth ♥ Social Network Sites”; Livingstone, Sonia. “Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers’ Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-Expression.” *New Media & Society* 10.3 (2008): 393-411. Print.

⁹⁶⁸ Ringrose, “Teen Girls,” 311-312.

information and communication structures in such a reflexive process.⁹⁷⁰ Moreover, sexual subjects, argues Louisa Allen, are always “produced through social structures like gender, class, age, ethnicity and physical ability in ways that render some dominant and others subordinate.”⁹⁷¹ The position of adolescents within these social structures bears on their access to new media technologies and shapes the socio-technical networks they are able to assemble, thus reproducing these social structures and their attendant relations of power through and within new media. A growing body of research reveals the discursive reproduction of these social structures by showing that subjects constructed through new media are not as multiple and fluid as some studies suggest, being significantly constrained by the same dominant discourses of gender, race, and class that shape subjects in ‘real life’.⁹⁷²

Nor does this model of networked subjectivity suggest that youth have an inherent capacity to use these technologies to engage with new media sex in empowering ways. There really are no digital natives. Young people may be born into a digital world, but the ability to use new technologies in creative and empowering ways is learned, and the stubborn realities of social, cultural, and economic difference bear on the acquisition of technical skills necessary for such

⁹⁶⁹ Albury, Kath & Kate Crawford. “Sexting, Consent and Young People’s Ethics: Beyond Megan’s Story.” *Continuum* 26.3 (2012): 463-473. Print.

⁹⁷⁰ Lash, Scott. “Reflexivity and Its Doubles: Structure, Aesthetics, Community.” *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Eds. Ulrich Beck, et al. Cambridge: Polity, 1994. 110-173. Print; Lash, Scott & John Urry. *Economies of Signs and Spaces*. London: Sage, 1994. Print.

⁹⁷¹ Allen, *Sexual Subjects*, 8.

⁹⁷² Baym, Nancy K. “The Emergence of Online Community.” *Cybersociety 2.0: Revising Computer-Mediated Communication and Community*. Ed. Steve Jones. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1998. 35-68. Print; Davis, Katie. “Coming of Age Online: The Developmental Underpinnings of Girls’ Blogs.” *Journal of Adolescent Research* 25.1 (2010): 145-171. Print; Elias, Nelly & Dafna Lemish. “Spinning the Web of Identity: The Roles of the Internet in the Lives of Immigrant Adolescents.” *New Media & Society* 11.4 (2009): 533-551. Print; Grisso & Weiss. “What Are gURLs Talking About?”; Hardey, Michael. “Life Beyond the Screen: Embodiment and Identity through the Internet.” *Sociological Review* 50.4 (2002): 570-585. Print; Herring, Susan C., et al. “The Discourse Construction of Weblogs.” *Into the Blogosphere: Rhetoric, Community, and the Culture of Weblogs*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2004. Web. 1 Feb. 2014; Kendall, “Meaning and Identity”; Kolko, Beth, et al. *Race in Cyberspace*. New York: Routledge, 2000. Print; Nakamura, Lisa. *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print; Nakamura, Lisa. *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. Print.

empowerment — realities which the universalizing discourse of digital nativism obscures.⁹⁷³

Likewise, American adolescents come of age in a pornotopian culture, but the ability to use new media to effectively negotiate sexual discourses in the construction of an empowered sexual subjectivity must also be learned. Rather than trying to protect them from media sex through industry regulation, technological intervention, legal sanction, or scare tactics, youth need to be educated — not in the ‘facts of life’, but in the skills necessary to critically engage with the diverse discourses through which the ‘facts of life’, the desires, bodies, and pleasures these ‘facts’ exclude, and the ideas of innocence, precocity, and risk in which they are framed, are mobilized in the production of sexual knowledge about and for them, and to thereby play a role in shaping this knowledge and the sexual subjectivities it constructs.

Sexual Subjectivity and Literacy

New media technologies offer new ways for adolescents to explore sexuality, to play with sexual identity, and to actively articulate their sexual subjectivities. This certainly presents new risks, but also offers new opportunities.⁹⁷⁴ The proliferation of pornography and its easy accessibility online, for example, means that most youth are encountering increasingly hardcore images at an ever-younger age. They risk learning from these representations specific sexual ideas and practices without having a contextual frame in which to understand them, and then acting inappropriately in certain situations. But it also means that there is a greater diversity of representations available, offering opportunities to explore a wider range of sexual possibilities than ever before. Text and instant messaging foster informal and less inhibited forms of

⁹⁷³ Buckingham, David. “Introducing Identity.” *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media*. Ed. David Buckingham. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008. 15-16. Print; Herring, Susan C. “Questioning the Generational Divide: Technological Exoticism and Adult Constructions of Online Youth Identity.” *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media*. Ed. David Buckingham. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008. 71-92. Print; Vaidhyanathan, Siva. “Generational Myth.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 55.4 (2008): n.p. Web. 30 Sep. 2013.

communication. Adolescents risk sending messages that they later regret, or that fall into the wrong hands, and then being subject to social or legal sanctions. But they gain through these media the opportunity to flirt and otherwise express intimacy in a mostly low-stakes, low-pressure medium. Chatrooms, blogs, and social network applications expand young people's social circles beyond their local communities. When they expose intimate aspects of their lives in these virtual spaces, they risk being stalked, bullied, blackmailed, or otherwise abused. But these spaces also offer the opportunity to connect and interact with others, to share knowledge and experiences, and to thus participate intersubjectively in the discursive construction of sexual subjectivities.

Dominant discourses about adolescents' sexual uses of new media, however, recognize only the risks. These discourses have deep historical roots in the Romantic ideal of the innocent child who needs to be protected from a world of adult knowledge and experience. As we saw in chapter two, media sex has long provoked anxiety about the risks of innocent young people being corrupted by access to carnal knowledge, which has fueled centuries of efforts to protect them by regulating access. In chapter three, we saw how the Romantic notion of the young innocent at risk of exposure to media sex has been reproduced within scientific discourse through research into the relationship between youth and sexual representations in the media. We have seen in this chapter that despite the celebration of the empowering potential of new media technologies, emergent forms of sexual communication that these technologies foster have also provoked anxieties that have shaped medical, media, legal, and other discourses about youth and new media sex. Because new media technologies allow young people to participate in the production and circulation of sexual representations, they risk not only the corruption of their own innocence, but

⁹⁷⁴ Livingstone, Sonia & Ellen Helsper. "Balancing Opportunities and Risks in Teenagers' Use of the Internet: The Role of Online Skills and Internet Self-Efficacy." *New Media and Society* 12.2 (2010): 309-329. Print.

also being the corrupters of others. Dominant discourses thus position youth as at risk of being both innocent victims *and* knowing perpetrators of new forms of media sex.

These discourses have been mobilized in efforts to regulate youth access to, and participation in, new forms of media sex. As the sexual sphere has been extended into cyberspace, laws like the CDA, COPA, CIPA, and DOPA have sought to bound this emergent public sphere. While these laws have been attacked for infringing upon constitutionally protected speech, subsequent juridical proceedings have established the legitimacy of excluding young people from the online sexual sphere, and have indicated that new media technologies need to be structured to do so. In drawing boundaries around the online sexual sphere and promoting technology as the solution to maintaining it, these efforts work to sustain the distinction between child and adult that youth access and participation in this sphere threatens. In doing so, they delegitimize adolescents' sexual agency, which lends support to discourses about their innocence, dependence, risk, and need for protection, and also victimizes them by positioning them as victims or villains. This furthers the abstraction of adolescence and also disadvantages particular adolescents by ignoring their specific social, cultural, and economic contexts and the ways that these contexts shape the ability to access and use new media technologies.

Moreover, while these discourses are mobilized in media panics to shore up a social order threatened by the dissolving distinction between child and adult in the face of increased youth access, autonomy, and agency within adult realms of knowledge and experience, they have also functioned to support existent social hierarchies and relations of power grounded in gender, race, class, and sexual difference. White, privileged, heterosexual girls are most often subjected to the discourse of corrupted innocence, while young people who are underprivileged, non-white, male, or LGBTQ are positioned as problematic or deviant sexual subjects by the discourse of prodigious precocity.

These hegemonic discourses obscure the actual experiences of adolescents who engage with new media sex by silencing their voices when they do not speak or act from the positions that these discourses define. Even when seen as agents in their own loss of innocence or in the corruption of others, this silencing denies their active role in becoming sexual beings through new media sex. Many young people express a complex understanding of the pleasures and risks associated with new forms of media sex, and are often adept at using new media technologies to explore sexuality, to negotiate sexual discourses, and to play with and perform sexual identity as part of the reflexive process of constructing their sexual subjectivities. While this process can sometimes be transgressive, intentionally or unintentionally challenging gender and sexual norms and their particular intersections with race, class, and ethnicity, it can also be regressive, working to reproduce dominant discourses, social structures, and relations of power.

By challenging dominant discourses, youth participation in new media sex reveals that adolescents are often not innocent, but that they are often ignorant. As more young people increasingly use the media not only to access sexual knowledge, but also as spaces for articulating their sexuality, they need to develop a critical media literacy that allows them to 'manage' the sexual knowledge with which they engage. A *sexual media literacy* would allow them to evaluate sexual representations and discourses, to understand the institutions and practices through which they are produced, to appropriate and rework them through their own practices, and thus to meaningfully participate in the production of sexual knowledge to which they are subjects.

Conclusion: Beyond the Birds and the Bees

The ideal of childhood innocence has thoroughly shaped the sexual knowledge of American adolescents. Since the seventeenth century, the discursive mobilization of this ideal worked to create childhood by protecting the young from an adult world of knowledge and experience. Pedagogical, juridical, medical, and other social institutions and practices — schools and their curricula, child labor laws, customs and laws regarding the age of consent and matrimony, advice literatures, children’s hospitals, orphanages, playgrounds, nurseries, and bedrooms — were developed for producing and regulating separate “childhood places.”⁹⁷⁵ Cordoned off from the adult world, these material and conceptual “spaces” helped to maintain the boundary between child and adult.⁹⁷⁶

The “invention of adolescence” at the turn of the twentieth century eroded this boundary.⁹⁷⁷ Earlier onset of puberty and delayed marriage opened a gap between the “sexual awakening” that ended childhood and the approved expression of sexual behavior within the matrimony that marked entry into adulthood. At the same time, new public spaces emerged in which these adolescents risked exposure to “unwholesome sources” of carnal knowledge that threatened their innocence.⁹⁷⁸ The Progressives, seeking to maintain the moral values and sexual purity upon which their middle-class status and their plans for social progress were staked, endeavored to protect adolescent innocence by pragmatic means. Science-based sex education would enable young people to make the “intelligent choice” of sexual self-control.⁹⁷⁹ This tactic of using the ‘facts of life’ as a basis for inculcating normative moral and social values became foundational to

⁹⁷⁵ Olwig, Karen Fog & Eva Gulløv. “Towards an Anthropology of Children and Place.” *Children’s Places: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. Eds. Karen Fog Olwig & Eva Gulløv. New York: Routledge, 2003. 1-20. Print.

⁹⁷⁶ The idea of ‘childhood place’ derives from Yi-Fu Tuan’s distinction between merely physical spaces and more conceptual places infused with a history of culture, social relations, morality, and politics. Tuan, Yi-Fu. “Space and Place: Humanistic Perspectives.” *Philosophy in Geography*. Eds. Stephen Gale & Gunnar Olsson. Boston: Reidel, 1979. 387-427. Print.

⁹⁷⁷ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 1-22.

⁹⁷⁸ Exner, “Sex Education,” 575; Galloway, “Sex Instruction,” 643.

the discursive formation of sex education, media sex, and sexual science, fostering within and across these three fields a range of institutions and practices, regulatory strategies, and disciplinary mechanisms for creating and controlling adolescent sexual knowledge and behavior.

From ASHA's "campaign of education" in the early twentieth century to Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education in the early twenty-first, formal efforts to teach young people about sex have implicitly modeled the logic of the birds and the bees that characterizes this discursive tactic. The "campaign of education" and the subsequent "People's War" on venereal disease and the illicit forms of sex with which it was associated structured this logic into the prevailing paradigm for sex education in the United States: Under a veneer of science, private organizations promote particular values by articulating them in terms of public health issues and by pushing for policy that supports the integration into public institutions of pedagogical programs designed to address these issues. In the interest of combatting venereal disease, 'delinquent' behavior, the 'disintegration of family', 'unhealthy' sexuality, teen pregnancy, and AIDS, adolescents have been taught the 'facts of life'. Defined in terms of anatomy, biology, pathology, and risk, the 'facts of life' abstracts sex from the complex of social relationships, meanings, emotions, desires, and pleasures in which it is practiced. This abstract sexual knowledge not only fails to prepare adolescents for sexual life, but also inculcates values aligned with traditional gender norms, monogamy, matrimony, and heterosexuality, and that favor the white middle class from which they derive.

For much of the twentieth century, sex in the media was a necessary complement to formal sex education. For the 'facts of life' to be established as the 'truth' of sex, popular culture had to be purged of sexual representations at odds with these 'facts' or their subtending values. The media industries' regulation of content in the interest of staving off government intervention and attracting a broad audience — especially kids and families — produced a coy sexual knowledge

⁹⁷⁹ Bigelow, *Established Points*, 5.

aligned with the story of the birds and the bees. Media sex subtly hinted at a particular kind of sexuality. By silencing or condemning desire, lust, passion, pleasure, promiscuity, perversion, prostitution, adultery, homosexuality, miscegenation, and “low forms of sex,” industry production codes worked to define “natural” sex in terms of “the sanctity of the institution of marriage.” Everything outside this narrow definition of sexuality was necessarily indecent, obscene, vulgar, perverse, abnormal, immoral, and unnatural. This normative sexual knowledge helped to maintain adolescent sexual innocence while also promoting the same values informing the ‘facts of life’ taught in formal sex education programs.

Ironically, efforts to limit media sex actually helped it to proliferate, while also furthering its abstraction from the complex contexts in which sex is practiced and experienced. The legal struggle to define obscenity put previously silenced expressions of sex into public discourse through both the struggle itself and the resultant narrowing of the definition. At the same time, defining obscenity as ‘sex for the sake of sex’ rendered sexual pleasure itself meaningless, and turned its representation into a floating signifier that had to be contextualized within works of intellectual merit to be legitimate. While this allowed legitimately artistic and literary depictions of sexual pleasure to flourish, it also allowed and even encouraged the construction of arbitrary contexts into which representations of sexual pleasure could be inserted to make them legitimate. As a result, the proliferation of media sex has tended toward the pornotopian, characterized by a “relentless circumscription of reality” that produces decontextualized, abstract sexual knowledge.⁹⁸⁰

The regulation of sexual content in the media that fundamentally shapes this knowledge has been informed and supported by numerous studies into the effects of media sex on youth. The research community within which these studies are conducted has developed a particular epistemic culture, which through an amalgam of institutional arrangements, theoretical precepts,

and methodological practices produces a knowledge of adolescents consistent with the logic of the birds and the bees: innocents who need to be protected from the risks of exposure to ‘inappropriate’ sexual knowledge. The adolescent subject of this knowledge, like the knowledge itself, is abstract. Removed from the complex socio-cultural contexts in which media sex is encountered and engaged, the abstract adolescent is shaped by the analytical obfuscation of the dynamics of gender, race, class, and sexuality. Knowledge of the abstract adolescent not only informs regulatory policies and practices that govern adolescent access to sexual knowledge, but also works to directly discipline adolescents by educating them on the effects of media sex and inculcating the values embedded in this knowledge.

These three discursive fields produce an abstract sexual knowledge of and for adolescents. Young people are both objects and subjects of this knowledge: their attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors are observed, tracked, recorded, and analyzed, and the abstract knowledge *of* them that this produces informs and shapes the production of abstract knowledge *for* them — both formal sex education programs and the informal pedagogy of media sex. While a number of organizations have intentionally undertaken this work, on the whole it has been neither an organized nor an intentional effort. Rather, the production of adolescent sexual knowledge has worked through a shifting assemblage of social institutions and practices that spans the three discursive fields that *SexEd* has traced: moral and medical tracts, lectures, and advice manuals, public policies and laws, court cases, legal doctrines, educational programs, government agencies and commissions, private organizations and associations, research institutes, philanthropic foundations, scientific disciplines, methodological techniques, and of course, the media — movies, magazines, radio, television, advertisements, and the manifold industries that create them. Together these diverse discursive elements constitute a “grid of intelligibility” for adolescent sexual knowledge, which functions as a comprehensive system of sex education

⁹⁸⁰ Marcus, *Other Victorians*, 268-277.

through which adolescents not only learn about sex and sexuality, but also become sexual subjects.

Though unorganized, amorphous, and unintentional, the logic and the aim of this system are clear: Providing young people with ‘appropriate’ knowledge will maintain a sexual innocence that protects them from the risks associated with exposure to ‘inappropriate’ knowledge. In broad terms, the aim — protecting children — is noble. Indeed, the modern conceptualization of childhood as a period of idyllic innocence that needs to be protected has become so entrenched in Western culture that it is beyond reproach. Raising the specter of children imperiled is thus an unassailable discursive strategy for marshaling forces around a host of social issues, especially those pertaining to sex and sexuality, such as sex education and sex in the media.⁹⁸¹ Yet the logic in which this aim has been embedded is riddled with flaws, and these flaws undercut the aim. Rather than protecting sexual innocence by dispelling ignorance, the system of sexual pedagogy that developed in the United States over the course of the twentieth century fosters an ignorance that dispels innocence, while also making adolescents — particularly those not aligned with the subtending values of this system — more vulnerable to the very harms from which this system purports to protect them.

The flawed logic of this system — the logic of the birds and the bees — has been increasingly exposed through the emergence of new forms of media sex. Sex education, media sex, and the science that has rationalized the particularity of these forms of sexual pedagogy developed largely in relation to a mass media model that positioned adolescents as passive receivers of sexual knowledge. This fit nicely with prevalent pedagogical models of children as empty vessels to be filled, or as blank slates to be inscribed upon. Even as more complicated models of mass media reception were forwarded, the active role of the audience in constructing

⁹⁸¹ Buckingham & Bragg, *Young People*, 3-5; Jenkins, *Intimate Enemies*, 10-12; Lancaster, *Sex Panic*, 39-72; Rubin, “Thinking Sex,” 138.

the meaning of media texts that these models posed was either not extended to young people, or became just another variable factored into the media effects equation. The celebration of digital media technologies, however, repositioned youth as inherently active media users, which was supported by a changing conceptualization of children as active agents in their own socialization. So while the media panics that have emerged around new forms of media sex like cyberpornography, cam sex, and sexting still cast youth as innocent victims, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore their precocity and their active complicity in their own loss of innocence.

Adolescent use of media technologies to not only access sexual knowledge, but to also explore and experiment with sexuality, to perform sexual identity, and to produce sexual subjectivity, undermines the logic of the birds and the bees by revealing how it is structured upon a set of assumptions about innocence, risk, development, and desire. Youth engagement with new media sex reveals that young people are not innocent, but rather are ‘knowing’ — not passive victims of sexual representations, but rather active participants in the production of sexual knowledge. Not only does their ‘knowing’ make them aware of sexual risks, but it also allows them to negotiate the discourses through which potential outcomes of particular choices are constructed as risks. This active sexual ‘knowing’ challenges the developmental assumption that adolescents are particularly at risk because they are essentially irrational, impulsive, and thus incapable of weighing consequences and making “the intelligent choice.” Finally, active practices of knowing undercut the notion of an essential sexual identity defined in relation to an abstract and universal sexual truth through the desiring subject.

Yet the logic of the birds and the bees has been so thoroughly engrained in the complex of institutions and practices that structure adolescent sexual knowledge that the discourses of innocence, risk, development, and desire have become hegemonic. Clearly we need to move

beyond the birds and the bees, and to do so, we need to move beyond its underlying assumptions about innocence, risk, development, and desire.

Beyond Innocence

To be agents in one's own life one must cast off innocence.
— Joanne Faulkner⁹⁸²

The ideal of innocence, as we have seen, is central to the concept of childhood. Neither the concept nor the ideal, however, are historically consistent or universal, even in western cultures. During the Middle Ages, children did not exist as a distinct category of personhood; young people past infancy were viewed, treated, and portrayed as either “miniature” or “inchoate” adults.⁹⁸³ With the Protestant Restoration and the rise of capitalism in the sixteenth century, childhood began to be distinguished in two contradictory ways. On the one hand, the Puritans — who were fundamentally aligned with the doctrine of original sin — saw children as inherently evil “little devils” who needed to be guarded and strictly disciplined in preparation for a life of toil and deliverance in death. On the other hand, the growing bourgeoisie — who tended to maintain sympathies for the Catholic Church, which was not only tolerant of their accumulation and display of wealth, but also rejected original sin — saw children as innocent “little angels” who needed to be coddled in preparation for a life of providence. While the latter view became dominant, neither of these distinct concepts of children — which Chris Jenks calls the “Dionysian child” and the “Apollonian child” — would ever completely disappear.⁹⁸⁴ Indeed, they continue to inform a binary perception of children that evokes their conceptual roots in social difference and promotes differential treatment of children.

⁹⁸² Faulkner, Joanne. *The Importance of Being Innocent: Why We Worry About Children*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 8. Print.

⁹⁸³ Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*; Calvert, *Children in the House*; Schultz, *The Knowledge of Childhood*.

⁹⁸⁴ Jenks, *Childhood*, 70-72.

Rousseau's doctrinaire foregrounding of childhood innocence — proposed both from a position of privilege and as a Calvinist converted to Catholicism — belied this binary. As the ideal of innocence became a dogmatically normative assumption of childrearing and pedagogy in the influential wake of *Emile*, its Janus face was obfuscated. Childhood innocence became the invisible norm that marked Others as deviant or corrupt. By the nineteenth century, then, William Acton could facilely forward as fact that children were naturally innocent, even while acknowledging the problematic precocious sexuality of the young urban poor.⁹⁸⁵ Such “medico-moral” discourse came to underpin public health interventions against “dangerous sexualities,” which focused on children, young women, and ethnic minorities.⁹⁸⁶ Social reform work targeting prostitution and providing child welfare “was directed downwards from Victorian middle-class family values to the ‘morally degenerate’ and ‘vice-ridden’ poor.”⁹⁸⁷ Even as the “little devil” disappeared from public discourse about childhood, then, the ideal of innocence was embedded with normalizing conceptualizations of the “problem child” that were based in hegemonic values of gender, race, class, and ethnicity.⁹⁸⁸

Innocence is thus a “suspect concept,” argues Jenny Kitzinger, “because it stigmatizes the ‘knowing’ child.” By “exclud[ing] those who do not conform to the ideal,” the discourse of childhood innocence “facilitate[s] further victimization.”⁹⁸⁹ Minors who fail to conform to this discourse, notes Richard Lancaster, may be labeled “sexually aggressive.”⁹⁹⁰ Such precocious children forfeit their claim to protection, becoming instead the target of increased surveillance and disciplinary measures.⁹⁹¹ This often plays out along lines of race, class, and gender, as

⁹⁸⁵ Acton, *Functions and Disorders*; Acton, *Prostitution*.

⁹⁸⁶ Mort, Frank. *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830*. London: Routledge, 1987. Print.

⁹⁸⁷ Corteen & Scraton, “Prolonging ‘Childhood,’” 82.

⁹⁸⁸ Burman, *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*, 229-233.

⁹⁸⁹ Kitzinger, Jenny. “Defending Innocence: Ideologies of Childhood.” *Feminist Review* 28 (1988): 80. Print.

⁹⁹⁰ Lancaster, *Sex Panic*, 63.

⁹⁹¹ Kitzinger, “Defending Innocence,” 80.

binaries like angel/devil, moral/immoral, and innocent/corrupt “provide ideological justification for social inequality” by being mapped onto other binaries like black/white, rich/poor, and male/female.⁹⁹² For example, the Sexually Aggressive Children and Youth (SACY) program at the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services has permanently marked for continued observation and intervention numerous poor, African-American children who exhibited ‘inappropriate’ sexual behaviors, which were based on normative conceptions of ‘appropriate’ behavior derived from studies of white children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds.⁹⁹³ The same dynamic works in the discursive positioning of teen girls as sexual subjects, whereby they are innocent virgins until they sexually assert themselves, at which point they become sluts, and are subject to surveillance (by family, peers, teachers, counselors, therapists, and doctors) and discipline (grounding, shaming, bullying, abuse, counseling, and therapeutic or educative interventions).

Throughout *SexEd*, we have seen how the dynamic of the Dionysian-Apollonian binary coded into the ideal of childhood innocence plays out in the discursive production of adolescent sexual knowledge and subjectivity. Formal sex education programs normalize the sexual innocence of youth by promoting abstinence before marriage. In the process, they maintain gender- and hetero-normativity, and reproduce white, middle-class family values, which position those sexual behaviors at odds with these norms and values as ‘problems’ needing to be addressed. Representations of sex in the media have likewise targeted youth with a sexual knowledge that structures innocence and carnality across lines of gender, race, and class, producing virgins and vamps, rakes and romantics, celibates and savages, saints and sinners, and almost always valorizing the virtuous and punishing the promiscuous. Young people who engage

⁹⁹² Elliott, Sinikka. “Parents’ Constructions of Teen Sexuality: Sex Panics, Contradictory Discourses and Social Inequality.” *Symbolic Interaction* 33.2 (2010): 196. Print.

⁹⁹³ Thigpen, Jeffrey W., et al. “Normative Sexual Behavior of African American Children: Preliminary Findings.” *Sexual Development in Childhood*. Ed. John Bancroft. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003. 241-254. Print.

in new forms of media sex are either little angels or little devils: Middle-class, heterosexual, white girls who sext, for example, are innocent victims; ethnic, gay, and lower class boys who do so are acting on an intrinsically deviant sexuality. The science of media sex plays a supporting role in this binary construction of adolescent sexual subjectivities: By assuming a sexual innocence corrupted by the media and by obscuring social and cultural differences, studies of youth and sexual media maintain an abstract ideal of adolescent innocence against which a range of socially and culturally specific sexual behaviors are measured as evidence of deviance or corruption.

Children and young people are thus taught that they should be innocent. Immersed in a pornotopian culture that loudly celebrates sexual pleasure, they “are expected to remain passive onlookers, locked within a kind of unquestioning childhood innocence.”⁹⁹⁴ When they do assert themselves sexually, when they seek sexual knowledge, when they participate in sexual discourses through voice or action, they face a range of sanctions — from stigmatization to criminal prosecution. They are targeted by social, political, legal, medical, and pedagogical regulations that position them as powerless and dependent.⁹⁹⁵ In the name of innocence, they are thus denied sexual knowledge and control over their own bodies, and their expressions of sexuality are repressed.⁹⁹⁶

Moreover, the very methods used to protect young people’s sexual innocence contribute to their lack of competence in navigating a highly sexualized culture, and thus increase their vulnerability.⁹⁹⁷ By limiting the language, knowledge, voice, and agency youth need to negotiate life experiences, the discourse of innocence denies their sexual subjectivities and undermines

⁹⁹⁴ Corteen & Scraton “Prolonging ‘Childhood,’” 76.

⁹⁹⁵ Rose, Nikolas. *Governing the Soul: The Reshaping of the Private Self*. London: Free association, 1989. 123-134. Print.

⁹⁹⁶ Kitzinger, “Defending Innocence,” 80.

⁹⁹⁷ Corteen & Scraton “Prolonging ‘Childhood,’” 76; Kitzinger, “Who Are You Kidding? Children, Power and the Struggle Against Sexual Abuse.” *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary*

their development as informed, competent, and critical citizens.⁹⁹⁸ In doing so, they are constructed as socially and politically unaware, and their education — formal and informal, sexual and otherwise — is depoliticized, failing to encourage them to critique and challenge, and actually fostering their participation in, the dominant relations of power and inequality that mark racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia.⁹⁹⁹

But young people, as Judy Blume so astutely observed, are not so much innocent as they are inexperienced.¹⁰⁰⁰ Children exhibit sexual behavior from infancy, engage in socio-sexual play from the age of three, and become aware of the social complexity of sex and sexuality well before puberty.¹⁰⁰¹ Subject to the particular sexual knowledge produced of and for them, they become ‘knowing’ children at a young age. Yet while they *know of* sex, they don’t necessarily *know* sex. They lack what John Shotter calls “knowing of the third kind” — not the abstract *knowing of* or *knowing why*, nor the technical *knowing how*, but the pragmatic *knowing what to do*.¹⁰⁰² Most young people in the United States have access to a diverse range of sexual knowledge, but don’t necessarily know what to do with it, how to incorporate it into their lives in meaningful ways that

Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood. Ed. Alison James & Alan Prout. London: The Falmer Press, 1990. 157-183. Print; Plummer, “Understanding Childhood Sexualities.”

⁹⁹⁸ Corteen & Scraton “Prolonging ‘Childhood’”; Hawkes, Gail & R. Danielle Egan. “Developing the Sexual Child.” *Historical Sociology* 22.2 (2008): 443-466. Print; Kitzinger, “Who Are You Kidding?”; Plummer, “Understanding Childhood Sexualities”; Robinson, “Doing Anti-Homophobia”; Robinson, “In the Name of ‘Childhood Innocence.’”

⁹⁹⁹ Robinson, *Innocence, Knowledge*, 27.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Foerstel, Herbert N. *Banned in the U.S.A.: A Reference Guide to Book Censorship in Schools and Public Libraries*. Westport: Greenwood, 2002. 137. Print.

¹⁰⁰¹ DeLamater, John & William Friedrich. “Human Sexual Development.” *The Journal of Sex Research* 39.1 (2002): 10-14. Print; Friedrich, William, et al. “Child Sexual Behavior Inventory: Normative and Clinical Comparisons.” *Psychological Assessment* 4.2 (1992): 303-311. Print; Goldman & Goldman, *Children’s Sexual Thinking*; Martinson, Floyd M. “Eroticism in Infancy and Childhood.” *The Journal of Sex Research* 12.4 (1976): 251-262. Print; Okami, Paul, et al. “Sexual Experiences in Early Childhood: 18 Year Longitudinal Data from the UCLA Family Lifestyles Project.” *The Journal of Sex Research* 34.4 (1997): 339-347. Print; Ryan, Gail. “Childhood Sexuality: A Decade of Study.” *Childhood Abuse & Neglect* 24.1 (2000): 33-48. Print; Thanasiu, Page. “Childhood Sexuality: Discerning Healthy from Abnormal Sexual Behavior.” *Journal of Mental Health Counseling* 26.4 (2004): 309-319. Print; Yang, Michele L., et al. “Masturbation in Infancy and Early Childhood Presenting as a Movement Disorder: 12 Cases and a Review of the Literature.” *Pediatrics* 116.6 (2005): 1427-1432. Print.

¹⁰⁰² Shotter, John. *Cultural Politics of Everyday Life: Social Constructionism, Rhetoric and Knowing of the Third Kind*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993. Print.

allow them to make empowered choices. Moving beyond innocence would entail accepting that youth *may* have carnal knowledge, but *may* not know how to use it. It would not, however, entail assuming what specific knowledge they have or how it is relevant to them, and would thus not presume how they *should* use it. Rather than seeking to protect them, any pedagogic intervention would thus need to start from what they know and guide them through a process of interpretation, critique, contextualization, and application of this knowledge within their own lives on their own terms.

Beyond Risk

The knowledge of the world is only to be acquired in the world, and not in a closet.

— Lord Chesterfield

Protecting the presumed innocence of children, which emerged as a moral prerogative of bourgeois families in the sixteenth century, became an issue of public health from the eighteenth century on. As part of the nation-state project of producing a productive population, the “pedagogization of children’s sex” linked childhood innocence to the public good.¹⁰⁰³ Progressive efforts to stamp out venereal disease in the early twentieth century by teaching young people ‘the facts of life’ established the protection of innocence as a public health practice.¹⁰⁰⁴ While precocious carnal knowledge was still perceived as a moral threat, it would increasingly be framed in terms of health risks that threatened both individuals and society at large.¹⁰⁰⁵

Research and interventions into adolescent sexual behavior have thus focused tightly on risk. Sex education and media regulation of content are almost always justified as ways of reducing risk; studies of youth sexuality, which are predominantly structured around finding

¹⁰⁰³ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 11-30.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 23-67.

¹⁰⁰⁵ This is part of a broader shift in secularized societies whereby the “modern, sanitized discourse of risk” functions as a “forensic resource” that displaces “sin” as the explanation for misfortune. Douglas, Mary. *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory*. London: Routledge, 1992. 24-26. Print.

correlates of risk behavior, provide empirical support for these interventions. Together they work to discursively maintain adolescence as an inherently risky stage of development and to position sexually precocious adolescents as ‘at risk’.

This functions as part of a broader framing of sexual behavior within the ‘health belief model’. First developed by social psychologists at the U.S. Public Health Service in the 1950s and since applied to a wide range of human behaviors, the health belief model presumes human action as volitional and rational, and risks as objective realities to which people respond subjectively.¹⁰⁰⁶ Hazards or dangers are taken as independent variables and people’s responses as dependent, and it is assumed that given information about vulnerability, consequences, and the effectiveness of preventative measures, people will act to avoid these hazards or dangers. This model casts individuals as “risk-averse” information-processing units who “seek order in the world,” “recognize inconsistency,” and “assess probability.”¹⁰⁰⁷ Avoiding risk is perceived as the only rational response, which makes risk-taking fundamentally irrational; engaging in any sexual behavior seen as risky is thus irrational by definition.¹⁰⁰⁸ Applied to adolescents through interventions grounded in the logic of the birds and the bees, this model functions tautologically to confirm their ‘at risk’ position. Youth are assumed to be irrational and thus particularly prone to risk, while it is also assumed that providing them with ‘appropriate’ information will help them ‘make the right choice’ and thus avoid risk. Failing to do so is taken as evidence of their irrationality, and thus proof that they *are* at risk.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Bradbury, Judith. “The Policy Implications of Differing Conceptions of Risk.” *Science, Technology and Human Values* 14.4 (1989): 380-399. Print; Glanz, Karen & Donald B. Bishop. “The Role of Behavioral Science Theory in Development and Implementation of Public Health Interventions.” *Annual Review of Public Health* 31 (2010): 399-418. Print.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Douglas, Mary. *Risk Acceptability According to the Social Sciences*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1985. 25-28. Print.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Bloor, Michael. *The Sociology of HIV Transmission*. London: Sage, 1995. Print.

Yet “nothing is a risk in itself,” claims François Ewald, “There is no risk in reality.”¹⁰⁰⁹ As Ewald, Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck, Mary Douglas, and others have shown, risks are socially constructed and culturally specific.¹⁰¹⁰ “What we measure, identify and manage as risks are always constituted via pre-existing knowledges and discourses,” argues Deborah Lupton, and thus “a risk is never fully objective or knowable outside of belief systems and moral positions.”¹⁰¹¹ Rather than objective realities that we rationally assess and act to avoid, risks are “assemblages of meanings, logics and beliefs” that cohere around particular phenomena and define them as risky.¹⁰¹² Harmful consequences are attached to things, activities, or situations to create “risk objects,” which then become the loci of discursive struggles to define and control them.¹⁰¹³ Risk objects are primarily constituted through “expert knowledges” — science, medicine, social work, law, and economics — which are “embedded within organizational contexts and often mediated through the mass media.”¹⁰¹⁴ These “expert knowledges” create not only risk objects, but also “risk positions” for the subjects of this knowledge, from which they come to understand themselves as “at risk.”¹⁰¹⁵

Through the discursive mobilization of expert knowledge, the “lay knowledges” of “subjects at risk” are disparaged and the agency of these subjects denied.¹⁰¹⁶ The “situated knowledges” of these subjects are more contextual, local, and individual, and reflect an awareness

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ewald, François. “Insurance and Risk.” *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Eds. Graham Burchell, et al. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. 199. Print.

¹⁰¹⁰ Beck, Ulrich. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage, 1992. Print; Douglas, *Risk Acceptability*; Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity*.

¹⁰¹¹ Lupton, Deborah. *Risk*. New York: Routledge, 1999. 29. Print.

¹⁰¹² Lupton, *Risk*, 30.

¹⁰¹³ Hilgartner, Steve. “The Social Construction of Risk Objects: Or, How to Pry Open Networks of Risk.” *Organizations, Uncertainty, and Risk*. Eds. James Short & Lee Clarke. Boulder: Westview, 1992. 39-53. Print.

¹⁰¹⁴ Lupton, *Risk*, 32.

¹⁰¹⁵ Macgill, Sally. “Risk Perception and the Public: Insights from Research Around Sellafield.” *Environmental Threats: Perception, Analysis and Management*. Ed. Jennifer Brown. London: Belhaven, 1989. 48-66. Print.

¹⁰¹⁶ Wynne, Brian. “May the Sheep Safely Graze? A Reflexive View of the Expert-Lay Knowledge Divide.” *Risk, Environment and Modernity: Towards a New Ecology*. Eds. Scott Lash, et al. London: Sage, 1996. 44-83. Print.

of how expert knowledge has been framed by particular social values and by understandings of agency, predictability, and control.¹⁰¹⁷ Moreover, these knowledges are not merely informational, but also incorporate aesthetic and hermeneutic understandings developed through the embodied experience of “being-in-the-world.”¹⁰¹⁸ By ignoring or devaluing these knowledges, decisions at odds with expert advice are cast as ignorant, irrational, irresponsible, and even deviant, rather than as complex negotiations of risk that resist or challenge expert judgment.¹⁰¹⁹ This works to position “subjects at risk” as either “particularly vulnerable, passive, powerless or weak, or as particularly dangerous to themselves or others,” making them targets of surveillance and disciplinary intervention.¹⁰²⁰

Contrary to popular perceptions, adolescents have been found similar to adults in their ability to reason and understand risks associated with their behaviors.¹⁰²¹ Likewise, they are able to identify possible consequences of these behaviors.¹⁰²² But adolescents, like adults, often take risks even when aware of the consequences. In a “risk society” where people are bombarded with contradictory information and ideas about the myriad potential risks surrounding them, everyday life becomes a perpetual process of “risk negotiation.”¹⁰²³ We are always weighing what we know about the consequences of particular choices — an understanding arrived at through not just information, but also through culturally specific intuitions and interpretations, as well as through personal feelings and imaginations — against the consequences of other choices, against potential

¹⁰¹⁷ Lupton, *Risk*, 108-110.

¹⁰¹⁸ Lash, Scott. “Reflexive Modernization: The Aesthetic Dimension.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 10.1 (1993): 1-23. Print; Threadgold, Steven & Pam Nilan. “Reflexivity of Contemporary Youth, Risk and Cultural Capital.” *Current Sociology* 57.1 (2009): 47-68. Print.

¹⁰¹⁹ Michael, Mike. *Constructing Identities: The Social, the Nonhuman and Change*. London: Sage, 1996. 105-130. Print.

¹⁰²⁰ Lupton, *Risk*, 114.

¹⁰²¹ Reyna & Farley, “Risk and Rationality,” 33-36.

¹⁰²² Beyth-Marom, Ruth, et al. “Perceived Consequences of Risky Behavior: Adults and Adolescents.” *Developmental Psychology* 29.3 (1993):549-563. Print.

¹⁰²³ Jones, Julie Scott & Jayne Raisborough. “Situating Risk in the Everyday.” *Risks, Identities and the Everyday*. Eds. Julie Scott Jones & Jayne Raisborough. Burlington: Ashgate, 2007. 1-18. Print; Threadgold & Nilan. “Reflexivity of Contemporary Youth”; Tulloch, John & Deborah Lupton. *Risk and Everyday Life*. London: Sage, 2003. Print.

rewards, against wants, needs, and desires. As Deborah Lupton and John Tulloch document, taking risks is often an intentional and ‘reasoned’ choice arrived at through such reflexive negotiation.¹⁰²⁴

“Voluntary risk-taking” is often geared toward a pleasure derived from undermining ontological security.¹⁰²⁵ Such “escape attempts” from the norms, routines, and rules that govern everyday life function as a kind of “edgework” through which people negotiate the cultural boundaries defined by risk discourses.¹⁰²⁶ In providing an opportunity to embody risk by intentionally choosing danger, mastering fear, and maintaining control, risk-taking functions as a “practice of the self” whereby subjects are afforded a sense of agency, emotional engagement, self-expression, self-efficacy, self-development, and self-actualization.¹⁰²⁷ This role of risk-taking in subject formation is supported by recent research on adolescent behavior, which suggests that taking risks is crucial to learning processes whereby young people develop coping skills, independence, resilience, and responsibility.¹⁰²⁸

Louisa Allen argues that formal programs of sex education do not acknowledge adolescent agency in engaging in ‘risky’ behavior.¹⁰²⁹ Others have likewise indicated that discourses about youth media use, which shape doctrine and policy regarding media regulations, do not recognize

¹⁰²⁴ Lupton, Deborah & John Tulloch. “‘Life Would Be Pretty Dull Without Risk’: Voluntary Risk-Taking and Its Pleasures.” *Health, Risk & Society* 4.2 (2002): 113-124. Print; Tulloch & Lupton, *Risk and Everyday Life*.

¹⁰²⁵ Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity*, 132-133.

¹⁰²⁶ Cohen, Stanley & Laurie Taylor. *Escape Attempts: The Theory and Practice of Resistance to Everyday Life*. London: Routledge, 1992. Print; Lyng, Stephen. “Edgework: A Social Psychological Analysis of Voluntary Risk Taking.” *American Journal of Sociology* 95.4 (1990): 851-886. Print.

¹⁰²⁷ Jones & Raisborough, “Situating Risk,” 6; Lupton & Tulloch, “Life Would Be Dull,” 122-123.

¹⁰²⁸ Coleman, John C. *The Nature of Adolescence*. New York: Routledge, 2011. 209-226. Print; Coleman, John & Ann Hagell. *Adolescence, Risk and Resilience: Against the Odds*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2007. Print; Gill, Tim. *No Fear: Growing Up in a Risk-Averse Society*. London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2007. Print; Madge, Nicola & John Barker. *Risk & Childhood*. London: The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce, 2007. Print; Somerville, “A Time of Change”; Steinberg, “A Social Neuroscience Perspective.”

¹⁰²⁹ Allen, Louisa. “Doing ‘It’ Differently: Relinquishing the Disease and Pregnancy Prevention Focus in Sexuality Education.” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 28.5 (2007): 575-588. Print.

intentional risk-taking as a possible outcome of a complex process of negotiation.¹⁰³⁰ Young people who gain pleasure from flirting with sexual ‘danger’ — whether sexting or barebacking — are unintelligible within discourses that normatively construct the adolescent sexual subject as risk-averse when given the right information about sex. The interventions developed out of these discourses thus focus on reducing risk by regulating access to sexual knowledge and experiences; in doing so, they may reduce risk, but they simultaneously reduce the opportunities associated with risk-taking.¹⁰³¹

Moving beyond the birds and the bees requires moving beyond discourses of risk that disparage the situated knowledges through which young people negotiate risks, and that ignore their agency in risk-taking as a practice of the self through which they participate in the constitution of their sexual subjectivities. Rather than interventions designed to protect youth from risk by controlling sexual knowledge and experience, we need interventions informed by their own knowledge and understandings of sex and sexual risk, and that accept, embrace, and foster their agency in making choices about sexual behavior that may be risky.

Beyond Developmentalism

Psychology keeps trying to vindicate human nature. History keeps undermining the effort.
— Mason Cooley

Since its invention at the turn of the twentieth century, adolescence has been characterized as essentially irrational, a period of “storm and stress” in which the immature young person is controlled by passions. Because risks are imagined as objective realities to which the rational response should be avoidance, the assumed irrationality of adolescents suggests that they are not

¹⁰³⁰ Bragg & Buckingham, “Too Much Too Young?”; Jochen, Peter & Patti M. Valkenburg. “The Influence of Sexually Explicit Internet Material on Sexual Risk Behavior: A Comparison of Adolescents and Adults.” *Journal of Health Communication* 16 (2011): 750-765. Print; Luder, Marie-Thérèse, et al. “Associations Between Online Pornography and Sexual Behavior Among Adolescents: Myth or Reality?” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 40.5 (2011): 1027-1035. Print; Pascoe, “Resource and Risk,” 14.

fully capable of perceiving risks and responding in an appropriately risk-averse manner. They are thus positioned as inherently ‘at risk’, constituted as the subjects of numerous risk discourses, particularly those related to sex. The assumption of adolescent irrationality that informs their discursive positioning as ‘subjects at risk’ derives from developmental psychology.

As Valerie Walkerdine suggests, developmental psychology is “one of the ‘grand metanarratives of science’ through which modernity has been characterized.”¹⁰³² A particularly modern perception of time underlies this narrative. As “the defining quality of the modern world,” the “temporalization of experience” through the standardization of time created a chronological order in which the productive functions of life are measured in teleological terms as development within an unfolding history.¹⁰³³ Foucault recognized this epistemological shift from a spatial to a temporal ordering of life in the transition from the natural history of Linnaeus to the proto-evolutionary biology of Lamarck and Cuvier.¹⁰³⁴ This new epistemic order of “development-in-time” structured not only evolutionary biology, but also conceptualizations of ontogenesis and social progress.¹⁰³⁵ As we saw in chapter one, the invention of adolescence by G. Stanley Hall was profoundly informed by a social-Darwinistic synthesis of biologic, ontogenetic, and social theories of development: Ontology was seen to recapitulate phylogeny, so that adolescence was cast as a developmental stage between the impulsive ‘savagery’ of ‘lesser’ races and the ‘civilized’ rationality of the more evolved.¹⁰³⁶ While the biological theory of recapitulation fell out of favor during the twentieth century, the idea retained influence in theories

¹⁰³¹ Livingstone & Helsper, “Balancing Opportunities and Risks,” 328.

¹⁰³² Walkerdine, Valerie. “Beyond Developmentalism?” *Theory & Psychology* 3.4 (1993): 451. Print.

¹⁰³³ Bender, John & David E. Wellbery, eds. *Chronotypes: The Construction of Time*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991. 1. Print; Koselleck, Reinhart. *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. Trans. Keith Tribe. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985. Print; Luckman, Thomas. “The Constitution of Human Life in Time.” *Chronotypes: The Construction of Time*. Eds. John Bender & David E. Wellbery. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991. 151-166. Print

¹⁰³⁴ Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage, 1994. Print.

¹⁰³⁵ Toulmin, Stephen & June Goodfield. *The Discovery of Time*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965. 233-235. Print.

of psychological and cognitive development through the child study movement that Hall fathered, and later through the work of Jean Piaget, who suggested that ontogeny parallels phylogeny because in both cases “the preconscious mind” develops through “a sequence in modes of reasoning.”¹⁰³⁷ The development of rationality was the common link between evolution of the human species and maturation of the human individual.

Developmentalism is indebted, then, to both the progressive temporality of the modern epistemic order and its attendant valorization of reason. The discourse of development grew out of the Enlightenment ideal of a universal human history grounded in progress and rationality, framing the maturation of child into adult as a linear transition through stages marked by the displacement of instinctual and impulsive behaviors by reasoned decision-making. With the Enlightenment, rationality became “the pinnacle of western civilization.” This “end point of a quasi-evolutionary process” was crucial to the development of the autonomous individual at the core of democratic governance, and thus, as Walkerdine argues, “psycho-pedagogic practices [were] designed to produce a citizen who would reason and be reasonable.”¹⁰³⁸ By emphasizing “the development of rationality as a means to ensure the stability of the social order,” claims David Buckingham, defining children as inherently irrational “justified the introduction of a lengthy period in which they could be trained in the arts of self-control and disciplined behavior.”¹⁰³⁹ The invention of adolescence functionally extended this period of training and discipline, and, as Nancy Lesko suggests, the psychology that created this stage of development

¹⁰³⁶ Hall, *Adolescence*; Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 16-18.

¹⁰³⁷ Indeed, as Steven Gould documents, the theory of recapitulation had a lasting influence in a number of areas over the course of the twentieth century, including criminal anthropology, child development, education, and psychoanalysis. Gould, Steven Jay. *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977. 144-147. Print.

¹⁰³⁸ Walkerdine, “Beyond Developmentalism?” 456.

¹⁰³⁹ Buckingham, *After the Death*, 33.

“helped make the inner, personal qualities of individuals visible and significant for building a modern society.”¹⁰⁴⁰

Developmentalism thus emerged as a discursive apparatus for producing rational, self-governing subjects by making legible and calculable the inner processes of the young mind, by codifying, standardizing, and normalizing these processes within a rationalist teleology, and by providing disciplinary mechanisms for training these processes to the ‘normal curve’ of development.¹⁰⁴¹ Drawing on Anne McClintock, Lesko suggests that this apparatus works through a kind of “panoptical time” in which progress is rendered as a “measurable spectacle” that is visible “at a glance.” Through tables, charts, and graphs, normative development is made a readily legible baseline against which to measure atavism, recidivism, or precocity.¹⁰⁴² As with McClintock’s analysis of the evolutionary “Tree of Man” as a “natural genealogy of power,” these developmental spectacles function as colonial and administrative technologies, inscribing youth within the lower branches of the social hierarchy and naturalizing their subordinate position.¹⁰⁴³

Given the legacy of recapitulation in developmental theory, whereby the child has been linked to the uncivilized Other as not fully human, colonialism is highly relevant to developmentalism, not just in the conceptual terms of a privileged gaze that produces the Other as a subject of knowledge, but also as a way to “trace the embeddedness of race [and class] in the cultivation of the bourgeois self.” To become an adult, argues Ann Stoler, has always “meant distinguishing oneself from that which was uncivilized [and] lower-class.” Stoler writes of Victorian discourses on child rearing that, “In rehearsing repeatedly what a child must shed to become an adult, these verbal and written injunctions also rehearsed a social hierarchy and racial

¹⁰⁴⁰ Lesko, Nancy. *Act Your Age! A Cultural Construction of Adolescence*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2011. 9. Print.

¹⁰⁴¹ Rose, Nikolas. *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*. London: Free Association Books, 1989. 144-154. Print.

¹⁰⁴² Lesko, *Act Your Age!* 107-120.

taxonomy of libidinal desire and uncivilized habits that bourgeois children would have to shed to become fully human.”¹⁰⁴⁴ As we have seen in *SexEd*, through the logic of the birds and the bees, the ‘traces’ of a race, class, and gender hierarchy that first appeared in childrearing discourses have been embedded in a range of discursive institutions and practices geared toward cultivating upstanding adults and citizens by producing sexual knowledge of and for adolescents that works to regulate their libidinal desires and uncivilized habits.

Like the colonial Other frozen in time as an uncivilized primitive by the Tree of Man, children and adolescents are trapped within the developmental stages made legible by the discursive technologies of panoptical time. As Allison James and Alan Prout argue, youth are both imprisoned in time and removed from the flow of time, unable to move forward or backward without being disciplined for being “immature” or “precocious.”¹⁰⁴⁵ Lesko likens this condition to Stephen Kern’s concept of “expectant time,” a passive temporal mode oriented toward the future. “Cut off from the flow of time” and “isolated in the present” by a lack of agency in matters that shape the future, individuals are left “waiting for the future to come along.”¹⁰⁴⁶ Contained within expectant time, adolescents are positioned outside history as “becoming but not being,” and thus, like the colonial Other, are perceived as less than human.¹⁰⁴⁷

But as the final stage of development, adolescence also reflects the final ascendancy of Western civilization, and so it is emblematic of modernity. Adolescent expressions and behaviors that challenge the staged order of child development thus threaten the developmental order of the Western world. Unrestrained sexuality, as “the hallmark of savages,” is particularly threatening,

¹⁰⁴³ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 37-39.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 151-152.

¹⁰⁴⁵ James, Allison & Alan Prout. “Re-presenting Childhood: Time and Transition in the Study of Childhood.” *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*. Eds. Allison James & Alan Prout. London: Falmer, 1990. 216-238. Print.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Kern coined the term “expectant time” to describe the condition of assembly line workers under Taylorism, whose diminished control over the immediate future in the productive process relegated them to an expectant mode of being. Kern, Stephen. *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983. Print.

as Lesko exemplifies through the teen pregnancy “crisis” of the 1980s.¹⁰⁴⁸ Teens who get pregnant threaten the temporality of the social order by acting “out of time.” By “growing up all-at-once,” they are “before their time,” but they are also “primitive” in not suppressing the sexual impulse. Such temporal crises, as we have seen in *SexEd*, have raced, classed, gendered, and sexed dimensions: Precocious sexuality is not viewed as an early arrival at adulthood, but is rather seen as irrational, impulsive, primitive; and it thus threatens to undermine the essentially white, middle-class, patriarchal, and heterosexual order structured around a sublimated sexuality that can only be legitimately expressed in the context of monogamous marriage.

Just as in colonial societies the Other must “turn white or disappear,” adolescents in western societies must become like adults to be legitimately visible as humans.¹⁰⁴⁹ To do so they must develop the rationality that marks the endpoint of both evolution and maturation. This rationality is not equivalent to thinking, as Walkerdine notes, but is rather “a particular kind of logic [...] which has become equated with thinking.”¹⁰⁵⁰ This is not the logic of Piaget’s concrete operational stage — not the ability to classify, generalize, and problem-solve — but is rather the abstract thinking of the formal operational stage, the capacity for hypothetical and deductive reasoning.¹⁰⁵¹ Walkerdine defines this type of abstract reason as “a particular discursive form in which all external reference has been removed.”¹⁰⁵² Marked by the progress from primitive, concrete thought to this advanced, abstract reason, adolescence, argues Lesko, “reenacts the evolutionary supremacy of the West over primitive others.”¹⁰⁵³ Becoming adult, becoming civilized, becoming human, thus requires developing the ability to think and speak from a position decontextualized from the material conditions of existence.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Lesko, *Act Your Age!* 7, 123.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Lesko, *Act Your Age!* 133-147.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Richard Philcox. New York: Grove, 2008. 100. Print.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Walkerdine, “Beyond Developmentalism?” 456.

¹⁰⁵¹ Piaget, *The Essential Piaget*.

¹⁰⁵² Walkerdine, “Beyond Developmentalism?” 456.

¹⁰⁵³ Lesko, *Act Your Age!* 137.

Developing such abstract thought, as Walkerdine points out, is an indulgence of the privileged who can afford the time to think outside the necessities of everyday life. The universal child posited by developmentalism obfuscates less privileged Others who might “disrupt the cozy certainty of a paradigm in which the difference is simply deficiency.” Developmentalism thus commits “modernity’s mistake” by ignoring “the particular relations of power and oppression inscribed inside the practices [taken] to be universal.”¹⁰⁵⁴ Moreover, the “deficit thinking” of developmentalism casts the cultural specificity of these Others as problems to be overcome rather than useful cognitive resources.¹⁰⁵⁵

“Modernity’s mistake” has been to fall under “Reason’s Dream” — the dream of generalizable, universal, and immutable truth proven through rational thought.¹⁰⁵⁶ While this is a fantasy, it is so powerful that it functions veridically, spawning immutable yet abstract truths through abstract reason. Developmentalism is a rational abstraction that produces abstract rationalism as immutable truth: reason as the essence of humanity, human development as a rationalizing process, children and adolescents in the process of developing the abstract reason that will make them human. Through this abstraction, young people are generalized and universalized within different stages of becoming rational, so that deviations from this development are cast as deficiencies rather than differences that might be accounted to social structures, cultural specificities, and economic inequalities. When these deviations from ‘normal’ development are of a sexual nature, they are almost always pathologized.¹⁰⁵⁷

The abstract ‘truths’ that developmental rationalism claims have been made immutable by linking the ‘irrational’ behavior of adolescents to biology. Overwrought emotions, mood swings,

¹⁰⁵⁴ Walkerdine, “Beyond Developmentalism?” 460-461.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Valencia, Richard, ed. *The Evolution of Deficit Thinking: Educational Thought and Practice*. London: RoutledgeFalmer, 1997. Print; Valencia, Richard & Daniel Solórzano. “Today’s Deficit Thinking about the Education of Minority Students.” *Tongue-tied: The Lives of Multilingual Children in Public Education*. Ed. Otto Santa Ana. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004. 124-133. Print.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Rotman, Brian. *Mathematics: An Essay in Semiotics*. Cited in: Walkerdine, Valerie. “Beyond Developmentalism?” *Theory & Psychology* 3.4 (1993): 465-466. Print.

teen angst, rebelliousness, and risk-taking have long been explained by “raging hormones,” grounding adolescence in biology through an endocrinologic connection to its hallmark traits of irrationality, risk, ‘storm and stress’, and sexuality.¹⁰⁵⁸ More recently, the truth claims of developmentalism have been extended through evolutionary psychology, which combines cognitive science and evolutionary biology to theorize why the mind develops the way it does.¹⁰⁵⁹ From this perspective, there is a biological basis for increased risk behavior in adolescence.¹⁰⁶⁰ Recent neuroimaging research seems to support this claim. Poor decision-making and impulsivity in adolescents is linked to delayed maturation of the prefrontal cortex.¹⁰⁶¹ Limbic systems develop earlier than prefrontal cortices, favoring emotional stimuli over inhibitory control.¹⁰⁶² As the limbic system and especially the amygdala are involved in sexual arousal, their maturation before the “executive function” of the prefrontal cortex is fully developed suggests that young people are particularly susceptible to responding irrationally to sexual stimuli.¹⁰⁶³

This “science of adolescent brain development” constitutes a new “grand theory” of adolescence that reinforces the hegemony of developmentalism through “the seductive allure of neuroscience,” providing the “hard evidence” of visual images to “explain” youth immaturity, irresponsibility, impulsivity, and irrationality.¹⁰⁶⁴ In doing so, this research infantilizes adolescents, perpetuates prejudices that unequally diminish their social and political status, and

¹⁰⁵⁷ Buckingham, *After the Death*, 14; Walkerdine, “Beyond Developmentalism?” 459.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Lesko, *Act Your Age!* 3.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Pinker, Steven. *How the Mind Works*. London: Allen Lane, 1997. Print.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Johnson, “Neuromaturation and Adolescent Risk Taking”; Spano, “Adolescent Brain Development”; Eshel, “Neural Substrates of Choice.”

¹⁰⁶¹ Yurgelun-Todd, “Emotional and Cognitive Changes.”

¹⁰⁶² Casey, “The Adolescent Brain”; Casey, “Braking and Accelerating”; Galvan, Adriana, et al. “Earlier Development of the Accumbens.”

¹⁰⁶³ Ferretti, “Dynamics of Male Sexual Arousal.”

¹⁰⁶⁴ Bessant, “Hard Wired for Risk”; Johnson, “Adolescent Maturity and the Brain”; Steinberg, Laurence. “Should the Science of Adolescent Brain Development Inform Public Policy?” *American Psychologist* 64.8 (2009): 739-750. Print; Steinberg, Laurence. “A Behavioral Scientist Looks at the Science of Adolescent Brain Development.” *Brain Cognition* 72.1 (2010): 160-164. Print; Weisberg, Deena Skolnick, et al. “The Seductive Allure of Neuroscience Explanations.” *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 20.3 (2008): 470-477. Print.

contributes to the construction of youth in general as a problem.¹⁰⁶⁵ Underpinned by a positivism that values empirical evidence and causal explanations, this type of biological reductionism forecloses an understanding of “how human beings interpret their worlds and how we interpret their acts of interpretation” by abstracting them “to a point almost beyond recognition as representative of human life.”¹⁰⁶⁶ As Peter Kelly argues, neuroscience and developmental discourses of adolescent brain development “disembody, reduce, and simplify the complexities of these figures we *know* as adolescents,” effectively reducing “young people to being little more than a *brain in a jar*.”¹⁰⁶⁷ By defining thought as an abstract process and then abstracting it from the complex, embodied, and material situations in which it is practiced, the very sciences that purport to reveal how adolescents think instead work to maintain a normative model of thought that positions them as the unthinking Others of adults, as irrational, impulsive, and prone to risk.

As the work of Mike Cole, Ed Hutchins, Jean Lave, and others has shown, however, thinking is always a situated practice.¹⁰⁶⁸ Counter to the Cartesian model that locates thought exclusively in the brain, this work reveals cognition as an emotional, embodied, and environmental process that works through social relations and institutions and cultural contexts and artifacts. Lave’s research on child street vendors, for example, reveals how their practices of calculation are structured within and through the urban environment, their economic situation,

¹⁰⁶⁵ Bessant, “Hard Wired for Risk”; Epstein, *The Case Against Adolescence*, 194-201; Epstein, Robert. “The Myth of the Teen Brain.” *Scientific American Mind*. April/May (2007): 57-63. Print; Kelly, Peter. “An Untimely Future for Youth Studies.” *Youth Studies Australia* 30.3 (2011): 47-53. Print; Males, Michael. “Does the Adolescent Brain Make Risk-Taking Inevitable? A Skeptical Appraisal.” *Journal of Adolescent Research* 24 (2009): 3-20. Print.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Bruner, Jerome. *Acts of Meaning: Four Lectures on Mind and Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990. xiii. Print.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Kelly, “The Brain in the Jar,” 944.

¹⁰⁶⁸ See: Clark, Andy. *Being There: Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997. Print; Cole, Michael & Sylvia Scribner. *Culture and Thought: A Psychological Perspective*. New York: Wiley, 1974. Print; Hutchins, Edwin. *Cognition in the Wild*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995. Print; Lave, Jean. *Cognition in Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. Print; Lave, Jean & Etienne Wenger. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. Print; Vygotsky, Lev S. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978. Print.

relations with clients, feelings of hunger, and their fantasies, fears, and desires.¹⁰⁶⁹ By developmental standards that perceive and measure math skills as thought processes abstracted from practical applications, these kids do not measure up; yet they are functionally superior calculators within the everyday context in which they live and work. This research not only shows the importance of paying attention to the particular situations in which young people think — the social, cultural, economic, political, material, technologic, and embodied substrates of thought — but also draws attention to how the abstract reason privileged by developmental models casts different ways of thinking within different contexts as deficient.

Moving beyond developmentalism would require abandoning the privileged position of abstract reason as the pinnacle of civilization, and instead accounting for the complex situations in and through which adolescents think, including their bodies, social positions, cultural backgrounds, economic status, family life, and material and technological environments. Doing so would destabilize the entrenched ‘stages of development’ by exposing the contingency of the normative ‘milestones’ by which they are marked. Indeed, it would productively undermine the very idea of adolescence, along with all its assumptions about immaturity, irrationality, impulsiveness, and dependency, allowing young people to be taken seriously as human *beings*, rather than treated warily as *becoming* adults, *becoming* civilized, *becoming* citizens, *becoming* human.

Beyond Desire

We must not think that by saying yes to sex, one says no to power.
— Michel Foucault¹⁰⁷⁰

Michelle Fine observed decades ago that a “discourse of desire” is missing from sex education.¹⁰⁷¹ Teaching ‘the facts of life’ — only the anatomy, biology, and pathology of sex seen

¹⁰⁶⁹ Lave, Jean. *Cognition in Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. Print.

as necessary for protecting youth from sexual risks — omits any consideration of the complex motivations involved in sex, and also fails to acknowledge young people’s agency as motive sexual beings. When spoken of, such desires are “tagged with reminders of ‘consequences’ — emotional, physical, moral, reproductive, and/or financial.”¹⁰⁷²

Formal sex education, in the United States and elsewhere, has thus tended to be “sex-negative,” having always “emphasized fearful and dangerous aspects of sexuality.”¹⁰⁷³ This is due in part to the general perception in Western cultures of sex as “a dangerous, destructive, negative force,” which is intensified in relation to young people, who are supposed to be sexual innocents.¹⁰⁷⁴ Sex education, notes Louisa Allen, has “the contradictory task of acknowledging the sexual activity of those who are ‘ideally’ and normatively socially constituted as ‘non-sexual.’” By “concentrating on negative outcomes,” Allen suggests, sex education “may be seen to reconcile this tension.”¹⁰⁷⁵ In framing sexual behavior in terms of risks — unwanted pregnancy, STIs, AIDS, violence, and abuse — sex education can advocate innocence even while imparting knowledge.

The negative representation of sex in formal sex education programs is at odds with what kids learn from popular media. Sex is generally portrayed in magazines, movies, and on TV as desirable, exciting, pleasurable, and involving few risks.¹⁰⁷⁶ Allen points out that “when young

¹⁰⁷⁰ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 157.

¹⁰⁷¹ Fine, “Sexuality, Schooling.”

¹⁰⁷² Fine, “Sexuality, Schooling,” 33.

¹⁰⁷³ Frayser, Suzanne G. “Defining Normal Childhood Sexuality: An Anthropological Approach.” *Annual Review of Sex Research* 5.1 (1994): 210. Print; McCay, Alexander. *Sexual Ideology and Schooling: Towards a Democratic Sexuality Education*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1999. 65. Print.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Rubin, “Thinking Sex,” 148; See also: Corteen & Scraton. “Prolonging ‘Childhood’”; Monk, Daniel. “‘New Guidance/Old Problems’: Recent Developments in Sex Education.” *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law* 23.3 (2001): 271-291. Print; Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society*.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Allen, “Doing ‘It’ Differently,” 576.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Gunaskera, “Sex and Drugs”; Kim, Janna L. & L. Monquie Ward. “Striving for Pleasure Without Fear: Short Term Effects of Reading a Women’s Magazine on Women’s Sexual Attitudes.” *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 36.3 (2012): 326-336. Print; McRobbie, Angela. “MORE! New Sexualities in Magazines.” *Back to Reality? Social Experience and Cultural Studies*. Ed. Angela McRobbie. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997. 190-209. Print; Ward, Lawrence M. “Talking About Sex: Common

people receive the message from school that sexual activity is predominantly about danger, guilt and risk while elsewhere it is promoted as involving fun, pleasure and power, sexuality education's warnings can appear didactic and boring."¹⁰⁷⁷ Indeed, in numerous studies about their experiences with sex education, students report dissatisfaction with the overwhelming emphasis on risk and danger and the relative lack of discussion about desire, pleasure, and the embodied, emotional, and relational aspects of sexuality.¹⁰⁷⁸ As a result, young people find what they learn about sex in the media to be more relevant to their lives than what they are taught in school.¹⁰⁷⁹

As Fine and others have shown, the absence of desire and the focus on negative outcomes in sex education impacts youth differently across social identity categories.¹⁰⁸⁰ In presenting what

Themes About Sexuality in Prime-Time Television Programs Children and Adolescents View Most." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 24 (1995): 595-615. Print.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Allen, *Sexual Subjects*, 169.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Abel, Gillian & Lisa Fitzgerald. "When You Come to It You Feel Like a Dork Asking a Guy to Put a Condom On": Is Sex Education Addressing Young People's Understandings of Risk?" *Sex Education* 6.2 (2006): 105-119. Print; Allen, *Sexual Subjects*; Allen, Louisa. "They Think You Shouldn't Be Having Sex Anyway": Young People's Suggestions for Improving Sexuality Education Content." *Sexualities: Studies in Culture and Society* 11.5 (2008): 573-594. Print; Buckingham & Bragg. *Young People*; Carmody, Moira. *Sex and Ethics: Young People and Ethical Sex*. South Yarra: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print; Dicenso, Alba, et al. "Completing the Picture: Adolescents Talk About What's Missing in Sexual Health Services." *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 92.1 (2001): 35-38. Print; Fine & McClelland, "Sexuality Education and Desire"; Halstead, Mark & Michael J. Reiss. *Values in Sex Education: From Principles to Practice*. London: Routledge and Farmer, 2003. Print; Hillier, Lynne & Anne Mitchell. "It Was Useful as a Chocolate Kettle": Sex Education in the Lives of Same-Sex-Attracted Young People in Australia." *Sex Education* 8.2 (2008): 211-224. Print; Hilton, Gillian L.S. "Listening to the Boys Again: An Exploration of What Boys Want to Learn in Sex Education Classes and How They Want to Be Taught." *Sex Education* 7.2 (2007): 161-174. Print; Powell, Anastasia. *Sex, Power and Consent: Youth Culture and the Unwritten Rules*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Print; Rolston, Bill, et al. "The First Time: Young People and Sex in Northern Ireland." *Journal of Youth Studies* 7.2 (2004): 191-207. Print.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Allen, *Sexual Subjects*; Allen, Louisa. "They Think"; Ballam, Stacy M. & Paul F. Granello. "Confronting Sex in the Media: Implications and Counseling Recommendations." *The Family Journal* 19.4 (2011): 421-426. Print; L'Engle, Kelly L., et al. "The Mass Media Are an Important Context for Adolescents' Sexual Behavior." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 38.3 (2006): 186-192. Print; Levine, Judith. *Harmful to Minors: The Perils of Protecting Children from Sex*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2002. Print.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Connell, Catherine & Sinikka Elliott. "Beyond the Birds and the Bees: Learning Inequality through Sexuality Education." *American Journal of Sexuality Education* 2.2 (2009): 83-102. Print; Elia, John P. & Mickey Eliason. "Discourses of Exclusion: Sexuality Education's Silencing of Sexual Others." *Journal of LGBT Youth* 7.1 (2010): 29-48. Print; Fine & Sara McClelland, "Sexuality Education"; Garcia, Lorena. "Now Why Do You Want to Know About That?": Heteronormativity, Sexism and Racism in the Sexual Education of Latina Youth." *Gender & Society* 23.4 (2009): 520-541. Print; Rasmussen, Mary Lou. "Wounded Identities, Sex, and Pleasure: 'Doing It' at School. NOT!" *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 25.4 (2004): 445-458. Print; Tolman, Deborah L. & Tracy E. Higgins. "How Being a

is considered natural sexual behavior in terms of the risks involved, sex education codes implicit and explicit messages that reinforce a hegemonic sexuality which is rooted in, and bolsters, racial, class, gender, and sexual inequalities.¹⁰⁸¹ For example, anatomical and endocrinological accounts of sex reproduce the gendered sexual norms of the active, aggressive male and the passive, receptive female.¹⁰⁸² Teaching kids these ‘facts of life’ not only suggests to them that the purpose of sex is reproduction, and that sex is therefore ‘naturally’ heterosexual, but also positions them as the conventionally gendered sexual subjects of this discourse.¹⁰⁸³ In doing so, as Fine argues, sex education silences adolescent girls’ expressions of sexual agency — treating them as passive victims rather than active sexual subjects — and it thus participates in their victimization and exacerbates their vulnerability.¹⁰⁸⁴ Others have pointed out how teaching only the ‘facts’ about sex and risk also silences, victimizes, makes vulnerable, and otherwise disadvantages non-white, underprivileged, disabled, and LGBTQ youth.¹⁰⁸⁵

While particular young people bear an unfair share of the burden of sex-negative education, it is disadvantageous to all. As Allen has argued, “the predominant message of avoiding risk and danger does not afford young people the kind of agency necessary to make empowered sexual

Good Girl Can be Bad for Girls.” *Bad Girls’/‘Good Girls’: Women, Sex and Power in the Nineties*. Eds. Nan Bauer Maglin & Donna Perry. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996. 205-225. Print.

¹⁰⁸¹ Connell & Elliott, “Beyond the Birds”; Griffin, Christine. *Representations of Youth: The Study of Youth and Adolescents in Britain and America*. Cambridge: Polity, 1993. Print; Sears, James T., ed. *Sexuality in the Curriculum: The Politics and Practices of Sexuality*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1992. Print.

¹⁰⁸² Fausto-Sterling, Anne. *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books, 2000. Print.

¹⁰⁸³ Diorio, Joseph A. & Jennifer A. Munro. “Doing Harm in the Name of Protection: Menstruation as a Topic for Sex Education.” *Gender and Education* 12.3 (2000): 347-365. Print; Fields, Jessica. *Risky Lessons: Sex Education and Social Inequality*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2008. 112-113. Print; Scholer, Anne-Marie. “Sexuality in the Science Classroom: One Teacher’s Methods in a College Biology Course.” *Sex Education* 2.1 (2002): 75-86. Print.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Fine, “Sexuality, Schooling.”

¹⁰⁸⁵ Allen, *Sexual Subjects*; Connell & Elliott, “Beyond the Birds”; Elia & Eliason, “Discourses of Exclusion”; Fine & McClelland, “Sexuality Education”; Garcia, “‘Now Why Do You’”; Ingham, “‘We Didn’t Cover That in School’”; Rasmussen, Mary Lou. “Wounded Identities, Sex, and Pleasure: ‘Doing It’ at School. NOT!” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 25.4 (2004): 445-458. Print; Tolman & Higgins “How Being a Good Girl.”

decisions.”¹⁰⁸⁶ By not providing the sexual knowledge they want and need in order to make choices about whether, when, how, and with whom to have sex, sex education does little to help adolescents develop critical judgment and take responsibility for their sexual behavior.¹⁰⁸⁷ Developing healthy sexual subjectivity, according to Deborah Tolman, requires a sense of entitlement to both sexual safety *and* sexual pleasure, an understanding of both the risks *and* the rewards of sex, and the ability to make accordingly responsible choices.¹⁰⁸⁸ Formal sex education programs in the United States fail to nurture such sexual subjectivity.

Fine suggested that including a discourse of desire in sex education would help adolescent girls become empowered sexual subjects.¹⁰⁸⁹ Expanding on this, Allen argues that sex education needs to include a “discourse of erotics” that “acknowledge[s] that all young people, whatever their gender or sexual identity [...] are sexual subjects who have a right to experience sexual pleasure and desire.”¹⁰⁹⁰ Such a ‘sex-positive’ approach would open discursive space for the voices of adolescents, would respond to their expressed wants and needs, would help them challenge the gender- and hetero-normativity implicit in existing sex education curricula and in mainstream media and pornography, and would foster the development of empowered sexual subjects. Such “desiring subjects,” Fine and Sarah McClelland add, would also be able to recognize and navigate the broader social, political, and economic contexts that shape sexual risks, desires, and decision-making.¹⁰⁹¹

¹⁰⁸⁶ Allen, “Doing ‘It’ Differently,” 581.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Fine, “Sexuality, Schooling.”

¹⁰⁸⁸ Impett & Tolman, “Late Adolescent Girls”; Tolman, *Dilemmas of Desire*, 20; See also: Phillips, Lynn M. *Flirting with Danger: Young Women’s Reflections on Sexuality and Domination*. New York: New York University Press, 2000. Print.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Fine, “Sexuality, Schooling.”

¹⁰⁹⁰ Allen, Louisa. “Beyond the Birds and the Bees: Constituting a Discourse of Erotics in Sexuality in Education.” *Gender and Education* 16.2 (2004): 152. Print.

¹⁰⁹¹ Fine & McLelland, “Sexuality Education”; McLelland, Sara & Michelle Fine. “Writing on Cellophane: Studying Teen Women’s Sexual Desires; Inventing Methodological Release Points.” *The Methodological Dilemma: Creative, Critical and Collaborative Approaches to Qualitative Research*. Ed. Kathleen Gallagher. London: Routledge, 2008. 244. Print.

Both Fine and Allen point to the importance of acknowledging the sexual pleasure of young people, but this is framed in terms of the “desiring subject.”¹⁰⁹² Discourses of desire or erotics are imagined as ways to empower a sexual agency that has been repressed, and to thus liberate youth to explore sexual pleasure, and to come to know themselves as sexual beings. But as Foucault argues, “It is the agency of sex that we must break away from.” Sex is not “an autonomous agency” which “power tries as best it can to dominate,” but is rather “an ideal point made necessary by the deployment of sexuality.” The notion of ‘sex’ developed as an anchor point for a diverse set of moral, medical, scientific, legal, and pedagogical discourses about various bodies, behaviors, pleasures, practices, and social relations, through which these discourses could produce a unified body of knowledge deployed in the governance of modern populations. Rather than an essential force that has been repressed, sex is a collation of heterogeneous phenomena made to “function as a unique signifier and a universal signified.” Sex has thus been instrumentalized as “a motive force,” “a causal principle,” “a source of truth,” “the explanation for everything.” Modern citizens are governed in part through the production of sexual knowledge that “sex” indexes, by which they are positioned as “desiring subjects” whose “bodies and pleasures” become visible and intelligible, to themselves and to others, through the expression of sexual desire. Thus, per Foucault, “the rallying point of the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures.”¹⁰⁹³

¹⁰⁹² Both Fine and Allen often refer to “pleasure and desire” as if they are interchangeable concepts. In “Doing ‘It’ Differently,” Allen specifically refers to Foucault’s “ethics of pleasure,” but does not address how this is specifically set against the an “hermeneutics of desire” whereby individuals are “led to focus their attention on themselves, to decipher, recognize, and acknowledge themselves as subjects of desire, bringing into play between themselves and themselves a certain relationship that allows them to discover, in desire, the truth of their being.” Allen, “Doing ‘It’ Differently”; Foucault, Michel. *The Uses of Pleasure*. New York: Vintage, 1990. 5. Print.

¹⁰⁹³ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 154-157.

Sexual desire, according to Eve Sedgwick, is a “powerful solvent of stable identities.”¹⁰⁹⁴ Desire distills identity, crystalizing difference into essence. Desire implies aspiration, inclination, disposition, and thus functions as a mechanism by which the diverse discourses that produce sexual knowledge link embodied practices of pleasure to identities.¹⁰⁹⁵ Through the mechanism of ‘sex-desire’, different bodies and diverse pleasures become objects of knowledge, which are discursively assembled into a sexual truth that comes to define the identity of the desiring subject. Especially for women, racial, ethnic, and class Others, adolescents, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people, whose bodies and pleasures have been attacked, abused, maligned, disparaged, impugned, and erased because of their sexual desires, resistance to this discursive regime of sexuality requires a forefronting not of desire, but rather of pleasure. Sexual desire has been a mechanism through which these sexual Others have been made to confess their pleasures, through which these pleasures have been classified as perverse, and through which these classifications have been organized into deviant identities: the slut, the mandingo, the promiscuous poor, the libertine homosexual, the precocious adolescent. Articulating sexual pleasure outside the framework of desire — sex for the sake of sex — affords a “tactical reversal of the various mechanisms of sexuality” through which sexual subjects are constituted.¹⁰⁹⁶

Resisting the deployment of sexuality through “pleasure for its own sake” is not a “struggle for freedom,” argues Elizabeth Grosz, but is rather “a refusal to validate sexuality in terms of a greater cause or a higher purpose.”¹⁰⁹⁷ Yet this refusal can itself be liberatory — not of the repression of desire, but of the desire through which pleasures are made the objects of a

¹⁰⁹⁴ Sedgwick, Eve Sokofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990. 85. Print.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Davidson, Arnold I. “Foucault, Psychoanalysis, and Pleasure.” *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002. 213. Print; Halperin, David. *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. Print.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 157.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Grosz, Elizabeth. “Experimental Desire: Rethinking Queer Subjectivity.” *Supposing the Subject*. Ed. Joan Copjec. London: Verso, 1994. 157. Print.

knowledge that constitutes the subject. The “multiplication” and “intensification” of pleasures detached from a desire that would define them makes sexuality labile and indeterminate. This undercuts the instrumentalization of sex by *scientia sexualis*, and effectuates an *ars erotica* in which sex is part of an “aesthetics of existence.” “To speak of human existence as a work of art,” suggests James Bernauer, “is to take it out of the domain of the scientifically knowable,” which attenuates “the obligation of deciphering ourselves as a system of timeless functions which are subjected to corresponding norms.”¹⁰⁹⁸ Against desires discursively and normatively overdetermined by sexual science as the truth by which one comes to know oneself, practices of pleasure afford a way to form and transform oneself through the “arts of existence.”¹⁰⁹⁹

The “arts of existence,” as detailed by Foucault in his genealogy of sexual pleasure in Western antiquity, are “techniques” or “practices” of the self, “those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves.”¹¹⁰⁰ Through practices of pleasure — what the Greeks called the *aphrodisia* — individuals form themselves as “ethical subjects” of sexual conduct. In the Christian morality of sexual behavior that would subsume these arts of existence — and which would inform both *scientia sexualis* and our contemporary confessional culture — subjectivation works through the recognition of a codification of sexual acts within a set of laws and values, to which the subject adheres in a process of self-examination, confession, and renunciation of desires. In the arts of existence, the ethical subject is formed through an active process of self-mastery, of testing and training oneself in the control of desires. Through this process, the ethical subject establishes her freedom — not only from desire, and thus in relation to herself, but also in relation to others, as it

¹⁰⁹⁸ Bernauer, James. “Beyond Life and Death: On Foucault’s Post-Auschwitz Ethics.” *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*. Ed. Timothy J. Armstrong. Brighton: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1992. 261-262. Print.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Sawicki, Jana. “Foucault, Queer Theory, and the Discourse of Desire: Why Embrace an Ethics of Pleasure?” *Foucault and Philosophy*. Eds. Timothy O’Leary & Christopher Falzon. Malden: Blackwell, 2010. 185-203. Print.

is the ability to govern oneself that frees one from being governed, and “the power over oneself” that “regulates one’s power over others.”¹¹⁰¹ Rather than submission to a moral code or subjection to a set of scientific facts, this “ethics of pleasure” is practiced actively, freely, and in balanced relations of power with others.

Foucault intimates that he undertook this genealogy to recoup an “ethics of pleasure” for a “politics of identity” not determined by laws, values, and science.¹¹⁰² Jana Sawicki suggests that this was an attempt “to open the epistemological and cultural space for us to invent new truths about ourselves — to subject ourselves to new forms of self-understanding,” and to thus become sexual subjects unbound from normative identities defined by desires.¹¹⁰³ Applied to sex education, Mary Rasmussen argues that an ethics of pleasure could enable young people to experience themselves and relate to others as sexual beings in ways that transcend normative identity categories.¹¹⁰⁴ By moving beyond desire, an ethics of pleasure would undercut the logic of the sexual science underlying the birds and the bees, by which it is assumed there is an essential sexual truth through which young people should come to know themselves. Fostering an ethics of pleasure would afford adolescents the potential to form ethical sexual subjectivities through practices of pleasure in which they develop self-mastery over desire and thus enact sexual freedom in relation to themselves and others.

¹¹⁰⁰ This genealogy constitutes the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality, The Use of Pleasure, and The Care of the Self*. Foucault, Michel. *The Care of the Self*. New York: Vintage, 1988. Print; Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, 10-11.

¹¹⁰¹ Foucault, Michel. “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom.” *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: The New Press, 1997. 288. Print.

¹¹⁰² Foucault, Michel. “Ethics of Pleasure.” *Foucault Live: Interviews, 1961-1984*. Ed. Sylvere Lotringer. New York: Semiotext(e), 1996. 371-381. Print; Foucault, Michel. “Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity.” *Foucault Live: Interviews, 1961-1984*. Ed. Sylvere Lotringer. New York: Semiotext(e), 1996. 382-390. Print.

¹¹⁰³ Sawicki, “Foucault,” 186.

¹¹⁰⁴ Rasmussen, “Wounded Identities.”

Critical Sexual Pedagogy

SexEd follows Louisa Allen's call for sex education to move beyond the birds and the bees. By tracing how this discursive tactic has propagated a complex system of sexual pedagogy of which formal sex education is but one part, *SexEd* suggests that such a move requires unraveling the logic of the birds and the bees by moving beyond its foundational assumptions about adolescent sexual knowledge. Beyond the birds and the bees lies the possibility of a critical sexual pedagogy that abandons these imperious assumptions in favor of engaging adolescents in a reflexive process of producing sexual knowledge that is about them, for them, and relevant to them.

The birds and the bees assumes that adolescents are innocent. By accepting that often they are 'knowing' — that they not only have access to a wide range of sexual knowledge, but also play an active role in interpreting, producing, and circulating this knowledge — sexual pedagogy can push beyond an entrenched didacticism aimed at protecting youth to become a partner in the ongoing process of 'knowing' sex. Sexual pedagogy can be re-imagined as a tool more than a teacher, which adolescents can use to help them navigate diverse sexual knowledges and the tangle of discourses and institutions through which they are produced, to make meaning of these knowledges by interpreting, critiquing, and contextualizing them, and to appositely apply these knowledges to their own lives.

The birds and the bees assumes that adolescents are inherently at risk. By recognizing that risks are socially constructed, that adolescents have situated knowledge through which they negotiate risks, and that they sometimes make choices counter to the risk-averse logic of 'expert knowledge', sexual pedagogy can progress beyond a peremptory approach to risk, working instead to guide young people in the task of sexual decision-making. A critical sexual pedagogy would not only provide information about the potential outcomes of particular actions, but would also engage adolescents' specific cultural and embodied knowledges, their feelings and fantasies,

their wants, needs, and desires, and would thereby help them make *the right choices for them*, whether ‘risky’ or not. In doing so, sexual pedagogy would nurture ‘practices of the self’ through which young people develop the coping skills, independence, resilience, and responsibility necessary for a healthy sexual life.

The birds and the bees assumes that adolescents are irrational. By not privileging abstract reason as the endpoint of development, sexual pedagogy can advance beyond the developmental model that locks youth into particular stages and limits curriculum to “developmentally appropriate practices,” offering in its place a range of educational materials and methods that can address the diversity of development across individuals, as well as their specifically situated practices of cognition. A critical sexual pedagogy would encourage adolescents to think through their bodies, their feelings, and their environment as they engage with sexual knowledge and make sexual decisions, thus making sex something real and relevant rather than intangible and abstract, and grounding the development of their sexual subjectivities in the institutions, practices, bodies, and artifacts in and through which they are constituted.

The birds and the bees assumes that there is an essential sexual truth through which adolescents will come to know themselves. By seeing sexuality as a product of diverse discourses unified under the unique signifier ‘sex’, and desire as the mechanism by which ‘bodies and pleasures’ are discursively figured as particular identities, sexual pedagogy can become more than an apparatus for reproducing normative sexual identities through an essentializing sexual knowledge, functioning instead to nurture the development of ethical sexual subjects by assisting adolescents in developing self-mastery of their desires. A critical sexual pedagogy would promote an ‘aesthetics of existence’ by providing adolescents with resources for exercising practices of the self, thereby cultivating ethical relationships with themselves and others.

In accepting adolescents’ sexual knowledge as situated practices of knowing through which they constitute sexual subjectivities, rather than as sexual truth that will manifest their desires as

identities, critical sexual pedagogy would need to take seriously the pedagogic function of media sex. Young people come to know sex through the pornotopian media culture that forms the terrain of everyday experience more than through the ‘facts of life’ imparted in the classroom. As we have seen, sex education has become impoverished in the United States while sex in the media has flourished, yet media sex often reflects the hegemonic sexuality coded into the ‘facts of life’ taught in schools.¹¹⁰⁵ Such media act as a “force of permanent education,” which, as Raymond Williams recognized, is “financed and distributed in a much larger way than is formal education.” As such, it is a form of public pedagogy “in which our ideas of the world, of ourselves and of our possibilities, are most widely and often most powerfully formed and disseminated.”¹¹⁰⁶

Williams drew attention to the need to take media seriously as pedagogical sites. Pedagogy is not restricted to the classroom, but is rather diffused throughout the realm of culture. As Henry Giroux suggests, this means that the pedagogical and the political are thoroughly intertwined, as “the very processes of learning constitute the political mechanisms through which identities are shaped, desires mobilized, and experiences take on form and meaning.”¹¹⁰⁷ Williams called for the development of alternative public pedagogies to counter the commercial imperative of a mass media that serves the interests of capitalism. While Williams located possible alternatives outside

¹¹⁰⁵ Attwood, Feona. “Sluts and Riot Grrrls: Female Identity and Sexual Agency.” *Journal of Gender Studies* 16.3 (2007): 233-247. Print; Banet-Wiser, Sarah. “Branding the Post-Feminist Self: Girls’ Video Production and YouTube.” *Mediated Girlhoods: New Explorations of Girls’ Media Culture*. Ed. Mary Celeste Kearney. New York: Peter Lang, 2011. 277-294. Print; Brown, “Mass Media Influences,” 42-45; Durham, *The Lolita Effect*; Gill, Rosalind. “Empowerment/Sexism: Figuring Female Sexual Agency in Contemporary Advertising.” *Feminism & Psychology* 18.1 (2008): 35-60. Print; Harris, “Discourses of Desire”; Harris, Anita. *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print; Kim, Yerna. “Idol Republic: The Global Emergence of Girl Industries and the Commercialization of Girl Bodies.” *Journal of Gender Studies* 20.4 (2011): 333-345. Print; Pinto, Pedro. “Minding the Body, Sexing the Brain: Hormonal Truth and the Post-Feminist hermeneutics of Adolescence.” *Feminist Theory* 13.3 (2012): 305-323. Print; Sorsoli, C. Lynn, et al. “From Sex to Sexuality: Exposing the Heterosexual Script on Primetime Network Television.” *Journal of Sex Research* 44.2 (2007): 145-157. Print; Wolf, Michelle & Alfred Kielwasser. *Gay People, Sex, and the Media*. New York: Harrington Park Press, 1991. Print.

¹¹⁰⁶ Williams, Raymond. “Preface to the Second Edition.” *Communication*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967. 15. Print.

¹¹⁰⁷ Giroux, Henry A. “Neoliberalism as Public Pedagogy.” *Handbook of Public Pedagogy: Education and Learning Beyond Schooling*. Eds. Jennifer A. Sandlin, et al. New York: Routledge, 2010. 491. Print.

the media, Stuart Hall and others who responded to this call have shown that popular media function as sites of ideological struggle over the meanings of representations through which we form ideas about the world and ourselves.¹¹⁰⁸ As such, the media need to be taken seriously not as didactic tools of the culture industries, but as potential sites for articulating and practicing alternative public pedagogies.

However, as we have seen in *SexEd*, one legacy of child, media, and sexual studies in the United States is a didactical understanding of the pedagogical relationship between youth and media sex, in which young people are seen as blank slates upon which media messages are indelibly inscribed, and thus as innocent victims of a force over which they have no control. This has fueled numerous media panics and prompted endless regulatory efforts, which have failed to limit young people's access to media sex, but have succeeded in shaping it in often troublesome ways. Media sex has thus become a readily available yet problematic source of sexual knowledge for young people. At the same time, it has become valuable and is sought out because it portrays aspects of the emotions, intimacies, bodies, pleasures, and desires that are elsewhere silenced. Moreover, new forms of media sex not only allow access to information, ideas, and images of desire and pleasure that range well beyond the dominant sexual discourses in the mainstream media, but they also offer new ways to explore and experiment with sexuality, to engage, interact, and participate in the discursive production of sexual knowledge. Yet because of the hegemonic discourse of childhood innocence, which insists that young people are asexual, passive, and dependent, when they actively use new media to assert themselves as sexual subjects, the precociousness of these young prodigies is condemned, particularly if they challenge gendered, raced, and classed norms of sexuality.¹¹⁰⁹

¹¹⁰⁸ Hall, "Encoding and Decoding"; Morley, *The "Nationwide" Audience*; Liebes & Katz, *Export of Meaning*; Corner, "Meaning, Genre"; Smythe, *Dependency Road*.

¹¹⁰⁹ As Richard Lancaster notes, minors who fail to conform to adult discourses of youth sexual innocence may be labeled SACY — Sexually Aggressive Children and Youth. Such adult discourses are embedded with normalizing conceptualizations of the 'problem' child, argues Erica Burman, which are based in

Rather than seeing adolescents as innocent victims or precocious perpetrators of media sex, a critical sexual pedagogy would assume they have the *potential* to engage critically with media sex in making meanings relevant to their own lives, and would thus take their media sex practices as valuable exercises in the reflexive construction of their sexual subjectivities. As we saw in the last chapter, young people already engage in such critical practices. Youth do think about, talk about, appropriate, and repurpose media representations of sex to make meanings that sometimes resist hegemonic discourses. Digital and networked technologies have afforded new opportunities for doing so. The internet in particular has fostered “safe spaces” for engaging, questioning, and critiquing dominant sexual discourses.¹¹¹⁰ Numerous studies have documented how young people use chatrooms, websites, blogs, and socially networked applications to explore sexuality and play with sexual identity in a reflexive process of constructing sexual subjectivity.¹¹¹¹

Research has, however, also revealed a tendency for adolescents to discursively reproduce established social structures and normative identities in online spaces by borrowing tropes and representational practices from the mainstream media and popular culture.¹¹¹² A critical sexual pedagogy that takes seriously the pedagogic potential of the media would be a crucial intervention into this discursive process of ideological reproduction. Such an intervention would not attempt to teach adolescents the ‘right’ or ‘appropriate’ way to engage with media sex, but rather, would provide them with the tools to do so in critical and reflexive ways. Refusing to be

hegemonic values of gender, race, class, and ethnicity. When children assert themselves as active social agents, observes Sue Scott, they are often judged by these values and defined as problems. Due to child pornography laws and heightened attention to sexual predators, those identified as SACY may be subject to criminal sanctions. Burman, *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*, 229-233; Karaian, “Lolita Speaks”; Lancaster, *Sex Panic*, 63; Scott, “Swings and Roundabouts,” 696-697.

¹¹¹⁰ Harris, “Discourses of Desire”; Harris, *Future Girl*.

¹¹¹¹ boyd, “Why Youth ♥”; Grisso & Weiss, “What Are gURLs Talking About?”; Harper, “Sexual Identity Development”; Huffaker & Calvert. “Gender, Identity, and Language”; McKenna & Bargh, “Coming Out”; Stern, “Producing Sites, Exploring Identities”; Subrahmanyam, Greenfield & Tynes, “Constructing Sexuality”; Subrahmanyam, Smahel & Greenfield. “Connecting Developmental Constructions”; Turkle, *Life on the Screen*.

¹¹¹² Baym, “Online Community”; Davis, “Coming of Age Online”; Elias & Lemish, “Spinning the Web”; Grisso & Weiss, “What Are gURLs Talking About?”; Hardey, “Life Beyond the Screen”; Herring,

didactic, this pedagogical intervention would not prevent adolescents from reproducing hierarchically positioned normative identities, nor would it even discourage them from doing so. Nor would this pedagogy assume that “giving voice” to youth is inherently liberating or empowering.¹¹¹³ Such celebrations of the power of putting “authentic” youth voice into media suggest a nonexistent egalitarianism that obscures rather than unsettles uneven distributions of power, tends to reproduce stereotypes, disciplines young people by managing their conduct, and produces “enterprising subjects” by instilling “norms of individualism, self-reliance and self-management” that “resonate with new configurations of power and authority under neo-liberalism.”¹¹¹⁴ Instead, by providing tools to not only critique representational practices, but to also participate in them, this pedagogy would incorporate the situated knowledges and contextual cognition of adolescents, thereby making representational practices into practices of the self for which they are responsible, to themselves and to others. How they conduct these practices may or may not be liberating, empowering, or transgressive, but they would function within a relational ethics of media sex not determined by moral codes or empirical evidence.

As such, a critical sexual pedagogy would necessarily be a form of media literacy praxis. Indeed, as Paolo Freire, Donaldo Macedo, Henry Giroux, and many others have recognized, critical pedagogy must engage a cultural politics of literacy to ensure that the very ways young people learn to communicate have the potential to empower rather than repress. Such a pedagogy must be grounded in the everyday knowledge, experience, and practice of youth, rather than in

“Women and Children Last”; Kendall, “Meaning and Identity”; Kolko, *Race in Cyberspace*; Nakamura, *Cybertypes*; Nakamura, *Digitizing Race*.

¹¹¹³ Hoehsmann, Michael & Stuart R. Poyntz. *Media Literacies: A Critical Introduction*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. 118. Print.

¹¹¹⁴ Bragg, Sara. “‘Student Voice’ and Governmentality: The Production of Enterprising Subjects?” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 28.3 (2007): 343. Print; Orner, Mimi. “Interrupting the Calls for Student Voice in Liberatory Education: A Feminist Poststructuralist Perspective.” *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*. Eds Carmen Luke & Jennifer Gore. New York: Routledge, 1992. 15-25. Print; Soep, Elizabeth. “Beyond Literacy and Voice in Youth Media Education.” *McGill Journal of Education* 41.3 (2006): 197-213. Print; Trend, David. *Cultural Democracy: Politics, Media, New Technology*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997. Print.

abstract, universalizing, and normalizing knowledge that obfuscates the Other and denigrates difference.¹¹¹⁵ Because “the literacies of the postmodern age are electronic, aural, and image based,” notes Giroux, “it is precisely within the diverse terrain of popular culture that pedagogical practices must be established as part of a broader politics of public life.”¹¹¹⁶ Critical sexual pedagogy as a practice of media literacy would open up new possibilities and opportunities for adolescents to engage with sexual knowledge, allowing them to shape the public pedagogy of media sex, and in doing so, to shape their sexual subjectivities. “Through a continuous critical engagement with texts, images, events, and other registers of meaning as they are transformed into public pedagogies,” such a “politics of possibility” would “give meaning and ethical substance to their experiences and voices,” while also opening them to others, thus providing a foundation for the constitution of ethical sexual subjects and relations.¹¹¹⁷

The Limits of Literacy

Digital media literacy has been forwarded as a solution to the “second level digital divide” between those who have access to new media technologies and those who use them in

¹¹¹⁵ Freire, Paulo & Donaldo Macedo. *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*. London: Routledge, 1987. Print; Gee, James Paul. “Teenagers in New Times: A New Literacy Studies Perspective.” *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 43.5 (2000): 412-420. Print; Giroux, Henry. “Literacy and the Pedagogy of Voice and Political Empowerment.” *Educational Theory* 38.1 (1988): 61-75. Print; hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print; Lewis, Cynthia & Bettina Fabos. “Instant Messaging, Literacies, and Social Identities.” *Reading Research Quarterly* 40.4 (2005): 470-501. Print; Morrell, Ernest. “Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Popular Culture: Literacy Development Among Urban Youth.” *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 46.1 (2002): 72-77. Print; Morrell, Ernest. *Critical Literacy and Urban Youth: Pedagogies of Access, Dissent, and Liberation*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print; Street, Brian V. *Literacy in Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Print.

¹¹¹⁶ Giroux, “Teenage Sexuality,” 329.

¹¹¹⁷ Giroux, Henry A. *America's Education Deficit and the War on Youth: Reform Beyond Electoral Politics*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2013. 192. Print; Giroux, Henry A. & Roger Simon. “Popular Culture and Critical Pedagogy: Everyday Life as a Basis for Curriculum Knowledge.” *Critical Pedagogy, the State, and Cultural Struggle*. Eds. Henry A. Giroux & Peter McLaren. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989. 237. Print.

empowering ways.¹¹¹⁸ As a media literacy praxis, a critical sexual pedagogy would likewise address the divide between the numerous young people who have access to new media sex and the relatively few who engage with it in the articulation of empowered and ethical sexual subjectivities. While there has simultaneously been increasing concern with new media sex and increasing attention to the need for media literacy, the idea of *sexual media literacy* has not been developed. Sexual media literacy would allow adolescents to negotiate sexual representations and discourses in the media, to take and make meaning from them that is relevant to the development of their sexuality. Such literacy would entail the ability to not only critically ‘read’ media sex ‘texts’ — which would itself require both textual analysis and analysis of the social, political, and economic institutions that make and shape media texts — but also to use new media technologies to ‘manage’ media sex: to appropriate, repurpose, and recirculate existing texts, to produce new texts, and to thus participate in the discursive production of sexual knowledge to which adolescents are subjects.

Casting critical sexual pedagogy as a practice of sexual media literacy has the advantage of fostering a sex education that moves beyond the birds and the bees by contextualizing the ‘facts of life’ within an aesthetics of existence, while sidestepping the sticky morass of formal sex education in America. However, widespread adoption of media literacy education has been hampered in the United States, and where it has been adopted, has been limited by the particular

¹¹¹⁸ Hargittai, Eszter. “Second Level Digital Divide: Differences in People’s Online Skills.” *First Monday* 7.4 (2002): n.p. Web. 10 Oct. 2013; Hargittai, Eszter & Gina Walejko. “The Participation Divide: Content Creation and Sharing in the Digital Age.” *Information, Communication and Society* 11.2 (2008): 239-256. Print; Peter, Jochen & Patti M. Valkenburg. “Adolescents’ Internet Use: Testing the ‘Disappearing Digital Divide’ Against the ‘Emerging Digital Differentiation’ Approach.” *Poetics* 34.4/5 (2006): 293-305. Print; Van Dijk, Jan. “Divides in Succession: Possession, Skills and Use of New Media for Social Participation.” *Media Access: Social and Psychological Dimensions of New Technology Use*. Eds. Erik P. Bucy & John E. Newhagen. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004. 233-254. Print.

cultural politics of literacy that has developed as new forms of media have been integrated into society.¹¹¹⁹

Bound up with questions of power and control over the circulation of information and ideas, the history of literacy has been marked by struggles over the right to not only access, but also to interpret — to make meaning — of media texts.¹¹²⁰ These struggles have been prompted by the development of a literate but supposedly uncritical public.¹¹²¹ As the masses acquired reading and writing skills that had secured the power of the elite by giving them control over knowledge, “literacy” was differentiated from the “literary” to distinguish between high and low culture, and between the social classes with which forms of culture were associated.¹¹²² It signified particular formal qualities and substantive engagement with enduring human issues that required education and skills beyond mere “literacy” to understand. This initially class-based distinction has been mapped onto succeeding media as a difference between access and discernment.¹¹²³

Modern media literacy campaigns began in response to concerns about the first truly mass medium: cinema. Unlike print, films were ‘written’ in the ostensibly universal language of images, and seemed to require no special skills to ‘read’. The powerful ability of movies to communicate to people of all ages, classes, and ethnicities, as we saw in chapter two, was both touted for its educational and democratic potential and also denounced as a low form of culture that instilled poor values. In the United States, efforts to teach film literacy emerged in the 1920s

¹¹¹⁹ Giroux, Henry A. *Impure Acts: The Practical Politics of Cultural Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2000. Print; Kellner, Douglas. *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern*. New York: Routledge, 1995. Print.

¹¹²⁰ Luke, Carmen. *Pedagogy, Printing, and Protestantism: The Discourse of Childhood*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1989. Print.

¹¹²¹ Drotner, Kirsten. “Dangerous Media? Panic Discourses and Dilemmas of Modernity.” *Pedagogica Historica* 35.3 (1999): 593-619. Print.

¹¹²² Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. Print.

¹¹²³ Hoggart, Richard. *The Uses of Literacy: Changing Patterns in English Mass Culture*. Fair Lawn: Essential Books, 1957. Print.

as part of industry efforts to preclude government regulation.¹¹²⁴ The National Board of Review worked to educate viewers in how to evaluate, distinguish, and appreciate good films, hoping to realize the educational and democratic potential of film while also advancing it as an art and a valuable cultural resource by pressuring Hollywood to make better films for a more discerning audience.¹¹²⁵ Following the publication of the Payne Fund Studies, film literacy efforts began to specifically target youth by integrating film into classrooms through the film education and film appreciation movements. These efforts sought to put critical distance between young viewers and the characters, scenes, and actions with which they might identify by asking them to question their plausibility and realism, focusing specifically on the displays of wealth, crime, and sex that were thought to lead young people into delinquent behavior.¹¹²⁶

¹¹²⁴ As Alexander Fedorov documents, similar efforts emerged in the 1920s and 1930s in France, the UK, Germany, and Russia, but these were not linked to industry. Fedorov, Alexander. "Media Education Around the World: Brief History." *Acta Didactica Napocensia* 1.2 (2008): 56-68. Print.

¹¹²⁵ The NBR, as Raymond Haberski notes, shifted emphasis toward educating the audience when their editorial function was largely displaced by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), aka the "Hays Office," in 1922. The NBR's publications include: *Film Program* [1917-1926], *Exceptional Photoplays* [1920-1925], *Photoplay Guide to Better Movies* [1924-1926], *National Board of Review Magazine* [1926-1942], and *Films in Review*, which was first published in 1950. Haberski, *It's Only a Movie!* 48-62; Nichols, "Countering Censorship."

¹¹²⁶ These two different efforts were instigated by PFS researchers. Mark May spearheaded the film education movement. Through the non-profit organization Teaching Film Custodians, which was backed by film industry trade group the MPPDA, excerpts of Hollywood features were compiled into series designed to teach science, citizenship, and moral character. Edgar Dale collaborated with the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) to prepare course materials and study guides to help students appreciate, evaluate, and critique films. One exercise asked students to consider "To what extent are the real effects of crime upon the welfare and happiness of people truthfully shown?" Another asked whether the following characterizations of love scenes in motion pictures were true to life: 1) Men fall in love with women because of their pretty faces, hair, and clothes; 2) Women fall in love with men because they are tall, dark, and handsome; 3) If a girl is pretty, she can make a man happy regardless of her intelligence; 4) Marrying a rich man can insure happiness for a poor girl. Dale, Edgar. *How to Appreciate Motion Pictures: A Manual of Motion-Picture Criticism Prepared for High-School Students*. New York: Macmillan, 1933. Print; Dale, Edgar. *Audio-Visual Methods in Teaching*. New York: Ohio State University Press, 1946. Print; Jacobs, Lea. "Reformers and Spectators: The Film Education Movement in the Thirties." *Camera Obscura* 8.1 (1990): 28-49. Print; Lewin, William. *Photoplay Appreciation in American High Schools*. New York: National Council of Teachers of English, 1934. Print; May, Mark. "Educational Possibilities of the Motion Picture." *Journal of Educational Sociology* 11.3 (1937): 149-160. Print; Mullen, Sarah McLean. *How to Judge Motion Pictures: A Pamphlet for High School Students*. New York: Scholastic, 1934. Print; Pollard, Elizabeth Watson. *Teaching Motion Picture Appreciation*. New York: Bureau of Educational Research, Ohio State University, 1933. Print; Rand, Helen & Richard Lewis. *Film and School: A Handbook in Moving-Picture Evaluation*. New York: National Council of Teachers of English, 1937. Print.

This protectionist approach — teaching youth critical skills that would “inoculate” them against influential media messages in order to counter their deleterious effects — would shape media literacy education (MLE) in the United States for much of the twentieth century.¹¹²⁷ On the one hand, the tight regulation of media content by industry codes obviated the need for “inoculation” for which literacy was prescribed. On the other hand, because new forms of media like film, radio, and television were seen as popular (and low) forms of culture intended for entertainment and leisure, they were not seen as worthy of school study in their own right, as were classical (and high) forms of culture like fine art and literature.¹¹²⁸ Film — and to a lesser extent, television — would be used in the classroom as educational technologies, but efforts to teach critical literacy about them never became widespread.¹¹²⁹ While in the UK, and then in other Western European nations, Australia, and Canada, the influence of cultural studies developing out of the work of Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams in the 1950s and 1960s made media an important social topic and literacy a vital national concern, in the US, it was only with growing anxiety over the effects on children of television violence in the 1970s that the issue of media literacy came to the attention of the public and policy makers.¹¹³⁰

In the interest of counteracting persuasive and violent media messages, both the NEA and the NCTE passed resolutions recommending critical viewing curricula in schools.¹¹³¹ A number

¹¹²⁷ Protectionism also shaped media literacy education in the UK, following F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson’s efforts to inoculate children against mass media effects in the visual literacy movement of the 1930s. But this was displaced by a cultural studies approach to media literacy following the work of Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams in the 1950s and 1960s. Hoggart, *Uses of Literacy*; Leavis, F.R. & Denys Thompson. *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1933. Print; Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society, 1780-1950*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1958. Print.

¹¹²⁸ Kubey, Robert W. “Why U.S. Media Education Lags Behind the rest of the English Speaking World.” *Television and New Media* 4.4 (2003): 359-361. Print.

¹¹²⁹ Television, for example, was integrated into inner-city classrooms in the 1950s through programs spearheaded by the National Association of Educational Broadcasters and backed by the Ford Foundation, which were a response to under-funding and teacher shortages in poor, urban areas. Goldfarb, Brian. *Visual Pedagogy: Media Culture in and Beyond the Classroom*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002. Print.

¹¹³⁰ Kubey, “Why U.S. Media,” 365.

¹¹³¹ Heins, Marjorie & Christina Cho. *Media Literacy: An Alternative to Censorship*. New York: Free expression Policy Project, 2003. 7. Print; Klass, Karen. “National Education Association Activities in

of subsequent small-scale programs implemented in and outside the classroom showed positive results, but reluctance to see the value of having kids study the media limited media literacy efforts.¹¹³² The first federal endeavor — a Department of Education initiative under the Carter administration that sought to establish a nationwide K-12 “critical viewing skills” curriculum to inoculate youth against media violence — was shut down by Congress for “wasting tax-payer’s money teaching kids to watch TV.”¹¹³³ Playing on the negative publicity that the pilot programs of this endeavor received, Ronald Reagan’s presidential campaign included a proposal to dissolve the Department of Education. While this was never achieved, under his administration “back-to-basics” became the mantra of US education policy, under which media literacy programs became “unnecessary frills.”¹¹³⁴

Non-governmental efforts to promote media literacy continued in the 1980s, but MLE in the United States remained, as Patricia Aufderheide characterized it in 1992, “a blizzard of idiosyncratic projects” that lacked “a central mission or mandate” as well as any infrastructure

Receivership Skills Curricula.” *Education for the Television Age: The Proceedings of a National Conference on the Subject of Children and Television*. Eds. Milton Ploghoft & James Anderson. Athens: Cooperative Center for Social Science Education, 1981. 107. Print.

¹¹³² See: Ashton, Craig. “The Way We See It: A Program Design for Instruction of Critical Televiewing Skills.” *Education for the Television Age: The Proceedings of a National Conference on the Subject of Children and Television*. Eds. Milton Ploghoft & James Anderson. Athens: Cooperative Center for Social Science Education, 1981. 55. Print; Brown, James A. *Television “Critical Viewing Skills” Education: Major Media Literacy Projects in the United States and Selected Countries*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991. 181-200. Print; Dorr, Aimee, et al. “Television Literacy for Young Children.” *Journal of Communication* 30.3 (1980): 71-83. Print; Elingson, Melva. “Television Viewer Skills Project, Eugene, Oregon School District.” *Education for the Television Age: The Proceedings of a National Conference on the Subject of Children and Television*. Eds. Milton Ploghoft & James Anderson. Athens: Cooperative Center for Social Science Education, 1981. Print; Rapaczynski, Wanda, et al. “Teaching Television: A Curriculum for Young Children.” *Journal of Communication* 30.2 (1982): 51. Print; Schaff, Suzanne. “Television Receivership Skills Program in the East Syracuse-Minoa Central Schools.” *Education for the Television Age: The Proceedings of a National Conference on the Subject of Children and Television*. Eds. Milton Ploghoft & James Anderson. Athens: Cooperative Center for Social Science Education, 1981. 85-86. Print; Singer, Dorothy, et al. “Helping Elementary School Children Learn About TV.” *Journal of Communication* 30.3 (1980): 84-93. Print.

¹¹³³ Thoman, Elizabeth & Tessa Jolls. “Media Literacy Education: Lessons from the Center for Media Literacy.” *Media Literacy: Transforming Curriculum and Teaching*. Eds. Gretchen Schwarz & Pamela Brown. Malden: Blackwell, 2006. 180-205. Print; Tyner, Kathleen. “The Media Education Elephant.” *Proceedings of the 1992 UNESCO Conference on Media Education*. Ed. Cary Bazelgette. London: BFI, 1992. n.p. Print.

¹¹³⁴ Tyner, “The Media Education Elephant.”

that would give it legitimacy.¹¹³⁵ When the federal government finally returned to the issue of media literacy in the mid-1990s, it again took a protectionist stance, and again failed to organize any sort of nationwide endeavor.¹¹³⁶ Media literacy was incorporated into specific youth protection programs sponsored by diverse federal agencies such as the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the National Traffic Safety Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Office of Justice Programs.¹¹³⁷ The influence of the protectionist paradigm and the scattershot method of deploying it was reflected in academic journals in the late 1990s, which reported numerous and diverse media literacy efforts, which for the most part targeted specific problems like tobacco, alcohol, and drug use, violence, and AIDS.¹¹³⁸

Two other developments significantly shaped media literacy in the United States during this time. First, the integration of video and computers into classrooms during the 1980s and 1990s, like film and television before them, was largely as educational technologies intended to assist or enhance established pedagogical practices, with little to no critical reflection on them as forms of media. Videotapes and then DVDs merely provided content. Computers were used for word processing, problem solving, or rote learning tasks. When they did become the objects of

¹¹³⁵ These efforts included the development of curricula by the National Parent Teacher Association, participation in the UNESCO Symposium and Declaration on Media Education, and the establishing of two major organizations, Strategies for Media Literacy and the Center for Media Literacy. According to Aufderhide, infrastructure for media literacy education would include “an operating foundation, a professional association, a central database and network” that would provide “basic information” and evaluation. Aufderhide, Patricia. “Media Education in the 1990s.” *Afterimage* 20.2 (1992): n.p. Print; Brown, *Television “Critical Viewing Skills,”* 178-201; Heins & Cho. *Media Literacy*, 11-12.

¹¹³⁶ The Departments of Justice (DOJ), Education (DOE), and Health and Human Services (HHS) hosted a conference in 1993 titled “Safeguarding Our Youth: Violence Prevention for Our Nation’s Children,” which produced a report prioritizing a “broad-based media literacy education” to be implemented by the DOE, HHS, the FCC, and the FTC. Such an effort was never realized. Heins & Cho. *Media Literacy*, 15; “Safeguarding Our Youth: Violence Prevention for Our Nation’s Children.” Thousand Oaks: National School Safety Center, 1993. Print.

¹¹³⁷ Heins & Cho. *Media Literacy*, 15.

¹¹³⁸ Several influential journals dedicated special issues to the topic of media literacy. See, for example: *Journal of Communication* 48.1 (1998); *English Journal* 87.1 (1998); *Journal of Adolescent Health* 27.2 (2000).

education, it was in the form of technical training oriented towards job markets.¹¹³⁹ Videography and editing skills opened up career possibilities in the burgeoning media industries, and basic computer skills were being touted as increasingly necessary to a range of job options.¹¹⁴⁰ While this kind of “critical vocationalism” offered new opportunities for underprivileged youth, teaching only practical skills encouraged imitation of industry practices, rather than critique.¹¹⁴¹

Second, increasing involvement in media literacy efforts on the part of the media industries themselves helped to discourage and deflect critique of these industries as part of the media equation. Channel One, for example, made its national debut in 1990, offering twelve minutes of news and two minutes of advertising targeted at students in schools that accepted this programming in exchange for TVs, VCRs, and satellite equipment. After being widely criticized as a marketing scheme designed to sell a captive youth audience to advertisers, Channel One commissioned media literacy educator Renée Hobbs to design a short series, *Media Matters*, that taught basic skills for analyzing news and advertising.¹¹⁴² Media industry trade groups and corporations also established “collaborative partnerships between broadcasters and educators nationwide,” in which they provided media literacy curricula.¹¹⁴³ By focusing on the analysis of

¹¹³⁹ Hoechsmann & Poyntz, *Media Literacies*, 13-14.

¹¹⁴⁰ This was in part due to a shift toward career-oriented pedagogical prerogatives, but was also because media education was not often integrated into other curricula, instead being taught in specialized courses and programs by former professionals who often did not emphasize critical thinking. Goldfarb, Brian. *Visual Pedagogy: Media Culture in and Beyond the Classroom*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002. Print.

¹¹⁴¹ Connel, Ian & Geoff Hurd. “Cultural Education: A Revised Program.” *Media Information Australia* 53 (1989): 23-30. Print; Masterman, Len. *Teaching the Media*. London: Comedia, 1983. Print.

¹¹⁴² The PTA, the NEA, and the National School Board Association (NBSA) were among the critics. Channel One had itself boasted that its programming was “a marketer’s secret weapon [...] an unparalleled way to reach a massive teen audience in a highly relevant, important and uncluttered environment.” Manning, Steven. “Channel One Enters Literacy Movement.” *Rethinking Schools* 14.2 (1999): n.p. Web. 30 Jan. 2014.

¹¹⁴³ The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) commissioned media literacy educators Dorothy and Jerome Singer to design the “Creating Critical Viewers Program,” which provided to schools, teachers, and nonprofit organizations videos and other curricular material that “taught young people how to watch television with a critical eye to news gathering, stereotypes, and conflict resolution.” Discovery Communications, owner of the Discovery Channel and the Learning Channel, developed and distributed to schools their own curriculum on understanding nonfiction television, in an effort to get local cable systems to carry their channels. Considine, David & Gail Haley. *Visual Messages: Integrating*

content, none of these curricula encouraged critical reflection on the industries that produced this content. Regarding this development, Bob McCannon of the New Mexico Media Literacy Project argued that “media literacy is being hijacked by corporate interests who are using the movement to buy legitimacy and deflect criticism of their products.”¹¹⁴⁴ Moreover, in doing so they compete with, and detract from, the work of non-profit organizations to promote more comprehensive forms of media literacy.

In the twenty-first century, then, even as media literacy is being prescribed as an antidote to the digital divide, it remains, in the words of Marjorie Heins, “a patchwork quilt of nonprofit advocacy groups, for-profit providers of curricular materials, and assorted state and local initiatives, [only] a handful of which receive federal funding.”¹¹⁴⁵ While some endeavors strive to be integrative and comprehensive, MLE in the United States is dominated by what James Anderson calls “impact mediation” — efforts to protect children from the harms seen to be posed by specific media representations such as those that glorify violence or drug use, or that idealize unrealistic standards of beauty.¹¹⁴⁶ By focusing on the dangers of the media, as Elizabeth Thoman

Imagery into Instruction. Englewood: Libraries Unlimited, 1992. 16. Print; Golden, Daniel. “‘Media Literacy’ Sparks a New Debate of Commercialism in Schools — Should Programs that Teach Kids to View Ads Critically Also Take Advertising?” *Wall Street Journal* 17 Dec. 1999. *ProQuest*. Web. 30 Jan. 2014.

¹¹⁴⁴ Manning, “Channel One.”

¹¹⁴⁵ Heins & Cho. *Media Literacy*, 20.

¹¹⁴⁶ This has been driven in part by the federal support of media literacy campaigns aimed at inoculating young people against media messages perceived to be dangerous. For example, between 2000 and 2002 the DOE and the National Endowment for the Arts provided \$5 million in grants to programs designed to counteract media violence or other risky representations. In 2002, the White House released a policy statement supporting media literacy education, which while fairly progressive in recognizing the importance of critical thinking and the need to respect young people’s intelligence and their “pleasure in media use,” still articulated MLE in terms of teaching about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Some examples of organizations producing research and programs focused on protecting youth from media: The Center for Media Literacy’s *Selling Addiction: A Workshop Kit on Tobacco and Alcohol Advertising*, the Media Education Foundation’s *Pack of Lies: The Advertising of Tobacco*, the Center for Media Education’s report “Alcohol and Tobacco on the Web: New Threats to Youth,” the New Mexico Media Literacy Project’s *Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Program* and *Media Literacy: Reversing Addiction in Our Compulsive Culture*, the Just Think Foundation’s “Body Image Project,” and the University of South Carolina School of Medicine Office of Alcohol and Drug Studies’ Media Literacy Clearinghouse. Anderson, James. “Television Literacy and the Critical Viewer.” *Children’s Understanding of Television: Research on Attention and Comprehension*. Eds. Jennings Bryant & Daniel R. Anderson. New York: Academic Press, 1983. 297-327. Print; Heins & Cho. *Media Literacy*, 20-29.

and Tessa Jolls argue, this protectionist approach to media literacy tends to foster cynicism rather than intellectual skepticism because it does not provide a sense of agency.¹¹⁴⁷ David Buckingham has likewise suggested that by neglecting young people's emotional engagement with media, this approach substitutes cynicism for in-depth analysis.¹¹⁴⁸ Research has also shown that such fragmented efforts targeting the glamorization of specific social problems in the media are largely ineffective.¹¹⁴⁹

Furthermore, by focusing on the analysis of specific media representations, MLE in the United States tends to overlook the role of media industries and institutions in producing these representations, as well as the role of different social contexts in their reception.¹¹⁵⁰ While this may help to develop more sophisticated media consumers, it does little to foster knowledge of

¹¹⁴⁷ Thoman & Jolls, "Media Literacy Education," 185.

¹¹⁴⁸ Buckingham, David. *Children Talking Television: The Making of Television Literacy*. London: Falmer, 1993. Print.

¹¹⁴⁹ A comparative study of different MLE programs amongst ninth graders in Massachusetts found that simply exploring these issues "in a short set of lesson plans using off-the-shelf curricula did not appear to develop effective analysis skills." Hobbs, Renée & Richard Frost. "Instructional Practices in Media Literacy Education and Their Impact on Students' Learning." *New Jersey Journal of Communication* 6.2 (1999): 123-148. Print.

¹¹⁵⁰ This focus on content analysis is due to some extent to the "corporate co-optation" of media literacy, but is also due to the position taken by the federal government and many media literacy organizations funded by either federal or private foundation grants, which refuses to "blame the media." A 2002 White House report on the use of MLE in drug prevention, for example, urged educators, "Don't 'bash' the media." The National Telemedia Council promotes "a philosophy that values reflective education and cooperation rather than confrontation with the media industry." With support from the Carnegie Corporation and other foundations, the Center for Media Literacy (CML), one of the larger nonprofits involved in MLE and a later recipient of significant federal grants, published a curriculum titled *Beyond Blame: Challenging Violence in the Media*, which put emphasis on "what each of us can do as individuals." The Alliance for a Media Literate America, an umbrella organization for a number of independent media literacy organizations including the CML, which has been supported by AOL Time Warner, the Discovery Channel, the Fox Family Channel, and the National Endowment for the Arts, notes that "media corporations have social responsibility to support media literacy," and emphasizes the importance of "skill-building" over "media bashing and blame." Wally Bowen, executive director of Citizens for Media Literacy (CML) argues that most media literacy initiatives in the US are "scaled-down" and "politically palatable" due to this reluctance to critique the media industries. "We are not immune," he wrote in the CML newsletter, "to the peer pressure of our well-heeled colleagues in the media industry." Bowen, Wally. "Can U.S. Media Literacy Movement Open Door to More Points of View?" *The New Citizen* 2.1 (1994): n.p. Web. 10 Dec. 2013; Center for Media Literacy. *Beyond Blame: Challenging Violence in the Media*. medialit.org. Web. 10 Dec. 2013; White House Office of National Drug Control Policy Media Campaign. *Helping Youth Navigate the Media Age: A New Approach to Drug Prevention — Findings of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign Media Literacy Summit*. Washington, DC: Office of National Drug

how media function within broader social and economic structures, with their attendant hierarchies and relations of power.¹¹⁵¹ Finally, MLE in the United States also tends to either ignore media production skills or to disaggregate them from critical literacy into practical, career-oriented programs. Such “practical activity does not, in itself, constitute media education,” warned Len Masterman in his germinal *Teaching the Media*, and can lead to student media production functioning as “a form of cultural reproduction in which dominant practices become naturalized.”¹¹⁵²

This situation has been exacerbated, notes Jeff Share, by “the corporate appropriation of progressive pedagogy under the label of instrumental progressivism.”¹¹⁵³ The emphasis on competencies over knowledge formation and the promotion of increased surveillance through excessive standardized testing — first through the No Child Left Behind Act and more recently through the adoption of the “Common Core” curricular framework — disables critical thinking in the interest of preparing students for the job market, while also furthering the merger of public education and corporate America.¹¹⁵⁴ The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21), founded by the DOE, the NEA, Microsoft, Apple, Cisco, Dell, and AOL Time Warner, exemplifies how this merger shapes media literacy toward the acquisition of useful skills rather than critical reflection.¹¹⁵⁵ The “focus on workplace productivity and the absence of a social justice agenda,” Share points out, “demonstrate the influence of business interests.”¹¹⁵⁶ P21 is one of a number of

Control Policy, 2002. Print; Pungente, John. “Live Long and Prosper: Media Literacy in the USA.” *Clipboard* 8.2 (1994): n.p. Web. 10 Dec. 2013.

¹¹⁵¹ Lewis, Justin & Sut Jhally. “The Struggle Over Media Literacy.” *Journal of Communication* 48.1 (1998): 109-120. Print.

¹¹⁵² Masterman, *Teaching the Media*, 26-27; See also: Stafford, Roy. “Redefining Creativity: Extended Project Work in GCSE Media Studies.” *Watching Media Learning: Making Sense of Media Education*. Ed. David Buckingham. Bristol: Taylor & Francis, 1990. 81. Print.

¹¹⁵³ Share, Jeff. *Media Literacy is Elementary: Teaching Youth to Critically Read and Create Media*. New York: Peter Lang, 2009. 41. Print.

¹¹⁵⁴ Robins, Kevin & Frank Webster. *Times of the Technoculture: From the Information Society to the Virtual Life*. New York: Routledge, 1999. 167-188. Print.

¹¹⁵⁵ Partnership for 21st Century Skills. *p21.org*. Web. 10 Dec. 2013.

¹¹⁵⁶ Share, *Media Literacy*, 41.

public-private enterprises promoting media literacy through programmatic frameworks for developing skills necessary to becoming a ‘smart consumer’ and a ‘productive worker’ rather than a critical subject.

Whether MLE should have a social or political agenda is an issue of ongoing debate amongst media literacy educators.¹¹⁵⁷ There has, however, been general consensus that the objective of media literacy should not be the fostering of good workers and consumers, but rather the development of critically reflexive subjects and citizens.¹¹⁵⁸ Learning to analyze media texts empowers young people to better assess information and ideas in the course of making choices relevant to both their own lives and society at large. Douglas Kellner argues that this requires “expanding textual analysis to include issues of social context, control, and pleasure,” which involves “ideology critique and analyzing the politics of representation of crucial dimensions of gender, race, class, and sexuality.”¹¹⁵⁹ Analysis also requires attention to the “system” within which media texts are produced — a critical awareness of how different technologies, corporations, and legal and economic policies shape media production.¹¹⁶⁰ Media texts are created, circulated, and consumed within particular social, political, and economic contexts that shape their meaning, and can only be understood through analysis of these contexts.

Digital media literacy in particular also requires the ability to create media texts.¹¹⁶¹ New media technologies offer unprecedented opportunities for young people to participate in media production. However, the discourse of digital nativism suggests that doing so comes naturally —

¹¹⁵⁷ Hobbs, Renée. “The Seven Great Debates in the Media Literacy Movement.” *Journal of Communication* 48.1 (1998): 16-32. Print.

¹¹⁵⁸ Kellner, Douglas & Jeff Share. “Critical Media Literacy, Democracy, and the Reconstruction of Education.” *Media Literacy: A Reader*. Eds. Donaldo Macedo & Shirley R. Steinberg. New York: Peter Lang, 2007. 3-23. Print; Lewis & Jhally, “The Struggle.”

¹¹⁵⁹ Kellner & Share. “Critical Media Literacy,” 8.

¹¹⁶⁰ Buckingham, David. *Media Literacy of Children and Young People: A Review of the Research Literature on Behalf of OFCOM*. London: OFCOM, 2005. Print; Livingstone, Sonia, et al. *Internet Literacy Among Children and Young People: Findings from the UK Children Go Online Project*. London: OFCOM, 2005. Print; Lewis & Jhally, “The Struggle.”

that youth are inherently media literate — thus obviating the need for teaching production, while obscuring the differential access to skills, knowledge, and technologies that manifests across differences in age, race, gender, class, family, and geography.¹¹⁶² At the same time, the explosive growth of the digital media industries, with their promise of lucrative jobs, has further promoted teaching production as career or vocational skills divorced from critical analysis. Thus most young people are neither taught nor learn on their own critical and reflexive production practices. Such critical skills are crucial in a digitally networked world in which not only many forms of communication, cultural production, social belonging, and political action, but also the performance of identity and construction of subjectivity, are increasingly enacted through modes of media production.¹¹⁶³

Critical sexual pedagogy as a practice of sexual media literacy would need to work against not only the entrenched limitations of sex education, then, but also those of media literacy education. Rather than inoculating kids against media sex, such a pedagogy would help them analyze and assess, within the social, political, and economic contexts of their production, the sexual texts and discourses that inform their sexual knowledge. Teaching critical production skills would allow them to incorporate these texts and discourses into reflexive and situated practices of knowing, by appropriating and repurposing media sex to produce sexual knowledge grounded in

¹¹⁶¹ Park, Sora. "Dimensions of Digital Media Literacy and the Relationship With Social Exclusion." *Media International Australia* 142 (2012): 87-100. Print.

¹¹⁶² Asthana, Sheena, et al. "Social Exclusion and Social Justice: A Rural Perspective on Resource Allocation." *Policy & Politics* 37.2 (2009): 201-214. Print; Becker, Henry Jay. "Who's Wired and Who's Not: Children's Access to and Use of Computer Technology." *The Future of Children* 10.2 (2000): 44-75. Print; Hargittai, Eszter & Steven Shafer. "Differences in Actual and Perceived Online Skills: The Role of Gender." *Social Science Quarterly* 87.2 (2006): 432-448. Print; Hohlfeld, Tina N., et al. "Examining the Digital Divide in K-12 Public Schools: Four-Year Trends for Supporting ICT Literacy in Florida." *Computers and Education* 51.4 (2008): 1648-1663. Print; Holloway, Darren. "Disparities in Internet Access: A Case Study of the Digital Divide in Western Sydney." *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 37.1 (2002): 51-69. Print; Lengsfeld, Jörn H.B. "An Econometric Analysis of the Sociodemographic Topology of the Digital Divide in Europe." *The Information Society: An International Journal* 27.3 (2011): 141-157. Print.

¹¹⁶³ Buckingham, David. *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture*. Cambridge: Polity, 2003. Print; Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York:

their everyday experiences. This would resist the abstraction of sexual knowledge that promotes ignorance, fostering instead an aesthetics of existence affording the development of empowered and ethical sexual subjects.

Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Sexual Media Literacy

A critical sexual pedagogy is a radical, and even dangerous proposal. As first articulated by Paulo Freire, critical pedagogy was itself a radical departure from the established “banking” model of education in which students were positioned as passive recipients of knowledge. Freire advocated a pedagogical praxis in which students would actively develop and apply a critical consciousness of their oppressed position in relation to social, economic, and political institutions that structure inequality, in order to transform them.¹¹⁶⁴ Understanding how power works through the production of knowledge within these institutions is central to critical pedagogy, as is the resuscitation of situated knowledges that have been subjugated by institutional knowledge practices.¹¹⁶⁵ For Henry Giroux, such critical pedagogy is radical because it recognizes education as a form of cultural politics that is “implicated in relations of power, social practices, and the privileging of forms of knowledge that support a specific vision of past, present, and future,” and it opens up these relations, practices, and visions as sites of struggle by bringing lived experience and local knowledge into practice.¹¹⁶⁶ It is dangerous because it “cultivate[s] in students a healthy skepticism about power, a ‘willingness to temper any reverence for authority with a sense of

New York University Press, 2006. Print; Park, “Dimensions of Digital Media Literacy”; Share, *Media Literacy*.

¹¹⁶⁴ Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum, 1990. Print.

¹¹⁶⁵ Giroux, Henry A. “Rethinking Education as the Practice of Freedom: Paulo Freire and the Promise of Critical Pedagogy.” *Policy Futures in Education* 8.6 (2010): 715. Print.

¹¹⁶⁶ Giroux, Henry A. & Peter L. McLaren. “Radical Pedagogy as Cultural Politics: Beyond the Discourse of Critique and Anti-Utopianism.” *Texts for Change: Theory/Pedagogy/Politics*. Eds. Donald Morton & Mas’ud Zavarzadeh. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991. 153. Print.

critical awareness.”¹¹⁶⁷ Applied to the production of adolescent sexual knowledge, critical pedagogy would challenge a social order structured and maintained in part through the hegemonic discourses of innocence, risk, development, and desire by engaging young people in a praxis that puts their own subjugated knowledges and experiences into discourse, and thus destabilizes and transforms the ‘truths’ by which they have been positioned within this social order.

Such a radical and dangerous sexual pedagogy is unlikely to be a viable practice within formal programs of sex education in the United States, given that the uptake of even much less radical ‘sex-positive’ approaches has been hampered by a number of historical, political, and institutional factors. “Within a risk-averse society,” notes Allen, “discussion of pleasure in sexuality education is rendered irresponsible, inappropriate and dangerous.”¹¹⁶⁸ And while “the arguments in favor of promoting a more positive vision of sexuality and pleasure in sex education programs are numerous and well grounded in research,” Claire Greslé-Favier posits that “they are unlikely to prevail” due to “the legacy of abstinence-only discourses.”¹¹⁶⁹ The structure of the American education system, which reflects the dispersed and isolated geography of the country, compounds the problem: Parochialism and unusually powerful school boards favor the status quo, resisting widespread adoption of *any* reform not encouraged by federal funding restrictions.¹¹⁷⁰ The politics of sexuality manifest in the ongoing culture wars, which frequently flare up around children and often target media sex and sex education, further militate against any progressive movement in sex education.¹¹⁷¹ Furthermore, the general “depoliticization of education” within a

¹¹⁶⁷ Giroux, *America's Education Deficit*, 204; Said, Edward. “On Defiance and Taking Positions.” *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000. 501. Print.

¹¹⁶⁸ Allen, “Doing ‘It’ Differently,” 582.

¹¹⁶⁹ Greslé-Favier, “The Legacy of Abstinence-Only,” 419.

¹¹⁷⁰ Apple, Michael W. *Teachers and Texts*. Boston: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1986. Print; Considine, David M. “Media Literacy: Can We Get There From Here?” *Educational Technology* 19 (1990): 7-19. Print; Kubey, “Why U.S. Media.”

¹¹⁷¹ Irvine, Janice M. “Doing It With Words: Discourse and the Sex Education Culture Wars.” *Critical Inquiry* 27.1 (2000): 58-76. Print.

“culture of positivism,” as Giroux argues, has effected a shift from pedagogical practices towards a science of education that excludes the role of values, feelings, and subjective meaning-making, which has been exacerbated by neoliberal policies such as “No Child Left Behind” and “Common Core” that emphasize quantifiable achievement of marketable skills.¹¹⁷² Finally, the bearing of scientific positivism on sex education in particular, which has not only encouraged ‘facts of life’ curricula, but also puts epistemic emphasis on developmentally appropriate practices and quantifiable outcomes, makes the inclusion of a critical sexual pedagogy improbable.¹¹⁷³

While not abandoning all hope for moving beyond the birds and the bees in formal sex education programs, *SexEd* suggests that the media itself might prove a more viable site for practicing a critical sexual pedagogy. Sex in the media, as Giroux points out, and as we have seen, functions as a form of public pedagogy that shapes adolescent sexual identity “through forms of knowledge and desire that appear absent from what is taught in schools.”¹¹⁷⁴ Because “the political work of pedagogy includes the articulation of practices not only within sites but also across them,” and needs to incorporate “a range of cultural apparatuses extending from television networks to print media to the Internet,” a critical sexual pedagogy need not only bring media sex into sex education, but also to extend sex education into media sex.¹¹⁷⁵

New media technologies are already being used for sex education. The focus of these efforts, however, is overwhelmingly on sexual health risks, even when taking a sex-positive approach. *SexEd* lauds these endeavors to move beyond the birds and the bees by not avoiding adolescent sexual desire and pleasure, but is critical of their scope and reach. Recent research has shown that adolescents’ awareness of sexual health websites is quite low, and that these sites have

¹¹⁷² Giroux, Henry A. “Schooling and the Culture of Positivism: Notes on the Death of History.” *On Critical Pedagogy*. New York: Continuum, 2011. 19-47. Print; Giroux, Henry A. “Neoliberalism and the Politics of Public Pedagogy.” *On Critical Pedagogy*. New York: Continuum, 2011. 133-151. Print.

¹¹⁷³ The emphasis on developmentally appropriate practices and quantifiable outcome has become even more pronounced since the development of Common Core Standards for sex education in 2012. Shah, Nirvi. “New Standards Aim to Guide Sex Education.” *Education Week* 31. 17 (2012): 12-13. Print.

¹¹⁷⁴ Giroux, “Teenage Sexuality.”

significant deficiencies in content, usability, and interactivity.¹¹⁷⁶ Few of these sites are optimized for mobile compatibility, and there is a paucity of mobile sex education apps.¹¹⁷⁷ Moreover, these sites and apps for sex education are weakened by a top-down approach. Based on the health belief model of providing information to attenuate risk, they can be valuable resources for those who find them, but make little use of the interactive and network potentials of new media for reaching out and engaging youth in sexual exploration. Neither do they promote critical media sex practices. When they do address media sex, it is often done didactically, explaining what particular representations mean or how media sex technologies should be used, rather than offering a space for young people to make their own meanings or to experiment with technologies.

Because of the limited viability of comprehensive sex education and critical media literacy programs in schools, and in response to the limited scope and reach of new media efforts at sex education underwritten by the health belief model, *SexEd* proposes developing a suite of sexual media literacy software that will open up safe discursive spaces for young people to explore media sex. These spaces will be designed to foster a “community of practice” conducive to collaborative learning about media technologies and sexual representations by providing tools for engaging in “joint enterprises” of sexual knowledge production and creating a “shared repertoire” of media sex resources.¹¹⁷⁸ Recognizing that media sex is ubiquitous, dispersed, and polymorphous, and that kids encounter and engage with it in a variety of contexts during everyday life, the sexual media literacy suite (SMLS) will consist of a set of tools for helping

¹¹⁷⁵ Giroux, *America's Education Deficit*, 204; Giroux & Simon. “Popular Culture,” 249.

¹¹⁷⁶ Boyer, Robin, et al. *TECHsex USA: Youth Sexuality and Reproductive Health in the Digital Age*. Oakland: ISIS, 2010. 37. Print; Whitely, Laura B., et al. “A Review of Sexual Health Web Sites for Adolescents.” *Clinical Pediatrics* 51.3 (2012): 209-213. Print.

¹¹⁷⁷ The weakness of mobile sex education has an especially adverse effect on minorities most at risk for unwanted pregnancies and STIs, who are more likely to use mobiles to access information. Lenhart, *Social Media and Mobile Internet*.

¹¹⁷⁸ Lave & Wenger. *Situated Learning*; Wenger, Etienne. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Print.

them manage these often isolated encounters with media sex by bringing them into a community space where they can be interrogated.

SMLS will be organized around three key functions: capture, critique, and create. A core component of the suite will be the ‘funnel’, an app that can be installed on any networked device which will allow users to capture media sex and upload it to the community space. The space itself is another core component that will afford the archiving of media sex and its discussion, debate, and critique through tagging and commenting functions, as well as providing other informational resources and interactive functions relevant to media literacy and sex education. The final core component will be a media sex ‘editor’ that allows users to collaboratively redefine and repurpose sexual representations by modifying or mashing them up. Other components could include exercises, games, and other activities designed to encourage critical reflection on, and engagement with, media sex representations and practices, and integrated functionality with social network and publishing platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Tumblr, and Blogger.

SMLS will offer fine-grained control over functionality, access and privacy, allowing it to be tuned to the needs of particular users. It could thus be incorporated into sex education and media literacy programs in the classroom on a local and ad hoc basis, offering a valuable resource to underfunded schools and to educators tasked with teaching knowledge and skills with which they are uncomfortable or for which they have not been adequately prepared. SMLS could likewise be used in after school programs, youth groups, or other organizations promoting media literacy or sex education. Parents, who like teachers are often uncomfortable or inadequately prepared to talk with their kids about media sex, and sex more generally, could also draw on SMLS as they saw fit to teach their children about sexual representations in the media and how to safely use new media technologies to explore and express sexuality.

Finally, SMLS will also function as a research tool by generating data about adolescents’ use of media sex, their sexual knowledge and practices, and their articulation of sexual

subjectivity. Gathered ethically with the utmost concern for protecting privacy, this data will not only be invaluable to researchers, but will also help bring the voices of youth into public discourses about media sex and about adolescent sexuality from which they have been largely excluded.

SMLS will thus seek to address the problematic issues of adolescent sexual knowledge that *SexEd* has identified. It will move beyond the birds and the bees by enabling a peer-led sex education grounded in the media culture that supplies much of adolescent sexual knowledge, allowing the ‘facts of life’ to be learned in relation to the broader contexts of emotions, desires, pleasures, and relationships, as well as the social, political, and economic institutions and forces that shape them. It will produce adolescent sexual knowledge grounded in the voices of adolescents rather than the abstract knowledge produced by contemporary sex education programs, sex in the media, and the sciences of adolescence and media sex. By providing a space in which young people can collectively negotiate the meanings of sexual representations and discourses, SMLS will foster their participation in the production of sexual knowledge and the construction of empowered and ethical sexual subjectivities.

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