

University of Massachusetts Amherst

From the Selected Works of Amy Schalet

Spring 2009

Subjectivity, Intimacy, and the Empowerment Paradigm of Adolescent Sexuality: The Unexplored Room

Amy Schalet, *University of Massachusetts - Amherst*



Available at: https://works.bepress.com/amy_schalet/S/

*Subjectivity, Intimacy, and the
Empowerment Paradigm of
Adolescent Sexuality:
The Unexplored Room*

Amy Schalet

OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES, a highly organized segment of the Christian Right has increasingly determined the parameters of what can be said and done in U.S. domestic and international sexual and reproductive health policy.¹ Both in the United States and abroad, adolescent girls have been at the center of the efforts on the part of religious conservatives to limit the information young people receive about contraception and abortion services and the access they have to them. Just as troubling as the limitations imposed on young people are the contents of what they are being taught. Public schools receiving federal sex education funds are prohibited from teaching about the benefits of condoms and contraception, and they are mandated to teach their students that sex outside of heterosexual marriage is wrong and likely to be damaging. The curricula that do meet federal standards often contain scientific inaccuracies, promulgate gender stereotypes, and stigmatize nonheterosexuality.²

Meanwhile, feminist perspectives and concepts have been largely absent from post-sexual revolution U.S. public discourse and debate on adolescent sexuality. One reason for this absence is that many feminist scholars and activists were long silent on the topic of teenagers and their sexuality. When Ruby Rich concluded her 1986 *Feminist Studies* review on

feminism and sexuality in the 1980s with the observation, “looking back over the sexuality debates of this decade, it often seems that a crowd is gathered in one corner of a very large house, oblivious to the many places still unexplored,”³ one largely unexplored room was that of adolescent sexuality. Having found representatives of the women’s movement “conspicuously absent” in the congressional hearings on teenage pregnancy of the 1970s and 1980s and adolescent sexuality missing from the feminist scholarship she reviewed, sociologist Constance Nathanson speculated in the early 1990s that the ideological complexities of adolescent sexuality and pregnancy—which highlighted the racial, class, and age differences among women—may have led feminists to bypass the issue.

Yet, even as Nathanson berated feminists for conceding the territory of teenage sexuality to “groups and individuals with conceptions of the

BOOKS DISCUSSED IN THIS ARTICLE

Going All the Way: Teenage Girls' Tales of Sex, Romance, and Pregnancy. By Sharon Thompson. New York: Hill and Wang, 1995.

Puberty, Sexuality, and the Self: Girls and Boys at Adolescence. By Karin A. Martin. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Dilemmas of Desire: Teenage Girls Talk about Sexuality. By Deborah L. Tolman. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Virginity Lost: An Intimate Portrait of First Sexual Experiences. By Laura M. Carpenter. New York: New York University Press, 2005.

good society and the place of women in it . . . very different from their own” and the Religious Right intensified its grip on U.S. sexual policies, a group of feminist scholars had begun shining a light on that forgotten room of adolescent sexuality.⁴ Rooted in studies and activism of the previous decades, they drew attention to the unique dilemmas that teenage girls faced in negotiating their sexuality in the post-sexual revolution era. Since the mid-1990s, that feminist scholarship on adolescent sexuality, which has focused largely on girls and their heterosexual desires, activities, and relationships, has culminated in several books.

Four books, spanning a decade, are reviewed in this essay. Center stage in these works are issues of sexual subjectivity and agency, terms that refer to the capacity—or lack thereof—to feel connected to one's sexual desires and in charge of one's sexual decision-making process. Redirecting attention from the question of who has “done it,” central to the current political discourse, to the question of what forces promote an empowered experience of sexuality, they provide, collectively, a timely and potentially powerful alternative paradigm for understanding and talking about teenage sexuality to those that dominate U.S. public discourse and policy. After discussing each of the four books in detail, the essay concludes with a synthesis of their collective contributions and limitations and suggestions about how to use and develop this “empowerment paradigm” of adolescent sexuality to advance scholarship and politics.

CONCEPTUALIZING FEMALE SEXUAL SUBJECTIVITY AND AGENCY

How can young people claim their sexuality as their own and access it as a vital source of pleasure, connection, and agency in the face of social and cultural forces in intimate relationships and society at large that make sexuality a site of danger and disempowerment? How can they come to know their sexual feelings, desires, and boundaries and to act in accordance with that knowledge in their sexual relationships with others? In tackling these questions of sexual subjectivity and agency at adolescence, the four books reviewed in this essay build on several important studies of adult women's sexuality, published in the 1970s and 1980s when scholars were taking stock of the changes wrought by the sexual and gender revolutions and were asking what these changes had meant, and might eventually mean, for women and their relationship to their sexuality.

One such work was *Taking Chances: Abortion and the Decision Not to Contracept* (1975).⁵ In this book, based on her doctoral dissertation, Kristin Luker sought to reframe scholarly and popular interpretations of women's “contraceptive failure,” according to which only ignorance or irrational disturbances would lead women to forego use of the contraceptive technologies that were available to them. Urging her audiences to take seriously women's own subjective experiences of sexuality, as shaped by the

broader social and cultural forces at work, Luker argued that far from ignorant or irrational, the decision of women not to use contraception was, in fact, a rational, although perhaps not fully conscious, strategy to respond to their loss of sexual power in romantic relationships.

Although the terms of the pre-sexual revolution “gender bargain” had given women considerable power to goad men into committing and taking responsibility for contraception and family formation, the post-sexual revolution bargain, Luker showed, took away from women the power to say no to sex without, at the same time, giving them the economic or emotional resources to set the terms of saying yes to sexual intercourse. Women resented their new responsibilities for preventing pregnancy, especially because having sex, most notably sex that appeared to be anticipated and planned, still carried considerable social and emotional costs for women. Prefiguring a recurring theme in later studies on girls, Luker found that many women preferred to view sex as something that “just happened,” arguing that “the pretense that it always ‘just happened’ . . . is one way of escaping the social definition of being a person who is sexually active by choice” (47). But a pregnancy, even if aborted, might still serve the purpose of cajoling a man into committing to a relationship. “Taking chances” was thus a high-risk and high-gains gamble, which made good sense under the social and cultural constraints women faced.

If one of Luker’s contributions was to demonstrate that women exercised a form of rational agency in their relationships, despite the social and cultural conditions that kept them from identifying as a “person who is sexually active by choice,” *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* (1984), the edited volume of the collective papers from the 1982 Barnard conference on sexuality, sought to contribute to the intellectual and political conditions that would allow women to experience themselves as true sexual subjects. To do so, Carole S. Vance argued in the volume’s introduction, scholars and activists alike had to recognize that for women sexuality is often at once a source of pleasure and of danger. The dual task for feminists was therefore to reduce the threat of the latter while widening the scope to speak and write about the former. Keeping women’s diverse pleasures in their sexuality at the forefront of the conversation was vital, Vance argued, for the empowerment of individual women and for

the strength of the feminist movement as a whole, and she called for a feminist scholarship that examined “how women experience sexual desire, fantasy and action,” and for a politics that did not “operate solely on fear,” but moved instead “toward pleasure, agency, self-definition.”⁶

But the problem with using women’s desire as the guide in their sexual liberation is that active desire is so often missing from women’s own experience of sexuality, argued Jessica Benjamin in *Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (1988). She located the source of women’s lack of sexual subjectivity in their lack of recognition as infants. Denied subject status by institutionalized gender inequality, Benjamin argued, women cannot offer their daughters the example that fathers offer sons of actively desiring and willing—the basis for agency, both nonsexual and sexual. Nor can mothers recognize desire, will, and agency in their daughters. Unrecognized by either parent for their own desires, girls turn their frustrated wishes into self-abnegation, on the one hand, and into “ideal love” for their fathers, on the other hand—a psychic pattern that continues into adulthood when women tend to make a man into “a vicarious substitute” for their own agency and accept “the other’s will and desire as [their] own.”⁷ But Benjamin concluded hopefully that as the rigidly gender-polarized universe broke down and women and men shared the tasks of parenting and breadwinning, women would gain access to full subject status in work and in intimate relationships.

Drawing on empirical research conducted in the late 1960s and 1970s and developing arguments at the tail end of the sexual revolution as the conservative backlash against it was taking shape, these three works were clearly responding to distinct historical moments. Their conceptualizations of sexual agency and subjectivity and of the forces that were inhibiting those capacities from fully flourishing would, in turn, shape the study of sexuality among those coming of age in the 1980s and 1990s.

THE RISK OF ROMANCE

Of the four books on adolescent sexuality reviewed in this essay, Sharon Thompson’s *Going All the Way: Teenage Girls’ Tales of Sex, Romance, and Pregnancy* (1995) is the earliest and most ambitious in its ethnographic reach. Over a period of eight years (from 1978 to 1986), Thompson interviewed 400

teenage girls. She had intended to interview pubescent girls and boys about the experience of puberty, but, she writes, “if there are more reluctant interview subjects, I have never encountered them” (3). As she moved to older teenagers, boys remained reluctant. But girls, by contrast, were eager to tell their tales of excitement and disappointment, often for many hours. And so Thompson traveled to several cities, suburbs, and a small agricultural town in the Northeast, Midwest, and Southwest where she listened and recorded the stories of girls, half of whom were working class and half of whom were middle class. Almost one-third of the girls were African American or Hispanic, and one in ten identified as lesbian.

If the sheer numbers—and the different kinds of stories—make this book extraordinary, another unique feature of the project is that it began as a work of journalism. Some readers might miss some of the familiar trappings of social science research—among them a methodological appendix and an explicit line of argument—but Thompson’s journalistic and literary style also offer unmistakable advantages, most notably her facility in bringing to life the emotional tone and texture of her interviewees’ often contradictory experiences. With a novelist’s talent to “show, not tell,” Thompson takes the reader through a series of tableaux depicted by eight different kinds of narrators. There are the victims of love—the predominantly working-class girls who fall in unrequited love with two-timing boyfriends and lose not only their virginity but also their hearts, sense of self, and faith in their futures (which had lacked options to begin with). There are the popular girls who “play the field.” There are the fast-tracking honors students who pursue sexual experience with the same rational determination with which one might pursue a science experiment or an extracurricular activity, leading them to greater knowledge of sex but rarely of passion. There are teenage mothers, abandoned by the boyfriends who talked them into having their babies; the young lesbians who ensnare themselves in emotionally rewarding, but nevertheless stifling, romantic bonds; the girls who self-consciously chose adult lovers to lose their virginity; and the girls who report years of “hell and freedom,” during which they pursued sex and drugs, rebelling against controlling parents, having fun, and learning, often the hard way, about life and love.

Thus, Thompson brings to life the zeitgeist of the late 1970s and 1980s—the girls who were pioneers in making sex before the age of eighteen a normative adolescent experience and the researchers who were alarmed and befuddled by the girls' choices. To answer questions researchers were asking, such as why girls fail to use contraception effectively, Thompson argued, as Luker did, that they must take seriously girls' own subjective experiences as shaped by their changing social and cultural conditions. And for all the attention to different social locations and narrative styles, a consistent thread of inquiry runs through the book, namely, what promotes sexual agency in girls and what forces can explain its lack, especially in love's victims, whose dramatic accounts of losing heart, control, and sometimes even the desire to live are the book's opening act.

Building on Luker's argument about the changing gender bargain in the wake of the sexual revolution and its consequences for women's powerlessness and risk taking, Thompson argued that the unsettling of the traditional bargain was especially detrimental to girls who lack opportunities for college. Having staked their identities on finding true love, but entering the market without license to resist boys' desire for sex or to make their own desire part of the new bargain, Thompson's victims of love construct first sex almost like a sacrificial offering. Faced with a diminished investment in romance by boys, girls appear to make up the "love deficit"⁸ by offering sex, conceived often as pain, not pleasure, as proof that the relationship is loving and meaningful. Shrouded in fantasy, sex remains unreal, and love's victims are rarely prepared when it does happen. Still, their main risk is not pregnancy. Of Tracy, the ultimate victim, Thompson says:

She had been ruined . . . not by sex or pregnancy, but by love. The damage wasn't to her hymen, her health, or her marriage chances. Her ruin was psychological. She'd been old enough for sex but too young to go through the emotional distress of believing a love was true, having intercourse, and getting dumped. (22)

None of the other girls Thompson interviewed are as deeply "ruined" by sex. Some, like the popular girls, stay safe by keeping their eye on a prize other than love: "Working on popularity, unlike trying to become

the object of love, at least gave girls some sense of agency" (51). Although their hearts stay out of trouble, because they keep their romances light and move on quickly, popular girls still do not report much sexual pleasure, but that, Thompson writes, "may have been just one more sign, from the group of girls that understood the social rules better than any other, that though it may have become acceptable to acknowledge having sex, it still wasn't cool to talk about liking it" (76). For other girls, the solution is to look for something that the boys or men they get involved with are capable of giving. Some teen mothers move on from the heartbreak of abandonment by going just for fun: "They knew how to see sex and boys for what they were, and to bother with them only so long as it was pleasurable" (138).

For Thompson, loss of self and self-protection seem to be the greatest risks of romance. She was disconcerted to discover that fast-trackers "barely recognized intimate obligations" and were "so miserly with their affection," and she wondered "if they weren't as blinded by the discourse of self and success as other narrators were by the discourse of love" (104). But generally, it is too much, rather than too little, desire for emotional intimacy that disconcerts her. With tales of requited love and without worry about pregnancy or orgasms—everyone reports having orgasms—narrators of lesbian romance constitute a "radical departure" from "much of teenage heterosexual experience" (201). But the intense intimacy of lesbian couples has its liabilities, Thompson argues, as they tend to close out the external world, in part because of its hostility toward them.

It's crucial not to lose the self in love; essential, especially in adolescence, to keep growing, reaching out, questioning as well as affirming the self. When women love each other, the vaunted female tendency to forge intimate connections in case-hardened steel can choke not just autonomy but also growth, individual identity, love and desire. (202)

Thompson concludes her epic journey with the "romantic strategists." If the victims of love cling to a past that no longer exists, the savvy gamblers of the "Games of Love" roll with love's punches as well as they deliver them and provide hope for a future that does not yet exist. "Equality narrators," as Thompson calls them, "planned for their pleasures, and

they took romantic payback as a rule. (If one guy hurt a narrator in this group, the next few guys she met had better watch out).” Many equality narrators are daughters of feminist-identified mothers, and although some call themselves postfeminist, “there’s a lot of feminism in their stories, and despite the cool calculation, a lot of romance” (248). Connected to friends and work while lovers come and go, equality narrators practice the balancing of love and work, essential, Thompson argues, for healthy romance. Equality narrators use humor to “lighten the weight that romance had to bear” (261). And they faced disappointment with “realism, irony, and courage,” choosing “a perspective that salvaged their pride and kept them from generalizing their disappointment” . . . (274).

Yet for all their guts and gumption, one cannot help noticing their lack of unbridled joy and the courage it takes to be open to deep connection. The lone narrator of mutual teenage love, Cindi, is extraordinary, Thompson tells us, having found a “mindful, sensuous, respectful dream lover of the feminist vision” (246). Cindi describes how one night, after she and her boyfriend had started having sex:

He said, “You’re the first girl that I really loved the way I love you. I mean, I really feel like I’m in love with you,” and I said, “Yeah, I feel that way too,” and then that was like—I don’t know it seemed like it made things a lot better. We were much closer, and I was much more comfortable around him, and I was really happy, you know, really, really happy. (248)

Still, Cindi’s is not a true equality narrative, Thompson explains, because Cindi’s boyfriend Scott “knew more and he consistently took the lead” (248). Yet, the equality narratives Thompson provides paint a bleak picture of the possibilities for true intimacy at adolescence. The book’s final character, Anja, lacks Cindi’s “dream” lover. “Rather, by choice or by fate, she, like most girls, had to struggle and strategize to remain equal.” Anja does so by never giving away her hand. Whether romance deals her cards of pleasure or cards of pain, Anja acts as though nothing throws her off balance, putting up an emotional front and withholding the truth of her experience from her lover. Thompson argues that gamesters like Anja model a “fine ideal,” namely, that “affection, recognition, and equality—

not blind neediness and desperation—generate the force of love” (282). Perhaps, or perhaps a girl may now have sex, but still not go “all the way.”

SUBJECTIVITY’S SEX

The girls and boys of the post-AIDS era whom Karin A. Martin interviewed for *Puberty, Sexuality, and the Self: Girls and Boys at Adolescence* (1996) give little evidence of the excited, if often thwarted, spirit that Thompson attributed to the “sexual pioneers” she spoke with a decade earlier. In fact, Martin’s point of departure is the question of why girls’ confidence and self-esteem drop sharply at adolescence, as noted by an array of gender scholars of the 1980s and 1990s, all of whom, Martin argues, overlooked an important piece of the puzzle: the experience of puberty and sex.

To understand the “internal corrosion” that girls experience, Martin argues, one must look at the process by which they, and not boys, become alienated from their bodily and sexual selves. She defines sexuality broadly, “as the pleasure we get from our bodies and the experience of living in a body.” Sexual subjectivity is for Martin the capacity to own one’s sexuality, to feel pleasure in one’s body, and to be the subject of one’s own desire: “Who one desires to have sex with or which sexual practices one desires are not as important . . . as the issue of whether or not one desires at all.” Building on Benjamin’s arguments about subjectivity and desire, Martin, herself a sociologist, argues that attaining sexual subjectivity and attaining nonsexual agency are intimately linked:

Sexual subjectivity is an important component of agency, feeling like one can do and act. This feeling (agency) is necessary for a positive sense of self. . . . That is, one’s sexuality affects her/his ability to act in the world and to feel like she/he can will things and make them happen. (10)

Based on interviews with fifty-five middle- and working-class girls and boys, forty-five of whom were white and ten of whom were Latin American or Asian, Martin shows how almost every aspect of puberty is a source of anxiety for the girls who lack what she calls “subjective body knowledge,” an internal and emotionally connected physical awareness. The girls Martin interviewed associate puberty with a series of negative meanings: sexuality, female sexual bodies, dirtiness, shame, danger, and

objectification. Unable to identify with their bodies and take pleasure in them as subjects in their own right, girls engage in self-objectification and view their bodies as their accomplishment or failure. Recognized for their changing bodies, rather than subject to the judgments and monitoring that the girls report, the boys, by contrast, describe enjoying and taking ownership of their bodily changes, for instance, by playing with their deepening voices.

Having emerged from puberty with different feelings about their own bodies, girls and boys enter heterosexual relationships with different resources and strategies (none of Martin's interviewees describe same-sex romantic attraction or experiences). Extending to adolescence Benjamin's argument that infant girls, faced with their mother's lack of subjectivity, fall in "ideal love" with their fathers onto whom they project all their own stifled desires for agency and accomplishment, Martin argues that "many girls, especially working-class girls, find ideal love to be the only route (although often an alienated one) to attaining agency and sexual subjectivity" (61). Like Thompson, Martin hones in on the intricate narrations through which especially working-class girls, who typically receive less recognition than their middle-class peers for their individual accomplishments in school and sports, create romantic fairy tales in which they are the tragic heroines (62).

And, like Thompson, Martin suggests that these tales are based in fantasy, as the boys she interviewed do not seem to share the girls' feelings and attachments and sometimes express a dislike, disdain even, of their girlfriends. They are curious about sex and eagerly anticipate it. But many are unaware or untroubled that they are pressuring girls into having sex. Boys who had sex are typically content with their experience but, notably, "did not rave" about it. Some are "psyched" about having "done it" or having seen a naked woman. Others wonder about whether they "did okay" (81). One thing sex clearly does is alleviate anxieties about masculinity, even if, especially for middle-class boys, it leaves them with doubts about their performance. Thus, Martin concludes, for boys sexual experiences "often result in them feeling grown up, masculine, bonded with other men, agentic, and sexually subjective" (91).

Not surprisingly, this is not what first sex does for girls. If female sexuality is an amalgam of pleasure and danger, then Martin's teenage interviewees received more of the latter and little of the former. What stands out in the girls' accounts is the prevalence of pain and fear, in both the anticipation and the actual experience of sex. More than one-half of the girls Martin interviewed expected or expect sex to be painful and scary. One girl recalls her first sex as "not really intimate 'cause we were both scared out of our minds. I was shaking and I was just not feeling very sexual at that moment. It wasn't that great. I remember we just sat there side by side with our hands folded afterward" (79). Girls are often unable to describe the reasons for their first sex in terms other than "it just happened." Very few of Martin's interviewees see sex as pleasurable. Having moved from kissing to intercourse in a very short time, Martin argues, many girls entered their sexual encounters without desiring, or being prepared for, sexual pleasure. Martin reports that girls fall back on a story of "it just happened" as a result of pressure, if not coercion, from boys and the fear of being called a "slut" if they say they do want to have sex. And having acquiesced to sex in response to external pressure from their boyfriends, rather than having acted on their own desire and decisions, girls come away from their first sex with their already fragile sexual subjectivity and agency further diminished.

The book's last two chapters are devoted to lessons to be learned and taught. Martin argues that those girls with the most sexual subjectivity have mothers who have encouraged them to develop (sexual) self-knowledge, which strengthens them in their romantic relationships with boys. But Martin is also careful to point out that mothers are not to blame for girls' lack of sexual subjectivity, nor can a solution be found "at an individual or psychological level," because although "the problem manifests itself psychologically . . . the cause is rooted in gendered meanings and social interactions" (122). For those to change, a wholesale transformation in the "cultural discourses about gender and sexuality" is needed. One step in that direction, Martin argues, would be for sex education to teach girls to find "a desire of their own" grounded in physical desire, as well as emotional desire. Another of her recommendations is to supplement sex education with "gender education" that teaches boys and girls about their

unequal social context, for instance, teaching them to deconstruct the beauty standards of the fashion industry.

Excellent recommendations as these are, absent are thoughts about how to improve “relationship education” that would teach girls and boys how to communicate their own desires and boundaries and respect those of the other person. Such lessons are in order, given Martin’s findings that boys are unaware of violating their girlfriends’ boundaries and that several girls state explicitly that they would like their teachers to talk “more about relationships, emotions, and social relations and less about physiology and internal organs” (124). But like Thompson, Martin seems profoundly ambivalent about girls’ longings for intimacy, viewing their professions of “love” as often misguided and self-defeating, even though, like Thompson’s Cindi, one of Martin’s interviewees offers evidence that good relationships are not always illusory but can be real and significant.

Cherri, a middle-class nineteen-year-old, now had orgasms (she was one of only three girls who said she did) and she too attributed it to the fact of “love.” Cherri said, “As soon as I began to relax and trust, it happened. We have a really open communication kind of relationship and that makes all the difference.” (80)

So, what conditions and capacities allow boys to create relational contexts in which their girlfriends can “relax and trust” and let it happen? To start to answer that question, we need a richer understanding about boys’ inner lives and conflicts than *Puberty, Sexuality, and the Self* gives us. The boys sound terse and never fully come to life. Although Martin meets girls’ tales of love with skepticism, she does not probe beyond boys’ compressed answers, leaving largely unexplored the signs that they too fear sex, intimacy, and falling short, or that they too may be working through problematic parental identifications. She insightfully probes beneath the surface of girls’ stories to bring to light “the narrative work” girls do to reconcile their negative experiences—the pain, fear, lack of agency—with a sense of how it should be. One wonders whether boys engage in “narrative work” of their own, through their curt, cut-off accounts of what they should be.

DISCOURSES OF DESIRE

If *Taking Chances* hovers over *Going All the Way*, and *Bonds of Love* informs *Puberty, Sexuality, and the Self*, of the three predecessors, *Pleasure and Danger* echoes most clearly throughout Deborah L. Tolman's *Dilemmas of Desire: Teenage Girls Talk about Sexuality* (2002). A developmental psychologist, Tolman argues that sexual desire is both natural (that is, as sentient beings who are connected to the external world through embodied feelings, girls will naturally feel desire unless an interplay of social and psychic forces crowd it out) and necessary (that is, if girls cannot consciously feel and take ownership of their desire, they lose connection to their bodies and other people, as well as the ability to distinguish safe and dangerous situations and act accordingly). The problem is, Tolman argues, that an array of institutions—ranging from professional psychology to peer culture—confront girls with what Michelle Fine has aptly termed the “missing discourse of desire,” encouraging them to deny and resist their sexual desires.⁹

Tolman's project then is to excavate and bring to print these missing discourses of desire and to bear witness to the “phenomenology” of girls' desire. To that end, Tolman interviewed thirty girls, ages fifteen to eighteen. Of those thirty, one girl identifies as lesbian, two as bisexual, and the remainder as heterosexual. The girls were drawn evenly from an “urban” school and a “suburban” school, and they “represent a range of races, ethnicities, religions, sexual abuse histories, and sexual experiences” (28). A final chapter analyzes differences between the “urban” girls (low-income and Latina, Caribbean, and African-American) and the “suburban” girls (middle- and upper-income and white). But for most of the book, Tolman focuses on her interviewees' “commonality as girls coming of age in a patriarchal society” (40).

Listening closely for what Audre Lorde has called the “power of the erotic,” that inner source of pleasure, creativity, and self-affirmation, in girls' voices and using “a systematic psychodynamic method” for discerning different narrative layers, as developed by Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan, Tolman concludes that, contrary to much of the literature, almost all of her thirty interviewees have, among their many voices, an erotic one. She writes that girls “do feel embodied sexual desire, can

describe these feelings, and, when asked, can include them in their narratives about their sexual experiences" (41).¹⁰ Yet, even as girls evidence a discourse of desire, Tolman argues, building on Adrienne Rich, they confront heterosexuality as an institution that objectifies them and demonizes their own desires.¹¹

The book is organized according to how girls balance the dangers and pleasures. It begins with those girls for whom the experience of danger overwhelms any pleasure, whether they've had no or considerable experience with sex. What unites them, however, is a lack of knowledge of or, as several girls put it, "curiosity" about their sexual feelings. Whether due to ominous parental warnings about the dangers of boys or the stifling effects of trying to embody the desexualized "good girl," these girls have become, Tolman argues, dissociated from desire, a state of affairs that is particularly detrimental to their well-being as it deprives them of the physical and psychic tools they need to hold on to themselves in face of the feelings and needs of others. She makes a convincing case, drawing on the experiences of girls with "silent bodies," that not being able to feel desire makes it difficult for girls who have been raped or sexually abused to recognize that they have been violated and to heal from their injuries. Girls who are familiar with their sexual feelings, by contrast, are better able to recognize when their own physical boundaries and desires are being overridden by others and thus to protect themselves.

A second group of girls report sexual desire, but experience that desire as shrouded in dangers and requiring active resistance. Sixteen-year-old Ellen believes she has to fight off desire because "it might affect my life, a lot. What happens or my education" (87). Among this group of girls, the fear of pregnancy, AIDS, getting a bad reputation, being used or violated by boys, or judged amoral by parents weighs heavily. Eighteen-year-old Rochelle resists desire when she is with her boyfriend, and she declines his "gentle inquiries" to say what would please her. But Rochelle also tells of being so aroused recently that she called her boyfriend at 3 A.M.: "I can't sleep, I'm like, I just think about it, like oh, I wanna have sex so bad, you know, it's like a fever, drugs" (94). Rochelle's words are a powerful testimony to Tolman's claim that even girls who emphasize the dangers of desire are able to feel and articulate strong sexual longings.

A third group of girls give unmistakable evidence of sexual subjectivity, including an entitlement to desire and pleasure. Among them is seventeen-year-old Eugenia who describes her first intercourse as chosen and deeply desired: "I definitely wanted to do it. . . . I loved my first time, it was like [laughs] one of my favorite times ever having sex" (125). Paulina feels desire when "my temperature is really, really hot. . . . And my body would have . . . I would have a feeling going up my spine" (153). But among this third group of girls, Tolman draws a telling distinction. The vast majority take their pleasures without essentially challenging the inequalities embedded in the institution of heterosexuality—between girls and boys and between "good" girls and "bad" ones. They may, like Eugenia, explore sex within a long-term monogamous relationship—the one setting in which girls feel relatively protected against being labeled a slut. Or, like Trishia, they may hide the one-night stands that threaten their reputations. But whatever their strategy, girls do not move beyond what Tolman calls the "Parameters of Pleasure."

Tolman is, at times, clearly critical of this pleasure without politics. She notes that Eugenia's sexual subjectivity developed in an egalitarian relationship with a boy "whom she trusts and loves, who helped to make it safe for her to act on her desire" (126). But her "privileged position" is accompanied by an "insider politics" so that she is neither particularly charitable toward girls she sees as "loose," nor particularly agentic when exploring her sexuality outside of relationships. What distinguishes Eugenia from Pauline and Amber—the two "political resisters" Tolman found among her group of thirty interviewees—is that the latter, in addition to speaking frankly about their sexual feelings and actions, actively critique and challenge the status quo. Both Pauline and Amber talk angrily about the double standard and are willing to risk being labeled a "bad" girl by befriending girls with bad reputations and by speaking openly about gender.

Tolman argues that girls must receive support from adults—opportunities to relate their feelings and experiences and place them in a broader social and cultural context—in order to develop the kind of social awareness and political critique the resisters evidence: "Fully aware that they are not supposed to be desiring girls, and fully aware of the consequences for

doing so, they simply refuse to deny their feelings. . . . There is a conscious political edge to their resistance to gendered sexuality, tinged with their outrage at being unjustly muzzled" (151). But Amber and Pauline's positions as social standouts—one girl is a recent immigrant from Eastern Europe; the other is a veteran of foster homes—suggest that girls' social location is as important to their development of a critical perspective on mainstream culture as are their discursive tools and opportunities.

Yet, the significance of social location falls away in the book's final analysis. Its organization around the progressive development of girls' desire, from silence to outrage, betrays its assumptions of universality. Tolman conceives of the "urban girls" much as she does of their white, middle-class counterparts, as subject to a shared set of forces—a natural generative force of desire from within and the oppressive force of heterosexuality as an institution from outside. The book's primary empirical and analytic contribution is the illumination of girls' dilemmas in the context of their girlhood, which they share, rather than in the context of their class, ethnicity, and race locations, which distinguish them. Although a final chapter describes how "urban girls" and "suburban" girls encounter different physical conditions—physical ruination looms much larger for the former than for the latter—as well as different stereotypes about their sexuality, the book does not provide, nor could it, given its research design, an in-depth understanding of how race, class, and ethnicity, as social structures, affect girls' experience with desire and sex.

Measured against its aim of letting girls describe their experiences of desire, *Dilemmas of Desire* is a success and a deeply moving one at that. Reading girl after girl detail her experiences with desire, one cannot help admire not just the girls' courage in being willing "to speak about a part of their lives that is, essentially unspeakable" but also Tolman's courage in putting in black on white "the unspeakable" (24). Still, the book is operating within parameters of its own. Tolman says she is not "advocating that adolescent girls engage in sexual intercourse or suggesting that early sexual intercourse or activity of any sort is inevitable or good" (22). This caveat and the ambiguity about whether it applies to the girls who are featured in the pages that will follow suggest that while talking about desire may now be good for girls, actually doing sex is still bad for them.

POPPING THE CHERRY

The cover of Laura M. Carpenter's *Virginity Lost: An Intimate Portrait of First Sexual Experiences* (2005) sports two bright red, dew-dropped cherries connected by a stem, a first sign that what lies inside differs from the other books reviewed, an impression reinforced by Carpenter's account of her experience of virginity loss at the beginning of the book. Having come of age during the mid-1980s, Carpenter hints at a generational conflict with her mother, a "recently divorced opponent of premarital sex" who confronted a daughter "insistent on [her] right to enjoy every liberty that men did," and her intent to "value sexual activity for its own sake, rather than for the love it might represent." Carpenter saw virginity as "the antithesis of cool"; she remembers "gloating" with one of her girlfriends that "should President Reagan's foreign policies trigger a nuclear war, at least we wouldn't die virgins—not like some unfortunates we knew" (2).

In other words, Carpenter and her peers understood their first sexual intercourse through the lens of the "virginity-as-stigma" framework that, Carpenter goes on to argue later in the book, is one of the three metaphors Americans use to interpret virginity loss. The virginity-as-stigma framework was traditionally the prerogative of boys only, but it has, Carpenter argues, increasingly become available to girls as well. The latter claim, which, as we will see, is only weakly supported in the research itself, is indicative of a fundamental difference in perspective from the previous books reviewed here. Although gender—understood as a power structure with profoundly unequal outcomes—is the primary organizing principle for understanding adolescent sexuality in the first three, for Carpenter, gender is but one, and not necessarily the most important, of many factors.

Instead, Carpenter organizes her book around the three metaphors for understanding virginity loss that emerged inductively from interviews with a racially, economically, and sexually diverse group of sixty women and men, ages eighteen through thirty-five, whom she subdivides into a younger and older group—interpretive frames that, Carpenter argues, are both the product and the vehicle for the self-fashioning of distinct social identities. She notes that especially for the younger among her twenty-two "lesbigay" interviewees, as she calls her nonheterosexual interviewees (whom she purposely "over-sampled"), virginity loss can include oral sex.

But most of the recollections featured in *Virginity Lost* focus on young women and men's first vaginal intercourse during their teenage years.

A common frame for the heterosexual women and the younger heterosexual men, although not for the "lesbigays," is virginity loss as gift. For "gift-givers," virginity loss represents the pinnacle in a gradually intensifying mutual exchange of intimacy. Gift givers have the dubious distinction of being both most emotionally satisfied by their virginity loss experiences—and the most prepared to use condoms and other contraception—if their experience of sex as gift was reciprocated and the most devastated if their gift was rejected. As Thompson argued a decade earlier, Carpenter finds that heterosexual girls who discover after virginity loss that their boyfriends do not reciprocate their gift are "not only disappointed, even devastated, but also deprived of sexual agency" (195). Because they see virginity loss as giving themselves, Carpenter argues, they find it hard to leave abusive relationships. But unlike Thompson, Carpenter finds that most gift giving happens in genuinely warm and mutually caring relationships.

Most heterosexual men and a small group of heterosexual women experienced their virginity as an "unendurable stigma" that they were eager to discard. Some were so eager, in fact, that they do not build up to first sex, emotionally or sexually, or use condoms or contraception. For girls, who are able to use the double standard to their own advantage—not only is it relatively easy for them to find a willing contributor, but they also do not fear humiliation because of lack of "stellar" performance—and for popular boys, who typically have considerable social and economic resources, the thrill of virginity loss outweighs feelings of shame about having been virgins and the anxiety about having to hide their virginity status from their partners. But for several boys with low social capital, throwing off the stigma, often with a relative stranger who was none too sensitive, resulted in disempowering, even traumatic, experiences. Bill, for instance, was an eighteen-year-old, working-class college student when he lost his virginity:

I was so nervous, it was my first time, and . . . I didn't want to look foolish. . . . And we had sex and I didn't know anything about it. . . . I tried to do

what I saw the people do in the porno movies, move my body in a certain way, and do it really fast. . . . I just felt like I was, I wasn't performing well, you know. I felt like I had really fucked this thing up. She was totally unsatisfied and I had no control. (121)

Men like Bill felt humiliated and diminished by their first time, avoiding sex for long thereafter, but those youth who had what Carpenter calls a "process" perspective overcame not always pleasurable first experiences with relative ease. A defining feature of the mostly middle-class women and men who saw their virginity loss as a rite of passage or a step in a developmental process was that they remained relatively unshaken by their first experiences, whether good or bad. As prepared for sex as "gifters," in terms of using condoms and contraception, and more experienced than members of any other group with oral sex prior to first vaginal sex, "processors" were not more likely to experience physical pleasure than others. But by interpreting an initial disappointment as a "learning experience," processors could see it as a source of personal agency and move on relatively soon to better sexual experiences. Indeed, none of the processors expressed regrets about when and how they lost their virginity.

A final interpretive group—whom Carpenter names the "virginity-as-worship" group—apparently hopes to avoid disappointment altogether. Aware of the increasing political clout of the abstinence-only movement—which she describes in some detail—Carpenter went out of her way to find individuals who believed that sex belonged only in marriage. Carrie, a twenty-year-old virgin, had "romantically kissed only two men." She "look[ed] forward to sex within marriage as 'an opportunity . . . to get emotionally and physically and spiritually, all sorts of connected, in a very unique way'" (184). Kate, by contrast, changed her ways after joining a Pentecostal congregation and dating an old boyfriend who had become a born-again Christian. Single at the time of the interview, Kate is determined "not to kiss any man except her eventual husband." Like Carrie, Kate believes "that physical intimacy hinders a person's ability to develop a truly lasting relationship" (188). Clearly, Carrie and Kate view chastity as a kind of premarital insurance policy against divorce. One has to wonder whether one effect of this "policy" is to prevent young women from developing any kind of intimate relationships at all.

But Carrie and Kate are exceptions. None of Carpenter's other fifty-nine interviewees, including several from conservative Christian families, believe premarital sex is wrong. Considering her research results—including the finding that the vast majority of interviewees feel good about their first sex—she concludes that abstinence-only-until-marriage sex education makes little sense: “My research . . . represents an empirically based challenge to the claim that virginity loss before marriage, or during adolescence, inevitably causes physical and psychological harm” (194-95). After considering the physical and emotional effects that each of the three perspectives seems to have on those who subscribe to them, Carpenter recommends that schools teach the “virginity-loss-as-process perspective” because it enhances agency without carrying the risks of deep disappointment and humiliation of the gift and stigma perspectives.

Carpenter's data, especially on the dilemmas of boys, are illuminating, and her attempt to use these findings from cultural sociology to address the questions that educators, healthcare professionals, and policymakers ask is an important move. Unfortunately, the punch of her final arguments is compromised by twin demons, one methodological and one theoretical. Like the other three books, *Virginity Lost* is a work of qualitative research. But although Carpenter acknowledges that her small sample limits the kind of conclusions she can draw, claims of patterns found, based on percentages and comparisons between her various subgroups, are sprinkled throughout the book. For instance, she suggests that men and women are starting to converge in their interpretations of virginity loss: the younger men in her sample are more likely to use the gift metaphor and the younger women are more likely to use the stigma metaphor than are their older counterparts. There may well be some truth to this suggestion, but it is not one Carpenter can substantiate given the small numbers—four out of sixteen younger women used the stigma metaphor versus three out of seventeen of the older women.

A second problem is that Carpenter overplays the agency of individuals and the power of their “interpretive preferences” to determine their identities and experiences. She argues at various points throughout the book that their social identities encourage young people to choose a particular metaphor, but she also claims that social movements have suc-

ceeded in creating a more equal opportunity structure for choosing one's virginity loss metaphor and thereby shaping the self. It may well be accurate to argue that young Americans have more flexibility to choose their interpretation of virginity loss than they used to and that those choices deeply influence their sexual pleasures, relationships, health, and sense of themselves. But Carpenter does not do enough to relate these interpretive frames and the individuals who chose them to the social and cultural conditions that are not of their own choosing. Without explicating, especially in the concluding sections, that the social structures of class, race, and ethnicity continue to confer on young people profoundly unequal resources with which to navigate their sexuality, the book leaves the impression that when it comes to popping the cherry, inequality and injustice can be overcome by making different interpretive choices.

THE EMPOWERMENT PARADIGM

As a society, the United States has never quite come to terms with the fact that, as Sharon Thompson put it, from the late 1960s through the late 1970s, "more and more and more and more girls went all the way." Even in the 1950s, three-quarters of American women had premarital sex before age twenty-five, the same percentage that do so by age twenty today.¹² Yet, a fantasy to return to the "way we never were,"¹³ including the belief that encouraging abstinence before marriage is a viable protective strategy, has driven sexual and reproductive health policy in the United States, in part because policymakers, healthcare professionals, and the public at large seem to lack an alternative paradigm to understand and talk about adolescent sexuality—both its pleasures and its dangers.

The books reviewed in this essay offer us building blocks for such an alternative—what I call an "empowerment paradigm" of adolescent sexuality. Recognizing that sex at adolescence, especially for teenage girls, is often disappointing and dangerous, the books trace the source of the problems of teenage sexuality back not to acts of sexual intercourse *per se*, but to the social and cultural forces—at home, at school, in the media, peer groups, and romance—that undermine the connection that girls have with their bodies and the control they exercise over their sexual decision making and behaviors. In doing so, they shift the emphasis from

whether a young person has had intercourse—a central preoccupation of much public health research and policy—to how she approaches, interprets, and experiences her sexuality, broadly defined as a range of desires and acts.

These studies show us that a key issue is whether young people possess the subjectivity and agency they need to experience sexuality in a pleasurable fashion and to protect themselves against danger. Having an awareness of one's sexual desires and boundaries, possessing sexual subjectivity, makes it possible for girls and boys to enjoy their bodies from within; and sexual agency gives them the power to make decisions that accord with their own wishes and to prepare for sexual intercourse by using condoms and other forms of contraception. Particularly powerful is the argument, advanced most clearly by Martin and Tolman, that teenage girls must be encouraged by adults to know their bodies and their desires intimately so that they will have the physical and emotional self-knowledge to protect themselves against destructive external forces. Subjective body knowledge and awareness of one's sexual desires are necessary to recognize, ward off, and heal from sexualizing and objectifying media messages as well as interpersonal sexual violations.

The concept of sexual subjectivity, especially as it has been developed into a quantifiable construct by psychologists Sharon Horne and Melanie J. Zimmer-Gembeck, provides a bridge between the largely qualitative feminist studies of adolescent sexuality and quantitative public health research, which is politically very influential but often theoretically underdeveloped.¹⁴ Mainstream public health researchers and professional organizations have rejected abstinence-only approaches as ineffective and unethical but have remained, for the most part, caught in a framework that views adolescent sexuality as a health hazard, an approach that undercuts the power of their critique. By arguing theoretically and demonstrating empirically that sexual subjectivity promotes adolescent sexual and overall well-being—and conversely, that lack of sexual subjectivity constitutes a barrier to development—the empowerment paradigm provides public health researchers with a new set of tools with which to reconceptualize and research the linkages between sex, health, and well-being.

If the empowerment paradigm makes a strong case for talking with teenagers about sex—in ways that encourage self-knowledge and self-acceptance—at its best, it combines psychology with sociology to bring back the institutions that have been erased from U.S. political discourse. Just as right-wing welfare rhetoric of the 1980s removed from the story the institutional forces—as opposed to individual choices—that perpetuated poverty and need for welfare, right-wing sexual rhetoric of the turn of this century narrates a story in which sex, not institutional forces, undermines healthy relationships and family formation and produces rates of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases that dwarf most of the advanced industrial world.¹⁵ Turning on its head the argument that sex itself is to blame for disease, disappointment, and disadvantage, the empowerment paradigm posits that whether young people attain sexual agency largely depends on the psychological, economic, and cultural resources available as they come of age.

With intellectual roots that reach back to the 1960s and 1970s, the empowerment paradigm has benefited from the long gestation time of several of its key contributions. Having explored the questions of girls' sexual agency and subjectivity from the promises of those earlier decades through the disappointments of the decades that followed, their authors were well-positioned to discern some, if not timeless then certainly intractable, patterns in teenage girls' experiences with sexuality and romance in the United States and to offer arguments that take into account the complexities of the many forces at play. At the same time, the young people who inspired these insights and arguments have long since left adolescence and many have entered into middle age. And it is evident that along with the benefits of maturation, the empowerment paradigm has some gaps—unanswered questions of who, what, and why—that also betray the signs of times passed.

The books and theorizing on teenage sexual agency and sexual subjectivity have been based largely on interviews with girls and on an implicit, if not explicit, one-dimensional, naturalized vision of boys' sexuality.¹⁶ And although all of the authors made an effort to include nonwhite interviewees, they do not succeed in doing justice to the racial, ethnic, and class structures that serve as sources of sexual constraint as well as sexual

agency. One reason for these missing pieces is simply methodological. In-depth interviewing may be necessary to study a topic as personal as sex and its complex and contradictory meanings and experiences. But it is also a method that depends on the interviewee's propensity to trust and to tell. This means that some stories will be more easily recorded than others (both Thompson and Martin tell of their difficulties interviewing boys) depending on who is doing the interviewing—all the researchers featured in this essay are white women. And the limited sample size, the time-consuming analyses, and the narrative of the writeup in qualitative research put clear limits on the subcategories that can be systematically and fruitfully explored.

Additional qualitative research and mixed-method research are both necessary to disentangle race, ethnicity, and class as social structures and give each one its full due. There is enough evidence to demonstrate the specific forms of oppression that women and girls of color have experienced, especially in the arena of sexual and reproductive health, and to suggest that race and class intersect to create particular patterns in the experience of sex, bodies, pleasure, and agency.¹⁷ Yet we lack in-depth studies of the meanings of puberty, desire, and subjectivity among middle-class African American girls, for example.¹⁸ Qualitative work must move beyond just including several girls and boys of color and follow an explicit logic of inquiry designed to hone in on the specifics, including class, of their conditions and experiences. In quantitative work, it is vital to treat race, ethnicity, and class not simply as individual attributes that correlate with others, but as social structures that operate through enduring patterns of resource distribution, power, and cultural meanings that constrain individual choices and behavior.

The second gap in the empowerment paradigm of adolescent sexuality pertains not to the individuals it studies, but to the quality of being or of relating that it problematizes. We learn a great deal from these works about what teenagers, especially girls, need to attain subjectivity and agency. We learn much less about what girls and boys need to form intimate and egalitarian relationships. I am referring to the nitty-gritty of intimacy: how to get to know another person, listen and empathize, communicate our wishes and boundaries, respect those of the other person, deal with

conflict, build trust, and enjoy each other's company. Granted, becoming truly intimate, in any kind of relationship, is not an easy endeavor. But if we are going to ask how teenagers can develop sexual subjectivity—no small feat for those twice their age—then we should also ask what conditions and capacities allow them to form good relationships with each other.

Neither the highly romanticized “love” that Thompson and Martin are at pains to critique, nor the highly instrumental and antagonistic construct of the “battle of the sexes,” which coexist in U.S. culture, give young people the tools to navigate the challenges of actually relating intimately. Indeed, U.S. adolescents in their teens and twenties seem to have trouble figuring out how to form emotionally intimate relationships and even whether they have a right to them.¹⁹ The question of how girls and boys, and young women and men in their twenties, can form good relationships in the face of gender inequality—how they can play fair and fight fair with one another, even as they are treated unfairly by social institutions—is not easy to answer. But waiting until you are married or thirty, as our government teaches, is not an answer.²⁰ And the counsel of the books reviewed—maintain emotional equanimity, critique inequality, and resist power—is, however appropriate and necessary, not enough of an answer. Scholars and activists must speak to the dilemmas and difficulties, as well as the rewards, of forming intimate relationships, in order to better assist those coming of age and to forge a more powerful conceptual counterweight to the argument that intimacy can wait until marriage.

Finally, we need to be able to speak to the why of teenage sexuality, not just the desires and the talking, but the acts and actual experiences. With everything said and done, the prevailing wisdom in the United States, even among many feminists, is that no sex is still the best sex for teenagers. This is probably true for girls in their early teens, because sexual intercourse at that age is more likely to be involuntary and less likely to be really wanted.²¹ But there is no evidence to suggest that, in the later teens, sex is usually involuntary or damaging—although, as the works reviewed here show, it is not unproblematic either. And there is good reason to believe, as these works also demonstrate, that under the right internal and external conditions, sex can be a great thing, especially with a little prac-

tice. But saying so remains a challenge and it requires the right words that communicate ethical values in terms that are easy to understand. Finding those words is part of the work ahead.

NOTES

I want to thank Elizabeth Armstrong, Jillian Henderson, Kathleen Hulton, Kat Jones, and Sarah Miller for helpful comments; Janice Irvine for invaluable conversations and comments; and the Ford Foundation for supporting my time while writing this essay.

1. Janice M. Irvine, *Talk about Sex: The Battles over Sex Education in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Diane di Mauro and Carole Joffe, "The Religious Right and the Reshaping of Sexual Policy: An Examination of Reproductive Rights and Sexuality Education," *Sexuality Research and Social Policy: A Journal of the National Sexuality Resource Center* 4, no. 1 (2007).
2. See, John Santelli et al., "Abstinence and Abstinence-Only Education: A Review of U.S. Policies and Programs," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 38 (2006): 72-81.
3. B. Ruby Rich, "Feminism and Sexuality in the 1980s," *Feminist Studies* 12 (Fall 1986): 558.
4. Constance Nathanson, *Dangerous Passage: The Social Control of Sexuality in Women's Adolescence* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 222.
5. Kristin Luker, *Taking Chances: Abortion and the Decision Not to Contracept* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).
6. Carole S. Vance, "Pleasure and Danger: Toward a Politics of Sexuality," in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984).
7. Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).
8. My term "love deficit" is a play on Arlie Russell Hochschild's concept of the "care deficit," in "The Culture of Politics: Traditional, Postmodern, Cold-Modern, and Warm-Modern Ideals of Care," *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State, and Society* 2, no. 3 (1995): 332.
9. Michelle Fine, "Sexuality, Schooling, and Adolescent Females: The Missing Discourse of Desire," *Harvard Educational Review* 58, no. 1 (1988).
10. Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, Calif.: Crossing Press, 1984); Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).
11. Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983).

12. Lawrence B. Finer, "Trends in Premarital Sex in the United States, 1954-2003," *Public Health Reports* 122, no. 1 (2007): 73-78.
13. This expression comes from Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).
14. See Sharon Horne and Melanie J. Zimmer-Gembeck, "The Female Sexual Subjectivity Inventory: Development and Validation of a Multidimensional Inventory for Late Adolescents and Emerging Adults," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (2006): 125-38.
15. Susheela Singh and Jacqueline E. Darroch, "Adolescent Pregnancy and Childbearing: Levels and Trends in Developed Countries," 14-23, and Christine Panchaud et al., "Sexually Transmitted Diseases among Adolescents in Developed Countries," 24-32, 45, both in *Family Planning Perspectives* 32, no. 1 (2000).
16. This is changing. A number of recent research projects have been able to explore boys' experiences with greater ease and depict them with more complexity. See, for instance, Peggy C. Giordano, Monica A. Longmore, and Wendy D. Manning, "Gender and the Meanings of Adolescent Romantic Relationships: A Focus on Boys," *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 2 (2006); Niobe Way and Judy Y. Chu, eds., *Adolescent Boys: Exploring Diverse Cultures of Boyhood* (New York: New York University Press, 2004).
17. See, for instance, Rickie Solinger, *Pregnancy and Power: A Short History of Reproductive Politics in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Sheila Parker et al., "Body Image and Weight Concerns among African American and White Adolescent Females: Differences That Make a Difference," *Human Organization: Society for Applied Anthropology* 54 (Summer 1995): 103-14.
18. For an exploration of adult African American women's experience with sexuality, see Tricia Rose, *Longing to Tell: Black Women Talk about Sexuality and Intimacy* (New York: Picador, 2003). For an exploration of sexuality among college-educated Chicanas, see Aída Hurtado, ed., *Voicing Chicana Feminisms: Young Women Speak Out on Sexuality and Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).
19. See also Leslie Catherine Bell, "Subjects of Desire, Objects of Affection: Twenty-something Women and the Contradictions of Sexuality" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2005).
20. Since 2006, abstinence-only policies have targeted "adolescents and/or young adults within the 12-through 29-year-old range," according to Cynthia Dailard, "New Bush Administration Policy Promotes Abstinence until Marriage among People in Their 20s," *Guttmacher Policy Review* 9, no. 4 (2006).
21. J.C. Abma et al., "Teenagers in the United States: Sexual Activity, Contraceptive Use, and Childbearing, 2002," in *Vital and Health Statistics*, series 23, *Data from the National Survey on Family Growth*, no. 24, ed. Gail V. Johnson (Hyattsville, Md.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, 2004).