

Stereotyping: teen pregnancy



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Judging people is a concept that children learn at a very young age. They constantly hear their parents talking about other families they know and their reputations. It's just one of those facts of life that you were conditioned to know. Consequently, conclusions about different types of races and different types of classes are jumped to all the time. Is there a reason so many people have different standards for different races, especially in poverty stricken areas? Teen pregnancy is a growing problem in the U. S and sadly there is a correlation among races and socioeconomic standing.

Lack of educational classes regarding sex, censorship in the media, and unobtainable contraceptives are among many factors that prevent the reduction the percentage of teen pregnancies among varied races. As much as we would like to say that we do not stereotype humans, that is a false statement. In most cases stereotypes can be proven wrong, even the stereotype that most teenage pregnancies are amongst teenagers of color and families with low incomes can be proven wrong in some ways. On the other hand, the highest percentage of teen pregnancies occurs in these types of situations.

Take Henrietta Lacks for example. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, written by Rebecca Skloot, is tragic story that starts out with introducing an underprivileged family. Henrietta was only 14 years of age when she first conceived a child with one of her cousins. Whether or not the pregnancies at young ages were a direct result to her cancer, it was a factor none the less. Later on in the story after Henrietta was deceased, Deborah, one of Henrietta's children was living with her older brother Lawrence, his girlfriend Bobbette, and the rest of her siblings plus her father.

When Deborah was 12, Bobbette insisted that she not have sex with any of her cousins due to the unfortunate event that happened to her sister Elsie. Bobbette made her promise that she wouldn't and Deborah fought them off of her when they tried (Skloot 112-117). The way Bobbette handled the situation, taught Deborah right from and wrong in that instance. Sadly, only two short years later, Deborah was pregnant at the age of 14. She later dropped out of school to attend an all girl school (Skloot 144). There are many educational programs to help prevent teen pregnancy.

However, the schools that need these programs are less likely to hold such classes due to money. According to the University of Minnesota, it is typical that the vast majorities of teenagers attending charter schools in poverty stricken areas are of Hispanic or colored decent. Teenagers in these schools don't get the sex education that more fortunate students receive. Gerald S. Oettinger, author of, " The Effect of Sex Education on Teen Sexual Activity and Teen Pregnancy," states that, " It's the children who have not had this kind of education who get in trouble.

Consequently, research from Eugene M. Lewit, in " The Future of Children," showed that the highest percentage of teen pregnancies from 1970-1989 resulted in black teens having twice the birthrate than white teens (Figure 2). Lack of education is not the only reason this judgment stands to reason. The media is a large component that seems to me, promotes teenage sex and targets certain races to diseases related to sex. In *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, Skloot mentions the Tuskegee project when she was talking on the phone with a scientist wanting information to get to Henrietta's family.

The scientist was drilling her with questions about African Americans and science. She exclaims that the researchers, who performed the study, claim the African American race to be, “‘ a notoriously syphilis-soaked race’” (Skloot 50). Although I do not agree with the way the study was collected, the researchers were not wrong in choosing African Americans to perform the study on. In “ Remarks by the President in Apology for Study Done in Tuskegee,” former President, Bill Clinton, makes a nation-wide apology to the survivors of the study at Tuskegee and the families of the targeted men who are no longer living.

I do agree with the apology because the way the men were treated and just left to die was completely uncalled for, however, after all, according to , “ Trends in Reportable Sexually Transmitted Diseases in the United States, 2004,” in 2000, reported cases of black adults with syphilis compared to reported cases of white adults having syphilis was 24 times greater. Other instances of the media proving stereotypes true and promoting sexual activities among teens, occur in movies such as “ Juno”, and “ Precious”.

Juno is a comical film that many teenagers can relate too, however, the way the family reacts and how easy it was in the movie is not how it would be in real life if a teenager were to become impregnated. The whole movie is based upon sex and it goes too far when Juno, the main character goes into details of her impregnation. On the other hand, Precious, a poor black girl, living in poverty has a hard life and on top of everything she becomes pregnant, more than one time. It becomes hard to live in a society where around every corner, magazine headlines read, “ Look Good Naked”, or “ 75 sex tricks.

In a movie I recently saw, “ Love, and other Drugs,” I left the theatre feeling as if I had just watched porn with everyone in the theatre. How is it, that the government is allowing such frontal nudity and vulgarity of sex? None the less, it doesn’t make sense that this movie would preview in a theatre before a PG film’s showing where kids and their parents are sitting, let alone commercials on television channels suitable for young teens. It seems to me that the media is promoting sex and influencing races of all kinds. The average price of birth control per month can be between \$25 and \$45 a month.

Also obtaining birth control before the age of 18 is nearly impossible unless you have consent by the parent. As crucial as it seems, the last topic a girl wants to bring up with her mother, is whether or not she is sexually active. These days, buying condoms and birth control aren’t easy. Condoms can be awkward and mortifying to purchase in the store, and birth control is unobtainable unless you’re over the age of 18 and have enough money to pay each month. Most parents wouldn’t even want to put their daughter on birth control due to the fact, they figure it just gives her an excuse to have sex.