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Family, Teenage Pregnancy



Taylor Cordell Nora Beerline English 1111 3-11-2013 Glitz and Glamour? “ Teen Mom 2” is a sequel to MTV’s “ 16 and Pregnant”. More than three million people watch the series every week. It is MTV’s highest-rated show targeting women starting at age twelve. “ Teen Mom 2” features the lives of four teen mothers: Leah, Jenelle, Chelsea, and Kailyn. They are followed by cameras daily to show the gritty hardships they face. Unlike “ 16 and Pregnant”, it offers an unglamorous and sometimes uncomfortable look into their lives. “ Teen Mom 2” under-scores what life can really be like when you have a child at a young age. The show educates teens about being a teenage parent, while still being entertaining. Leah struggles with having relationship problems with her ex-husband and developmental problems with one of her twins. She seems to reach the boiling point when she finds out she will be expecting her third child. Jenelle does not have custody of her child. She signed over custody to her mother so she could “ mature”. She is addicted to drugs and alcohol, moves from place to place, and gets violent with her mother in front of her child. Her segments have never been dedicated to her son. She is more interested in jail, boyfriends, and drugs. Chelsea is a single mom. She has support from family and many friends. She dropped out of high school once she had her daughter. She takes GED classes and plans on attending beauty school once finished with her GED. Kailyn is also a single mother. She attends college and struggles with living on her own. She does not have any family members to support her through her journey as a teen parent. She constantly argues with her son’s father about custody agreements and seems to spend most of her time in the courtroom. “ Teen Mom 2” no doubt has an influence on many people. There

are plenty of people who love watching this kind of emotional, soap opera, reality television. While the show attempts to highlight how difficult it is for these young women to juggle teen life with the responsibilities of being mothers it may be sending mixed messages to viewers. With the media making celebrities out of the teen moms, it has made the show detrimental to its core audience. Some people think it is incredibly entertaining to watch people screw up their lives. Some viewers see these young women as if they are already on the path for an unsuccessful and depressing future. They feel the young mothers are turning their lives into a complete train wreck due to the "fame" the series has brought them. Viewers may also think that the young mothers are sending themselves into a downward spiral and devastating their families in the process. Negative viewers may even see the show as an example of a really awesome way to live. This reality series may compel some individuals to behave in ways that will land them on reality shows. These messages could also be portrayed by other reality shows such as, "Jersey Shore" and the "Worlds Strictest Parents". Although they have concerns of different topics they could be seen in multiple different ways. As is only natural, the show also highlights the deep love and affection mothers have for their children. While many of the teen moms do say they wish they had been older before having a child, they are very much in love with their children. They do not say, nor should they say, that they wish they had not had their babies. Though they are struggling to be mothers, they are also in the awe of the life-changing experience of having a child of one's own. It is not easy to watch these young mothers live with the consequences they have made for themselves. Sometimes it is hard not to feel sorry for them.

Some of the teen mothers also make very bad decisions for themselves and their children. They may even negotiate their role as a mother and a typical teenager due to the loneliness and isolation they feel. The show allows viewers to see them accomplish goals such as finding homes for their families, attending college, and getting a well-paying job. "Teen Mom 2" offers lots of helpful information to sexually active teens. At the end of each show, MTV provides a notice about pursuing family planning services. The show offers information about birth control, marriage, drug and alcohol abuse, and violence. The "16 and Pregnant" and "Teen Mom" series are the only reality shows that offer information about the activities taking place during the show. They try to encourage teenagers to think twice about their personal relationships and the impact they have on their lives. The show does an excellent job of portraying the financial, emotional, and social struggles of the teen moms, teen dads, and their extended families. The producers of "Teen Mom 2" have worked hard to show viewers that having a baby is not a walk in the park. More people need to know and understand what the purpose of this reality show is. It may not be appropriate for younger kids but could serve as a starting point for parents to talk with their children about sex and its consequences. MTV presents this reality show as an object lesson for teens in avoiding unwanted pregnancy. "Teen pregnancy and teen birth has declined dramatically since the early '90s." Amy Kramer, director of entertainment media and audience strategy at the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, said, "There are shows like this showing teenagers how hard it really is and is letting them understand for themselves and make better decisions in their lives."

Their peers are having great times dating, going to the pizza shop, movies, clubs, and to the prom. All of this has stopped for them. Although I am a teen parent of two boys, I enjoy staying up late to be one of the millions watching the show. I like to watch and learn how different their struggles are from mine. This show inspires me to be a better teen parent. I do not like to see their babies hurting or facing challenges they do not deserve to because of something their parents have put them through. Their challenges may be different from the ones I face, but we are in the same situation. I have friends who are also teen parents and watch the show for the same reasons I do. We see MTV showing us how they fight their battles and stand strong for their children. I find it simply wonderful when I see these young families doing good and knowing that they are heading down the right path.

However, MTV is discussing officially pulling the plug on Teen Mom 2. They believe with Jenelle's behavior, being as bad as it is, she should not be a role model for other teen parents. A lot of the fans of Teen Mom 2 wished for only Jenelle to be taken off of the shows but the producers will not do it. Now, the three other girls who have actually stood up to the role the show was provided for are being deleted too. In order to save Jenelle from herself they must make many sacrifices. Whether or not "Teen Mom 2" sends the wrong message to viewers is ultimately up for debate. It shows both the joys and struggles of motherhood, and it is easy to see that the show can both encourage and discourage teens from becoming parents. In the end, discussions of the impact that Teen Mom has on viewers are wrapped up in the culture of reality television as a whole. Despite the recent decline of teen pregnancy rates in the United States, teen pregnancy prevention is still an

important issue and should remain top of mind. The MTV show “ Teen Mom 2” may provide a unique opportunity to open the eyes of teenagers and create a more engaging environment for learning. Whether or not the show itself glamorizes teen pregnancy is yet to be determined, but the series, coupled with adult discussion, shows promise in educating teenagers about some of the realities of teen pregnancy and motherhood.