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# Governmentality and U.S. Congressional Discourse Regarding Abstinence-Only Sexuality Education

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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, GOVERNMENTALITY AND U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DISCOURSE REGARDING ABSTINENCE-ONLY SEXUALITY EDUCATION, by WM S BOOZER, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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ABSTRACT

GOVERNMENTALITY AND U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DISCOURSE REGARDING ABSTINENCE-ONLY SEXUALITY EDUCATION
by
Wm S Boozer

To investigate how federal discourse constructs adolescence, the author analyzed discussions of abstinence-only sexuality education from the *U.S. Congressional Record* from 2001 to 2007. He used grounded theory methodology to identify theoretical codes and construct a model from the data. The grounded theory developed focused on Congress's maintenance of its role in mediating concern over the sexual behavior of adolescents as opposed to finding a solution to the problem it had identified. The author relates this theory to Foucault's (1974/1991) concept of governmentality. He discusses Congress's discourse about adolescence using Lesko's (2001) confident characteristics of adolescence as a framework.

# GOVERNMENTALITY AND U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DISCOURSE REGARDING ABSTINENCE-ONLY SEXUALITY EDUCATION

by
Wm S Boozer

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the
Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
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in
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## Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| P.R.W.O.R.A. | Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 |
| STD | Sexually Transmitted Disease |
| U.S. | United States |

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose and Contribution of the Study

In this dissertation, I present an investigation of U.S. Congressional discourse regarding abstinence-only sexuality education. In addition to gaining a sense of federal understandings and positionings regarding abstinence-only sexuality education, I sought to identify the ways that, within its discourse, Congress constructed adolescents as objects of discipline. Originally, I had intended to look at Congressional discourse as policy narratives and use the techniques of narrative policy analysis (Roe, 1994) to analyze the discourse. As Baez (2002) did regarding affirmative action, hate speech, and tenure on college and university campuses, I intended to look at these policy narratives, "stories commonly used in describing and analyzing policy issues" (Roe, p. 2), to construct alternative narratives about abstinence-only sexuality education and to understand adolescence as conceptualized through those narratives. Ultimately, I found the narratives I located (which were not specifically

solicited from participants but gathered from extant documentary records) did not lend themselves to such an analysis, that is, they did not include cohesive, detailed narrative stories. I resolved this problem by relying on a more conventional sociological method, grounded theory (Strauss, 1987), doing what I could to avoid its positivistic trappings (Charmaz, 2005).

Irvine (2002/2004), Levine (2002), and Moran (2000) have written histories of sexuality education in U.S. public schools. Each of these authors focused on how the development of sexuality education into modern abstinence-only programs reflected the ability of conservative civil and political groups to manipulate public opinion and school policy. While each of them referred to federal legislation (e.g., the Adolescent Family Life Act of 1981), they described how these policies can be perceived as victories for particular civil or political forces or how the policies were perceived by the people at the time of their adoption. Each of them adopted, to different degrees, a critical stance toward the implementation of sexuality education in public schools, generally portraying federal and state governments as tools used by "conservative" and/or "Christian" organizations to achieve their end of controlling the sexuality of adolescents by preventing it.

However, to my knowledge, no published author has attempted to review the federal discourse associated with consideration of federal attempts to support sexuality education in U.S. public school classrooms. Such discourses on their face reveal the intentions of supporters and detractors of considered legislation (e.g., H.R. 802, "Medically Accurate Sex Education Act" [108th, 1st session]; H.R. 4182, "Family Life Education Act" [108th, 2nd session]; H.R. 4192, "Preventing Teen Pregnancy Act" [108th, 2nd session]). However, they also reveal how the government perceives its role within the larger issues of disciplining sexuality in U.S. society and of disciplining adolescents through their families. These aspects of governmentality (Foucault, 1974/1991) counter understandings of governmental power as controlling citizens (or quasicitizens, as adolescents may be qualified); instead, it uses a Foucauldian (1977/1980) understanding of power "as a productive network which runs through the whole social body" (p. 119). Thus, the outcome of this study addresses the following purpose: to identify the role the U.S. Congress plays in the advocacy of abstinence-only sexuality education targeting adolescents in the United States. While this purpose did not provide my motivation for undertaking this study, it emerged as my analysis of the data gave rise to understandings of the

federal government's role in the administration of sexuality education that differed from the critical perspectives put forth by Irvine, Levine, and Moran.

One of my original expectations was that my analysis would support that Lesko's (2001) confident characterizations of adolescence are maintained in current political discourse. Lesko identified a contemporary academic and public discourse of adolescence as centering on four themes: (a) adolescence as "coming of age," (b) adolescence as a time of "raging hormones," (c) adolescence as a time when children turn to their peers (instead of adults) for social affirmation, and (d) adolescence as restricted by age. These ideas influenced how Congress discussed abstinence-only sexuality education, although these understandings were nuanced, as I describe in Chapter 5. I provide a detailed description of the characteristics in Chapter 2.

## Terminology

Several terms are used interchangeably in my discussion, particularly as I rēpresent the arguments of others: "adolescent," "teenager," and "youth." Many authors (e.g., Arnett, 2004) make distinctions among these terms; however, researchers have not been consistent in the use of these terms. Moreover, in the popular parlance, they are

often used synonymously, with "youth" used less frequently in the United States than the other two terms. Generally, unless I am citing the specific use by an author, I will use the term "adolescent" to refer the individuals who are the (generally unwilling and often unknowing) subjects of the federal narratives regarding abstinence-only sexuality education. Whenever possible and necessary, I will try to clarify the meaning of the term I am using. At no time do I refer to particular adolescents; instead, I will be referring to the objects of discourse that are designated by that label.

Additionally, I use the term, "scientificism," to refer to an exaggerated trust in the truth-identifying characteristics of science, particularly the scientific method. "Scientism" has been used to describe this idea; however, it has also been used more literally to define the "methods and attitudes typical of or attributed to the natural scientist" (Mish et al., 2001, p. 1043), a meaning I wish to avoid by using a different term, one that suggests such activity is more about appearance than truth.

## The Researcher

This dissertation is a work that I produced. As you are reading it, I have relinquished it. I leave you to make what meaning you may of it, to disagree with parts or all

of it as you see fit. I ask only that at no time you consider the interpretations and speculations I have made within these pages to be definitive or conclusive, and I apologize now for any implications I make to that effect.

With some trepidation, I offer in this section a description of myself. I deny that the purpose of this description is to satisfy some pique of vanity; instead, I provide this description because having some knowledge of my *Weltenschaung* may make it easier for you to understand how I come to the interpretations and speculations that I make in the later chapters of this dissertation. Rogers (1961/1995) suggested that readers are eager to know of an author, as such knowledge gives "context and meaning" (p. 4) to the author's text. If such is not the case for you, then I encourage you to skip the remainder of this chapter.

My reluctance stems from my having to subject myself to present myself. Like so many, I am located within a contemporary discourse that emphasizes the individuated identity, a concept toward which I possess some skepticism. Despite my personal misgivings, others—friends, instructors, students—have insisted to me that I do, indeed, have an identity, and, moreover, the identity I have is tied to constructs within social discourse. For instance, Helms

(1994) argued that I have a White identity, one in which I am at some level of recognition of my privilege within U.S. society. But while I recognize that others perceive me as White (what with my pale pink to ruddy skin and straight, medium-brown hair) and even that such perception has opened opportunities for me throughout my life that might not have been available to another with a different complexion, I do not agree that I have to internalize those perceptions myself and perform a White identity. Someone's seeing me as White and treating me accordingly does not, in my mind, make me White.

Detractors may suggest that my attesting to a lack of racial/ethnic identity is merely more evidence of my privilege (e.g., McKinney, 2005), and that is why I am providing this description of myself. Anyone wishing to criticize my work based on my social positionings, my "identities," should find herein the information they need to do so.

I begin with the standard demographics. I have mentioned that I appear White, and I add that I appear male (deep voice, persistent beard shadow), although not necessarily particularly masculine. My father was an active reserve officer in the military through his career, and, after parenting for most of my childhood, my mother pursued a career of her own in banking. I estimate that we spent

most of my childhood as a lower middle-class family; if not, then my parents kept it secret. Financial affairs were not discussed among our family. My parents were Protestant Christians, and they attempted to instill that belief in their children without complete success. Because of my father's occupation, I grew up in a number of locations in Virginia and Georgia, and I have lived in Atlanta since graduating from Tucker High School.

Thus you may read this dissertation as the product of a White male middle-class, Christian-reared, Southern military brat, and I do not deny that it is told from such a perspective. I merely question what it means to say it is told from such a perspective. This focus on identity as a characteristic derived from some group membership creates a "tendency to . . . in effect divide difference and self into neat, internally unified categories" (Carlson, 1998, p. 111). As a privileged White person, what do I have in common with other such White persons, such as Sonny Perdue or Lance Armstrong or Jenna Bush? Do they think as I do? Do they see the world as I do? Did they, like I, vote for Ralph Nader in multiple presidential elections? What can you know about them that tells you something about me?

From the perspective of queered theory, "identity categories [are, in part] regulatory mechanisms of the

dominant culture" (Carlson, 1998, p. 113). This characteristic is evinced in debates about insider (emic) and outsider (etic) research positions. For example, without stating so plainly, Bishop (2005) put forth that only insiders are qualified and concerned enough to do research on particular populations (in his case, the Maori). While he cited researchers who have suggested that the emic-etic distinction as a research position is "no longer useful" (p. 113), his description of the Kaupapa Maori research approach excludes the possibility that ways of knowing about the Maori developed by non-Maori researchers are desirable, meaningful, or even ethical. Instead of asking why a particular way of knowing is privileged, he would substitute a different way of knowing. I would rather ask why any ways of knowing are privileged. They are all, after all, always already artificial, as is even my own.

I have divulged my socioeconomic data, and those may be sufficient to let you understand what I do in the remainder of this dissertation. But I am not certain that merely by describing myself I have given you what I promised, some insight into how I think.

Evey: Who are you?

V: Who? Who is but the form following the function of what, and what I am is a man in a mask.

> Evey: Well, I can see that.
>
> V: Of course, you can. I'm not questioning your powers of observation. I am merely remarking on the paradox of asking a masked man who he is. (McTeigue, Silver, Wachowski, & Wachowski, 2006)

So now I will unmask myself, to a limited extent, as I am confident you are eager to get to my literature review in Chapter 2. I have described briefly my concerns about the nature of identity earlier in this section, and I expand further on that generally before addressing a specific aspect of contemporary identity, sexuality.

*On Being*

I am more comfortable with the idea of roles than with the idea of identities. A role can be filled by any person, calling upon me (when I fill one) to present myself in a particular fashion to accomplish a particular end, very like the presentation of self techniques described by Goffman (1959). Someone who has lost a contact lens asks me to help them it, and I do so: I would protest being labeled as a "lens-seeker," but I would agree that I had been seeking the lens. I do not feel the need to become a thing to perform an action with which that thing might be associated. My feelings here are related, I believe, to my resistance to surveillance (Foucault, 1979). Recently, a friend I had not seen in some time remarked to me, "Are you

still a vegetarian? A friend of mine saw you eating a roast-beef sandwich." I found the question infuriating, as it implied that my not eating meat was an invitation to others to monitor my behavior. I have never identified myself as *a* vegetarian, although I have in the past described myself as vegetarian (just as I am willing to describe myself as *queer* or, better yet, *queering*, but not as *a* queer). Now, I would say only that I do not eat meat, and I am reluctant to say even that. My not eating meat is a decision that I make each time I eat, not some static component of self I have contracted like an illness.

Etymologically, identity is that part of self that remains the same transituationally. I have a theory regarding why I find the idea of identity so distasteful. As I mentioned above, my father served in the military reserve while I was a child. Every three years (on average), our family would move to a new location, another military installation more often than not, where I would attend a new school and learn new systems and make new friends. Three years later, I said goodbye to those friends, moved to a new location, and started over. This experience, which occurred five times, contributed to my feeling outside of things, led me to avoid strong affectional bonds (Bowlby, 1979/2005) with others as I knew

such things would end in the so near future. While I enjoyed my friendships, the salient characteristic of them was and is their impermanence. (My relations with my parents were strained during these times, particularly my teenage years when I was having to hide my desires from them.) My not having to be a particular person through my childhood left me with no commitment to being a particular person as an adult. I felt quite free to behave in contrary ways, and I desired to do so.

The idea of roles appeals to me because it matches better my own experience in contemporary life, one in which my experience of myself is not as something permanent but rather as something relational, something that exists temporarily in my engagements with others. "Each truth about ourselves is a construction of the moment, true only for a given time and within certain relationships" (Gergen, 1991, p. 16). Instead of taking on an identity, I take on a role comprised of a negotiation between someone with whom I am relating and myself, that is, the role is constructed from expectations and reactions of others as well as desires and actions of me. (Burke & Reitzes, 1981, provide a symbolic-interactionist description of this process.)

*On Queering*

By (describing myself as) queering I suggest that I subvert heteronormativity. While this is a sexual positioning, it also a social and political positioning (Stein & Plummer, 1996) as well as an academic one. "A simultaneous tactical deployment of *and* critical engagement with the 'rules' of conventional behavior [represent] queer activity at some of its most sophisticated and provocative" (Hall, 2003, p. 7). For the past several years, I have subverted the heteronormative, the socializing message that individuals should entangle themselves in male-female pairings to establish a family, by practicing celibacy, refraining from sexual intimacy with others. Celibacy is not a permanent state: I am not a celibate; rather, it is a decision that I make in social situations (although, as I grow older and fatter, the opportunities where such a decision is enacted occur less often).

My decision to practice celibacy was a sexual choice, but the decision itself was spiritually motivated, that is, it was (and continues to be) based on my understandings of my relations to others and the universe. I want to channel my "positive energies in ways that at least cause no harm and hopefully do some good" (Snelling, 1991, p. 50) to/with others, and sexual acts whose ends are conquering or

possessing no longer seem to me desirable, regardless of how transgressively appealing they may appear.

My exploration of celibacy led me to consider abstinence-only education as a research topic for my dissertation. I am familiar with the debate on sexuality education in schools, and I am disappointed with the choices made in Georgia regarding teaching abstinence in the classroom. (See Grey, 2007, for a description and critique of Georgia's endorsed program.) While I am sympathetic to comprehensive sexuality education's argument that children must be provided “full” information so they can make their own decisions, I am concerned that both comprehensive sexuality education and abstinence-only sexuality education unattractively teach of sexual abstinence—celibacy—in their curricula. Specifically, they teach of abstinence as an activity (or even a nonactivity) that will last until an initial sexual encounter, as a “waiting” state rather than as a potential sexuality state of its own. I fear that abstinence-only sexuality education's attempt to coerce adolescents into abstinence and comprehensive sexuality education's offering it as an alternative to sexual activity do not provide adolescents with a full knowledge of abstinence as it may relate to their spiritual lives. (I have not yet located a content

analysis of a comprehensive sexuality education program, so my fear remains speculative.) I recognize that spirituality is not something easily discussed in public schools, but I believe celibacy could be taught in ways that make it seem less like a punishment or merely a contraceptive.

## Overview

For this dissertation study, I have chosen to look at the federal government, which, since 1996, has been providing increasing amounts of funding for abstinence-only sexuality education in U.S. public schools. In the next chapter, I review the research on sexuality education in schools and then describe two frameworks that I make use of in my analysis, Lesko's (2001) confident characteristics of adolescence and Foucault's (1974/1991) theory of governmentality. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology of my analysis. In Chapter 4, I present my findings. Finally, in Chapter 5, I connect my theory to governmentality, discuss the confident characteristics of adolescence and the Congressional texts, and provide suggestions for future research.

# CHAPTER 2

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I present an overview of sexuality education for adolescents in the United States, including a tracing of its historical development over the past century. As this history approaches contemporary times, I focus more specifically on the issue of sexual abstinence and abstinence-only educational programs, setting the historical and political context for the documents I intend to review for this study. I then present an overview of adolescence, based primarily on the work of Lesko (2001), who proposed a social context for the understanding of adolescence in the United States. Finally, I summarize Foucault's (1974/1991) conception of governmentality.

This review of the literature is brief for two reasons. First, the history of the development of sexuality education is represented primarily from three authors, each of whom is critical to different degrees of educational programs that teach only sexual abstinence while avoiding or omitting information regarding contraception, disease prevention, and sexual activity outside the sanction of a

different-sex marriage. These particular readings appealed to me because I found them to be engaging reads and because I too am critical of abstinence-only programs, albeit for somewhat different reasons. I did not seek out these particular readings because I generally agreed with their arguments and/or stances. My attempts to locate a history of sexuality education in the United States told from the perspective of someone who supports abstinence-only sexuality education were unsuccessful.

Second, despite the controversy surrounding the topics I address in this study, there has been little scholarly research published on them. While arguments about the effectiveness of sexuality education programs and abstinence-only education programs are frequently the topic of news reports and network specials, published research on this topic is scarce, possibly for reasons I discuss below.

## Sexuality Education in the United States

I begin this account at the turn of the 20th Century as do two of my main sources, but I do not imply that concern for disciplining sexuality began at that time. For example, Foucault (1977/1988, 1984/1988) argued that a social need to discipline sexuality has been a part of European and European-derived societies for centuries. However, my interest is in how this disciplining eye

specifically looked at adolescents as the targets of its disciplining, so this history begins where concerns over sexuality meet with the social construction of adolescence.

Bolton (1931) provided this anecdotal evidence regarding understandings of adolescence in the late 1800s:

> When I was a student in the Milwaukee Normal School from 1888 to 1890, we never heard anything about child study or individual psychology or adolescence. A few years later, while a student at the University of Wisconsin I heard almost nothing about child study or adolescence. (p. 53)

However, he claimed this situation changed when G. Stanley Hall became President of Clark University in 1887 and "under his guidance a number of students began to publish monographs and articles on adolescence" (p. 53).

According to Moran (2000), the invention of the concept of "adolescent" by Hall and others in the early 1900s was coupled with the idea of the adolescent as a dangerously sexual being. For instance, Hall (1904/1937) provided the following observation regarding masturbation and adolescence:

> During the teens, the intensity and frequency of it in individual cases, particularly those of sanguine and choleric temperament, is no less difficult to believe. It sometimes reaches a satyriasic and nymphomaniac degree, and many, if not most, of the perversions originate in these years. (p. 436)

Hall described the effects of masturbation as including a sense of unworthiness, sin, and pollution; loss of self-respect; lying and secretiveness ("closely connected with cowardice, timidity, egoism, and frivolity," p. 443); decrepitude; and senescence. Hall also argued against sexual activity with a partner unless it was "utilized for [Christian] religion" (p. 464), but he felt that adolescents and young adults were not receiving adequate instruction in that regard:

> That this department of sexual hygiene had been almost criminally neglected, none can doubt. . . . While legislation is sadly needed for the protection of youth, instruction is no less imperative if the springs of heredity are to be kept pure. The blame rests mainly with the false and, I believe, morbid modesty so common in this country in all that pertains to sex. (p. 465)

Thus, Hall specifically called on education to provide adolescents with the guidance they need to enjoin only in appropriate sexual behaviors.

In the early 1900s, more unmarried, potentially sexually active young people existed within society than had been the case in previous times because more teen-aged persons were attending school (thereby being physically separated from the adult world, Muuss, 1996), because more persons were entering puberty at a younger age than their predecessors, and because more students were remaining in

educational programs for longer periods of time, that is, into their mid-20s (Moran, 2000). Consequently, because Hall and his colleagues had defined

> adolescence as a sexually tempestuous period and [made] sexual control and sublimation the keystone of the maturation process, . . . adolescence demanded careful and sustained external control. (Moran, p. 20)

The idea of providing instruction in public schools to regulate adolescents' understandings of sexuality naturally followed from this definition.

But sexuality education in schools violated the "conspiracy of silence" (Moran, 2000, p. 39) that was necessary because discussion of sexuality "would corrupt youthful innocence" (McKay, 1999, p. 27). Partridge (1938) suggested that "that the secretive attitude of adult society toward sex only whets the curiosity of the growing young person" (p. 173; see also Jefferis & Nichols, 1967). Nonetheless,

> Sex education's defining dilemma . . . consisted of the tension between teaching young people proper information about sex before their minds were thoroughly debauched and avoiding the possibility that this education would itself arouse precocious interest in sexual matters. Between the need for timeliness and the dangers of suggestiveness lay an exceedingly narrow path. (Moran, p. 39)

This conflict led to the development of a scientific approach to sexuality education, which could follow that

narrow path, proponents argued, because "science was precise, . . . science was too pure to be suggestive, [and] 'scientific' sex education was fundamentally too boring to be suggestive" (Moran, p. 49).

This scientificism did not persuade everyone. Opponents of it, such as Jesuit educator Richard Tierney, argued that "the best sex education . . . was an education purged of sex" (Moran, 2000, p. 63). In line with such arguments, according to Levine (2002), the federal government published a sexuality education guide titled, *High Schools and Sex Education*, in 1922, in which "it practically eliminated sexuality from the courses altogether" (p. 94).

In 1938, Partridge suggested that problematizing adolescence was a social construction:

> It is in a society like that in America today, where social maturity, economic independence, formal status as citizen, and other marks of a mature person are delayed far beyond the attainment of physical and mental maturity, that a problem exists for young people. In other words, modern society creates its own adolescent problem by refusing to consider young people as grown-ups until many years after they have matured physiologically and mentally. (p. 13)

Specifically, he posited that "sex is not inherently a problem for young people—the restrictions of society make

it such" (p. 15). Partridge's position is contrary to the trends described by Moran (2000).

In the 1950s, sexuality education became part of family life education (Moran, 2000). The purpose of this new educational movement was "to strengthen and improve family living and to reduce family-related social problems" (Arcus, 1992, p. 390), which included the "problems" of sexual behavior and sexuality. However, family life educators were not able to demonstrate that their curriculum had a particular effect on the behaviors of their adolescent students. "The strongest supporters of family life education confessed that they were never quite sure themselves of the relation between their courses and their students' behavior" (Moran, p. 147). Over time, family educators lessened the amount of their curriculum specifically devoted to sexuality issues.

Irvine (2002/2004) cited the May 1964 establishment of the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) as the beginning of the modern sexuality education movement. Early SIECUS efforts focused on creating a public discourse about sexuality because

> SIECUS valued sexuality and sexual pleasure and vehemently condemned sexual ignorance and guilt. It opposed any social, religious, medical, familial, or other influence that stifled sexual openness. . . . SIECUS broke from the more

> traditional sex hygiene programs of the first half of the century in its emphasis on sexual pleasure, its refusal to impose a moralism on young people, and its critique of the corrosive power of sexual guilt. (Irvine, pp. 24-25)

Moran (2000) attributed SIECUS's success in influencing sexuality education to a

> nationwide panic about the sexual revolution. Concern over sexual changes provided the real energy for a proliferation of sex education programs; SIECUS and related organizations tried to stimulate and channel this energy, but by and large they merely followed popular demand for some kind of public response to the sexual revolution. (pp. 165-166)

Writing in *The Saturday Evening Post*, Kobler (1968) observed that "America seems to have suddenly discovered an urgent need for universal sex education [and] is galloping off in all directions to meet it" (p. 24). Irvine argued that the subsequent controversy over sexuality education brought Christian evangelicals and fundamentalists into politics, and they continued to influence public discourse regarding sexuality education throughout the remainder of the century.

Abstinence and Abstinence-Only Sexuality Education

When abstinence-only sexuality proponents speak of abstinence in the context of sexuality education, they refer to it as a negative reinforcement: "If you're not married, sex is not meant for you. It's that simple"

(Stenzel, 2003, p. 25). With federal monetary support, some Christian civil organizations have pushed for replacing comprehensive sexuality education programs (such as those advocated by SIECUS) with abstinence-only education programs (Irvine, 2002/2004).

> A [1999] study of public schools revealed that among all districts in the United States, 10 percent had a comprehensive sexuality education policy, 34 percent promoted abstinence as the preferred option for teenagers but allowed for discussion of contraception, and 23 percent required the sole promotion of abstinence. . . . The abstinence-only-until-marriage districts either completely prohibited any instruction in contraception or required that teachers only emphasize its failures. (Irvine, p. 188)

These statistics suggest the widespread instruction of sexual abstinence as a duty or restriction from sexuality, not as a form of sexuality itself.

Levine (2002) reported that in 1981 the American Family Life Act became "the first federal law specifically written to fund sex education" (p. 91). Alabama Senator Jeremiah Denton had introduced the bill, and influential Utah Senator Orrin Hatch's signing on as cosponsor gave the bill momentum and media attention (Levine). The new law was designed to prohibit discussion of abortion services in the programs it funded (Irvine, 2002/2004; Moran, 2000), and it "mandated abstinence education and units promoting 'self-discipline and responsibility in human sexuality'" (Moran,

p. 204) in those programs. Hymowitz (2003) described adoption of bill as a success for traditionalists (those opposed to comprehensive sexuality education), but she wrote that subsequent court actions obstructed implementation of the law's provisions. However, according to Levine,

> over the next two decades, large, well-funded national conservative organizations with a loyal infantry of volunteers marched through school district after school district, firing at teachers and programs that informed students about their bodies and their sexual feelings, about contraception and abortion. These attacks met with only spotty resistance. . . . The most progressive and politically savvy sex educators were working outside the public schools, so they had limited say in public policy and little direct effect on the majority of kids. At the grass roots, the visible forces against sex ed were usually miniscule, often one or two ferocious parents and their pastor. But local defenses were feebler, and the already puny garrisons of comprehensive sexuality education began to fall. (p. 91)

With the coming of AIDS in the 1980s, politicians argued that "education is the only way we have to prevent the spread of this deadly disease" (House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, 100th Cong., as cited in Moran, p. 207), with many of school systems nationwide opting for abstinence-only messages as prevention from infection (Moran). Public health officials have argued that because adolescents are developmentally unable to engage in

meaningful intimate relationships, "instructing them in safer sex is a set up for failure [as civilized beings or successful adults]" (Napier, 1996, p. 60).

At the beginning of the 2000s, the conservative movement that sought to remove sexuality from sexuality education had "all but won the sex-education wars" (Levine, p. 91). However, Hymowitz (2003) evaluated the situation with a different emphasis: "Today, the reign of comprehensive sex ed appears to be faltering" (p. 5). Regardless of the degree of change, Irvine charged that comprehensive sexuality education advocates had to bear some of the responsibility for the widespread prevalence of abstinence-only sexuality education they had been poor advocates. According to Frank (2005), "in fiscal year 2005, the federal government will spend about $186 million on abstinence-only-until-marriage programs—more than twice as much as it spent in 2001" (p. 2). Hymowitz wrote that "the federal government earmarks over $100 million annually for abstinence education" (p. 5).

Moran (2000) pointed out that abstinence was the original purpose of sexuality education, so the dominance of abstinence education is the logical outcome of the movement begun in the early 1900s. He also argued that such an outcome may be inappropriate for contemporary society,

conceived, as the outcome was, a century ago. However, Hymowitz (2003), who agreed that early sexuality education efforts were intended to discourage sexual activity between adolescent participants, disagreed with Moran's contemporary concern. She concluded her argument by observing that "comprehensive sexual education promises pleasure, but abstinence ['-only' by implication] education pushes honor" (p. 18).

## Adolescence and Its Confident Characterizations

Etymologically the time "to grow up" (Graham, 2004, p. 25), adolescence is a concept recreated at the turn of the 19th Century by psychologists and educators (Santrock, 2001). (It had originally been used to describe a period of human development in Classical Rome but fell out of use during the Medieval period in Europe, Graham.) Primary among those educators in terms of influence was G. Stanley Hall (Bolton, 1931), whose two-volume 1904/1937 publication, ***Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education***, applied evolutionary theory and recapitulation theory to study development of individuals during a stage between childhood and adulthood, which he described as "the period from 12 to 23 years of age, [which] is filled with storm and stress" (Santrock, p. 7).

Hall (1906/1921) characterized this period as one of transition and confusion for the individual:

> Adolescence is a new birth, for the higher and more completely human traits are now born. The qualities of body and soul that now emerge are far newer. . . . The adolescent is neo-atavistic, and in him the later acquisitions of the race slowly become prepotent. Development is less gradual and more saltatory, suggestive of some ancient period of storm and stress when old moorings were broken and a higher level attained. . . . The old measures of dimensions become obsolete, and old harmonies are broken. The range of individual differences and average errors in all physical measurements and all psychic tests increases. Some linger long in the childish stage and advance late and slowly, while others push on with a sudden outburst of impulsion to early maturity. . . . Nature arms youth for conflict with all the resources at her command--speed, power of shoulder, biceps, back, leg, jaw--strengthens and enlarges skull, thorax, hips, makes man aggressive and prepares woman's frame for maternity. (p. 6)

Assertions in Hall's work persist in the four confident characterizations of adolescence within contemporary society as described by Lesko (2001). "Confident characterizations" of adolescence are "several grounding assumptions that operate in [contemporary] scholarly and popular talk about teenagers" (p. 2). These characterizations are "coming of age," sexual subjugation, peer orientation, and age association. Writing in Britain, Graham (2004) described ten myths about adolescence which reflect some of the ideas in Lesko's characteristics.

*Coming of Age*

"Adolescents 'come of age' into adulthood" (Lesko, 2001, p. 3). The adolescent must search for consistent and reliable values to help him or her construct an adult self (Stancato, 2003), a search typically accompanied by pain and confusion as the individual moves away from the "lack of meaning" (Stancato, p. 19) of childhood through "storm and stress" (Peterson, 2003). According to Lesko, this classifying of adolescents serves to separate them, make them different and inferior to those who so label them. For example, Bickel and Jantz (2000) titled their advice book for Christian adolescents, ***Real Life Begins after High School***, implying that the lives people lead as adolescents are not real. DiClemente and Crosby (2006) wrote of adolescence, "The period of transition between child and adulthood is likely to be stormy, to say the least!" (p. 144).

*Sexual Subjugation*

Adolescents are perceived as "controlled by raging hormones" (Lesko, 2001, p. 3). "At adolescence, the dominant interests spring from sex development and center around sex" (Bolton, 1931, p. 192). In adolescence, "sex asserts its mastery in field after field and works its havoc in the form of secret vice, debauch, disease, and

enfeebled heredity" (Hall as cited in Nasaw, 1979, p. 8). In 1968, Sebald wrote of "the powerful role that sex plays in [adolescents'] lives" (p. 392). More recently, Balswick and Balswick (1994) warned parents that they need to prepare themselves "for the fact that, as part of the 'just do it' generation, your teen may make unwise choices in the adolescent sexual wilderness" (p. 8), and Moore and Rosenthal (1993) asserted that

> for most people, adolescence is a "critical period" in the upsurge of sexual drives, the development of sexual values, and the initiation of sexual behaviours. (p ix)

DiClemente and Crosby (2006) put forth that sexuality is a "central aspect" (p. 144) of what they identify as the developmental tasks of adolescence, identity and self-esteem.

*Peer Orientation*

Adolescents are seen as more peer-oriented and less adult-oriented (Lesko, 2001). Erikson (1950) theorized that to avoid role diffusion, adolescents "temporarily overidentify, to the point of apparent complete loss of identity, with the heroes of cliques and crowds" (p. 228). Sebald (1968) similarly noted,

> Problems intrinsic to [the] *teenager-adult* relationship include confused communication, unclear authority definitions, generalist-specialist discontinuity, incongruous standards,

> and many other problems. . . . On the other hand, the *teenager-teenager* relationship is characterized by few, if any, such confusions and uncertainties. Teenagers . . . know they belong together and observe norms and values not necessarily consistent with the adult world's folkways and mores. . . . In their peer culture they find status. (p. 203)

Giroux (1998/1999) wrote, "the relations between youth and adults have always been marked by strained generational and ideological struggles" (pp. 25-26). The implication of such views is that adolescents are part of a separate conformity, that they "are not fully autonomous, rational, or determining" (Lesko, p. 4), unlike adults.

Writing to teenagers, Pogány (1998) stated,

> Young people conform [to peer expectations] because they don't want to be left out. They want to feel as if they are part of something. They don't want to be laughed at. Nobody wants to be too different from their peers. Peer groups are also part of becoming independent from your parents. (p. 85)

Her understandings of adolescence succinctly illustrate the social understandings that Lesko described.

*Age Association*

"Adolescence is signified by age" (Lesko, 2001, p. 4). It has been tied roughly to the onset of puberty, and "psychological [development] and social development are expected to coincide and produce a normally functioning young adult by the late teens" (Sebald, 1968, p. 13).

Bolton (1931) asserted that "the period extends from about fourteen to twenty-five in males and from thirteen to twenty-one in females" (p. 46). More recently, Arnett (2004) argued, "Adolescence in [U.S.] society ends at about age 18" (p. 207) so that individuals could then enter "emerging adulthood," a period which he considered separate from adolescence but during which many of the issues traditionally associated with adolescence are addressed and resolved. According to Hymowitz (2003),

> One of the most striking flaws of the entire sex-ed dispute is that both sides talk about 13 year olds in the same breath as they do 18 or for that matter 22 year olds. (p. 18)

As with other characteristics, constructing adolescence as a time corresponding to a particular age, or, generally, a range of ages that may be separated in the individual by substantial changes in physiological, emotional, and mental processing reinforces the idea of the adolescent as in a not-yet-adult but no-longer-child developmental state and, thus, different from normal (adult) people.

*Summary*

Rooted in the ideas of Hall and other early social hygienists, conceptions of adolescence as a dangerous (to hegemonic society) time and thus a problematic (for

hegemonic society) time flourished as they converged with three sets of social worries:

> (1) worries over racial progress; (2) worries over male dominance; and (3) worries over the building of a nation with unity and power. Adolescent development became a useful way to talk about and strategize for racial progress, male dominance, and national strength and growth. The new experts on adolescence identified particular problems to watch for and offered active, supervised activities, especially team sports, as the prescribed path toward national progress and functional elites. (Lesko, 2001, p. 6)

Thus, Lesko argued that defining adolescence has historically and contemporarily had less to do with concern for adolescents than it did with concern for addressing larger social problems by controlling adolescents. As adolescents are a generally disenfranchised and legally disempowered group in the United States, they had little say in what was done to them by adults. Adolescents are other to *adults* in ways similar to how "assigned Others" differed from Europeans in colonial discourse (Lesko, 1996).

In his higher education textbook, *Adolescence*, Santrock (2001) defined and described adolescence as follows:

> 1. *Adolescence* is defined as the developmental period of transition between childhood and adulthood. (p. 17)

2. In adolescence, life becomes wrapped in sexuality. This is a time of sexual exploration and experimentation, of sexual fantasies and realities, of incorporating sexuality into one's identity. Adolescents have an almost insatiable curiosity about the mysteries of sex. (p. 354)

3. To many adolescents, how they are seen by peers is the most important aspect of their lives. . . . From the peer group, adolescents receive feedback about their abilities. Adolescents learn whether what they do is better than, as good as, or worse than what other adolescents do. . . . By adolescence, peer relations occupy large chunks of an individual's life. (p. 184)

4. In American and most other cultures today, adolescence begins at approximately 10 to 13 years of age and ends between the ages of 18 and 22 for most individuals. (p. 17)

These excerpts from Santrock's descriptions correspond to Lesko's characterizations of adolescence.

Scholarly and popular understandings of adolescence have changed in that contemporary authors give more importance to environmental contexts than to hereditary or biological traits as they may affect adolescent development (Lesko, 2001; Santrock, 2001); however, these basic social assumptions about adolescence do not evince significant modification over the past 100 years despite published research that has questioned their accuracy (Petersen, 1993):

> The stereotype of adolescence as a tumultuous period of life still appears in the media, but, as a result of recent research, adolescence is now considered [by researchers] much more differentiated, with better understanding of

> manifestations inherent to the life period versus those attributable to situations or contexts of adolescence. . . . The hypothesis that a universal change such as puberty would influence a nonuniversal outcome such as psychosocial problems now seems illogical. . . . Research demonstrates that the nature of relationships with parents changes during adolescence beginning with puberty but that this altered relationship typically becomes a more mature interdependent one (Collins, 1990; Steinberg, 1990), rather than one characterized by the dependency typical of childhood. (pp. 2-3; see also Graham, 2004; Manning, 1983)

Petersen concluded that research suggests "normal adolescent development is a positive process bringing adult maturity and competence, in contrast to existing negative stereotypes" (p. 4).

## Governmentality

Foucault (1974/1991) described contemporary political reality (in certain western European states and the United States) as exhibiting *governmentality*. He defined this term as the amalgamation of institutions, procedures, and researches that allow the exercise of a specific type of power (government) which targets the population, which uses political economy as its principal form of knowledge, and which uses the apparatuses of security as its essential technical means. Over a long period of time, particular countries, European and North American, have steadily moved toward the preeminence of government over other forms of

power (e.g., sovereignty, discipline), resulting "in the formation of a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses and . . . in the development of a whole complex of *savoirs*" (p. 103). A key element in the development of governmentality was the identification of a population which could then be managed (disciplined). The development of technical factors, such as statistical demography, made the population knowable as a generalized body. Within governmentality, the government is no longer its own purpose (as was the sovereign); instead, the government's purpose is

> the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc. . . . It is the population itself on which government will act either directly through large-scale campaigns or indirectly through techniques that will make possible, without the full awareness of the people, the stimulation of birth rates, the directing of the flow of population into certain regions or activities, etc. . . . The population is the subject of needs, of aspirations, but it is also the object in the hands of the government, aware, *vis-à-vis* the government, of what it wants, but ignorant of what is being done to it. (p. 100)

Foucault viewed government as a positive expression of power (MacLeod, 2002), not a repressive one. Nonetheless, his conception of government differs from the Marxist view that the political state enforces the interests of the bourgeoisie by conserving relations of production. Instead,

Foucault saw the state as serving the people (as the population), so that the overall interests of individuals are addressed even while the interests of some individuals must be neglected.

Pursuing the welfare of the population is tempered in these states by a pastorality understood both in its sectarian and occupational senses (Curtis, 2002), that is, as derived from religious dissidence (following the Reformation) and the corporatization of states (during and following the Age of Exploration). These forces competed with the interests of the population when they did not complement them.

Foucault (1974/1991) described a historical progression from government as sovereignty, ruled by a sovereign who could take away a citizen's property or livelihood; to government as discipline, ruled by laws that governed individuals' behaviors; to government as governmentality, ruled by its own processes and techniques with the goal of strengthening the state, including its population (Foucault, 1979/1988). Strengthening the state required knowledge of the current strength of the state, prompting the development of new techniques of measurement of the population.

Based on her analysis of British legal actions related to a child's ability to make decisions regarding his or her welfare, Bell (1993) identified a

> mode of governmentality [that] is one which the State watches over its citizens, governing through the family via a promise to guard the weaker members against arbitrary parental rule, whilst simultaneously maintaining a strong paternalistic attitude and normalizing "the family" as the unsurpassed social unit. . . . This does not mean that the State necessarily gives *adequate* response to the individual members within the family . . . but the discourse of protection exists. (p. 400)

In a neoliberal state (such as the United States), which is attempting to overcome the dissatisfactions of welfarism, "the successful government of the parent/child relation is crucial" (p. 395) even as the State attempts to distance itself from the family and provide it the appearance of autonomy. Tait (2000) posited that the State takes a similar relationship to contemporary schooling. "In addition to its formation within the family, the child also came to be constructed as an object of knowledge within the institution of the school" (p. 87). He argued that attempts to regulate the sexual behavior of youth, such as prescribed sexuality educations, have been unsuccessful in achieving that goal, but they have demonstrated the limitations of government as a disciplining entity.

## Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed the historical development of sexuality education for adolescents in the United States beginning with G. Stanley Hall and continuing through the 1900s. I have also described the place of abstinence-only sexuality education programs in contemporary public schools. My purpose in these descriptions has been to provide a historical and political context for my analysis of Congressional discourse about sexuality education, as I describe in Chapter 3.

Also in this chapter, I discussed Lesko's (2001) confident characteristics of adolescence, and I provided an overview of Foucault's (1974/1991) concept of governmentality. I expected these characteristics to provide the social and political contexts for my analysis.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

I had intended to use narrative policy analysis (Roe, 1994), which applies techniques of literary theory to the conventional practices of policy analysis (e.g., Yanow, 2000). However, when I engaged the data, which consisted of excerpts from the ***U.S. Congressional Record***, I realized the narratives provided in that text were insufficiently story-like to lend themselves to such an approach.

Consequently, I decided to use a grounded theory methodology to analyze the data. Faculty members in my master's-degree program used symbolic interactionism in their research and instruction, and I had used grounded theory a number of times on projects in the past, so I felt confident that I could do it quickly despite the amount of work involved in such a project.

In this chapter, I describe the theoretical perspective I adopted to analyze the data I collected, the procedures I used to identify data sources, and the methods I used for my analysis. I conclude this chapter by

describing how I present my results and findings in the subsequent chapters.

## Theoretical Perspective

For this project, I used interpretivism as a theoretical perspective, "the philosophical stance lying behind a methodology" (Crotty, 1998/2003, p. 66). Interpretivism is constructionist in epistemology, meaning that "meaning does not inhere in the object" (Crotty, p. 42) but rather is waiting to be constructed through interaction with an observer, or knower. As Guatama the buddha (c. 50 B.C.E./1976) is recorded as saying in the *Dhammapada*,

> We are what we think
> All that we are arises from our thoughts
> With our thoughts, we make the world

Within U.S. and most western-European-originating societies, this step is taken further in that reality is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) through symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1969). Symbolic Interactionism involves three assumptions:

1. That human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings these things have for them;
2. That the meaning of such things is derived from, and arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows;
3. That these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process

> used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters. (Blumer, p. 2)

Thus, reality is constructed through negotiation between or among social actors. Moreover, an individual's contribution to a social encounter represents his or her attempt to negotiate a particular version of reality (Berger & Luckmann; Goffman, 1959), which other members of the encounter may or may not accept as valid.

According to Crotty (1998/2003), Symbolic Interactionism "spawned the research methodology known as *grounded theory*" (p. 78). Grounded theory has been used in ethnographic analysis to locate meanings within interview texts and the like, but it can also be used for analysis of extant documents (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter, 2000). In my case, I used grounded theory to analyze excerpts of the *U.S. Congressional Record*, which is something between a transcript and a document.

## Procedures

In my study, I looked to the *U.S. Congressional Record* for narratives related to abstinence-only sexuality education. Originally, I had intended to use federal narratives within legislation as well as a court case and a transcript of committee testimony for my analysis. I had identified these data through some of the secondary sources

I used (e.g., Levine, 2002) as well as through an electronic search of the ***U.S. Congressional Record*** on the Library of Congress Internet site. When I went to document the parameters of my search (by replicating it), I searched instead the ***U.S. Congressional Record*** as available on the Government Printing Office's Internet site, and my results were quite different. I searched on two terms, "abstinence only" and "abstinence education," each as an exact phrase. Table 1 shows the number of hits I received for each search term for each of the years I searched, 2001 to 2007.

Each hit identified a segment of the ***U.S. Congressional Record*** in length from a single page to 167 pages. Consequently, within each document, I searched again for three terms, "abstinence," "teen," and "adolescent," to identify the sections of the texts that would be pertinent to my investigation. In some cases for very short documents, I printed out the pages and searched for the terms myself, highlighting each one in a different color. Some of the identified excerpts were appropriations reports or reports on actions related to transmittal of a bill to or from committee or the like, and these generally included no more than mention of the name of the bill, so they produced no examples of discourse for me to include in my report. Additionally, once the Senate and the House of

Table 1

Identifying Source Documents in the *U.S. Congressional Record*

| Search Phrase | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Abstinence Only | 5 | 4 | 66 | 16 | 12 | 6 | 2 |
| Abstinence Education | 11 | 19 | 30 | 14 | 19 | 12 | 1 |
| Unduplicated | 13 | 20 | 68 | 28 | 29 | 15 | 2 |

*Note.* Table data reflect number of hits based on the search phrase. "Unduplicated" represents the sum of the two searches with items that appeared in both searches counted only once.

Representatives have adopted versions of a bill, a joint committee meets to create a combined version of the bill, and this version is also published in the *U.S. Congressional Record*. Repetition also occurs with the transcription of speeches, as members of Congress are allowed to supplement their remarks after they are made, frequently submitting the entire text of their remarks which is then published along with the transcribed text.

I chose to use the text from the *U.S. Congressional Record* because I wanted to use Congress as a proxy for the federal government. By that I mean that I assumed the discourse about abstinence-only sexuality education that appears in the *U.S. Congressional Record* represented a federal discourse on this subject. This assumption placed a delimitation on my investigation which may, in turn, have affected the nature of the model I developed as an outcome.

## Methods

As I have mentioned, I used grounded theory to conduct my analysis of the texts from the ***U.S. Congressional Record.*** Using grounded theory, the researcher reviews the text to develop theories about the symbolic meanings of the text (Strauss, 1987). Within grounded theory, data collection and data analysis occur simultaneously, as the analysis can inform collecting further data through theoretical sampling, that is, identifying new sources of data to answer questions identified from but not addressed in data collected. For my particular project, theoretical sampling was not possible because I was using the entire population of documents that mentioned "abstinence only" or "abstinence education."

Once I engaged the data, I developed codes based on what I found. For example, "Abstinence is not just saying no to sex, it is about saying yes to a happier, healthier future" suggested the codes "defining abstinence" (conditions) and "future goals" (consequences). Thus, individual elements of the data could suggest multiple codes. "Open coding connotes just that—data are open to multiple simultaneous readings/codes" (Clarke, 2005, pp. 7-8). These codes were close to the raw data I was analyzing (see Table 2), providing a step to higher-level, theoretical codes.

Table 2

Content-Based Codes Developed Through Open Coding and Analysis of Data

| Code | Example |
|---|---|
| Autonomy | . . . teaches young people the skills to make responsible decisions about sexuality. |
| Causality | The abstinence movement profoundly influenced this trend. |
| Content | Authentic abstinence education programs give teenagers the full truth. |
| Decision-Making | We can and we must help America's young people to do better, to make better choices. |
| Definition | Comprehensive sex education is medically accurate, age appropriate, education. |
| Delay | We must send [children] the message that of the many decisions they will make in their lives, choosing to avoid early sex is one of the most important. |
| Demand | Today 49 out of the 50 States are participating in the [abstinence-only sexuality education grant] program. |
| Effectiveness | Sexuality education programs have clearly shown their effectiveness and ability to help curb teen pregnancy. |
| Experts | Scientific reports by the Institute of Medicine, the American Medical Association, and the Office on National AIDS Policy stress the need for . . . |
| External Connection | Abstinence-only sexuality education is the preferred program of President George W. Bush. |
| Future | Abstinence is . . . about saying yes to a happier, healthier future. |
| Ideology | This crisis is too severe and our response is too critical to let our efforts be undermined by catering to ideological pressure. |
| Marriage | Out-of-wedlock births are often disastrous for mothers, children, society as a whole. |
| Normalizing | . . . an issue of whether or not we will teach people what the healthy lifestyle is. |
| Popular Opinion | Americans overwhelmingly support sex education. |
| Pregnancy | Teen pregnancy is a problem that affects the entire country, not just the young women who are forced to make the difficult decisions at an early age. |
| Pregnancy/STD Prevention | Abstinence is the only sure way to avoid pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. |
| Religion | We need to start reinforcing . . . what we teach our children at church. |
| Social Good | Abstinence-only sexuality education programs strengthen our communities. |
| Statistics | Sixty percent of teens have sex before graduating high school. |
| STDs | In the 1960s, one in 47 sexually active teenagers were infected with an STD. Today, . . . it is one out of 4. |
| Teen Sex | Problems stemming from increased sexual activity among teens [have] not abated. |
| Values | Abstinence-only sexuality programs reinforce American's values. |
| What Works | Abstinence education works. |

*Note.* Only codes attached to four or more sections of text are presented. A full list of codes is in Appendix A.

Where possible, I used Strauss's (1987) core paradigm to clarify the meanings of the codes (i.e., as conditions, interactions, tactics, or consequences), although the nature of the documents (as opposed to observed actions) limited my ability to use the paradigm. As codes accumulated, I made connections among them, developing theoretical memos to identify recurring relations. To move toward identification of a core category as I engaged in open coding, I used axial coding strategies, in which the researcher focuses on each individual category, intensely investigating it using the core paradigm characteristics and evaluating its relationships with other categories (Strauss, 1987). As part of these activities, I consolidated categories with fewer than four indicators into other categories. For instance, I had attached the code, "abortion," to two items: "The best way to reduce the number of abortions is to prevent teen pregnancies in the first place" and "Approximately 82 percent of teen pregnancies are unintended and more than half of these end in abortion." Both of these items had also been coded as "pregnancy," and I decided to consider these associations of a controversial issue, abortion, with pregnancy as strategies and tactics of the arguments regarding "pregnancy" rather than to maintain "abortion" as a

separate code. Such revision of the coding categories continued until I was reduced to 24 codes, and I decided not to reduce my coding set further to allow some breadth of detail in my description of my analysis (see Chapter 4). A few categories did not lend themselves to this kind of consolidation (e.g., "family"—"encourages family communication between parent and child about sexuality"; others were "inclusion," "sexuality of adolescents," "peers"). These items were used in my discussion of adolescence in Chapter 5. Corbin and Strauss (1990) suggested that during open coding, "not all concepts become categories" (p. 7; where their use of "concepts" corresponds to my use of "categories" to refer to the original set of 60 codes developed during my analysis).

Eventually, as part of my memoing, I sketched a model of the relationships among the relationships, and the model identified a core category for organizing the theory. Throughout this process, I tried to keep my understandings of the texts *grounded* in the empirical data (Charmaz, 2005). While generally I found what I expected among the data, I also found some things I had not expected.

## Presentation

In Chapter 4, I present the findings of my investigation and present the model of the grounded theory

I developed. In Chapter 5, I discuss my theory in light of governmentality (Foucault, 1974/1991), revisit Lesko's (2001) confident characteristics of adolescence to talk further about Congressional discourse, and make suggestions for further study.

# CHAPTER 4

# FINDINGS

In this chapter, I first describe the existing statutes regarding abstinence-only sexuality education. I then present the codes developed during open coding along with an elaboration of their occurrence within the data. The code categories described are those for which there were at least four occurrences in the text. (The categories are described alphabetically.) Following these descriptions, I redescribe the analysis using theoretical coding. I developed the theoretical coding using axial coding strategies (Strauss, 1987) as guidelines. Finally, I present a model to illustrate the core theoretical category and its relationship to other categories.

I was surprised to find in the ***U.S. Congressional Record*** multiple discussions of sexuality education for other countries. Beginning in 2003, Congress considered and funded legislation to support disease infection rate reduction in certain nations in sub-Saharan Africa, in South America, and in southeast Asia. In general, discussions of this legislation in the context of abstinence-

only sexuality education focused on the spread of HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, with countries in other areas mentioned seldom. When I refer to these discussions below, I use "Africa" as a shorthand for all of the areas covered in this legislation.

## Statutes on Sexuality Education

I begin with descriptions from two acts that precede the statements from the *U.S. Congressional Record*. The first of these is the Adolescent Family Life Act of 1981, whose focus was on programs that targeted lowering the pregnancy rate among unmarried adolescents. The second is the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (P.R.W.O.R.A., 1996), which provided the initial federal funding for abstinence-only sexuality education programs.

### *Adolescent Family Life Act of 1981*

The Adolescent Family Life Act (1981) provided support for demonstration projects that dealt with the "problem of adolescent premarital sexual relations, including adolescent pregnancy" (§300z.b.1), that promote adoption, that provide care services to pregnant adolescents, that identify the "societal causes and consequences of adolescent premarital sexual relations, contraceptive use, pregnancy, and child rearing" (§300z.b.4), and that

"alleviate, eliminate, or resolve any negative consequences of adolescent premarital sexual relations and adolescent childbearing" (§300z.b.5). The Act also encourages the distribution of research results related to these goals. The Adolescent Family Life Act does not explicitly address sexuality education in public schools (although a public school or system might request funding for such a program under this statute). However, its provisions emphasize the prevention of adolescent sexual relations outside the constraints of marriage. Additionally, "outreach services to families of adolescents to discourage sexual relations among unemancipated minors" (§300z-1.a.4.O) is one of the "necessary services" which may be provided by the grant recipient. Educational services are specifically to include

> information about adoption; education on the responsibilities of sexuality and parenting; . . . support [for] the role of parents as the provider of sex education; and assistance to parents, schools, youth agencies, and health providers to education adolescents and preadolescents concerning self-discipline and responsibility in human sexuality. (§300z-1.a.4.G).

Funding is provided for demonstration projects that provide "family planning services" but only if such services are not otherwise available in the service area and if there is not sufficient funding from other sources to provide such

services (§2004.b). "Family planning services" is not explicitly defined in the Act, but

> grants or payments may be made only to programs or projects which do not provide abortions or abortion counseling or referral, . . . and grants may be made only to projects or programs which do not advocate, promote, or encourage abortion. (§300z-10.a)

The Act did allow project providers to provide referrals if they were requested by the adolescent and her parents or guardians. No mention is made throughout the Act of the responsibilities of the male partner who contributed to the pregnancy.

*Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*

With the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (1996), the federal government amended Title V of the Social Security Act to allot funding to each State

> to enable the State to provide abstinence education, and at the option of the State, where appropriate, mentoring, counseling, and adult supervision to promote abstinence from sexual activity, with a focus on those groups which are most likely to bear children out-of-wedlock.
>
> For the purposes of this section, the term 'abstinence education' means an educational or motivational program which—
>
> (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 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 increases vulnerability to sexual advances; and
>
> (H) teaches the importance of attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity. (§912).

This text was not accompanied by a "Findings" section. During consideration of the bill that led to this Act, Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina argued, "This bill takes a step in the right direction in helping reduce the rising illegitimacy rates by providing funds for abstinence education" (U.S. Congress, 1996, p. S9390).

## Content-Based Coding Categories

### *Autonomy*

Autonomy refers to an individual's ability to make independent decisions regarding his or her actions. An autonomous adolescent would make his or her own decisions regarding sexual activity: "[Abstinence education] teaches

young people the skills to make responsible decisions about sexuality" (U.S. Congress, 2007, pp. S55-S56). The goal of autonomy was not meant solely for adolescents: Abstinence education is an important part of "dealing with unplanned pregnancies and achieving independence for working men and women" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H2543), and "preventing teen pregnancy is a key part of moving people from welfare to work and reducing poverty" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H2552). However, autonomy could be dangerous because adolescents, given options, may select the wrong one: Comprehensive sexuality education programs have operated under the guise of "so-called safe sex programs, family planning programs, things using a euphemism for telling kids its okay to have sex, as long as you are careful about it" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6667).

*Causality*

Causality refers to the idea that a particular curriculum or instruction might effect a corresponding outcome, such as a change in adolescents' behaviors. Such a stance was exemplified by the Michigan Abstinence Partnership's receiving a bonus award from the Department of Health and Human Services, granted because Michigan had become one of the top five states in which the ratio of out-of-wedlock births to total births decreased and the

number of abortions decreased (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1752). Implied is a causal link between the abstinence-only program and changes in statistics on adolescent behavior: "The abstinence movement profoundly influenced this trend" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H497). Such programs might not always result in the desired effect: "Abstinence-only programs have never been proven effective and may result in riskier behavior by teenagers" (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. H6979). Some abstinence-only sexuality education programs "are actually harmful to teenagers because they provide incomplete, inaccurate, and misleading information with regard to contraceptives, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H2565).

One tactic was to argue that comprehensive sexuality education promoted sexual licentiousness: Telling a 16-year-old to abstain and also showing him or her how to use a condom sends a message of expectation of his or her nonmarital sexual activity (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1755). "Failed 'comprehensive sex education' and misleading 'abstinence plus' programs have for too long given teenagers the message that 'anything goes' as long as a contraceptive is used" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H497). Alternatively, such programs did not cause a particular desired effect: "Federal funding for so-called family

planning or safe sex programs, as they are often called, . . . has not reversed the trend of increase in teen out-of-wedlock births" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6640).

Only once was the idea of causality specifically questioned: "Current research shows that there are no 'magic bullets' for preventing pregnancy—not sex education alone, not abstinence alone" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. 2552). Otherwise, Congress assumed there was some relationship between the type of sexuality education it prescribed and some outcome related to adolescent behavior, whether or not it was the outcome desired.

*Content*

The content of abstinence-only sexuality education programs was frequently criticized for its scientific inaccuracies:

> Under the current administration's "abstinence-only" approach to sex education, millions of children and adolescents each year are deprived of basic facts on contraception and are instead being taught misleading information about reproductive health. (U.S. Congress, 2005, p. E1150)

"Currently, the federal government is spending millions on abstinence-only education that includes medically inaccurate and misleading information" (U.S. Congress, 2006, p. E1138). "Abstinence-only programs fail to provide information about contraception beyond failure rates, and,

in some cases, provide misinformation" (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. 6979). Some abstinence-only sexuality education programs "are actually harmful to teenagers because they provide incomplete, inaccurate, and misleading information with regard to contraceptives, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H2565).

In some cases, abstinence-only sexuality education was criticized not for being inaccurate as for being incomplete: "An abstinence-only approach will not work by itself" (U.S. Congress, 2005, p. H433). "'Abstinence-only' programs . . . censor health information for young people" (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. E1213).

At no time was the accuracy of abstinence-only sexuality education curriculums defended. Instead, supporters argued that providing medically accurate content was not its focus: "Authentic abstinence education programs give teenagers the full truth: There is no contraceptive for a broken heart, and no guaranteed protection against pregnancy or STDs except abstinence until marriage and fidelity afterwards" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H497).

While Congress did affirm that "abstinence-only programs do not provide clinical health services" (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. H6978), it did not generally discuss the specific content of abstinence-only sexuality education

programs, perhaps because the details had been codified in the P.R.W.O.R.A. (1996).

Proponents of comprehensive sexuality education programs were not particularly talkative about their contents either, nor were such programs ever criticized for having scientifically or medically inaccurate curricula. In addition to its description in the Family Life Education proposal (U.S. Senate, 2007, pp. S55-S56), supporters described comprehensive sexuality education as "medically accurate, age appropriate, education that includes information about both contraception and abstinence" (U.S. Congress, 2005, p. S1305) and that "expose[s] young adults to important information that they will not learn from an abstinence-only program" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6677). In particular, it provides adolescents with information about contraception: "Teenagers need to understand something about contraception and other aspects of a comprehensive sex education program" (U.S. Congress, 2006, p. S8153).

Scientific research shows that comprehensive sexuality education

> provides young people with information about contraception for the prevention of teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted disease [and calls for] sexuality education that includes messages about abstinence

> and provides young people with information about contraception for the prevention of teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted disease. (U.S. Congress, 2007, p. S52)

Supporters argued that "any curriculum funded with Federal dollars [must] be scientifically and medically accurate" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H485), although no legislation to that effect has been adopted.

The content of abstinence-first sexuality education, which I categorize as a special case of comprehensive sexuality education, was defined as

> a strategy that strongly emphasizes abstinence as the best and only certain way to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections and that discusses the scientifically proven effectiveness, benefits, and limitations of contraception and other approaches in a manner that is medically accurate. (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. S9723)

This content as well as that of comprehensive sexuality education in general was criticized for its moral content: "Failed 'comprehensive sex education' and misleading 'abstinence plus' programs have for too long given teenagers the message that 'anything goes' as long as a contraceptive is used" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H497).

In Africa, the only program considered for sexuality education was an abstinence-first sexuality program. This version of a sexuality education program was exemplified by

the “ABC Program” developed in Uganda. This program “stresses the ‘ABC’—‘A’ for abstinence, ‘B’ for being faithful, and ‘C’ for condom use when appropriate” (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. E1460). This combination of methods was considered appropriate because “once sexual activity begins—keeping in mind that sexual activity may not be consensual—it’s critical that accurate information about condoms and other preventive methods be available to limit exposure to sexually transmitted diseases” (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3614). In the African context, the content of the program was tied to its success: “The effectiveness of [sexuality education] programs depends literally on their comprehensiveness and on their relevancy to the population you are targeting” (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. S6418). In contrast to this idea that appropriate content should be determined at the implementation site, Congress considered and eventually adopted an amendment to consign 33% of prevention funding to abstinence-only education programs even though it “will push aside proven comprehensive programs in favor of questionable models designed to appease a right-wing constituency” (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3584).

*Decision-Making*

While the Family Life Education proposal encourages teaching "young people the skills to make responsible decisions about sexuality [and] how alcohol and drug use can affect responsible decision making" (U.S. Congress, 2007, pp. S55-S56), most of the discourse specifically about adolescent decision-making focused not on the adolescent's making a decision among a number of options but rather on his or her choosing a particular option: "We must send [children] the message that of the many decisions they will make in their lives, choosing to avoid early sex is one of the most important" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H497). Additionally, communities should be disciplined to support this decision, as abstinence-only sexuality education's "entire focus is to educate young people and create an environment within communities that support teen decisions to postpone sexual activity until marriage" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. S619). "We can and we must help America's young people to do better, to make better choices and have brighter futures" (U.S. Congress, 2006, p. S8154), implying that certain choices have higher moral value than others.

In Africa, decision-making discourse focused on where decisions regarding the content of sexuality education

curriculum and instruction should be made, in the U.S. Congress or in the communities receiving aid. Proponents of comprehensive sexuality education argued that such decisions should be made within the communities: "The Agency for International Development and other agencies working on the ground are competent to decide how much money to spend on abstinence-only programs based on local conditions" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. S6417). The amount of funding that goes to promote abstinence "is a public health decision that should be made . . . by experts working in the field" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. S6477). "There is also a considerable amount of concern in Africa that the President's focus on abstinence as the most important method of prevention will sidetrack the initiative based on an unrealistic understanding of the situation on the ground" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H6583).

*Definition*

Abstinence-only sexuality education is defined as

> teaching that has as its exclusive purpose the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity, teaching that abstinence from sexual activity for teens outside marriage is the expected standard, and it is the only way to prevent unwanted pregnancy and the only way to prevent sexually transmitted diseases that have exploded along with the explosion of teen pregnancies. (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6667)

"Abstinence is not just saying no to sex, it is about saying yes to a happier, healthier future" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1752).

"Comprehensive sex education is medically accurate, age appropriate, education that includes information about both contraception and abstinence" (U.S. Congress, 2005, p. S1305). Expert organizations endorse "a strategy that strongly emphasizes abstinence as the best and only certain way to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections and that discusses the scientifically proven effectiveness, benefits, and limitations of contraception and other approaches in a manner that is medically accurate" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. S9723).

In response to claims that abstinence-only sexuality education programs censored information about contraceptives, proponents pointed out that "nothing in the Federal law or the guidelines to the States prohibits the discussion of any subject" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1752). However, they also restricted funding for sexuality education programs to "public and private entities which agree that, with respect to an adolescent to whom the entities provide abstinence education under such grant, the entities will not provide to that adolescent any other education regarding sexual conduct" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H6508).

In Africa, abstinence-first sexuality education is exemplified by the "ABC Program" developed in Uganda. This program "stresses the 'ABC'—'A' for abstinence, 'B' for being faithful, and 'C' for condom use when appropriate" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. E1460). In discussing the provision of financial aid to similar educational programs in sub-Saharan African and other countries, proponents of a measure to restrict 33% of prevention funding to abstinence-only sexuality education argued that the ABC Program's success proved that abstinence-only sexuality education was effective. "The bill distinguishes between true primary prevention efforts, such as abstinence education, from intervention activities that promote condoms under the guise of prevention" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3581). However, opponents of the measure argued that the ABC Program was not an abstinence-only sexuality education program, calling on statistics to support their argument: "Ugandans used 80 million condoms last year . . . Condom use by prostitutes in Kampala . . . has increased from zero to 95 percent" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3578).

*Delay*

Messages about delaying sexual activity assume that the individual will engage in such activity at a future time. Regardless of the type of sexuality education a

member of Congress favored, he or she spoke favorably of delaying sexual activity. Abstinence-only sexuality education's "entire focus is to educate young people and create an environment within communities that support teen decisions to postpone sexual activity until marriage" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. S619). "Research shows that teenagers who receive sexuality education that includes discussion of contraception are more likely than those who receive abstinence-only messages to delay sexual activity" (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. S4314; see also U.S. Congress, 2005, p. S211). "Research has shown that the most effective programs are the ones that encourage teenagers to delay sexual activity but also provide information on how they can protect themselves" (U.S. Congress, 2006, p. S8153). A 2003 bill "details that included in prevention are those activities intended to help people avoid exposure by reducing the number of sexual partners and—if they are adolescents—delaying sexual activity until they are married" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H4381). "We must send [children] the message that of the many decisions they will make in their lives, choosing to avoid early sex is one of the most important" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H497). "Federal data [reveal] that virginal teenagers now

outnumber sexually-active ones" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H497).

*Demand*

As a tactic to justify continued support for abstinence-only sexuality education programs, proponents cited the national demand for such programs. For instance, "Over 359 entities across the country seeking some $165 million applied for a program that only had $20 million available to it" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6641). "The demand [for abstinence-only sexuality education] is huge in the United States. [The funding agency is] overwhelmed with applicants for these grants. They cannot fill that demand" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6670).

This argument may have held additional weight because agencies receiving federal funding had to make a substantial financially-defined contribution themselves. "Today 49 out of the 50 States are participating in the [abstinence-only sexuality education grant] program" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1752). "The Federal program on abstinence is not a mandated program on the States. In fact, States have to put up dollars to get into the abstinence program. And States readily do. . . . Because it works" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3615). (States must match every $4 in federal funding with $3 of state funds, U.S.

Congress, 2005, p. H12731.) However, "there is no federal program that earmarks dollars for comprehensive sex education" (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. E2160)

However, not everyone felt the demand for abstinence-only sexuality education funding was a positive indicator. "The recent explosion of federal funds for abstinence-only programs has negatively influenced schools. Almost one-third of secondary school principals surveyed reported that the federal abstinence-only funding influenced their school's sex education curriculum" (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. H6979).

*Effectiveness*

Some arguments for effectiveness involved the presentation of statistics, but I have relegated their presentation to a later section. Here I highlight those statements that argued a general effectiveness without necessarily tying it to a particular statistical indicator.

While abstinence-only sexuality education programs have "clearly shown their effectiveness and ability to help curb teen pregnancy" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6677), "between 1992 and 1994, . . . California instituted an abstinence-only education program across the entire state—only to discover through evaluation that this program was not effective" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. 2552). Similarly,

while "research has shown that the most effective programs are the ones that encourage teenagers to delay sexual activity but also provide information on how they can protect themselves" (U.S. Congress, 2006, p. S8153), detractors describe comprehensive sexuality education programs as "failed" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H497).

In Africa, "we have to look no further than Uganda for proof of the effectiveness of abstinence in the fight against HIV and AIDS. . . . We have proof positive . . . that abstinence works" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H485). In contrast, "abstinence-only education is simply not effective" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3617), and "the abstinence focus undermined previous education efforts and confused communities" (U.S. Congress, 2006, p. H1605). "An abstinence-only approach is a death sentence for millions of people" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3588) as "the effectiveness of [sexuality education] programs depends literally on their comprehensiveness and on their relevancy to the population you are targeting" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. S6418).

*Experts*

In a number of cases, experts, usually organizations, were identified to support the argument for a particular type of sexuality education or curriculum component. These

included "the American Medical Association, the American Nurses Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Public Health Association, and the Society for Adolescent Medicine" (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. S4311); "the Institute of Medicine, the American Medical Association, and the Office on National AIDS Policy (U.S. Congress, 2007, p. S52); and "the National Education Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Nurses Association, the Child Welfare League of America, and more than 130 other medical and professional organizations" (U.S. Congress, 2005, p. S1306). Additionally, experts appeared in the guise of statistics (e.g., "A November 2006 study of declining pregnancy rates among teens concluded that the reduction in teen pregnancy between 1995 and 2002 is primarily the result of increased use of contraceptives," U.S. Congress, 2007, S51; see below); however, "current research shows that there are no 'magic bullets' for preventing pregnancy—not sex education alone, not abstinence alone" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. 2552).

*External Connections*

External connections were the identifications of individuals or groups outside of Congress and its conception of adolescents who were affected or involved

with sexuality education programs. In the ***Experts*** section, I listed a number of these. Additionally, external connections were made to President George W. Bush (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. S3444) and Planned Parenthood Federation of America (U.S. Congress, 2006, p. E121).

Proponents of abstinence-only sexuality education discussed two local implementations of abstinence-only sexuality education curriculum. The Michigan Abstinence Partnership received a bonus award from the Department of Health and Human Services, granted because Michigan had become one of the top five states in which the ratio of out-of-wedlock births to total births decreased and the number of abortions decreased (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1752). Additionally, the ReCapturing the Vision program in Miami reported a 1.1% pregnancy rate during the 8 years of the program's operation (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1753).

Society as a whole was also identified as concerned about sexuality education, specifically with relation to pregnancy among adolescents: "Out-of-wedlock births are often disastrous for mothers, children, society as a whole" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1752). Moreover, "teen pregnancy is a problem that affects the entire country, not just the young women who are forced to make the difficult decisions at an early age" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H2549). Sexuality

education programs respond to "the great crisis that we have had for decades regarding teen pregnancy, teen sexual activity, [and] unwed births" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6667).

While society may be a victim of teen pregnancy, it can also encourage pregnancy among adolescents as well as the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases: "Educators, health workers, government officials, entertainment and news media outlets bombard children with the wrong messages" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H485).

*Future*

Messages about the future were present in arguments for abstinence-only sexuality education. Some messages were positive: "We can and we must help America's young people to do better, to make better choices and have brighter futures" (U.S. Congress, 2006, p. S8154). "Abstinence is not just saying no to sex, it is about saying yes to a happier, healthier future" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1752). Other messages were negative, warning of what would happen if an adolescent did not abstain from sexual activity:

> Statistically speaking, when low-income teenage girls get pregnant, they are dooming themselves to a lifetime of poverty and they are dooming their kids to a lifetime of poverty. (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H2551)

The following example also expresses concern about adolescents' futures: "Teens have the most to lose when faced with an unintended pregnancy or an STD infection" (U.S. Congress, 2007, p. E260).

*Ideology*

Twice was ideology cited in discussion about sexuality education in the United States, and both times it was contrasted with science, which is presumed to be absent of ideology: "Ideology, not science, has been driving America's response to the devastating problem of teen pregnancy and STD/HIV infection" (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. H6979). "Ideology, not science, has led Republicans to divert funding to ineffective 'abstinence-until-marriage' programs" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H6526). Both of these arguments countered arguments for funding of abstinence-only sexuality education programs.

In discussing disease-prevention aid to Africa, detractors of abstinence-only sexuality education continued to argue that such programs were ideologically-based and, therefore, inappropriate governmental actions. This ideology was characterized as conservative: An amendment to consign 33% of prevention funding to abstinence-only education programs "will push aside proven comprehensive programs in favor of questionable models designed to

appease a right-wing constituency" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3584). It was also described as religious:

> Instituting a blanket requirement for abstinence spending in our global prevention programs sends the message that religious ideology coming out of Washington, DC, is driving our global HIV/AIDS programs rather than sound science and the reality of the situation on the ground. (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. E1342)

And it was described as American: "Some of my conservative brethren come to this debate and argue that we ought to give more priority to abstinence. In a tone of some self-righteousness, they suggest that abstinence ought to be the preferred method, and that this reflects American values" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3578). Regardless of the type of ideology, it was dangerous: "This crisis is too severe and our response is too critical to let our efforts be undermined by catering to ideological pressure" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. E1068).

Some proponents of abstinence-only sexuality education described the ideological nature of their position with regard to funding disease prevention efforts in Africa. "We see a ray of hope with abstinence education. Abstinence is not just a moral issue. It is an issue of whether or not we will teach people what the healthy lifestyle is" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3613). "This is about a change of culture, about pushing a model of ABC which started with

abstinence and be faithful" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. S6476). Others argued that the ideology of their arguments was irrelevant: "It is not a matter of whether we like the morality of abstinence or not. The fact is that technology-wise it works" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3615). No one ever used the term "ideology" to criticize comprehensive sexuality education or its "scientific" backing.

*Marriage*

Marriage is frequently called upon to qualify the problem of pregnancy among adolescents. A pregnant adolescent is no longer a target of the government's disciplining if she becomes married. Similarly, delaying sexual activity is no longer a concern if the adolescent becomes married: A 2003 bill "details that included in prevention are those activities intended to help people avoid exposure by reducing the number of sexual partners and—if they are adolescents—delaying sexual activity until they are married" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H4381). For the unmarried adolescent, pregnancy is a problem: According to an unidentified source, "in 1994, 46.6 out of every 1,000 teenagers became pregnant out-of-wedlock. . . . As of January 2000, this teenage pregnancy rate has fallen to 39.6 per 1,000 teenagers. That is an incredible improvement

over a short period of time" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1754). But a worse problem appears to be an unmarried adolescent's giving birth: Sexuality education programs respond to "the great crisis that we have had for decades regarding teen pregnancy, teen sexual activity, [and] unwed births" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6667). "Out-of-wedlock births are often disastrous for mothers, children, society as a whole" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1752). "Only with the advent of abstinence education have we seen in the last couple of years a reversal of the long-standing and deplorable trend in this country of increases in teenage unwed births" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6640). Congress is also concerned about the effects of an unmarried adolescent's giving birth on the new infant: "Children born out-of-wedlock are far more likely to be poor, suffer ill health, drop out of school. In the case of boys, they are twice as likely to commit a crime, [leading] to incarceration by the time they reach their early 30s" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1752).

Marriage is discussed as a safe haven from being an unmarried, pregnant adolescent and from sexually-transmitted diseases. "We need to teach [our Nation's youth] about the benefits of saving sex until marriage. If we believe that children can exercise self-control to avoid

smoking, what about premarital sex?" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6672). "Addressing this crisis [in Africa] . . . would put a priority on the values of the American people, namely, abstinence and faithfulness to marriage, over condom distribution" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3574). An implication of this stance is that couples who are barred from getting married should never engage in sexual activity.

*Normalization*

Normalization puts forth how a normal adolescent should behave, suggesting that most other adolescents behave in similar fashion. One way to normalize is to establish standards, and these standards will be even more effective if adolescents want them: "Our young people look to us for clear messages and for help in setting high standards for themselves. Abstinence education programs will, in fact, give them that help" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. 1752). Adults also identified expectations for adolescents when they emphasized the importance of "teaching that abstinence from sexual activity for teens outside marriage is the expected standard" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6667) or when they argued that expectations can lead to changes in behavior:

> Some of our liberal friends say it is unrealistic to expect kids to abstain from sex. . . . That tells me they do not believe in America's kids. They expect them to fail, and when we expect a kid to fail, that kid probably will fail. (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. 2551)

A third normalizing strategy is to cast behaviors in terms of a "healthy" lifestyle: "Abstinence is not just a moral issue. It is an issue of whether or not we will teach [African] people what the healthy lifestyle is" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3613). An optional activity eligible for funding under the Education in Family Life program is to teach adolescents to "develop and practice healthy life skills including goal-setting, decisionmaking, negotiation, communication, and stress management" (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. S4314).

To some, this normalizing harkened back to an earlier historical period when, presumably, everyone was alike and behaved accordingly: "We need to return to a time when abstinence was respected, not denigrated. A time when young men and women were praised and rewarded spiritually, emotionally, and financially—for doing the right thing" (U.S. Congress, 2006, p. S8174).

### *Popular Opinion*

Sometimes Congress relied on statistical evidence to identify how the population felt about a particular issue:

> According to the [Zogby] poll, 73.5 percent of parents approve or strongly approve of abstinence-centered sex education. 61.1 percent of parents disapprove or strongly disapprove of so-called comprehensive or "safe sex" education. (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. E263)

The source of the information affected the content: "Americans overwhelmingly support sex education—more than 8 in 10 Americans favor comprehensive sex education that includes information about contraception" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6677). "We should listen to the needs of parents and children; 80 percent of them support abstinence and contraceptive education for their children. (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H485). "According to Advocates for Youth, 93% of Americans support teaching comprehensive sex education in high schools" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. E187).

While "everyone can agree that reducing unintended pregnancies [and] lowering STD infection rates . . . are important public health goals" (U.S. Congress, 2007, p. E260), not everyone believed the issue of sexuality education was of great importance to the U.S. population: "Abstinence education? A trip to Mars? Steroid use in professional sports? . . . I promise you those are not the priorities of most Americans" (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. H233).

*Pregnancy*

Pregnancy among adolescents is a problem. "We all agree that teenage pregnancy is a problem in the United States" (U.S. Congress, 2006, p. S8156). "Teen pregnancy is a problem that affects the entire country, not just the young women who are forced to make the difficult decisions at an early age" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H2549). Sexuality education programs respond to "the great crisis that we have had for decades regarding teen pregnancy, teen sexual activity, [and] unwed births" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6667). Moreover, pregnancy among adolescents is a problem that calls for prevention. The Family Life Education proposal would fund programs that provide "information about the health benefits and side effects of all contraceptives and barrier methods as a means to prevent pregnancy" (U.S. Congress, 2007, pp. S55-S56). Sexuality education programs have "clearly shown their effectiveness and ability to help curb teen pregnancy" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6677).

One of the ways the government monitors this problem is through discussion of pregnancy rates. According to an unidentified source, "in 1994, 46.6 out of every 1,000 teenagers became pregnant out-of-wedlock. . . . As of January 2000, this teenage pregnancy rate has fallen to

39.6 per 1,000 teenagers. That is an incredible improvement over a short period of time" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1754). As a particular case, the ReCapturing the Vision program in Miami reported a 1.1 percent pregnancy rate during the 8 years of the program's operation (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1753).

Perhaps more problematic than pregnancy among adolescents in general is unplanned pregnancy among adolescents, although discussion of this issue did not always specify itself as pertaining to adolescents: "Approximately 82 percent of teen pregnancies are unintended and more than half of these end in abortion" (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. H5606). Abstinence education is an important part of "dealing with unplanned pregnancies and achieving independence for working men and women" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H2543). Abortion was cited as one of the reasons pregnancy among adolescents needs to be prevented: "The best way to reduce the number of abortions is to prevent teen pregnancies in the first place" (U.S. Congress, 2006, p. S8153).

Finally, an adolescent who is pregnant and subsequently gives birth becomes an adolescent parent, creating a dangerous situation particularly for the new infant:

> Out-of-wedlock births are often disastrous for mothers, children, society as a whole, and children born out-of-wedlock are far more likely to be poor, suffer ill health, drop out of school. In the case of boys, they are twice as likely to commit a crime, [leading] to incarceration by the time they reach their early 30s. (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1752)

"We know that children of teenage mothers typically have lower birth weight deliveries, are more likely to perform poorly in school, and are at greater risk of abuse and neglect than other children" (U.S. Congress, 2006, p. S8153).

*Pregnancy and Sexually-Transmitted Disease Prevention*

While I identified separate codes for "pregnancy" and "sexualy-transmitted diseases," I included this combination code because I saw the two associated so many times in the texts. In my presentation of each of the other two code categories, I discuss only those incidences where the code appeared separately from the other. In this section, I discuss those incidences where they appeared together.

Most of the time, pregnancy and sexually-transmitted diseases among adolescents were discussed in terms of prevention. Abstinence-only sexuality education is "teaching that abstinence from sexual activity . . . is the only way to prevent unwanted pregnancy and the only way to prevent sexually transmitted diseases that have exploded

along with the explosion of teen pregnancies (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6667). Abstinence is the only sure way to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases as well as out-of-wedlock pregnancies" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1753; see also U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H485). Abstinence-first sexuality education is "a strategy that strongly emphasizes abstinence as the best and only certain way to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections . . ." (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. S9723) "Everyone can agree that reducing unintended pregnancies [and] lowering STD infection rates . . . are important public health goals" (U.S. Congress, 2007, p. E260).

In some cases, pregnancy and sexually-transmitted diseases among adolescents were portrayed as dangers: "There is no contraceptive for a broken heart, and no guaranteed protection against pregnancy or STDs except abstinence until marriage and fidelity afterwards" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H497). "Teens have the most to lose when faced with an unintended pregnancy or an STD infection" (U.S. Congress, 2007, p. E260). And sometimes only the diseases presented a danger: Sexuality education reduces "teen pregnancies [and] out-of-wedlock births and [protects] our young people from the scourge of sexually transmitted diseases" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1752).

Together, pregnancy and sexually-transmitted diseases comprise a "devastating problem" (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. H6979).

*Religion*

Proponents of abstinence-only sexuality education argued the importance of religion in teaching adolescents about sexuality: "We need to start reinforcing what we teach our children at home, what we teach our children at church but too often is undercut by the messages sent by the Federal Government" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6641). However, detractors criticized the programs for religious content: "[The programs use] an education approach based on moral or religious beliefs" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H4378).

In consideration of disease-prevention aid for Africa, religion was again used to criticize the abstinence-only sexuality education component of the funding:

> Instituting a blanket requirement for abstinence spending in our global prevention programs sends the message that religious ideology coming out of Washington, DC, is driving our global HIV/AIDS programs rather than sound science and the reality of the situation on the ground. (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. E1342)

However, proponents of abstinence-only sexuality education argued that a comprehensive sexuality approach would keep some organizations from providing assistance to communities

based on the organization's religious beliefs: "If a Muslim or Catholic organization is excellent in abstinence education or AIDS testing, they should not be disqualified from U.S. funding because they have a moral objection to condoms" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3610). This concern does not appear warranted from the wording of the legislation, but it may have been a problem with the program's administration.

*Social Good*

All arguments for policies that would bring about a social good (e.g., reducing poverty) were made as part of arguments in support of abstinence-only sexuality education. One proponent explained that Congress adopted the P.R.W.O.R.A. in 1996

> for the good-hearted and compassionate reason that when we want to lift people out of poverty, it is hard when we are trying to help a teenage mother out of poverty. . . . It was certainly the compassionate thing to do. (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1754)

"Statistically speaking, when low-income teenage girls get pregnant, they are dooming themselves to a lifetime of poverty and they are dooming their kids to a lifetime of poverty" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H2551). However,

> we know that this program works, and it would be wrong to deny this as a part of welfare reform as we look to have it . . . continue to work and do what all of us want to have happen, and that is

> to move people that are currently able-bodied and have the tools to in fact lead productive lives and lead their families out of welfare and into a productive sector of our economy. (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1756).

"Preventing teen pregnancy is a key part of moving people from welfare to work and reducing poverty" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H2552). Arguing for increased funding for abstinence-only sexuality programs, one proponent pled, "Let us help people not get into this cycle of disease and poverty" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6670).

Abstinence-only sexuality education can also bring independence to the working class. It is an important part of "dealing with unplanned pregnancies and achieving independence for working men and women" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H2543). It can also strengthen communities (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H12825).

*Statistics*

Statistical information was called upon to support a number of arguments made in discussions of sexuality education. Sometimes statistics were presented to represent the opinions of the population: "According to the [Zogby] poll, 73.5 percent of parents approve or strongly approve of abstinence-centered sex education. 61.1 percent of parents disapprove or strongly disapprove of so-called comprehensive or 'safe sex' education" (U.S. Congress,

2003, p. E263). “Americans overwhelmingly support sex education—more than 8 in 10 Americans favor comprehensive sex education that includes information about contraception” (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6677). “We should listen to the needs of parents and children; 80 percent of them support abstinence and contraceptive education for their children” (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H485). “According to Advocates for Youth, 93% of Americans support teaching comprehensive sex education in high schools” (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. E187).

Statistics also supported establishing the conditions related to sexually-transmitted diseases. “Three million teenagers contract a sexually-transmitted disease each year” (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H497). “In the 1960s, one in 47 sexually active teenagers were infected with an STD. Today, . . . it is one out of 4” (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1752). “3 to 4 million sexually transmitted diseases are contracted yearly by 15 to 19 year olds, and another 5 to 6 million . . . are contracted annually by 20 to 24 year olds” (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1753). Statistics also supported the conditions related to sexual activity among adolescents: “Sixty percent of teens have sex before graduating high school” (U.S. Congress, 2007, E260).

> Even though teen birthrates have declined over the past decade, we still have among the highest teen birthrates of any industrialized nation in the world. Sexually transmitted diseases have grown dramatically. Every day in America 10,000 young people contract a sexually transmitted disease; 2,400 become pregnant; and 55 contract HIV. (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H2547)

These conditions-related comments create a background for justification of sexuality education arguments.

In some cases, statistics were used to verify causality between a particular program and a desired effect. "A November 2006 study of declining pregnancy rates among teens concluded that the reduction in teen pregnancy between 1995 and 2002 is primarily the result of increased use of contraceptives" (U.S. Congress, 2007, S51). "Only with the advent of abstinence education have we seen in the last couple of years a reversal of the long-standing and deplorable trend in this country of increases in teenage unwed births (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6640). Additionally,

> in a recently-released interim report on the effectiveness of abstinence-only programs, the highly-respected research firm Mathematica noted that, and I quote, "Obtaining clear and definitive evidence on the success of abstinence programs is a difficult task that requires time." . . . We should continue to fund these programs so we can have an accurate picture of their effectiveness and to gain the value of the good that they do, the proven good they do. (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1753)

In this last example, that the statistical information did not support the desired conclusion did impede drawing the conclusion.

Citing statistical evidence showing a decrease in the number of HIV/AIDS diagnoses in Uganda, one abstinence-only sexuality education proponent declared, ""We have to look no further than Uganda for proof of the effectiveness of abstinence in the fight against HIV and AIDS. . . . We have proof positive . . . that abstinence works" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H485). However, a detractor also used statistics to refute this claim: "Ugandans used 80 million condoms last year . . . Condom use by prostitutes in Kampala . . . has increased from zero to 95 percent" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3578). In the United States, "recent analysis of abstinence only programs found that such programs can actually reduce the use of condoms when program participants become sexually active, increasing their risk of pregnancy" (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. H4735).

Abstinence-only sexuality education proponents used statistics to confirm the effectiveness of their program. "Contrary to the claim that there is no scientific evidence that abstinence programs work, there are, in fact, 10 scientific evaluations available now showing that abstinence education is effective in reducing sexual

activity" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1752). The ReCapturing the Vision program in Miami reported a 1.1 percent pregnancy rate during the 8 years of the program's operation (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1753).

*Sexually-Transmitted Diseases*

Programs funded under the Family Life Education proposal must provide "information about the health benefits and side effects of all contraceptives and barrier methods as a means to reduce the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS" (U.S. Congress, 2007, pp. S55-S56). This is the first mention of HIV/AIDS in sexuality education legislation outside of consideration of disease-prevention funding for Africa.

Statistical presentations of information regarding infection rates for sexually-transmitted diseases served to establish a sense of urgency in addressing this issue through sexuality education. "In the 1960s, one in 47 sexually active teenagers were infected with an STD. Today, . . . it is one out of 4" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1752). "3 to 4 million sexually transmitted diseases are contracted yearly by 15 to 19 year olds, and another 5 to 6 million . . . are contracted annually by 20 to 24 year olds (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1753).

> Even though teen birthrates have declined over the past decade, we still have among the highest teen birthrates of any industrialized nation in the world. Sexually transmitted diseases have grown dramatically. Every day in America 10,000 young people contract a sexually transmitted disease; 2,400 become pregnant; and 55 contract HIV. (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H2547)

"Three million teenagers contract a sexually-transmitted disease each year" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H497).

This sense of urgency was also present in discussions of sexuality education in Africa. "This crisis is too severe and our response is too critical to let our efforts be undermined by catering to ideological pressure" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. E1068). "Once sexual activity begins—keeping in mind that sexual activity may not be consensual—it's critical that accurate information about condoms and other preventive methods be available to limit exposure to sexually transmitted diseases" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3614).

### *Teen Sex*

In addition to discussion of delaying sexual activity among adolescents (see above), Congress acknowledged that some adolescents were having sex. Sexuality education programs respond to "the great crisis that we have had for decades regarding teen pregnancy, teen sexual activity, [and] unwed births" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6667).

"Problems stemming from increased sexual activity among teens [have] not abated" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H2547).

> There are, in fact, 10 scientific evaluations available now showing that abstinence education is effective in reducing sexual activity. (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1752)

Even this claim to victory includes acknowledgment that some adolescents are still engaging in sexual activity.

In discussion of sexuality education in sub-Saharan Africa, the focus was on preventing sexuality among adolescents. "We all support programs to promote abstinence among young people who are not yet sexually active" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. 6477).

*Values*

Abstinence-only sexuality programs "reinforce America's values" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6670). Funding for abstinence-only sexuality education "keeps in place the values that we teach our kids and says we want to reinforce them" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6641). "These are not just 'just say no' programs. They go into the broad work and the character of the individual" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1753). Increasing funding for abstinence-only sexuality education programs "does say that it is about time that the average American, the typical American, the normal values of everyday people in this country, receive the same

emphasis from their government as we have put on other things" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6667). "We need to start reinforcing what we teach our children at home, what we teach our children at church but too often is undercut by the messages sent by the Federal Government" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6641)."Addressing this crisis [in Africa] . . . would put a priority on the values of the American people, namely, abstinence and faithfulness to marriage, over condom distribution" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3574). However, one detractor questioned the connection between abstinence education and American values: "Some of my conservative brethren come to this debate and argue that we ought to give more priority to abstinence. In a tone of some self-righteousness, they suggest that abstinence ought to be the preferred method, and that this reflects American values" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3578).

*What Works*

This final code category formed around statements that a program did or did not work. Generally, no definition of what it meant for the program to work was provided, although sometimes context included hints. The italicization of the word, "work," in each of these examples is my doing.

"Abstinence education *works*" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6671). "Abstinence *works*" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1756).

> we know that this program *works*, and it would be wrong to deny this as a part of welfare reform as we look to have it . . . continue to *work* and do what all of us want to have happen, and that is to move people that are currently able-bodied and have the tools to in fact lead productive lives and lead their families out of welfare and into a productive sector of our economy. (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1756)

"States have to put up dollars to get into the abstinence program. And States readily do. . . . Because it *works*" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3615).

"Abstinence-only education does not *work*" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H6673). "Abstinence *works* perfectly if it is used perfectly, but it is not" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3583). "An abstinence-only approach will not *work* by itself (U.S. Congress, 2005, p. H433). "Comprehensive sex education simply *works* better" (U.S. Congress, 2005, p. S1306).

"We have to look no further than Uganda for proof of the effectiveness of abstinence in the fight against HIV and AIDS. . . . We have proof positive . . . that abstinence *works*" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H485). With regard to Africa, "it is not a matter of whether we like

the morality of abstinence or not. The fact is that technology-wise it *works*" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H3615).

## Theoretical Coding

My theory regarding Congressional discourse centers on Congress's attempts to mediate concern over the sexual behavior of adolescents in the United States. Congress has no sovereign ability to control behavior, so it resorts to disciplinary practices in its discourse on abstinence-only sexuality education to effect a desired end, the maintenance of its role in mediating concern over adolescents' sexual behaviors.

The restriction of this Congressional intention to the United States is an important condition. In a different context, Africa, Congress had no qualms about enforcing its particular end (which differed from its end for U.S. adolescents). In Africa, only a reduction of sexual activity appeared possible, while an elimination of such activity was discussed as a goal in the United States.

### *Social Responsibility*

Congress justified its actions as socially responsible with a number of specific tactics. By citing popular opinion, Congress claimed to be doing what the population wanted it to do (as it told members of the population what they should be wanting). By citing its adherence to

American values, Congress claimed to be operating in the interests of the nation, a representation of the population. By citing the demand for abstinence-only sexuality education programs by agencies throughout the nation, Congress claimed to be filling a demand, playing itself as a proper capitalist. By attempting to help people escape from poverty, Congress claimed to be serving all of society. In these ways, Congress justified its having a role in attending to adolescents' sexual behavior.

When it spoke of American values, Congress was not always specific about its meaning. Connecting American values to sexual abstinence suggests the value of chastity. However, Congress also spoke of two other issues stemming from what are generally seen as cultural values in the United States (see Pai, Adler, & Shadiow, 2006): the future and marriage.

*Future-orientation.* Because the United States was settled by and continues to be inhabited by a largely Christian population, it is strongly future-oriented. (Christians look forward to a glorious, rewarding afterlife following their deaths, e.g., 1 Corinthians 15.) Consequently, appeals to saving the future of adolescents or their unborn progeny were culturally valid arguments as

well as reminders that the population should be focused on the future.

*Marriage.* A second cultural value frequently mentioned by Congress is the sanctity of marriage, as codified in the Defense of Marriage Act (1996). In the United States, marriage is the legal bonding of two people, almost exclusively one man and one woman, in a manner that frequently also has religious connotations. The federal government restricts marriage to couples consisting of one man and one woman. Within discourse about abstinence-only sexuality education, marriage is portrayed as a situation of safety, a place where adolescent pregnancy, problematized otherwise, is socially and politically acceptable. Within marriage, sexual abstinence is no longer a goal, and the married adolescent can feel relatively safe from the dangers of sexually-transmitted diseases. Congress's position implies that both partners in a marriage will be nonadulterous, and it may be reluctant to criticize any aspect of marriage because it is a threatened institution (needing to be defended). Obliquely, as I have mentioned, restricting approved sexual activity to married couples leaves other pairings (e.g., female-female) no approved avenues for their own sexual activity.

*Expert Knowledge*

Congress established the condition of need for its intervention by problematizing the pregnancy rate and sexually-transmitted disease infection rates among adolescents. In so doing, it relied on expert, disciplinary knowledge to establish these problems as in need of urgent attention. This disciplinary knowledge came in the form of statistics or informed opinions. Additionally, scientific and medical experts attested to the quality (in terms of accuracy) of the content of sexuality education programs. They were often held in opposition to practices informed by "ideology," as if science and medicine are ideology free. The assumption that scientific and medical knowledges are more important, more "true," than moral and religious knowledges is not refuted within Congressional discourse, even within arguments for moral or religious ideology's informing particular practices or policies. Instead, moral or religious ideology is presented, at best, in conjunction with scientific and medical ideology. However, as represented within Congressional discourse, scientific and medical ideology appears to lose its influence in the implementation of abstinence-only sexuality education programs (e.g., the imposition of a 33% funding restriction for abstinence-only sexuality education on disease-

prevention funding for Africa), and while Congress discussed the scientific and medical inaccuracies of some of these programs, it failed to adopt legislation to enforce correction.

*Outcomes*

Two consequences discussed within Congressional discourse were categorized as normalization and effectiveness. Normalization refers to the establishing of standards of behavior for adolescents, and effectiveness refers to sexuality education policy's ability to effect change in adolescents' sexual behaviors.

*Normalization.* While many abstinence-only sexuality education proponents advocated that the normal adolescent does not engage in sexual behavior and, thus, does not need a sexuality education that includes discussion of contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, or pleasure, supporters of all types of sexuality education agreed that being pregnant and that having a sexually transmitted disease were nonnormal states for adolescents. In its discourse, Congress argued that the normal adolescent desires that society ("us") provide standards of behavior so that he or she will know how to behave and so that he or she can live a healthy lifestyle. This normal adolescent's desiring standards affirms the idea that establishing them

(e.g., though a sexuality education program) will bring about changes in adolescent behavior, that is, decreased sexual activity.

Supporting the idea of adolescent autonomy contributed to normalization in two ways. First, it emphasized that the choice to abstain from sexual activity was an individual decision, not one being enforced upon the individual. The normal adolescent makes a responsible decision, that is, sexual abstinence, regardless of what type of sexuality education program is the context.

Second, supporting the idea of adolescent autonomy transferred disciplinary responsibility from the government to its agents within the state—parents, schools, and other organizations within society. By defining normative behavior for adolescents but not prescribing it (which would be a sovereign act), Congress disciplines, for instance, the school by defining its measures of success. A school where adolescents engage in frequent sexual activity has failed its students, just as, under the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), a school where students do not achieve arbitrary standardized testing scores is deemed to have failed its students and is eligible for a number of punishments, including dissolution. Similarly, a parent

whose adolescent child engages in sexual behavior is a failed parent (see Bell, 1993).

*Behavioral Effects.* Expert knowledge provided varying evaluations of the effectiveness of sexuality education programs in terms of changes in adolescents' behaviors. These evaluations were correlations, so causality could not be demonstrated even though it was frequently claimed. Moreover, even when a significant change was seen with regard to a particular statistical evaluation (i.e., decrease in pregnancy rate among adolescents), it was sometimes conveyed as nonetheless a crisis needing attending to. Additionally, in some cases, undesired effects were identified as outcomes of policy and programs.

*Cycling.* Outcomes were not merely produced. Normalization, in the way it disciplines adults and organizations, influences popular opinion and values, providing new justification for Congress to participate in the process of mediating concern over adolescents' sexual behaviors. Similarly, experts use information about behavior effects to revise their evaluations of the current context, reemphasizing the condition of need for Congressional mediation of concern over adolescents' sexual behaviors. This cycling is illustrated in Figure 1.

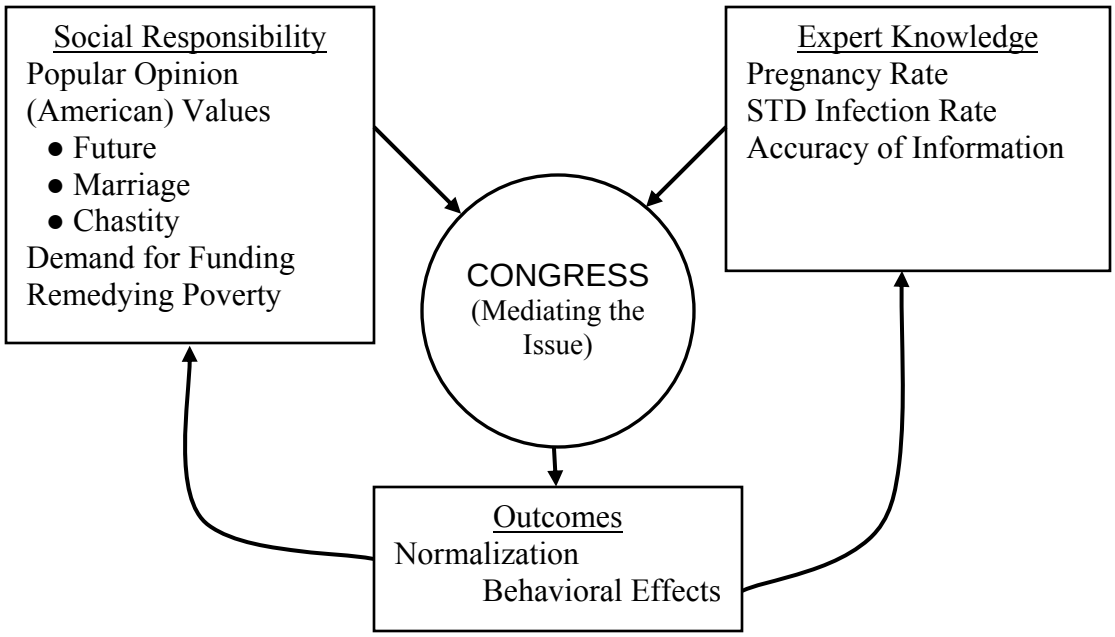


*Figure 1.* Congress's Maintaining Its Mediating Role.

## Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the codes I identified in my analysis of the *U.S. Congressional Record* from 2001 to the present. Twenty-four major codes were identified and illustrated. Subsequently, I constructed a theory based on a core category, that is, Congress's maintaining its role in mediating concern over adolescents' sexual behavior. I presented a model showing how Congress situates itself within two cycles of meaning-making, one based on social responsibility and one based on expert knowledge.

# CHAPTER 5

# DISCUSSION

## Congress and Governmentality

According to the grounded theory I developed from analyzing discussions of abstinence-only sexuality education in the *U.S. Congressional Record* from 2001 to 2007, Congress does not appear to be targeting adolescent individuals so much as it appears to be targeting the relationship between those individuals and other agents of society (e.g., parents, schools) with the goal of maintaining its own role in mediating concern over the sexual behavior of adolescents in the United States. And so it should be if understood within the theoretical framework of governmentality (Foucault, 1974/1991).

Under governmentality, the government serves the population, attending to its welfare and supporting its livelihood as it deems necessary. While it may exercise sovereign power or disciplinary power, it relies primarily on techniques of power that work indirectly through disciplining agencies within society. Such agencies include parents and schools.

The governmental state's ability to control individual behaviors is limited when compared to a disciplining state. The governmental state serves its population, but it knows its population from a distance, through the filters of popular opinion (civil society) and through the filters of expert professionals. As such, the government in the governmental state comes to see the necessity of maintaining itself within the state. This perception differs from the sovereign's need to maintain the sovereign within his or her state. The sovereign was the state, that is, the land that he or she ruled and that must be preserved. On the other hand, the government is the state in that the state is the population, not the land. Maintaining itself becomes a requirement if it is to continue to serve the welfare of the population.

Thus, Congress finds success in maintaining concern regarding sexual behaviors of adolescents not to find a solution to what it has problematized. Success comes from its continuing to play a role in the social processing of the concern. Without a problem to solve, a government in a governmental state becomes unnecessary, as it can offer no service to the population. In continuing its debate over what type of sexuality education works, Congress keeps the issue itself at the forefront of popular thinking,

maintaining its role in mediating concern over the sexual behaviors of adolescents in the United States.

## The Difficult Waters of Adolescence

In this section, I focus on Congressional discourse specifically describing adolescents or teenagers. As I have theorized, discourse about abstinence-only sexuality education did not target adolescents' sexual behaviors so much as maintain Congress's role in maintaining concern over such behaviors. Consequently, I found the discourse to be less enlightening with regard to definitions of adolescents than I hoped it would be when I began this investigation. Nonetheless, there were some interesting outcomes. I present comments according to the categories suggested by Lesko (2001), and then I describe a few comments that I did not feel fit easily into her four categories.

### *Coming of Age*

The conception of adolescents' coming of age into adulthood constructs adolescents as persons in a transitional state, as uncompleted individuals, as outsiders in society (Lesko, 2001). A number of Congress's statements emphasized this characterization of adolescents. For instance, Congress stated, "Adolescence is a time for education and growing up, not pregnancy and parenthood"

(U.S. Congress, 2004, p. E767), that is, not a time for dealing with "adult" issues.

> The thing we want to emphasize to our young people is that teenage is a time when they should be concentrating on education. They should be having fun. They should be talking about their career. They should be growing up and not focused on pregnancy or being a parent prematurely. (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H2151).

This argument serves to separate adolescents from adults and to suggest standards for their behavior.

> As all parents know, we place overwhelming pressure on ourselves to make sure we raise our children well. The decisions we make—and they make—will affect them for the rest of their lives. We cannot afford to let the doors close on them. Instead, we must continue to open that door of opportunity. (U.S. Congress, 2006, p. S8155)

By implicating the parents in the disciplining of adolescents' bodies and minds, Congress takes advantage of the family's contemporary role as a tool of governance of the state's population (Foucault, 1974/1991).

> Now, growing up has always been tough. It is tough all through one's life to really grow up well. But it is particularly tough in teen years and during that process of adolescence. If we, as parents, cannot talk straighter with our children and cannot listen at a level that allows us to listen to things we never thought we would hear our kids say, then we cannot, with them, help them guide themselves through the difficult waters of adolescence in today's world and the many pressures that growing up imposes on teenagers. (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H2151)

This argument stresses the otherness of the adolescent, both by labeling adolescents "children" to emphasize their

not being adults and by focusing on their process instead of on them as individuals. To Congress, adolescents are potentials on their way to becoming people.

Congress understands that endangered during adolescence is not just the adolescent himself or herself but rather his or her future, as I described in Chapter 4. "Too many of young people's dreams are still being cut short by poor personal decisions that dramatically affect the course of their lives" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H486). Additionally, Congress understands adolescence to be a period during which adolescents are themselves concerned about their future (or they should be): "Surveys show that three out of four teens hope to have a good marriage and family life" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1754). Defining the adolescent as a future state undermines an understanding of him or her as a person in the here and now.

*Dealing with Raging Hormones*

Defining adolescents as controlled by their raging hormones ties their being to their "developing" biology and suggests that their (sexual) behaviors are beyond social intervention (Lesko, 2001). "It is increasingly clear that unbridled sexual activity is hurting our youth" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H485). "Almost half of all teens aged 15 to 19 in the United States have had sex" (U.S. Congress,

2004, p. H6979). Suggesting that "most teens are not sexually active and most of those who are do not want to be" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1754), Congress argued both that some adolescents may be controlling their sexuality by not engaging in sexual activity (or they may not have had the opportunity) and that "most" adolescents who do engage in sexual activity are unable to keep themselves from doing so.

In contrast, Congress suggested that adolescents do have some measure of control over their sexuality. "If young people are given the necessary information and education, they will make an informed and [healthy] decision regarding their sexual activity" (U.S. Congress, 2003, p. S13342). Likewise, "only when teens have reliable information about their reproductive health can they make informed and appropriate decisions" (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. H6979). Implied in these statements is the idea that if a person knows the correct thing to do (as identified by, in this case, Congress), then he or she will do that thing. In Chapter 4, I described how this declaration of adolescent autonomy served to discipline adolescents and their parents.

*Turning to Peers*

Characterizing adolescents as strongly influenced by their peers as opposed to their parents (who were more influential during childhood) also contructs adolescents as uncompleted, less individuated persons who are not autonomous or rational (because they are governed by their peer culture) and who are, therefore, immature (Lesko, 2001).

> Teenagers, by their nature, spend their teen years weaning themselves from their parents. That is what growing up is all about. It is about gaining your independence, gaining a sense of yourself, developing your own skills so that you can be your own person in the decades ahead. (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H2151).

This typification has clear connections to the characterization of the adolescent as in a becoming state.

In much of its discussion, Congress stressed the important influence of parents. "Our teenagers . . . are looking for their parents and the adults in society to support them in their decision for abstinence" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1756). "We all hope that our teenaged daughters have the wisdom to avoid pregnancy, but if they make a mistake, a parent is best able to provide advice and counseling" (U.S. Congress, 2002, p. H1345). "Parents who feel that they have lost their children to the influence of peers and popular culture should note that teens say their

parents influence their sexual decisionmaking more than any other source" (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H2152).

> [School students] are the ones that tell you this program works. They are looking for standards. They are looking to us. We have been there. They do put more credibility in us sometimes than we give them credit for. When we tell them you can do well in college if you just try, a lot of them do that. When we tell them that abstinence works, it does work, and they see the proof in the pudding. (U.S. Congress, 2002, pp. H1756-H1757)

This final argument appears to have been borrowed from the "Think System" employed by Prof. Harold Hill in DaCosta's (1962) documentary, *The Music Man.* Nonetheless, while acknowledging the potential for peer influence of adolescents, Congress argued that parents have greater influence, calling forth adolescents themselves as expert witnesses. In this way, Congress identified parents as accountable for the sexual behavior of adolescents.

*Being the Adolescent Age*

Age is a characterizing aspect of adolescence both because it defines membership by connecting it with administrative records of adolescents' bodies and because it lumps a group of persons who may be very different in terms of physiology, behaviors, and attitudes so that they can be disciplined collectively (Lesko, 2001; see also Zerubavel, 1997). Congress supported this characterization any time it used terms such as "adolescent" and "teenager"

to talk about the subjects of its policies. In the Adolescent Family Life Act of 1981, Congress specifically defined "adolescent" as "an individual under the age of nineteen" (§2002.a.9)

When discussing similar sexuality education policies in foreign nations, Congress seldom defined the policy-subjects there by age; however, several times Congress referred to adolescents in the United States as "children" (e.g., U.S. Congress, 2003, p. H485), that is, not adults. Congress argued the need to "eliminate pregnancy among girls and boys who are far too often too young and unprepared, emotionally and financially, to be mothers and fathers" (U.S. Congress, 2006, p. S8158), consigning adolescents far too often to immaturity regardless of the physiological development of their bodies. This last division represents the idea of the adolescent as uncompleted and transitional.

### *Criminalizing and Empowering*

Congress referred to adolescents in two other ways among its comments. To some degree, there is overlap between these ways and the four characteristics I have discussed in this chapter already, just as there is overlap among those four categories, but these two areas are different enough to describe separately.

In one passage, Congress spoke of female adolescents in terms of their criminal behavior. “In recent years, we have heard about teenaged girls giving birth and then dumping their newborns into trash cans. One young woman was criminally charged” (U.S. Congress, 2004, p. S3660). This argument expanded on the dangers of pregnancy among adolescents and implied (disciplined) that no pregnant adult would engage in this behavior. To an extent, this characterization is connected to the idea of adolescents’ controlled by their raging hormones, as they are engaging in behaviors that Congress feels are inappropriate and irrational.

Finally, Congress spoke of empowering adolescents to achieve the goals that Congress desired. “Our youth have ideas, opinions and can provide leadership in our efforts to reduce teenage pregnancy” (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H2152). “I believe if we empower young people, they will make the difference” (U.S. Congress, 2001, p. H2151). While this sentiment could convey a respect for adolescents and an acceptance of their maturity, I am inclined to interpret this as an attempt to invoke (instill) adolescents’ own self-discipline. It is an extension of the idea that adolescents can be made into responsible decision-makers

but they are not responsible decision-makers as adolescents: Adults must make them such.

## Suggestions for Further Study

I set out with the goal of identifying how the federal government constructs adolescence within its discourse, and I chose abstinence-only sexuality education as a focus, both because I am interested in how adolescents are taught about celibacy and because I believed such a focus would produce a large but manageable amount of data for analysis. My findings, which are not so much about the construction of adolescence, led me to understand the discussion of abstinence-only sexuality education in terms of governmentality (Foucault, 1974/1991), and I wonder if analysis of texts of speeches and debates around other issues in Congress would yield similar results. For instance, a researcher might use grounded theory to investigate discourse surrounding the adoption and implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001).

As I described in Chapter 3, a delimitation of my study was that I looked only at Congressional discourse, using it as a proxy for federal discourse as a whole. A researcher might use similar methods focusing on executive and judicial discourse on this or another issue to see if a grounded theory from these discourses also illustrates a

governmentality. It might then be interesting to compare the three studies to see how governmentality may be nuanced as it is seen through different branches of the government and/or as it is seen as an amalgamation of theories from the different branches.

## Summary

In this study, I looked at a particular issue within a particular period of time. Researchers such as Tyack and Cuban (1995) have argued that policy talk, "diagnoses of problems and advocacy of solutions" (p. 40) that may or may not result in adoption of binding policy, cycles. They argue that while the implementation of reforms within classrooms is a slow, somewhat linear process, discussions and actions at a distance from the school, such as at the federal level, operate in periodic cycles, where stances on issues wax and wane over a period of time.

In the case of sexuality education, popular discourse has operated in a cyclic fashion, as I describe in Chapter 2. Originally proposed to compel adolescents to abstain from sexual activity, sexuality education in contemporary discourse has the same purpose, whether the argument is from abstinence-only sexuality education proponents or comprehensive sexuality education components. While these different proponents different in what they

would teach children and adolescents, they agree that adolescents' refraining from sexual activity is the preferred behavior.

However, the federal enactment of abstinence-only sexuality education funding for public schools occurred first in 1996, so the policy change itself has had only a decade to play itself out in public and federal discourse. Over time, with changes in federal personnel and public opinion, policies may see substantial changes. This year, Congressperson Louise Slaughter of New York introduced the Prevention First Act (see U.S. Congress, 2007, p. E259), a bill which, if adopted, would provide the first federal funding for comprehensive sexuality education programs. It is possible that the adoption of the P.R.W.O.R.A. in 1996 ironically ushered in the possibility of federal funding for comprehensive sexuality education, which may be more politically acceptable now as a counter to abstinence-only sexuality education program funding than it would have been as an acknowledgment that some adolescents are engaging in sexual activity.

Regardless, debate on the issue will continue so long as the government sees the opportunity to maintain itself through such debate. I do not draw this conclusion cynically; instead, my in-depth review of Congressional

discourse has led me to consider Congress (collectively) with both disfavor and pity. On the one hand, Congress wrongly uses adolescents as targets of discourse in ways that continuously reconstruct adolescence as composed of detrimental characterizations. On the other, given its size and (limited) diversity, Congress experiences itself as unable to control the behaviors of individuals in society, that is, to govern them as sovereign, the way it used to be done. I do not advocate a reinstatement of sovereign state relations, but I recognize that contemporary sociopolitics does not provide a clear role for Congress or for the federal government as a whole. While the government certainly tries, it is not clear what it is trying other than to maintain its role as a mediator of controversial issues, such as the governing of adolescents' sexual behavior.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Codes Developed Through Open Coding of Data

Abortion
Adolescent Need
Analogy
Authority
Autonomy
Birth Rate
Capitalist Values
Causality
Community
Content
Correspondence
Crisis
Culture
Decision-Making
Definition
Delay
Demand
Effect
Effectiveness
Emotional Appeal
Evaluation
Experts
External connection
Family
Fewer Partners
Funding
Future
Healthy lifestyles
Ideology
Inclusion
Influence
Knowledge-Discipline
Marriage
Media
Moral education
Moral ideology
Normalizing
Nostalgia
Peers
Popular Opinion
Pregnancy
Pregnancy/STD Prevention
Public Health
Purpose
Raging Hormones
Religion
Safety
Self-discipline
Sexual Activity
Sexuality of Adolescents
Social Approval
Social Class
Social Good
Statistics
STDs
Targeting
Teen sex
Unborns
Values
What Works