Introduction

In the 1970s there was an “epidemic” of teenage pregnancy in the United States. Over the last ten years, however, teenage pregnancy rates have decreased, although they are still higher than industrialized nations (Guttmacher Report of Public Policy, 2002).

Despite decreases, there is growing concern that reality shows such as Teen Mom, 16 and Pregnant, Secret Life of an American Teenager, and Bristol Palin: Life’s a Tripp, glamorize the issue of teenage pregnancy and could lead to an increase in teen pregnancy. Such glamorization is reinforced by media portrayals of the teens in these shows as role models.

Examples of Glamorization

Bristol Palin: “Life’s a Tripp” -

- Palin admitted on TV that she was doing a terrible job disciplining Tripp. (ABC News, 2012). This show was cancelled due to gay slurs and the terrible discipline of her son Tripp.

Teen Mom:

- This show focuses on more of the social lives of teen parents rather than the responsibilities of having a child. It promotes teenage pregnancy and makes it look easy and entertaining. (Henson, 2011)

Secret Life of the American Teenager:

- This show makes it look easy to have a child as a teen. The show tends to endorse a lot of sex and makes it look a teen parent will automatically have a lot of support. In fact research tells us that teen parents do not always have a support network. (Dee, 2009)

Cost of Having A Child

- Teen mothers are less likely to finish high school. In fact, only 1 in 3 teen moms will graduate.
- Only 1.5% of all teen moms have a college degree by the age of 30.
- Nearly 80% of all teen moms who do not marry end up on welfare.
- Teen moms are less likely to qualify for a high paying job because only two-thirds have a high school diploma. (dosomething.org).

References