Kristen **Nichols**

Facts and Fictions:

Teen Pregnancy in Young Adult Literature

> "It is a story social workers have heard all too often in the past—and are almost certain to hear hundreds of thousands of times in months and years to come. It is the story of a teenage girl who finds herself pregnant and, for all intents and purposes, alone."
>
> —Stewart, *Teen Mothers* 6

> "When I finished feeding Amy and was just about to put her down . . . Mum came over and took her from me. She just kissed her, the way she does, and then she walked back across the room and put her in Nan's arms."
>
> —Doherty, *Dear Nobody* 232

Almost one million teenagers in the United States become pregnant each year ("Facts in Brief"), and these same teens' ideas about sex and related matters are strongly influenced by the media. Young adult novels about teen pregnancy can speak to teens who "want to read about things that are interesting and true" (Donelson and Nilsen 87). These same teens also read young adult literature to "find out about themselves" (Donelson and Nilsen 42). For a teen who is dating, is considering dating, is pregnant, or whose friend is pregnant, young adult literature can be a method of receiving information and connecting with the experience. But can the way these experiences are being portrayed help teens form an accurate picture from them? Can teens, in fact, "find out about themselves" in the portrayal of teen pregnancy and parenthood in young adult novels?

Previous Research in Teen Pregnancy/ Parenthood Novels

Little research has focused on the issue of teen pregnancy in young adult novels. My search for material turned up only five studies addressing teen pregnancy and/or parenthood in this literature. These studies primarily examine the messages portrayed in the literature, focusing on stereotypes and the lack of information regarding details of teen pregnancy and parenthood.

One 2002 study examined six young adult novels, three featuring teen mothers and three focusing on pregnant teens. Author Cynthia Coffel was looking for stereotypes, identifying the intended audience, and critiquing the message. In the *ALAN Review* article, "Strong Portraits and Stereotypes: Pregnant and Mothering Teens in YA Fiction," she contends that pregnant and mothering teens can benefit from reading "old and new young adult literature about young women in situations similar to theirs," and she encourages them to do so "with a feminist and culturally critical critique" (15). Coffel intends students and teachers to use these novels to discuss sexuality, gender stereotypes, and teen pregnancy (19).

In their 2001 study covering fifteen pieces of literature (thirteen novels, one short story, and one creative non-fiction), Joy Davis and Laurie

McGillavray also examine messages regarding teen sex and pregnancy. Their article in the *English Journal*, "Books about Teen Parents: Messages and Omissions," outlines eight primary messages:

> Don't have unprotected sex even once.
> Most mothers keep their babies.
> Having a baby may put your education on hold, but you can still achieve your goals.
> When you are pregnant, you are on your own.
> For guys, sex is about fun. For girls, sex is about . . . [a variety of complicated reasons].
> Young women have to live with consequences, young men don't.
> Teen pregnancies do not mandate marriage.
> Teens from "troubled homes," or their partners, are more likely to become pregnant. (90–95)

As for "omissions," Davis and McGillivray identify three concerns: the lack of discussions of race and class, a limited number of references to prenatal care, and little, if any, discussion of how to prevent pregnancy (96).

In their *Knowledge Quest* article, "Teenage Pregnancy as Moral Panic: Reflections on the Marginalization of Girls' Feelings," Lynn Cockett and Sarah Knetzer conclude that, in the four novels they examine, the "problem belongs to the girls" (53), which they see as literary perpetuation of a myth. The authors argue that teenagers should be educated to be "critical consumers of information" so that they can see through this myth perpetuated in young adult literature (53).

Rather than looking at stereotypes or messages, Caroline McKinney examines young adult novels in which the female protagonists exhibit strength of character. Of the fifteen novels she discusses in her *ALAN Review* article "Finding the Words that Fit: The Second Story for Females in Young Adult Literature," two of the novels are about a teen who becomes pregnant. July (*Mr and Mrs Bo Jo Jones*) and Helen (*Dear Nobody*) both "create a stronger self" as they make decisions regarding their pregnancies (McKinney 3). McKinney believes that these novels' portrayal of strong female characters provides "illumination and discovery" for the adolescents who read them (6).

While the previous four articles examine stereotypes, messages, and character strength in young adult literature about teen pregnancy, an *ALAN Review* article by Denise Banker, "Too Real for Fiction: Abortion Themes in YA Literature," focuses solely on examining books which in some way address the abortion issue. Banker analyzes eleven young adult novels written between 1972 and 1991. Disappointed in what is available in young adult fiction on the issue of abortion (6), Banker believes more young adult literature should focus on abortion "to educate the students . . . [and] to allow them to expand their attitudes and to help them develop a sense of empathy and tolerance toward others" (2).

These five studies examine a variety of novels to discuss the stereotypes, social messages, strength of character, and choices represented in young adult literature. But these articles present only parts of the picture. While they do examine stereotypes related to teen pregnancy and/or parenthood presented in selected literature, and while they do mention information missing in the literature they have analyzed, the authors do not provide a comprehensive look at the portrayal of teen pregnancy and/or parenting compared to this reality in the United States today.

Novel Selection

After reading more than forty young adult novels that portray teen pregnancy, I narrowed the selections by focusing on three criteria: the copyright date (novels published since 1990), the perspective from which the story was told (pregnant and/or parenting teen only), and the level of reader engagement the story encouraged. I chose novels published in the last fifteen years to view the recent depiction of the topic. I limited the novels to those from the perspective of the pregnant and/or parenting teen rather than the story of the friend, parent, relative, or sibling to assure that the issue of teen pregnancy would be a primary focus of the novel rather than a subplot. Finally, I ruled out any novel that met the other two qualifications but was not likely to gain the reader's interest, because of implausible characters, an undeveloped or unrealistic plot, and/or a didactic or moralistic tone. After eliminating the novels that did not meet these qualifications, I compiled a list of twenty novels (see bibliography).

Choices

Though many different areas of teenaged pregnancy in young adult literature can be analyzed, I

narrowed my focus to the choices of abortion, adoption, or parenting by the protagonists. Of the novels in the study, some begin and end with the pregnant teen, some start with the pregnant teen and conclude with the birth of the infant, and some begin with the teen already parenting. The teens' experiences vary in terms of the decision made, the reasons, and the realism of the situation, given nonfiction accounts and statistics of pregnant and parenting teens (see Table 1).

Abortion

While forty percent of pregnant teens have abortions ("Facts in Brief"; Luker 155), young adult novels written from the perspective of the pregnant teen do not focus on this issue. Of the twenty novels included in this analysis, only two novels' (*Like Sisters on the Homefront* by Rita Williams-Garcia and *Borrowed Light* by Anna Fienberg) protagonists have abortions (ten percent).

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The protagonist in *Like Sisters on the Homefront*, Gayle, is a fourteen-year-old mother forced by her mother to have an abortion during her second pregnancy: "'S'pose I want to keep it. It's mines,'" [said Gayle]. 'As long as you fourteen and in *my* house, you mines,' Mama said" (Williams-Garcia 4). In seven pages, the author describes Gayle as waiting in a room at the clinic, experiencing the procedure for the abortion, and meeting with a counselor after the abortion (Williams-Garcia 3-9). Though Gayle's experience with abortion is discussed in only one chapter of *Like Sisters on the Homefront*, the information presented reveals Gayle's situation to be unusual. While teens who seek abortions "tend to be affluent and white, [and] to have more ambitious educational and career goals" (Luker 114), Gayle is an African American from the projects who does not seem to be interested in school. As the dialogue suggests, it is not likely that Gayle would choose to have this abortion, and she does not. Gayle's mother "'gave [her] one mistake [her son]'" and does not want to support another, and so she decides Gayle will have the abortion (Williams-Garcia 3). Although this situation appears unlikely, as the author does not explain why Gayle's mother would allow her to have the first baby but not the second, the author does present a protagonist having an abortion, however short the focus.

While Gayle's abortion and subsequent response is discussed for only a chapter in *Like Sisters on the Homefront*, Callisto's abortion in *Borrowed Light* is a significant part of the story. When Callisto, or Cally, gets pregnant, she decides on her own to have an abortion. Fienberg anticipates readers who may not agree with the protagonist's decision, so, in a conversational tone, Cally justifies her choice: "Still, I'd made a decision—all on my own . . . It was just something I had to do. And I was doing the best I could. You might think it's pathetic, a girl sitting there in that clinic, congratulating herself in a situation like that. But I'm telling the truth, once you make a decision, you feel better" (244). After the abortion, Cally experiences both physical and emotional pain but does not regret her decision.

More commonly in the novels, the pregnant protagonist decides against abortion. Helen, the protagonist in *Dear Nobody* by Berlie Doherty, walks out of the hospital instead of staying for her scheduled abortion (107). While lying on the bed in the hospital room, she feels "as if [she] ha[s] become two people" and cannot go through with the procedure (Doherty 107). A similar situation is presented in *Perfect Family* by Jerrie Oughton. Welcome's sister takes her to have

Table 1. Nonfiction Statistics Compared to Representations in the Novels

	Abortion	Adoption	Parenting
Reality	40% ("Facts in Brief"; Luker 155)	3% (Stewart, *Teen Parenting* 8)	57%
Novels (20 in this study)	10%*	35%	60%*

*One teen protagonist (Gayle from *Like Sisters on the Homefront*) is already a parent when she has an abortion.

an abortion, but Welcome, the protagonist, decides she cannot lose the "promise" she feels growing inside of her (Oughton 102). In *Detour for Emmy* by Marilyn Reynolds, Emmy thinks about getting an abortion, but she tells her brother she "waited too long" because she has "already felt those little butterfly moves inside [her]" (90). Likewise, the protagonist in *Annie's Baby: The Diary of Anonymous, A Pregnant Teenager*, edited by Beatrice Sparks, briefly considers having an abortion. However, she is concerned about the religious implications of the procedure.

Though in reality almost half of all pregnant teens choose abortion ("Facts in Brief"; Luker 155), this decision is not proportionally represented in young adult literature. The reasons in the novels for not having an abortion are true to actual teen experiences, since some teens decide against abortion for religious or emotional reasons and others have "every intention of having an abortion, but back out at the last minute because the idea makes them uncomfortable" (Stewart, *Teen Parenting* 34). However, the overarching message sent to teens through this literature is that most teens choose not to have abortions. Some young adult novels portray incidental characters as having abortions, but the issue is not given extended treatment, with the exception of Fienberg's *Borrowed Light*. Continuing scarcity of novels about abortion written from the perspective of the pregnant teen reinforces Banker's observations. The theme has not received any greater representation in the last decade, leaving teens who have abortions or are considering abortion without much literature to help them grapple with the issue.

Adoption

While only about three percent of pregnant teens choose adoptive parents for their children (Stewart, *Teen Parenting* 8), this is a popular resolution in young adult fiction centering on teen pregnancy. In fact, seven of the twenty plots (thirty-five percent) considered in this study end in adoption. Authors describe the story of the teen that decides to give the baby up for adoption in one of three ways: making the decision at the beginning of the pregnancy, near the end of the pregnancy, or after a short term of parenting.

Two novels in which the pregnant teen decides early in the pregnancy that she will give the baby up for adoption are *Don't Think Twice* by Ruth Pennebaker and *Someone Else's Baby* by Geraldine Kaye. Although *Don't Think Twice* is set in 1967, critics Cockett and Knetzer refer to the book's theme as "timeless" (52). When Anne's parents find out about her pregnancy, they send her to an unwed mother's home so no one will know she is pregnant. Anne knows that she will have to give the baby up for adoption, and so she thinks of the fetus as "a growth inside [her]" that will be gone in a few months (Pennebaker 25). The further she progresses in her pregnancy, however, the more she thinks of the fetus as her child. She signs the adoption papers because she must, but after her experience, Anne believes that "being pregnant and giving up your baby . . . isn't normal" (Pennebaker 254). However, the 1960s social stigma of being an unwed mother is more than she and her family want to overcome. Her experience is similar to Terry's in *Someone Else's Baby* even though the latter is set in the 1990s. Terry also feels from early in her pregnancy that she must give her baby up for adoption because her parents will not support her child, and she does not know how she could support a baby on her own. Terry also regrets giving up her baby, but she sees no other options, given her family's position.

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While Anne and Terry decide on adoption early in their pregnancies, Val (*What Kind of Love? The Diary of a Pregnant Teenager*, by Sheila Cole) and Welcome (*Perfect Family*, by Jerrie Oughton) believe throughout most of their pregnancies that they will keep their babies, before deciding to place them through adoption agencies.

In *What Kind of Love*? Val is confident she will be able to keep her baby because her boyfriend, Peter, proposes to her. However, their parents believe they are too young to be married, and Val's family will not support her if she chooses to keep her baby. At the

end of the novel, Val has an appointment with an adoption agency that she "would cancel in a second if [she] thought [she] could make it on [her] own" (Cole 192).

Like Val, Welcome in *Perfect Family* does not know if she can raise a child on her own. The difficulty of her decision is exacerbated by the fact that she lives in the 1950s, when social pressures dictate that she give her child up for adoption. That does not prevent her, however, from considering keeping her baby. When her family finds out about her pregnancy, Welcome is sent to live with her aunt and uncle. She considers staying with them after the birth of Adam, because she knows she cannot bring him back home with her. However, she decides Adam needs more than she can give him, so she leaves him with her childless aunt and uncle to raise as their son.

In reality, teens who choose adoption are often "more affluent, have higher aspirations for themselves, and are performing better in school" than teens who choose to parent their children (Luker 162).

Two other novels in this study feature teens that choose parenting before making the decision to place their children for adoption. In *Annie's Baby: The Diary of Anonymous, A Pregnant Teenager*, a fictionalized representation of an actual diary edited by Beatrice Sparks, fourteen-year-old Annie discovers she is pregnant. After briefly considering abortion, Annie decides she will keep the baby and is initially excited. However, when Mary Ann arrives, Annie admits, "Having *her* isn't anything like I thought it would be. I honestly did think I was prepared for a baby, but I'm not" (Sparks 163). As a fourteen-year-old, Annie feels too young to raise a child and cannot provide the kind of life she believes Mary Ann deserves. After much deliberation and about four months of being Mary Ann's mother, Annie decides to give her baby to a "real" family.

Sam, the protagonist in *Hanging on to Max* by Margaret Bechard, is another teen parent who eventually chooses adoption. When Sam's girlfriend gets pregnant and decides to give the baby up for adoption, Sam steps in to raise the baby. Sam has complete parenting responsibility for Max while Sam's father supports them financially so that Sam can finish high school. With this arrangement, Sam will be unable to afford college. However, Sam wants to go to college, and he misses playing basketball and hanging out with his friends. He also cannot imagine doing all of the things for Max that he needs, and he wants Max to have a mom, so when Max is almost a year old, Sam places him through an adoption agency.

Although there is variation in when the teens decide to give their babies up for adoption, all the teens who make this decision near the end of the pregnancy and after the birth of the baby want to give their babies better lives and want to pursue their own lives. The message of these novels seems to be that adoption can be the better choice for both the teen and the baby because life changes drastically when one becomes a parent. These novels show that many teens are not prepared to take on the responsibilities of parenting.

These six teens who give their babies up for adoption are Caucasian, middle or upper- middle class teens who have goals for their futures and parents who reinforce a middle class value system and middle class ambitions. However, in a seventh novel, *The White Horse* by Cynthia Grant, Raina is a homeless girl who decides to give her baby up for adoption. Raina wants to support herself and her baby, but after living in a homeless shelter indefinitely, she decides her baby deserves a better life. In reality, teens who choose adoption are often "more affluent, have higher aspirations for themselves, and are performing better in school" than teens who choose to parent their children (Luker 162). Also, statistically, these teens are predominately white (Bachrach, Stolley, and London 29; Stolley 32). Generally, then, the young adult novels about teen pregnancy in which the teen protagonist decides to give the baby up for adoption are true to life in terms of class, race, and situation. Unfortunately, though, non-Caucasian readers are less likely to see themselves in the literature in this situation.

Adoption in young adult novels is generally portrayed as a positive solution for those who believe they are too young to parent and who have goals of education or careers that they believe would be difficult to achieve while parenting. With the exception of Raina in *The White Horse*, the protagonists who

give their babies up for adoption match the description of the majority of teens in real life who make this decision. However, in reality, fewer teens decide to place their children with adoptive parents than young adult literature suggests.

Parenting

While adoption is generally portrayed in young adult literature as a positive option for pregnant teens, parenting is a more common decision both in real life and for the teen protagonists. Twelve of the twenty novels (sixty percent) included in this study portray a teen choosing to keep the child, and the authors present this in three ways: some novels focus on the pregnancy and conclude either before the birth of the baby or soon after, others include both the pregnancy and the first few months or years of parenting, and some of the novels begin with the teen already parenting.

In three of the novels included in this study, the story ends either before or soon after the birth of the baby, allowing the authors to focus on aspects of the pregnancy. *Triangle* by Jon Ripslinger is told from the father's perspective, and he and his girlfriend make plans to keep the baby even though the story ends before the birth. The reader is encouraged to believe that everything will work out for Jeremy and Joy when their baby arrives, but it is unclear how this will be achieved since Joy wishes to attend college and Jeremy plans to leave soon for the Navy. For these reasons, Diane Pozar's review in *Book Report* indicates that the "story is realistic" and the "characters' reactions are sincere," but the ending is "unrealistic" (49).

In a second example, *Waiting for June* by Joyce Sweeney, Sophie is in her third trimester when the story begins, and she has already decided to keep her baby. When June is born, Sophie has a large support network in place to help her raise her daughter.

Finally, in Berlie Doherty's *Dear Nobody*, the author shows what both Helen and Chris experience as they decide what to do about the pregnancy. Chris focuses on maintaining his relationship with Helen, while Helen tries to think practically about what life will be like with a child. As mentioned earlier, Helen initially plans on having an abortion, but she changes her mind. Her parents clearly want her to give the baby up for adoption, but she chooses to keep the baby after she feels the unborn baby move for the first time. Chris supports her decision, though he does not have any plans for their future. Doherty portrays how both teens interact with their families as they prepare to become parents, and she describes the physical and emotional changes Helen experiences during her pregnancy. In the end, Helen lives at home with her family and her baby, and Chris leaves for college.

Novels that narrate both the pregnancy and a few months of parenting include *Detour for Emmy* and *Too Soon for Jeff,* by Marilyn Reynolds; *The First Part Last,* by Angela Johnson; and *One Night,* by Margaret Wild. *Detour for Emmy* and *Too Soon for Jeff* present similar stories, but the reader receives a female's perspective from Emmy and a male's perspective from Jeff. The novels also differ in that Jeff shares custody of his son with the baby's mother, while Emmy raises her daughter on her own. After Rosie is born, Emmy discovers the difficulties of caring for an infant. However, with the assistance of her mother, her brother, and Rosie's father's family, Emmy is able to finish high school and go to college.

Like *Too Soon for Jeff*, *The First Part Last* presents a teen father's perspective. Though the story begins with Bobby taking care of his daughter Feather, Johnson includes Bobby and Nia's relationship, Nia's pregnancy, and Bobby's decision to parent Feather with chapters labeled "then" and "now," contrasting Bobby's life before and after he becomes a father. Bobby's life as a parent revolves around Feather to the point that he gets very little sleep, does not have time for his friends, and sometimes misses his former self. The *Horn Book Magazine* book review of this novel pinpoints its impact: "What resonates are the sacrifices Bobby makes for Feather's sake" (Beram 459). Though it is not clear how Bobby will raise Feather on his own, he believes he has made the right decision in choosing to parent.

One Night also portrays the teen experiences of both pregnancy and parenting. The novel is similar to *Dear Nobody* in that it includes both the teen mother's and the teen father's perspectives, and it is similar to *Too Soon for Jeff* since both teens share responsibility for their baby. Wild's approach differs from the other authors in that she uses free-verse poems to capture the emotional experiences of Helen and Gabe as they choose to share the responsibility of parenting their

son. Other novels portray teens that have already made the decision to keep their babies and are in the process of raising them. Three of the five novels in this study with this perspective include African American protagonists: *Spellbound,* by Janet McDonald; *Imani All Mine,* by Connie Porter; and *Like Sisters on the Homefront,* by Rita Williams-Garcia.

The young adult novels may end on a hopeful note for the parenting teens, but the reality of teen parenting is less positive.

Their different stories share certain characteristics. Raven (the protagonist of *Spellbound*), Tasha (*Imani All Mine*), and Gayle (*Like Sisters on the Homefront*) are all young (early high school) teen mothers from poverty-stricken families with absent fathers. While all three authors illustrate the experience of being a young mother of a baby, Porter's work, *Imani All Mine*, concentrates on parenting more than the other two.

As the sole parent of Imani, Tasha attempts to be a good mother. She takes her parenting class seriously, learning from her errors. When Mrs. Poole, the teacher of the parenting class, talks about Shaken Baby Syndrome, Tasha confesses to her, "I shook Imani. I ain't never done it again . . . I ain't know you shouldn't do it" (Porter 70). Tasha wants to be a good mother to Imani. She depends on the parenting class to learn what she needs to know since her mother does not help her, and she receives positive feedback from Mrs. Poole about her abilities as a single parent. The reader experiences, through Tasha, both difficult and joyous moments of parenting, from the frustration that leads Tasha to shake Imani when she is an infant to the first steps Imani takes before her first birthday. Though Tasha has a difficult life as a teen parent, her experiences as Imani's mother lead her to want to keep her second baby.

Two other examples of teen mothering use a visual format. *The Amazing "True" Story of a Teenage Single Mom* by Katherine Arnoldi is a graphic novel (which reads like a comic book) that illustrates the difficulties one teen mother faces as she attempts to provide the best possible life for her daughter and herself. The protagonist encounters many difficulties, but in the end she applies for financial aid and finds day care for her daughter so she can go to college. *Doll Baby*, written by Eve Bunting and illustrated by Catherine Stock, is in picture book format. Though reviews in *Horn Book Magazine* and *School Library Journal* are somewhat negative, finding the content inappropriate for a picture book audience, the author succinctly presents the message that caring for an infant can be a challenging task for a teen parent (Adams 564; McGinty 112).

The teen parents in these novels are satisfied with their decisions even though life becomes significantly more difficult when they have children. The difficulties are not always presented, but many of the authors portray how life changes for the teens. For instance, in *The First Part Last*, Bobby leaves to play basketball with his friends, but when he gets to the corner of his block, he realizes that he cannot leave because he is responsible for the baby he left alone in the house (Johnson 23). Also, many of the teens, like Helen in *Dear Nobody*, put their schooling on hold or change their plans so they can provide for their children. However, the overriding message in the novels is that though things change and life is difficult when one chooses to be a teen parent, it is still possible to be successful in life.

The young adult novels may end on a hopeful note for the parenting teens, but the reality of teen parenting is less positive. Since "more than 80 percent of teenage mothers were living in poverty or near-poverty long before they became pregnant," these teens do not have the resources that many of the teens in the novels have available to them (Luker 107). Parenting teens face other burdens than financial difficulties and lack of a social life. In *Teen Parenting*, Stewart writes, "Experts say that one of the most serious challenges facing teen parents is the potential for abusing children" (49). Teenagers often lack the maturity to restrain themselves and may shake or hit their children out of frustration (Stewart 49). Besides the possibility of physically abusing his or her child, a teen parent may neglect his or her child, either physically or emotionally. Some teens do not realize how much care and interaction a small child requires, and others may not have the desire to provide the necessary time and attention.

Overall, then, the picture of teen parenting presented in the novels is more positive than the

reality of being a teen parent. The authors of the novels do illustrate some of the difficulties teen parents face, but they focus on changes in social life and sleep patterns more than anything else. While, in reality, parenting teens are in danger of abusing their children, Tasha (*Imani All Mine*) is the only teen protagonist in this study who takes her frustrations out on her child. Since many of the teen protagonists in these novels are from middle class families, and since many of the families agree to help support the teens and their children, most of the teen protagonists do not have the financial concerns that many teen parents actually face. Some of the novels do mention financial concerns, such as in *Detour for Emmy*, in which Emmy complains that she cannot buy what she wants because of Rosie's needs. However, Emmy is not worried about money for food, rent, and other living expenses. Even novels that unfold in less privileged situations gloss over the financial difficulties of many teen parents. For example, Helen (*One Night*) is not allowed to stay at home, so she drops out of school to get a job to support herself and the baby. While Helen worries about how she will afford a baby on her own, her landlady helps her by halving her rent and by offering to baby-sit for free, both kind but unrealistic gestures.

Conclusion

Overall, this study suggests that the reality and fiction of the options surrounding teen pregnancy do not match. While forty percent of pregnant teens choose abortion ("Facts in Brief"; Luker 155), this option is rarely chosen by protagonists in young adult literature, conveying an impression that abortion is not commonly chosen. By contrast to abortion, adoption is well represented as an option. Only three percent of pregnant teens choose adoption (Stewart, *Teen Parenting* 8), but the authors favor this choice for their protagonists. With regard to parenting, the primary discrepancy between reality and fiction is the overwhelming financial and familial support the parenting teens in the novels receive. In reality many teens do not receive much support from their families (Aitkens 13; Stewart, *Teen Mothers* 17). Young adult novels often end optimistically, so if authors decide that their protagonists will keep the children, giving the protagonists financial and familial support allows for the "happily ever after" ending. Whatever the reasons behind authors' representations of character choices, the misrepresentations could mislead their readers.

Teen pregnancy remains a serious issue since almost one million teenagers become pregnant each year ("Facts in Brief"). It also comprises a popular topic in young adult literature. Unfortunately, however, many young adult novels featuring teen pregnancy or parenthood are truly fictional and do not adequately reflect the realities of the situation. In addition, unless the reader is Caucasian and middle-class, he or she has few protagonists with which to identify. Though the authors included in this study do portray some of the realities of teen pregnancy and parenthood, the entire story remains inadequately told. Future novels on teen pregnancy and parenthood should consider a greater variety of the realities of the situation confronting teens, their families, and their friends.

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