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Casey Ryan Kelly

Butler University, ckelly11@unl.edu

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Chastity for Democracy: Surplus Repression and the Rhetoric of Sex Education

Casey Ryan Kelly

Critical Communication and Media Studies, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Corresponding author – Casey Ryan Kelly, email crkelly@butler.edu

Abstract

Moving from opposition to participation, the Adolescent Family Life Act (1981) and the development of abstinence education marks the conservative movement's pivot to a rhetorical strategy of tolerance that enabled it to coopt the public culture of sex discourse. Working from Herbert Marcuse's theory of "surplus repression," I argue that the New Right seized the liberationist argument for open public discourse about sexuality to sublimate libidinal desires into a national project of familial (re)productivity. The AFLA is significant in the rhetorical history of sex education because it demarcates the transition to a productive form of biopolitics that sought to manage sexuality by instrumentalizing rather than censoring bodily desire. Conservative sex talk illustrates how *Eros*—transgressive, creative, and erotic desires—is channeled into the discursive production of hyperfunctional subjects invested in their own subjugation.

Keywords: surplus repression, biopolitics, sex education rhetoric, *Eros*, Herbert Marcuse

The public debate over sex education has long been concerned with "energies" and libidinal "forces," real or imagined. In the mid to late nineteenth century, the first public advocates for sexual education believed that sexual and reproductive information was a necessary evil to protect children against the disabling pleasures of vice. Observing the rise of prostitution, venereal disease, and out-of-wedlock children, proponents believed that the nation's sexual energies needed to be productively channeled into pursuits of the mind. So-called "social purist" Frances Willard argued in 1890 that "vital forces conserved build up the whole being, and especially the brain. The fire in the furnace should drive the ship over

the waves, not burn it to the water's edge."¹ Meanwhile, strident opponents of sex education were similarly concerned with the impending evaporation of the populace's industrious energy, the likely result of the public's exposure to sexually obscene material. Robin Jensen notes how antivice reformer Anthony Comstock argued that sex education would make America's youth "lazy, greedy, lustful, and therefore unable to strive toward excellence and power."² While both constituencies diverged on policy, they agreed that sex without restraint activated by institutional regulation threatened to unleash repressed carnal desires, thereby dissipating the Protestant spirit of hard work into the mindless pursuit of pleasure.

A century later, Senators Jeremiah Denton (R-Alabama) and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) sponsored the first contemporary abstinence education bill (Adolescent Family Life Act of 1981) to introduce "chastity and self-discipline" into the populous.³ In defense of reorienting the nation's sex education curriculum, Denton spoke of the emerging "breeding society," a nation not unlike the one envisioned by Comstock: a population of sexual degenerates who privileged their individual pleasures over their familial and national responsibilities. Likewise, proponents of comprehensive sex education remained wedded to established yet evolving principles of value-free and science-based curriculum with varying degrees of sex positivity. In one sense, it is easy to see these historic constituencies as diametrically opposed: one side committed to repressing sexual desires through censorship and prohibition; the other in favor of progressive management; hence the prevailing narrative of sex education as liberal progress periodically impeded by conservative backlash. However, what I wish to suggest over the course of this essay is the following: that the prevailing logic of abstinence education is the byproduct of a tacit agreement by both constituencies that the release of libidinal energies will profoundly undermine the civic and national good.⁴ In conceding that sex was a public question tied to the health of the body politic, conservatives narrowed the controversy from *if* to *how* sexual information would be disclosed. In other words, contemporary abstinence is not the outcome of Christian conservative prohibitions overcoming the case for progressive and open sex talk but, rather, a fusion of these two positions. Hence, proabstinence discourse demands that its audiences avoid arousal and repress their sexual desire until marriage *even as* it purposely proliferates sex talk about the pleasures of marital sex. By 1981, conservatives had appropriated frank sex talk, opting to no longer speak of themselves as antisex crusaders. With the passage of the AFLA, the New Right chartered its own curriculum and directed federal money to revamp rather than repeal sex education. This new approach retained older conservative disapproval of sex out of wedlock but adopted a progressive and morally affirming attitude toward sex within marriage. In recognizing that the previous two decades of protest had been animated by the erotic energies aroused by the youth counterculture and the sexual revolution, the New Right chose to publicize their own sexuality as part of a broader conservative revolution.

The New Right defined abstinence until marriage as the consummate act of the "self-disciplined" citizen, an ideal liberal subject who rejected *Eros* in the name of advancing a productive family and nation. Once again animated by concerns about dissipating productive energies and civic atrophy, conservatives envisioned abstinence education as a mechanism to mobilize rather than prohibit public expressions of sexuality. The ultimate goal

was to reintroduce the public to the civic virtues of self-denial and discipline that conservatives felt had been misdirected toward protest, rebellion, and alternative lifestyles. With its vision of sex untethered from heterosexual reproduction, the “contraceptive mentality” threatened to obliterate Denton’s hope for a nostalgic return to the “rearing society” wherein all social obligations and civic duties were structured around the health of family.⁵ The AFLA’s chastity education mandate marked a pivot in the conservative rhetorical strategy against sex education, from prohibition to mobilization of sex discourse to regulate the disruptive erotic energies introduced by feminism, the counterculture, and the sexual revolution.⁶

Situated in the context of historical discourse about sex education, this rhetorical shift evinces a fundamental shift in the biopolitical management of sexual health. Abstinence discourse functions neither by silencing nor by consigning sex to society’s private enclaves, but rather by prying open closed bedroom doors and inciting discourse about sex in order to open it up to regulation. Hence, by 1981 conservatives became the face of the national dialogue about sex, the one area of public life not subject to the logics of privatization.⁷ This historic shift in the rhetoric of sex education illustrates how libidinal energies of the body politic are managed or channeled but never eliminated. The shift to abstinence education was particularly effective because it allowed conservatives to gain access to the libido for the purposes of creating a docile populous invested in a narrow range of (re)productive pleasures.

In this essay, I argue that the shift in conservative sexual discourse was not to eradicate but sublimate erotic desire into a national project of democratic renewal. Working from Herbert Marcuse’s theory of surplus repression, I make visible the way in which the New Right seized the liberationist argument for open sexual discourse to subject private sexual choices to national civic obligations. Historicizing Freud’s repressive hypothesis, Marcuse observed how, under advanced industrial capitalism, sexual desire is sublimated into commodified expressions that create a populous invested in “domination and toil” at the expense of *Eros*.⁸ Docile subjects are compelled to perform sex acts but in the name of the common good—as a disciplined part of one national body—rather than for the highly individualized pursuit of erotic pleasure. Using Congressional testimony in favor of the AFLA as a case study, I illustrate how the original case for abstinence education was an attempt to channel libidinal energies away from the protest movements of the previous two decades.⁹ This biopolitical project illustrates how transgressive, creative, and erotic desires were channeled into the discursive production of hyperfunctional subjects invested in their own subjugation.

From prohibition to sex talk

To explain the biopolitical significance of the shift to abstinence education, I begin by briefly historicizing the conservative transition from censorship to open sexual discourse. Prior to institutionalization, the campaign for sex education was part of a moral crusade for social purity that allied the evangelical clergy with reform-minded middle-class women concerned about the increase in prostitution and venereal disease. Organizations such as

the Women's Christian Temperance Union, American Purity Alliance, and the Moral Education Society endorsed limited education for the white middle class, emphasizing the spiritual bond between husband and wife, the innocence of children, and the danger of male lust. Jensen argues that social purists outmaneuvered prohibitionists by using ambiguous language that foregrounded their moral commitments against vice. Later, social hygienists would advance the case through seemingly value-neutral and scientific language, both of which aligned with increasing support for eugenics at the turn of the century. While prohibitionists temporarily prevailed against more radical supporters of free love and contraception, the oppositional strategy proved difficult to sustain throughout the ascendancy of the twentieth century liberal consensus that government should promote the general social welfare.¹⁰

Until the 1960s, sex education was steadily institutionalized despite the organized efforts of Christian conservatives. In 1913, Chicago became the first major U.S. city to temporarily mandate sex education in public schools.¹¹ Following World War I, high rates of venereal disease among American GIs prompted the federal government to invest in military sex education and contraception. Throughout the 1920s, a patchwork of secondary schools followed suit by integrating hygiene and sex instruction into the curriculum.¹² In the 1930s, the U.S. Office of Education began publishing materials and training teachers in sex education. By midcentury the first college-level sexuality courses were on the books. In large measure, the moral conservatism of sex education rhetoric accounts for this slow but steady institutionalization. Prior to the 1960s, social purists' and hygienists' narrow focus on the prevention of venereal disease, masturbation, and prostitution overshadowed a broader conversation about sexual pleasure. They maintained a pragmatic yet moral commitment to eliminating vice and channeling sexual urges into productive heterosexual marriages.¹³ The debate over sex education was limited to whether censorship or education best promoted normative sexual ideals and maintained a self-disciplined citizenry, evidence mounting for the latter.

The progressive social forces of the 1960s, including second wave feminism and the sexual revolution, helped expand the case for sex education beyond the morally prohibitive, and often medically inaccurate, curriculum of purists and hygienists. In 1964 Mary Calderone founded the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), an organization that helped launch the movement for comprehensive sex education. Janice Irvine argues that movement broke from the moralist position by condemning "many traditional sexual restrictions, such as guilt imposed by religious doctrines."¹⁴ Calderone believed that moral opposition would wane in the face of scientifically accurate and relatively sex-positive discourse. Yet, this shift in emphasis generated widespread backlash from Christian conservatives for whom the moral relativity of sex education signified the decline of American civilization.¹⁵ The battle intensified between 1968 and 1969 when forty states were embroiled in public controversies over legislation to implement comprehensive sex education.¹⁶ The conservatives' last stand was to establish a narrative of depravity in which perverts, pornographers, and predatory teachers used sex education to prey on innocent children and promote communism.¹⁷

Though the emerging coalition between the Republican Party and evangelical Christians thwarted the implementation of comprehensive sex education in isolated school districts,

the vitriolic debates that took place between 1968 and 1969 provided several important lessons that would move conservatives away from their oppositional strategy. First, they learned that sex could mobilize large coalitions of Christian voters to remake public policy. Throughout the 1970s, the emergence of Reverend Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority and a politically active Christian electorate helped entrench sexual morality as a central component of the Republican platform.¹⁸ Second, conservatives began funding national organizations and research think-tanks devoted to advancing their own specialized curriculum, sex counseling, and self-help services.¹⁹ By the end of the 1970s, the New Right had outspent and out lobbied SIECUS, taking control of local school boards and producing volumes of educational research on human sexuality. The establishment of Christian sex education created what appeared to be a viable alternative to comprehensive sex education, an alternative that soon became eligible for federal funding. Indeed, by conceding on prohibition, conservatives were positioned to participate fully in and redirect the public culture of sexual discourse.

Surplus and sex education

A rhetorical reading of the AFLA contributes to our understanding of the biopolitics of sexuality and accounts for how conservatives triumphed in the public controversy over sex education, along the way evincing the broader entailments of *Eros* and the libido for the reproduction of docile citizens. The AFLA is significant in the rhetorical history of sex education because it marks the transition to a productive form of biopolitical control that sought to manage sexuality by instrumentalizing rather than censoring bodily desire. The new abstinence discourse invited the public to think of sexual liberation as a misrecognition of freedom, autonomy, and pleasure in a democratic culture. Yet, the New Right asserted that within appropriate parameters sex was an important facet of human expression, one that had a very specific function in the reproduction of national public culture. Conservatives suggested that personal fulfillment could be achieved through self-denial, delayed gratification, and an appreciation for the procreative function of human sexuality. Here, the traits one learns through abstinence happened to be that of their ideal citizen: restrained, responsible, and self-sacrificing. Hedonism, on the other hand, desecralized sex, the family, and the collective good. Pleasure without restraint promised not liberation but self-destruction. As Steven Seidman observes, conservatives portrayed their opponents as "agents of chaos and moral breakdown, comparing them to children whose egocentric hedonism must be domesticated and hemmed in to prevent self-destruction and social disorder."²⁰ Abandoning censorship enabled conservatives to incite the body politic to engage in sexual activity, to view bodily fulfillment through the lens of self-discipline, and to sublimate desire into a national biopolitical regime. Conservatives achieved their objective by offering the *best* version of sex: sex that was worth the wait.

The social production of docile bodies functions most effectively when discourses of governmentality enlist subjects to actively participate in their own management. As Michel Foucault observes, modern biopower is deployed to regulate populations by activation of the body to work properly, efficiently, and healthfully.²¹ In particular, his critique of Freud's repressive hypothesis highlights how open sexual discourse offers no reprieve

from the operations of power.²² Power works not by silencing but proliferating sexual expression to open populations to subjugation and control. Working from Foucault, Barbara Biesecker explains that repression is but a “mechanism for the production of a virtual explosion of discourse on sexuality.”²³ Consequently, education does not free sex from repressive power, it only changes the mechanism by which it is disciplined.

Foucault’s point is well taken; however, it is also important to delineate *how* particular biopolitical regimes manage sexuality and to what effect. Hence, Foucault concludes his critique by noting

the doubts I would like to oppose to the repressive hypothesis are aimed less at showing it to be mistaken than at putting it back within a general economy of discourses on sex in modern societies since the seventeenth century.²⁴

Foucault reads what Freud and others call repression as a productive capacity, a technique of governmentality that through discourse incites individuals and populations to participate in the regulation and production of knowledge about sexuality. Foucault’s genealogy of sexuality aligns with the historic development of biopower from early modernity to contemporary instantiations of the biopolitical. In the juridical sense, classic power was characterized by the sovereign’s decision “to take life or let live,” a power exercised over the populace through the spectacle of the scaffold.²⁵ Modern biopolitics, however, operates not by resurrecting the sovereign’s right to kill but by the logic of “make live and let die,” or a politics of productive enabling.²⁶ As Stuart Murray contends, “biopower comes from within rather than from above, it is invisible, as nebulous and totalizing as the borderless globe.”²⁷ Starting in the eighteenth century, the spectacle of sovereign violence gave way to a mode of modern governance that manages populations by promoting the welfare of its subjects.²⁸ For sexuality, this meant a transition from inflicting pain and death to reforming and rehabilitating sexual deviance. This shift entailed the proliferation of expert medical, psychological, sociological, and criminological knowledge about transgressive sexual practices with the normative goal of producing a healthy populace.

Modern biopower, then, is distinguished by the functioning of “governmentality,” or what Ronald W. Greene calls “the diffusion of governing logics into the populace to ensure its health and productivity.”²⁹ Here, biopower functions through both “anatomopolitics,” that fosters the life and productivity of the individual, and “biopolitics” which operates within “the species body” or a population within which discourses circulate that encourages the adoption of healthy and productive behaviors.³⁰ Biopolitics addresses the individual only in as much as they are aggregated or massified wherein techniques of governmentality can become diffuse and self-replicating.³¹ Population-level management concerns Malthusian calculations about the relationship between public health, longevity, sanitation, fertility rates, and carrying capacity. The diffusion of governmentality was essential to the development of modernity, where life could be most efficiently regulated, maximized, and mobilized. As sexuality and reproduction become population-level concerns, biopolitical discourses enlist the public in regulating their sexual practices in the name of the common welfare. Greene’s study of family planning discourses illustrates how throughout the nine-

teenth and twentieth century knowledge production concerning sex and reproduction became the grounds for governing through the administration of life. The invention of problem categories such as the hysterical women, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple, and the perverse adult provided warrants for the deployment of an “ensemble of practices, technologies, discourses, programs of action, institutions, and procedures dedicated to improving the security of a population.”³² Greene views concomitant discourses of “familization” as an attempt to govern the public problem of sexual health by enlisting the family as both the mechanism and object of social management.³³ Indeed, this observation mirrors Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s contention that the production of docile subjects under modern biopolitics has been outsourced to the family where the law of the father parallels the societal logics of disciplinary authority.³⁴ For Foucault, since the eighteenth century the axis of parents and relatives—backed by doctors, educators, and psychologists—became responsible for the “deployment of sexuality,” to convey both its juridical laws as well as its “economy of pleasure.”³⁵

Returning to the central problematic of sex education discourse, one can locate an intimate relationship between biopolitics and the social regulation of the libidinal “energies.” Indeed, the deployment of sexuality extends control beyond reproduction to “the sensations of the body, the quality of pleasures, and the nature of impressions, however tenuous or imperceptible these may be.”³⁶ Counter to Freud, Foucault’s history of sexuality positions the libido within an economy of productive power where instincts are not repressed but, rather, nurtured to produce docile bodies. While still maintaining fidelity to Foucault’s biopolitics, I suggest that a slightly reworked theory of repression explains how the deployment of pleasure in the discourse of abstinence invites subjects to conflate the pursuit of the reality principle with the fulfillment of the pleasure principle. In other words, the goal of repression is achieved by rhetorically aligning the functions of the instrumental body with the pleasures of the erotic body (for instance, the counterintuitive slogan “chastity is sexy”).³⁷ Here, Marcuse’s theory of surplus repression offers a conceptual bridge between Freud and Foucault to explain how the very terrain of what counts as pleasure is uniquely shaped by advanced industrial society. For Marcuse, capitalism’s infiltration of the life world folds economic imperatives into the intimate care of the self, methodically desexualizing or functionalizing pleasures in the name of societal productivity. Similar to Foucault, Marcuse contends that Freud failed to address how repression is historically contingent, or that human instincts and desires are organized by society and materialize in a “system of institutions.”³⁸ His most important insight was that the basic repression of instincts required for civilizational progress had outlived its historical necessity, that the immense technological capacity of late capitalism rendered domination and toil theoretically unnecessary for freedom and security.

Yet, the perpetuation of capitalism requires that subjects invest in the ideological presupposition that self-denial and productivity (surplus labor) retain their social utility. Marcuse argues that surplus repression entails a collective commitment to servitude despite the existence of means to produce other forms of social organization. His primary concern was the weakening of *Eros* by the sublimation of the libido into surplus labor—turning the body into work—and consumerism—pleasure experienced vicariously through commod-

ity fetishism. *Eros*, he posits, is nurtured when libidinal energies are channeled into creativity, leisure, and erotic pleasures, all of which become possible in age when repression is no longer the primary means of manufacturing social cohesion. Surplus repression is engendered by the promise to *safeguard* the pleasure principle by assuring gratification through delay, restraint, and docility. In turn, the very substance pleasure is transformed. As Marcuse explains,

the mastery of instinctual drives may be used against gratification; in the history of civilization, basic repression and surplus-repression have been inextricably intertwined, and the normal progress of genitality has been organized in such a way that the partial impulses and their "zones" were all but desexualized in order to conform to the requirements of a specific social organization of the human existence.³⁹

In advanced industrial society, pleasure is not denied but sublimated into activities that perpetuate a docile populace.

Marcuse's insights offer an important supplement to biopolitical theories of sexuality in general and lend nuance to our understanding of the conservative participation in sexual discourse in particular. On the latter point, Mark Cobb observes that Marcuse might offer a valuable supplement to the study of biopower as he, similar to Foucault, critiqued the commodification, sublimation, and trivialization of sexuality by new forms of social management. Of surplus repression, Cobb suggests that "an investigation of this concept along with Foucault's notion of docile bodies can help one begin to understand the ways in which *Eros*, the life instinct, is weakened."⁴⁰ Douglas Kellner and Clay Pierce add that although Marcuse foregrounds the role of discourse in the production of surplus repression, he also directs our attention to the material body itself as a site of biopolitical investment. They explain that "Marcuse retains an emphasis on the actual body as an ontic (and thus fully historic) and biological locus of contestation, providing a site wherein biopower can be resisted by a new notion of biopolitics."⁴¹ From such a perspective we see that biopolitical control requires access to the libido, to proliferate discourses of desire so that the libido's expressive practices can be made visible and committed to an instrumental project. For the former, sex talk enabled conservatives to assimilate threatening desires into their narrative of social progress. In Marcuse's words, "our society distinguishes itself by conquering the centrifugal social forces with Technology rather than Terror, on the dual basis of an overwhelming efficiency and an increasing standard of living."⁴² Of course, in one form or another sex education has always been an attempt to manage the social body. The rhetorical shift to abstinence, however, enables a particular kind of biopolitical regulation that compels sex and the life instinct to thrive but in the name of the total functionality of the social body.

Here, Marcuse provides singular illumination on docility and the sublimation of the libido as byproducts of capitalism's emphasis on hyperfunctionality and technological rationality. Biopolitical control is therefore predicated on the negation of *Eros* and its attendant creativity and leisure. Sexual desire must be framed in logics of instrumentality and conformity that characterize advanced industrial society. Seemingly languid and

wasteful, sexual pleasure must be sublimated and reframed as a means to forming hyper-functional subjects (i.e., healthier workers and productive citizens). As such, the theory of surplus repression offers several important insights into how sex discourse produces docile citizens. First, surplus repression explains how biopolitical regimes colonize the pleasure principle by conflating healthy and enjoyable sexual practices with the capitalist imperatives of functionalization and instrumentalization. The objective of biopolitical control, or what Marcuse called “the authority of the prevailing productive apparatus,” is to capture all the elements of life that do not perpetuate industrial civilization.⁴³ He explains,

thus emerges a pattern of *one-dimensional thought and behavior* in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, but their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are repelled or reduced to terms of this universe. They are redefined by the rationality of the given system and of its quantitative extension.⁴⁴

Sexuality in a one-dimensional society becomes attached to discourses and institutions that operate by the logic of hyperfunctionality. Like Foucault, Marcuse observed that the discourses of the sexual liberation movement had been predictably captured by the prevailing power structures of capitalist society. The theory of surplus repression, in other words, illuminates how biopower is perfected by not only making bodies work but making sure that bodies *only* work: there is no pleasure or life force that cannot be folded into an instrumental discourse.

Second, the present case study specifically illustrates how conservative sex talk achieves the biopolitical objective of managing desires by reframing abstinence as means to achieving personal productivity and political health. This entailed a strategic redefinition of gratification as self-denial. As Marcuse cunningly notes, resistance to advanced industrial society had been undermined by functionalized language, an Orwellian unification of opposing principles to negate critical thought. Marcuse writes,

the fact that the prevailing mode of freedom is servitude, and that the prevailing mode of equality is superimposed inequality is barred from expression by the close definition of these concepts in terms of the powers which shape the respective universe of discourse.⁴⁵

Even for proponents of sex education, then, the liberal lexicon failed to provide space for the enactment of sexual freedom and autonomy because its key terms bear little resemblance to their historical usages. Pried open by society’s adherence to market values, politically potent terms such as freedom had been lent to everything from trivial economic causes to war and destruction.⁴⁶ In this case, discourses of health and good citizenship structured conformity to an ailing democratic society. Thus, the rhetoric of sex and citizenship actually coordinated the biopolitical management of functional bodies. That is, tethering sex to the proper functioning of civil society became a capture mechanism for erotic energies that had not been fully committed to state and capital for the purposes of self-

replication. Pleasure in a functional political language must be made to serve some purpose that transcends the individual body.

The rearing society

Nearly three years after its passage, the Senate Subcommittee on Family and Human Services held public hearings on the efficacy of the abstinence education mandate. This hearing was the first opportunity for Congressional scrutiny of the 1981 legislation, as the bill originally went through committee and the floor without debate. Chaired by Senator Denton, these hearings included testimony from anti-abortion groups and family research organizations, including the National Right to Life Crusade, Catholic Family Services, and the Family of the Americas Foundation. Here, conservatives refined the techniques of governmentality in relationship to the regulation of sexual health.⁴⁷ First, proponents of the AFLA returned to the arguments of nineteenth century “social purists” and implicitly re-framed abstinence education as a safeguard for the pleasure principle against the forces of modern vice. Second, proponents argued that abstinence productively channels the sexual energies of youth toward the intellectual development of civic responsibility. Sex education is reimagined as a technology of democratic management, or a method for introducing self-discipline into the body politic. Third, sex for immediate gratification forfeits political enfranchisement in the body politic by undermining the health and productivity of the populace. Conservatives framed their opponents as hedonistic children, the sexually deviant third persona of the healthy and productive rearing society.⁴⁸

New social purists

Those who testified before the subcommittee revived what was once the social purist’s position on sex education: that schooling on basic physiology was ultimately the best way to prevent pregnancy and disease without forfeiting moral commitments. This discursive strategy positioned conservatives as open to the dissemination of sexual information so long as it retained a commitment to high spiritualism. Sex also remained identified with enhancing the (re)productive body to extend America’s distinctive civilizing mission. This Protestant notion of hard work, thrift, and self-denial helped ALFA proponents frame abstinence as liberating in that reproductive sexual energy is the spirit that drives American progress.

On this point, the testimony of Mercedes Wilson of the Family of the Americas Foundation is illustrative. Whereas Wilson aligns American reproductive sexuality with the historical development democracy, she also connects despotism and other oppressive self-destructive energies with European hedonism. She begins,

This country was founded on high human and spiritual values denied by other European nations. We wish to affirm these values and reverse a trend that seems to downgrade the importance of the family. A strong, productive nation is built on strong productive families.⁴⁹

European values are less about eighteenth century monarchical tyranny than they are conservative code for libertine sexual values. The enthymeme here is vital, as Wilson infers that despotism and social degeneration are somehow connected to acceptance of nonreproductive sexuality. A productive and democratic America, by contrast, channels its sexual energies into the activity of building.

Why is it that the productive nation is built on “strong productive families”? Indeed, Wilson’s introduction to her testimony reveals the movement’s biopolitical investments. As Deleuze and Guattari observe “social repression needs psychic repression precisely in order to form docile subjects and to ensure the reproduction of the social formation, including its repressive structures.”⁵⁰ Hence, the family has been delegated the social function of reproducing psychological repression. The family helps produce docile subjects because it organizes and regulates libidinal desires within its material and psychic structures. Wilson finds the family to be not only the core site of American national identity, but also the one social institutional capable of reigning in the libidinal energies that degenerated European civilization. For abstinence proponents the family is imagined to be in a perpetual state of crisis and in need of safeguarding. As Denton insists throughout the hearing, “I consider the broken family situation in the United States to be . . . devastating, in its proportion in comparison to any other era in this Nation.”⁵¹ For proponents, the family problem is a fissure in the previous modes of biopolitical control. In other words, the family has been rendered an ineffective delegate for the advancement of governmentality.

This discourse also helps conservatives trace the abstinence movement’s historic lineage to the nation’s founders and their repudiation of European despotism, or classical sovereign power. While the movement’s agenda may appear constrictive of personal liberty and bodily autonomy, the memory of Puritanical spiritualism aligns the high moral value of chastity with the foundation of American democracy. Wilson, then, frames abstinence as the withdrawal of sovereign power and a productive enablement of healthy bodies. Thus, she (re)declares the nation’s spiritual independence. Appropriating the preamble of the U.S. Constitution, Wilson states

We, *the families*, are the designers of the future and we must assume the responsibility of forming and transforming society we must retain the right to bring up our children. After all, Mr. Chairman, the United States is a Judeo-Christian country, which cherishes a strict code of moral ethics that opposes premarital sex, all kinds of sexual perversions, and abortion.⁵²

Because heterosexual reproduction quite literally propagates new citizens, parents have a privileged civic identity whose rights deserve special consideration when weighed against arguments for bodily autonomy or sexual freedom. Supplanting “we, the people” with “we, *the families*,” Wilson symbolically shifts the constitution of the nation from a public culture consummated by civic acts in the name of the polity to an intimate sphere characterized by healthy sexual reproduction.⁵³ She also erases the state’s enforcement of prohibitions against sexual expression, choosing instead to speak of moral injunctions as collectively negotiated among the familial public. She speaks in favor of the positive rights of families instead of prohibitions against sexual expression.

In this regard, the hearing's participants were exceptionally tolerant of sexual discourse. Senator Denton argued that the AFLA was designed first and foremost to "help teenagers and their parents to work together . . . to exchange views and to examine the values of family life and sexuality."⁵⁴ He even goes as far to say, "I personally am a supporter of family life and sex education."⁵⁵ This position of openness is made possible by his corresponding faith in the regulatory power of a constellation of biopolitical institutions. For instance, he notes, "the best sex education includes parents and relies upon cooperation of teachers, social workers, the medical community, and representatives of community and religious organizations with parents to develop the curriculum."⁵⁶ Edward Brandt⁵⁷ and Marjory Mecklenburg⁵⁸ testified that the debate over sex education had been narrowed to methods, that is, which type of programs "best encourage unmarried adolescents to postpone sexual activity."⁵⁹ Some participants even lamented their participation in sex talk as strategic. Mary William Sullivan of Catholic Family Services suggested that they have no other option than to outcompete other sources of sexual information, their sex talk compensatory to their "powerlessness in the face of mass media, television, movies, and so, and presenting sex as something that should be indulged in without any sense of responsibility."⁶⁰ She insisted that children "feel better about the fact that they do have a choice of being sexual active or not."⁶¹ The conservative solution became more sex talk or, in Sullivan's words, dealing with adolescents "in a direct and honest and frank way, and the open discussion of sexual matters in the company of one's peer group."⁶²

Yet, this embrace of frank and open sexual dialogue belied the proponents' finesse of concepts such as sexual freedom and bodily autonomy. That is to say conservatives carefully appropriated these aforementioned terms from the lexicon of sexual rights into a discourse of bodily health and purity. Proponents reframed the liberal ideograph <freedom> in terms of negative versus positive rights (i.e., freedom *from* rather than freedom *to*).⁶³ In part, this move speaks to Marcuse's critique of one-dimensional language in which conceptual opposites are fused through political double speak. Here, proscriptions of appropriate sexual behavior are not a restriction but a productive enablement. In part, of course, proponents' emphasis on freedom was responsive to second wave feminists who successfully articulated reproductive and bodily autonomy as a human right necessitating access to contraception and legal abortions.⁶⁴ But conceptually this conservative reconfiguration of freedom stresses that liberation is achieved by mastering unnatural bodily desires. Similar to social purists, abstinence advocates stressed that the value of education is that it teaches citizens how to keep the body free of contamination, dirt, disease, and other elements of nature that restrict bodily capacities. For instance, Terrance Olson, a professor of family sciences at Brigham Young University, testified that sexual freedom, as conceived by the Left, is in fact a constraint on adolescents. He explained,

there is not much truth to be told about freedom of choice, and freedom on choice is no gift, if the choices do not matter. We cannot help our teenagers by lining up all the available choices to them, as if they were soap brands on a supermarket shelf, and as if did not matter which one they chose.⁶⁵

The point of Olson's consumer choice metaphor is clear: the adolescent mind should be "freed" from having to make sexual decisions so that the adolescent body is free from sex's dangerous material consequences.

To this point Wilson testifies that freedom must be thought of in terms of what abstinence *enables* rather *constrains* in the body:

Because "freedom" is such a catchword used by those who are in favor of premarital sex, I would like to point out the freedom that chastity provides:

1. Freedom from unwanted pregnancy
2. Freedom from complications of the pill and IUD
3. Freedom from venereal disease
4. Freedom from early sterilization either V.D. or unwanted pregnancy
5. Freedom from complications of abortion
6. Freedom from forms of genital cancer
7. Freedom from the stigma and sorrow that befalls a family with an unmarried pregnant daughter
8. Freedom to explore cerebrocentric rather than genitocentric sexuality.⁶⁶

So-called "free" or premarital sex, Wilson argues, introduces greater restrictions on individual agency than abstinence until marriage. Particularly for minors, freedom is not derived from nature but, instead, by one's separation from it. Her neologisms—"cerebrocentric" versus "genitocentric sexuality"—suggest that the mind must be trained to overcome what nature has programed into the body. Extrapolated as a civic ideal, sexual abstinence embodies the civilizing force of culture over nature. Here, Wilson accesses one of the core tenets of American individualism, that the liberal subject is constituted through the hard work of turning nature into property. As she put it, "When self-motivation and self-regulation in sexual life are practiced and understood as inherently right or good, they become the natural virtue of chastity."⁶⁷ Although nature, the libido, is located within the body, it remains separate from and threatening to cerebral citizens who must be trained to self-regulate their physical desires. Note, for instance, the separation of the mind and body in her testimony when she explains,

Of far greater value to the health care of our teenagers would be the government's leadership role in a national program to protect their inner reproductive organs by the most effective and least expensive form of birth control, sexual abstinence.⁶⁸

Abstinence herein is a habit of the mind designed to control the uncivilized natural body whose desires are alien, irrational, and unworthy of civil protection. Abstinence enables the body to conquer venereal disease, genital cancer, and the shame of unwanted pregnancies. The imperative, then, is to enable individuals to perfect bodily self-regulation, abstinence until marriage fulfilling the instrumentalist fantasy of total mastery and control over the body.

This invocation of the nature/culture duality implicitly builds a case against sexuality and reproduction as private practices deserved of civil protection. Maligned, dirty, and impure, nonreproductive and premarital sex must be corrected and openly managed by expert discourses. Wilson suggested that although we all share common physical capacities and desires, one cannot safely exercise them outside of learned self-discipline within the confines of marriage, under the guidance of experts. The physical ability to have sex and reproduce does not, therefore, entitle one to exercise these capacities as unrestrained bodily rights. She explains, "Nature has dictated that young people are physically able to reproduce as soon as they become teenagers. They must be taught that intelligence and self-control are essential."⁶⁹ Like nature, sexuality must be subdued for the health and productivity of the populace. Hence, the conquest of physical desire represents the fulcrum of liberal governmentality, the highest test of one's fitness to exist and thrive as a responsible and productive member of society. In Wilson's estimation, "everyone has a responsibility to his own body, to the welfare of those he loves and is responsible for, and to society at large, including the generations to come."⁷⁰ Margarita Fernandez-Mattei, testifying on behalf of an adolescent pregnancy prevention organization added, "we are striving to teach our youth that responsibility in sexuality, self-respect, and respect for the lives of others is one of the most fundamental and important matters they will face in their young lives."⁷¹ Put differently, one's sexual practices demonstrate one's responsibility as a citizen in a republic with high moral values. For minors, enfranchisement was predicated not on coming of age in a physical sense but on the sublimation of the libido on the approach of adulthood. The youth body does not belong to the individual but instead to society. To become citizens, minors must demonstrate that they have committed that body to the national project of familial reproduction.

Managing the minor: Abstinence education

Advocates reframed abstinence education as a logical extension of other instituted bioregulatory regimes that assume physical and cognitive immaturity. Thus, abstinence was viewed as isomorphic with prohibitions against a minor's right to vote, serve in the military, and purchase alcohol and tobacco. The difference here, however, is that abstinence was not coded as a legal prohibition but, instead, as a care of the self that must be learned. Hence, a period of incubation is required during which minors must be trained into the habits of the body so as to cultivate health and moral reasoning. The name given to that period during which individuals cultivate a docile relation to disciplinary power is childhood. Later, during the period of adolescence, teenagers learn to actively participate in their own management by practicing the habits of the responsible adult. Here we see an explicit relationship between docility and biopolitics. The goal of governmentality is to ensure that the family adequately disperses psychic and social repression throughout the body politic for the purposes of management and regulation. Sex education serves as a bridge between the family and society in as much as the former should create subjects habituated to control and discipline of the latter. Concerned with assimilating into society, the abstinent individual defers enjoyment to a future point at which they have achieved

optimal instrumentality as both worker and citizen. The sex-conscious yet pleasure-deferring adolescent is the prototype of Marcuse's one-dimensional society.

This theory that childhood and adolescence are periods of incubation is fleshed out in the testimony of Terrance Olson. He rebukes comprehensive sex education for assuming that children can make and bear the consequences of adult decisions. Emphasizing that self-denial is citizenship training, Olson envisioned abstinence as part of the spiritual undercurrent that propelled American progress. Olson's position was premised on two overlapping assumptions about how discipline is socialized into the young. First, early childhood is training in docility to power during which institutions such as the family, education, psychiatry, and medicine acclimate youth to accepting a biopolitical model of authority. Emphasis on abstinence at an early age is thus habituation to how governmentality acts on the body. Second, adolescence is training in adult decision-making where subjects are inducted into the habits of the healthy mind and body. Olson contends that comprehensive sex education undermines the ability of key social stakeholders—parents, social scientists, and legislators—to ensure that minors first adapt to institutional power and later make choices under the internalized guidance of adult authority.

Indeed, this argument allowed proponents to encourage minors to think of abstinence as analogous to prohibitions against alcohol and tobacco without maintaining the strictly prohibitionist rhetoric characteristic of conservatives in previous decades. Olson testified that

The Adolescent Family Life Act honors the historical and legal tradition of limiting adolescents, as minors, from access to all the rights granted adult citizens and protecting them from bearing full adult responsibility for their behavior. This practice is a way of protecting teenagers while they develop maturity socially, emotionally, physically, and morally, to participate responsibly in a democracy.⁷²

Olson's remarks frame the chastity mandate as a historical corrective that harmonizes education policy with a larger corpus of American law that habituates minors to institutional authority. While restrictive of individuals, this prohibition was constructed as ultimately protective of the future demos. Though heterosexual reproduction physically creates new citizens, those subjects do not achieve political maturity without legal parameters, regimentation, and the expert guidance of adults who have successfully navigated the transition from childhood, adolescence, to adulthood. Olson explains,

once such legal parameters as acknowledging that minors are minors are eroded, it becomes increasingly difficult for parents, for social scientists, for legislators, to prevent problems associated with teenage sexuality. Often, our teenagers are taught that freedom of choice is an important gift that they have. But there is not much truth to be told about freedom of choice, and freedom of choice is no gift, if the choices do not matter.⁷³

Here, Olson reclaims the term “choice” from comprehensive sex education advocates, re-absorbing the word back into a conservative lexicon of personal responsibility. The democratic imperative is not in the maximization of personal liberties, but in crafting citizens capable of sublimating their passions and developing the capacity to participate in a public life. Olson, therefore, makes abstinence a precondition to political enfranchisement. He explains, “exclusion is a way of preparing teenagers for the day when their moral development and reasoning capacity is sufficient to grant them full democratic rights.”⁷⁴ The concepts of childhood and adolescence advanced here construct not a gradually emerging political subjectivity but instead a precarious period where the docile minds and the bodies of the young must be regimented and then molded in preparation for the health of the future populace.

With minors effectively stripped of agency and reason, teaching contraception transforms into a corrupting influence on the youth that misleads them into believing they are ready to make adult decisions. He argues that contraception tempts minors not merely to engage in dangerous sexual activity but to act as adults before they are supposedly ready to enter public life. Olson elaborates,

We agree that adolescents are not yet qualified for full participation in democratic affairs. Yet, when the legal system affirms a teenager’s right to have access to *contraceptives*, and excludes parents from the right to know of such behavior, it is taking for granted that adolescents have a legal right to engage in sex which is independent of family constraints or of their own legal status as minors in their decision whether to contracept. If there are practical, developmental, societal and familial reasons for adolescents not to be granted the full rights and responsibilities of adulthood then why do the courts erase that historical, legal distinction in the case of sexual behavior? How is it possible that an adolescent who has not yet reached full capacity in thought, in emotional maturity, social interaction, moral reasoning but possesses the sophisticated capacity to make responsible adult decisions about intercourse and contraception.⁷⁵

In this passage, Olson conflates sexual behavior with all other legal rights and responsibilities that define adult citizenship. As abstinence requires the cultivation of a disciplined mind to regiment and control its bodily desires, the practice is a litmus test for advocates to determine whether one possesses the mental habits of the autonomous self-made individual envisioned by the biopolitical apparatus. To circumscribe the proper exercise of civic duties, Olson’s argument suggested that self-denial of gratification both protects the pleasure principles and facilitates the development of responsible and productive members of society.

Against the breeding society

For Senator Denton, abstinence until marriage was part of a larger project to save American society from the collapse of what he perceived to be its most fundamental element: the family. He expressed hope that his hearings would convey a “message to the public that

would contribute to the pursuit of happiness of individuals and the survival of this Nation."⁷⁶ In particular, exchanges between Senator Denton and Dr. Mildred Jefferson of the National Right to Life Crusade elaborate on what they both perceive to be a dangerous cultural context in which the proliferation of modern vice required a national program of sex reeducation. Their dialogue hailed a parental citizen charged with recovering a "rearing society" in which one's primary civic duty is to reproduce and protect the young. As Denton proclaimed,

there is a great and tragic cost of happiness to children, to adults, in terms of wrecked marriages and psychological problems. There has developed in this Nation a concept of a breeding rather than a rearing society. And not only can no nation survive this war, indeed civilization itself cannot exist that way.⁷⁷

"Breeding" engenders regression to animalistic impulses that might thwart the techniques of governmentality that regulate the populace. Hyperbole aside, Denton's vision of civilizational decline is reactive to the circulation of *Eros* that he believed preceded the liberalization of sexual attitudes and social critique of the family.

Denton's investment was fundamentally biopolitical, that is to say that he conveyed both a nightmare of return to the uncivilized libido and a corollary fantasy of a society happily invested in its own subjugation. The "rearing society" was organized around safeguarding the pleasure principle through aggressive pursuit of the reality principle. In other words, Denton redefined pleasure as an abstract ideal achieved through delayed gratification, self-denial, and the reproduction of children. In an exchange between Denton and Jefferson, the rearing society was unveiled as a fantasy zone dedicated to the joy of children and the responsibilities of family life. In the rearing society, the family represented a future-oriented sexuality, solely dedicated to the contentment and productivity of generations to come. Thus, citizenship in the rearing society was enacted through expressions of emotional benevolence toward the nation's embattled children. Denton illustrated the threats to the rearing society when he took on a common enemy of children in conservative discourse: the mass media. He prefaced Jefferson's remarks by stating,

I am not sure that the media's message increases our joy. I think there is a large increase in pain and suffering, and perhaps, a forfeiture of some love. But in my job of trying to promote the general welfare, I would be a hypocrite, were I not to note that I think there is something that needs to be done, albeit voluntarily, not necessarily by legislation, but needs to be done to reverse the trend that what children read and see in the movies or on television communicates that the only real fun sex is that which is outside of marriage. That is a lie to begin with and second, it does not promote the general welfare, in my view.⁷⁸

Note how Denton wove "joy," "love," "happiness," and "fun" into his conception of the general welfare. By contrast, the mass media promoted premarital sex at the cost of minors' "pain and suffering." In the rearing society, the public was composed of parents or soon-

to-be-parents activated by the sentiment evoked by images of innocent children and embattled adolescents. He asked Jefferson, "To what do you attribute our inability as a society to bring ourselves to tell adolescents, to give them the simple message that premarital sexual relations will lead to problems unforeseen by them, serious problems?" In part, Denton already previewed what he believed to be the answer. That is, to address the issue of premarital sex, policymakers attempted to diffuse a parental model of authority into the body politic.

In contrast, proponents equated comprehensive sex education with the crude form of biopower engendered in scientific population control. Jefferson's response to Denton's queries framed the typical public policy response to teenage pregnancy as cold, depersonalized, and authoritarian. They portrayed comprehensive sex education as governed by dispassionate scientific rationalism that regulated the body but neglected the soul. She retorted,

over the last half century, accelerating to a catastrophic degree in the past decade, our country has been duped into accepting and implementing a theory of population control and reduction which threatens the survival of our people and the existence of our Nation.⁷⁹

Later in her testimony, Jefferson also characterized sex education as "behavior modification," a kind of "cooking school approach" that lacks a "sense of moral accountability."⁸⁰ For Jefferson, sex education had exchanged family values and religious sentiment for the "secular-humanist tradition with an avowed objective of displacing the influence of the mystical religions in our national life."⁸¹ Like nineteenth-century moral reformers, Denton and Jefferson reframed sex education as a policy unmoored from America's Judeo-Christian traditions, a sign that the nation was increasingly governed by the dispassionate rationalism of early modernity. As a result, the breeding society had abandoned the parental sentiments that once privileged the protection of children from vice. Moreover, sex education addressed children as if they react, like adults, to rational appeals rather than ingrained social conditioning. This argument built on Wilson and Olson's previous claims that children lack the cognitive and emotional skills required for civic participation. Working from this assumption, Jefferson argued that comprehensive sex education has ostensibly ceded parental authority to children who by definition possessed neither legal rights nor decision-making capabilities. He explained that "part of the tragedy of this, because it reflects the larger picture of the parent really not being able to function as the parent, the guide, the example, and so they abdicate the parental responsibility to be another 'pal.'"⁸² There appears, however, to be a fundamental contradiction in this exchange where comprehensive sex education is at once a restrictive form of population control and a liberal endorsement of teenage sexual freedom. But what seems to be a contradiction is in fact consistent with the proposition that the regulation of sexuality of is best achieved not by the state or the individual but by diffusing governmentality into the populace or delegating control to a network of institutions dominated by conservative voices.

In Jefferson's testimony, the rearing society required a clear delegation of institutional authority into the populace. Therefore, sex education had to be restructured so that educators, social scientists, and medical experts could properly enable youth to develop their productive capacities. Consequently, policymakers should prioritize the authority of parents and abstinence experts but also must themselves adopt a parental perspective toward access to information about sexuality. Jefferson made a case for the restoration of parental power, claiming that a "sweeping social revolution" has created a nation that is "frightened of their children."⁸³ But, ultimately Jefferson's argument was a broader defense of hierarchy, authority, and discipline as inherent social values. For example, note how she responded to Denton's inquiry as to the root of the problem: "one of the problems, Senator Denton, is that there has been a breakdown throughout the society of the willingness to take a firm stand," therefore, "instead of establishing what would be standards that the child must live within, they try to suggest that they can go along with whatever the others are doing, and this is a very tragic thing."⁸⁴

Jefferson's oblique reference to the "sweeping social revolution" evoked the youth counterculture, feminism, and the sexual revolution as the rearing society's invisible third persona, a collection of child-like hedonists who threaten to subvert the biopolitical apparatus.⁸⁵ For Jefferson, both adolescents and sexual dissidents had to be held accountable to parental power to restore a disciplined society. Denton affirmed Jefferson by adding, "*they* are a minority of activists who have a value system which is so far removed from that of the average citizen that it is almost incredible that they have been able to assume control of the situation."⁸⁶ Again, "*they*," the unnamed enemy of the rearing society, shared values that were fundamentally unlike most ordinary Americans. *They*, as Denton suggested earlier, were part of the cultural movement "pushing teenagers toward premarital sexual activity."⁸⁷ Denton and Jefferson's emphasis on the hierarchal parent-child relationship is, therefore, a paternal metaphor for the ideal biopolitical relationship between government and its citizens. Viewed from this perspective, Jefferson's testimony both elided dissenting voices as a cognitively immature minority as it praised the normative virtues of authority and discipline. Parental citizens—wise, mature—were granted a greater say in public policy matters than the vocal minority of noncitizens who lacked the self-discipline to participate in public life.

Denton concluded his conversation with Jefferson by offering a rebuttal to the natural rights case for sexual rights. Ostensibly, he argued that what distinguished society from nature is the inviolability of parental power. Even where parent-child relationships exist in nature, they lacked civilizing institutions to codify morality and protect the health of the species. He commented to Jefferson,

this [the parent-child relationship] is something that cannot be addressed even by the separation of powers, because in nature itself, there is no government, except perhaps a totalitarian one, which can properly see itself within its system as interposing itself between the parent and the child.⁸⁸

In other words, only in the anarchical realm of nature or the oppressive structures of totalitarian societies do we see defiance of parental power. Therefore, natural rights were an

insufficient basis for protecting parental sovereignty. Denton argued that sexual rights are firmly outside the realm of liberal values, aligned with disorder of nature and the “behavior modification” endemic to despotism. As Wilson noted earlier, the conservative movement believed that American democracy was guided by the spiritual principles of civilized society not the hedonistic natural rights philosophies of Europe. Whereas the breeding society privileged the unrepressed subject of nature who was animated by child-like impulses and desires, the rearing society idealizes the self-discipline parental subject of culture. Hence, Denton and Jefferson viewed any interference with parental sovereignty as a superlative violation of democratic values. As comprehensive sex education invests educators with the responsibility of teaching such values, Denton believed that “the government advocates a policy in which, in my opinion, constitutes the worst kind of interference in the family.”⁸⁹ The rearing society is reserved for parental citizens, those faithful subjects who earned their rights through performances of repression and self-mastery.

As the hearings came to a close, the opponents of the rearing society were dehumanized and negated through silence. *They* were the enemies of the productive apparatus, aligned with the impurity and disorder of nature. In rejecting the productive ethos of the nation, *they* were ostensibly excised from American civic culture. The case for the chastity mandate thus concluded with a clear demarcation of the boundaries of citizenship. Conservatives symbolically brought order and discipline to a population threatened by a collection of unnamed feminists and other sexual dissidents. In the case for the AFLA, chastity, marriage, and procreation became pathways for individuals to demonstrate their commitment to a productive, healthy, and hyperfunctional society. By encouraging a public reinvestment in surplus repression, the chastity mandate offered to reign in the egocentric desires that had once animated the populous to resist conservative values.

Biopolitics of abstinence

This essay brings into focus the New Right’s historic pivot from a prohibitive rhetoric against sexuality to the open biopolitical management of sexual behaviors. To be sure, conservative policymakers continue their support for abstinence and opposition to the “contraception mentality.” The recent Republican push to defund Planned Parenthood and to provide support for businesses denying health coverage for contraception indicate the ongoing salience of the rearing society for contemporary conservatives.⁹⁰ The reauthorization of the AFLA was a significant moment in the history of the rhetoric of sex and public policy. Once made a permanent feature of the New Right’s agenda, the legislation transformed sex education into a regime of civic reproduction, a conduit to a national fantasy of a citizenry activated and constituted by heterosexual reproduction. This essay illustrates how for the New Right, the scope of what constituted healthy citizenship was at once expansive and narrow; expansive in the sense that civil status could now be measured by intimate acts but narrow in the sense of what types of intimacy could be instrumentalized for national progress. The AFLA provided the discursive and ideological infrastructure for conservatives to use sex education to activate rather than prohibit bodily desires. The goal was the production of hyperfunctional subjects whose most intimate behaviors and fantasies could not escape sublimation into a project of national productivity.

It is important to note that the rhetorical influence of this logic extends throughout the life of abstinence policy. In the following decades, abstinence was used by conservatives to manage populations they perceived to lack self-discipline.⁹¹ Of course, adolescents were the primary audience. Throughout the life of abstinence education, its critics have identified how curriculum was structured around shame appeals—extreme stories of productive lives ruined—their central message that premarital sex lessened an individual's use-value. Some curriculum included exercises where sexually active teens are constructed as dirty and used, comparable to toothbrushes and discarded candy.⁹² Provirginity discourse reduces individuals, young women in particular, to their bodily matter, their use-value to society only measured by their sexual behavior.⁹³

The proponents of chastity and self-discipline also extended abstinence education by directing their message to adult welfare recipients.⁹⁴ For instance, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (1996) linked abstinence promotion with welfare reform, as proponents saw both initiatives as pathways to promote the Protestant work ethic. While the welfare reform bill separately expanded abstinence education funding by \$50 million, the Bush Administration's Healthy Marriage Initiative completed the process by making abstinence training a precondition to receiving some forms of public assistance.⁹⁵ Extending sex education to fully enfranchised adults bespeaks the larger construction of docile subjects in conservative culture. The mythic welfare queen, a breeding subject par excellence, is the byproduct of laziness and a failed moral education. Dependent on the government and lacking in self-discipline, the promiscuous welfare recipient is treated as a hedonistic child who does not possess the faculties required to be considered a fully formed political subject.

My narrowing of the theoretical field on docile bodies to Marcuse's surplus repression is premised on my desire to explore the biopolitical implications of managing libidinal energies. Reading the changes in rhetorical history reveal the shifts in power, from early sex education to the AFLA, which I have argued marked an important transition in how conservatives used sex talk to colonize the pleasure principle. Indeed, Foucault is correct in the sense that what we often call repression is actually the byproduct of a proliferation of sex talk not prohibition. Marcuse offers a supplementary way for talking about the dynamics of repression in sex education discourses, namely how conservatives sought to connect the ideal subject of advanced industrial society with the productive management of the libido. Marcuse's reading of the repressive hypothesis does not locate sexual liberation outside of the operations of power. Indeed, sexual liberation is discharged into consumerism and productivity instead of political activity. This essay demonstrates how sexual discourses facilitate the instrumentalization of pleasure, a vision of sexuality deployed to create docile subjects invested in toil and domination as healthy and productive features of their existence. In hyperfunctional times, perhaps the most transgressive acts are those that embrace *Eros* and revel in pleasures that cannot be captured by the productive apparatus.

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Notes

1. Quoted in Robin Jensen, *Dirty Words: The Rhetoric of Public Sex Education, 1870–1924* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 10.
2. Jensen, *Dirty Words*, 6.
3. See Rebekah Saul, “Whatever Happened to the Adolescent Family Life Act?,” *Guttmacher Report on Public Policy* 1, no. 2 (1998): 5–11; and Alesha E. Doan and Jean Calderone Williams, *The Politics of Virginity: Abstinence in Sex Education* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008).
4. Michel Foucault argues that in the history of ideas visible contradictions are explained as accidents, surface appearances, or aberrations of what are otherwise coherent systems of thought, or a hidden unity underlying a discourse. Foucault suggests instead that contradictions can be understood as organizing principles of a system that “constitutes the very law of its own existence.” In this case, opposing utterances about sex education are its founding law. Thus, both opponents and proponents drew from the same organizing principle to support the same fundamental statement about the danger of desire. See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971), 151.
5. Jeremiah Denton, *Reauthorization of the Adolescent Family Life Demonstrations Project Act of 1981* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 170.
6. See Jeffery Escoffier, “Fabulous Politics,” in *The World the Sixties Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America*, eds. Van Gosse and Richard R. Moser (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008); and Steven Seidman, *Embattled Eros: Sexual Politics and Ethics in Contemporary America* (New York: Routledge, 1992).
7. See Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); and Janice M. Irvine, *Talk about Sex: The Battles Over Sex Education in the United States* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).
8. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (London, UK: Routledge, 1998), 40.
9. The text I examine consists of two U.S. senate hearings before the Subcommittee on Labor and Human Relations on April 24 and 26, 1984 (Ninety-Eighth Congress, Second Session). The hearings were called by Senator Denton to hear witness testimony from participants in the AFLA demonstration project from 1981 to 1984 and organizations involved in adoption, counseling, and sex education.
10. Elizabeth Schroeder, *Sexuality Education: Past, Present, and Future* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009).
11. See Robin E. Jensen, “Using Science to Argue for Sexual Education in U.S. Public Schools: Dr. Ella Flagg Young and the 1913 ‘Chicago Experiment,’” *Science Communication* 29, no. 2 (2007): 217–41; and Jeffery P. Moran, “‘Modernism gone Mad’: Sex Education Comes to Chicago, 1913,” *Journal of American History* 83, no. 2 (1996): 481–513.
12. Jeffery P. Moran, *Teaching Sex: The Shaping of Adolescence in the 20th Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); and L. E. Rotskoff, “Sex in the Schools: Adolescence, Sex Education, and Social Reform,” *Reviews in American History* 29 (2001): 310–18.
13. John P. Elia, “School-Based Sexuality Education: A Century of Sexual and Social Control,” in *Sexuality Education—Past Present and Future, Volume One—History and Information*, eds. Elizabeth Schroeder and Judy Kuriansky (Westport CT: Praeger, 2009), 33–57.
14. Irvine, *Talk about Sex*, 18.

15. Natalia Mehlman Petrzela, *Classroom Wars: Language, Sex, and the Making of Modern Political Culture* (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015).
16. Elizabeth Schroeder and Judy Kuriansky, eds., *Sexuality Education: Past, Present, and Future* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009).
17. Natalia Mehlman, "Sex Ed . . . and the Reds? Reconsidering the Anaheim Battle Over Sex Education, 1962–1969," *History of Education Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (2007): 203–32.
18. Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 333.
19. Including but not limited to the Americans United for Life, Christian Coalition, Concerned Women for America, Eagle Forum, Family of the Americas Foundation, Focus on the Family, and National Right to Life Crusade. See also Janice M. Irvine, *Disorders of Desire: Sexuality and Gender in Modern American Sexology* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2005).
20. Seidman, *Embattled Eros*, 7.
21. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2009).
22. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1* (New York: Random House, 1978).
23. Barbara Biesecker, "Michel Foucault and the Question of Rhetoric," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 25, no. 4 (1992): 353.
24. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 11.
25. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 136. See also *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1977); and *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979* (New York: Picador, 2010).
26. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 136.
27. Stuart Murray, "Thanatopolitics: On the Use of Death for Mobilizing Political Life," *Polygraph: An International Journal of Politics and Culture* 18 (2006): 204.
28. For instance, Foucault argues that "the endeavor, begun in the eighteenth century, to rationalize the problems presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, race." See Michel Foucault, *The Essential Foucault*, eds. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (New York: The New Press, 2003), 202.
29. Ronald W. Greene, *Malthusian Worlds: U.S. Leadership and the Governing of the Population Crisis* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 4.
30. Greene, *Malthusian Worlds*, 17.
31. See Stuart Murray, "Hegel's Pathology of Recognition: A Biopolitical Fable," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 48, no. 4 (2015): 443–72.
32. Greene, *Malthusian Worlds*, 4.
33. Greene, *Malthusian Worlds*, 58.
34. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).
35. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 106, 108.
36. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 106.
37. Christine J. Gardner, *Making Chastity Sexy: The Rhetoric of Evangelical Abstinence Campaigns* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).
38. Marcuse, *Eros*, 15.

39. Marcuse, *Eros*, 38.
40. Mark Cobb, "Diatribes and Distortions: Marcuse's Academic Reputation," in *Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader*, ed. John Abromeit, 163–187 (New York: Routledge, 2004), 180.
41. Douglas Kellner and Clayton Pierce, *Philosophy, Psychoanalysis and Emancipation: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume Five: Herbert Marcuse Collected Papers* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 54.
42. Marcuse, *Eros*, xlii.
43. This phrase appears in Marcuse's unpublished manuscript "Obsolescence of Psychoanalysis" prepared for a presentation at the 1963 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. Quoted in Kellner and Pierce, *Philosophy*, 56.
44. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 12.
45. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 88.
46. See Casey Ryan Kelly, "'We Are Not Free': The Meaning of <Freedom> in American Indian Resistance to President Johnson's War on Poverty," *Communication Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (2014): 455–73.
47. I am guided by Lisa M. Gring-Pemble's observation that the Congressional record provides rhetorical critics with a "means of gaining insight into the rhetorical processes by which social policy is formulated." Congressional testimony is particularly illustrative of how biopolitical control is rhetorically enacted. Lisa M. Gring-Pemble, "'Are We Going to Now Govern by Anecdote?' Rhetorical Constructions of Welfare Recipients in Congressional Hearings, Debates, and Legislation, 1992–1996," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 87, no. 4 (2001): 342; See also Zornitsa Keremidchieva, "The Congressional Debates on the 19th Amendment: Jurisdictional Rhetoric and the Assemblage of the U.S. Body Politic," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 1 (2013): 51–73.
48. Philip Wander, "The Third Persona: An Ideological Turn in Rhetorical Theory," *Central States Speech Journal* 35, no. 4 (1984): 197–216.
49. Mercedes Wilson, *Reauthorization of the Adolescent Family Life Demonstrations Project Act of 1981* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 192.
50. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 129.
51. Denton, *Reauthorization*, 65.
52. Wilson, *Reauthorization*, 192–93.
53. Michael C. McGee argues that the Constitutional phrases "we, the people" does not refer to an already existing public, but rhetorically calls into being a constructed vision of the nation. Hence, "we, the families," does not refer to a family demographic but instead creates a subject position for the audience to inhabit. See Michael C. McGee, "In Search of 'the People': A Rhetorical Alternative," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61, no. 3 (1975): 235–49.
54. Denton, *Reauthorization*, 2.
55. Denton, *Reauthorization*, 2.
56. Denton, *Reauthorization*, 2.
57. Assistant Secretary for Health and Human Services.
58. Assistant Secretary for Population Affairs.
59. Edward Brandt and Marjory Mecklenburg, *Reauthorization of the Adolescent Family Life Demonstrations Project Act of 1981* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 7.
60. Mary William Sullivan, *Reauthorization of the Adolescent Family Life Demonstrations Project Act of 1981* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 37–38.
61. Sullivan, *Reauthorization*, 38.
62. Sullivan, *Reauthorization*, 38.

63. Here, freedom functions ideographically, as a politically resonate term in American public discourse that warrants actions and cultivates ideological identification. See Michael Calvin McGee, "The 'Ideograph': A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66, no. 1 (1980): 1–16.
64. See Jane Gerhard, *Desiring Revolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of Twentieth-Century American Sexual Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).
65. Terrance Olson, *Reauthorization of the Adolescent Family Life Demonstrations Project Act of 1981* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 68.
66. Wilson, *Reauthorization*, 194–95.
67. Wilson, *Reauthorization*, 195.
68. Wilson, *Reauthorization*, 196.
69. Wilson, *Reauthorization*, 195.
70. Wilson, *Reauthorization*, 196.
71. Margarita Fernandez-Mattei, *Reauthorization of the Adolescent Family Life Demonstrations Project Act of 1981* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 228. Fernandez-Mattei testified on behalf of the Coalition of Hispanic Mental Health and Human Service Organization.
72. Olson, *Reauthorization*, 71.
73. Olson, *Reauthorization*, 71.
74. Olson, *Reauthorization*, 71.
75. Olson, *Reauthorization*, 67.
76. Denton, *Reauthorization*, 49.
77. Denton, *Reauthorization*, 170.
78. Denton, *Reauthorization*, 49.
79. Mildred Jefferson, *Reauthorization of the Adolescent Family Life Demonstrations Project Act of 1981* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 174.
80. Jefferson, *Reauthorization*, 174.
81. Jefferson, *Reauthorization*, 174.
82. Jefferson, *Reauthorization*, 170.
83. Jefferson, *Reauthorization*, 174, 170.
84. Denton, *Reauthorization*, 170.
85. Wander, "The Third Persona."
86. Jefferson, *Reauthorization*, 172. Emphasis mine.
87. Denton, *Reauthorization*, 171.
88. Jefferson, *Reauthorization*, 171.
89. Denton, *Reauthorization*, 171.
90. See William Saletan, "The GOP Argument for Defunding Planned Parenthood Is Incoherent," *Slate*, September 30, 2015, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2015/09/the_gop_s_argument_for_defunding_planned_parenthood_makes_no_sense.html.
91. For scientific studies on the ineffectiveness of abstinence education see Hannah Bruckner and Peter Bearman, "After the Promise: The STD Consequences of Adolescent Virginity Pledges," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 36, no. 4 (2005): 271–78.
92. See Tara Culp-Ressler, "5 Offensive Analogies Abstinence-Only Lessons Use to Tell Teens Sex Makes Them Dirty," *ThinkProgress*, April 7, 2014, <http://thinkprogress.org/health/2014/04/07/3423582/abstinence-only-dirty-analogies/>. Anna Wolfe, "Mississippi Sex Education Efforts Still

- Limited," accessed December 30, 2015, <http://www.jacksonfreepress.com/news/2015/feb/25/mississippi-sex-education-efforts-still-limited/>.
93. Jessica Valenti, *The Purity Myth* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2009).
 94. Andy Kopsa, "Obama's Evangelical Gravy Train," *The Nation*, July 8, 2014, <http://www.thenation.com/article/obamas-evangelical-gravy-train/>
 95. Barbara Ehrenreich, "Opportunities in Abstinence Training," *The Nation*, August 1, 2007 <http://www.thenation.com/article/opportunities-abstinence-training/>