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Jamie Lynn Spears, of the wholesome Nickelodeon show "Zoey 101," announcing she's pregnant at 16.

The Other Spears Does The Bump

Britney's Little Sister No Longer the, Uh, Role Model

By MONICA HESSE
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We thought she was the good Spears. Sure, Jamie Lynn looked like her big sis in an uncanny Mini-Me sort of way. But tabloids had released nary an underage boozing photo, and "Zoey 101," her Nickelodeon show, was downright wholesome — especially compared with the jailbait "Baby One More Time" video that Britney was touting at 16. Jamie Lynn was, yes, a role model.

Which is why the news of the 16-year-old's pregnancy Tuesday was so — and here's a word you don't hear often anymore when affiliated with the Spears brand — shocking. Somehow the teen managed to bypass the Paris Hilton party photos, the Li-Lo rehab revolving door, and head straight for the Big Irrevocable of motherhood.

The public can accept a lot from Hollywood. But a rotund teenager on the red carpet, displaying the

See SPEARS, C8, Col. 3

Going From 'Zoey 101' to 'Knocked Up'

SPEARS, From C1

gestating results of that early sexualization of girls you've heard too much about? Let's just call it the boundary test between societal acceptance and condemnation.

A quick recap, for those who missed out yesterday: Spears — 12 weeks pregnant. Dad — Casey Aldridge, 19, the boyfriend whom she met at church. Plans — keep the baby and raise him/her in Louisiana "so it can have a normal life."

It's all a far cry from the sweet character Jamie Lynn plays on "Zoey 101," which for the past three years has chronicled the adventures of a girl attending a formerly all-boy prep school. You know, one of those institutions where lacrosse is funded better than Your Changing Bodies.

As of yesterday, Nickelodeon was responding to questions about "Zoey 101's" fate with this blandly caring statement: "We respect Jamie Lynn's decision to take responsibility in this sensitive and personal situation. We know this is a very difficult time for her and her family, and our primary concern right now is for Jamie Lynn's well-being."

Which translates to: We'll sit tight and see how this plays out. Season 3 ends with a cliffhanger on Jan. 4, and Season 4 is already in the can.

But don't count her permanently out: "My instinct is that this is a new low," says Michael Levine, a Hollywood publicist who has represented Michael Jackson, Sandra Bullock and Demi Moore. "But I'm telling you there's a 50-50 shot that five years from now she'll be invited to the White House as an ambassador of youth."

In teen scandals of months past, Vanessa Hudgens ("High School Musical") seems to have weathered her recent nude photo calamity, but have you heard of 17-year-old Oscar nominee Keisha Castle-Hughes since she became pregnant (while promoting her role as the Virgin Mary in "The Nativity Story," no less) and gave birth to a daughter last spring?

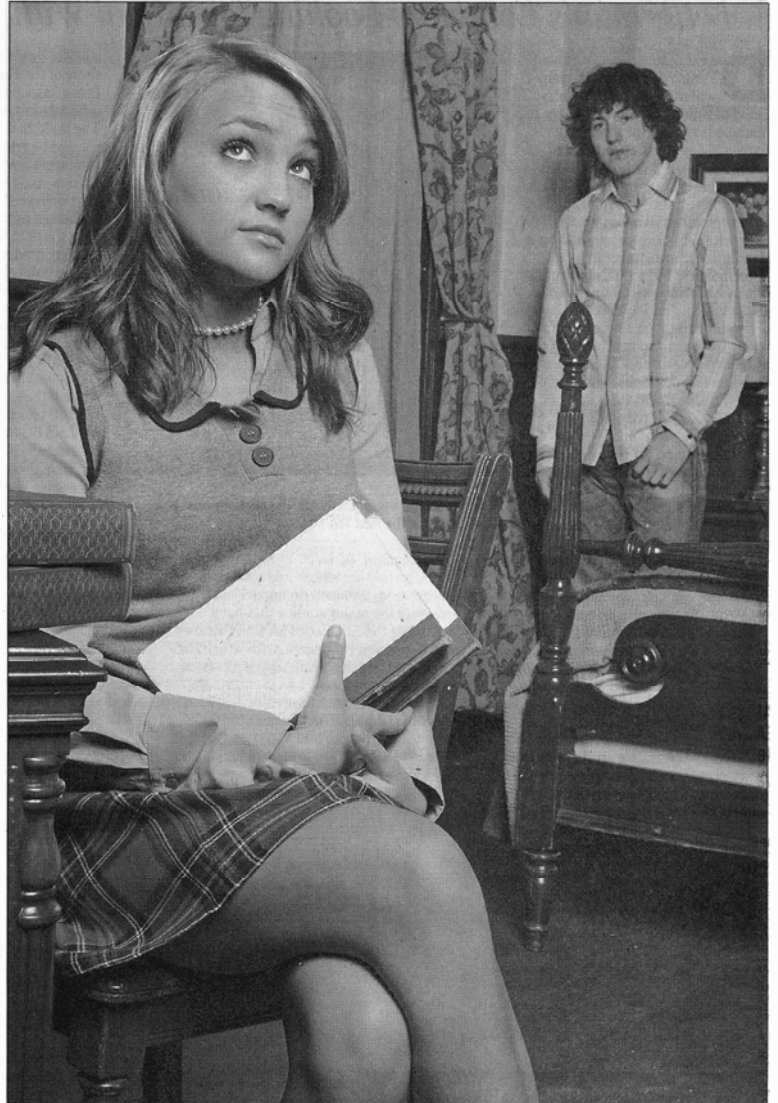
But questions of career rebounds aside, the larger issue at hand is how the pregnancy will resound with teen girls around the country.

"It's interesting to note that Jamie Lynn has a good-girl image," says Jessica Sheets of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. "It's a message that girls should be getting." Message received: Good girls get baby bumps, too.

"Jamie Lynn was quoted as saying she was shocked" by the news, Sheets adds, "which shows she's not ready to be having sex." Message received: One should never be "shocked" that intercourse can result in babies.

In many ways, Spears is a pregnant little symbol of these conflicted times. Do we want True Love to Wait, or do we want to buy those belly shirts for our third-graders?

The Bush administration recently increased funding for abstinence-only sex education. The teen pregnancy rate has risen for the first time in more than a decade. One in seven girls has sex before she is 15,



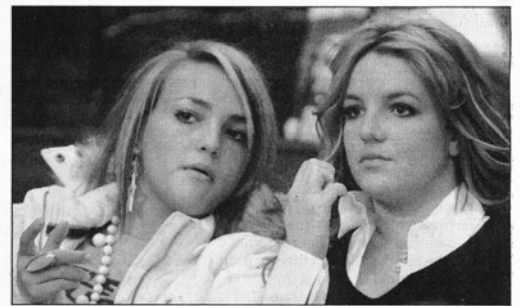
Jamie Lynn Spears in an episode of Nickelodeon's "Zoey 101," above, and with sis Britney (far right). The 16-year-old actress was thought to be more of a role model than her sibling — until news this week of her pregnancy.

according to the National Campaign's research, and 60 percent of teen girls who have sex say later they wish they'd waited.

Like a lot of the country, the Spears family has been big on touting Christian values. Mom Lynne was scheduled to release a parenting book with Christian press Thomas Nelson in 2008; on Tuesday, the publishing house announced that the book's printing will be delayed... indefinitely.

And out of this maelstrom: Jamie Lynn.

"This is a teachable moment," says Bill Albert, the deputy director of the National Campaign. "Parents tell us time and time again that they want to address [this], but



BY LUCY NICHOLSON — REUTERS

they don't know where to start. Jamie Lynn Spears is the perfect place to start."

Albert suggests that parents open the conversation by posing a series of questions to their teens and tweens: What do you think

about this? What do you think will happen to her life? Do you think a 16-year-old is ready for sex and for the lifetime commitment of having a child?

The answer to that last question, teen readers, is No.