

## BACKGROUND

- Medical literature is often concerned with the “preservation” of female fertility, and implies the dependence, and/or fragility, of the female body<sup>1</sup>
- Fertility as a mechanism of socialization for women and the subsequent management of their bodies<sup>2</sup>
- Family planning can operate as a vehicle to influence other areas of society through fertility<sup>3</sup>
- Women treated for infertility are often distressed by gender role identity, career role salience, and societal pressure influence a woman’s distress level surrounding her infertility<sup>4</sup>
- Fertility clinics represent spaces the “liminality” of fertility is reinforced<sup>5</sup>
- There is a lack of literature on fertility experiences of women not currently seeking fertility treatments



**Transitory Fertility:** Periods or moments of perceived fertility or infertility that change across a person's life and are based on life experience and belief rather than medical diagnosis/classification.

## KEY FOR THREE MAJOR THEMES

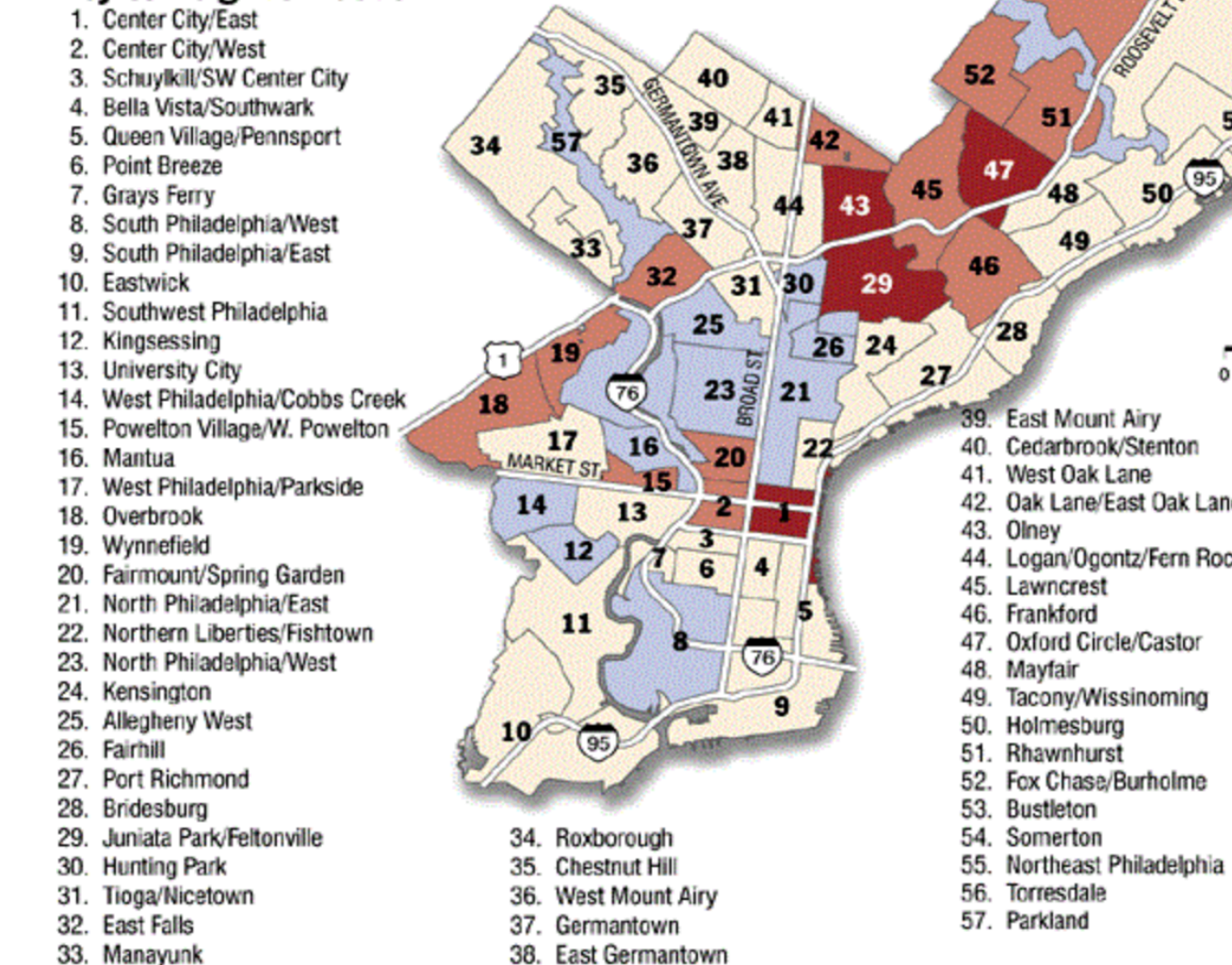
Instances of Transitory Fertility

Management/Control of Body

Emotional experience

Philadelphia Neighborhoods

Key to neighborhoods



“Honestly, I don't know if I was thinking whether I could get pregnant, you know, because I had sexual experiences prior to my pregnancy. So, it was kind of this, you know, **until it happened, I thought I couldn't get pregnant, and then I did.**” -Jane\*, age 30

“I always wanted to be married with two daughters and live in Delaware and have a fancy house and car. **But that changed when I thought I couldn't have children. My dreams were like kind of shattered.** It wasn't, you know, how I planned it to be...I just felt, not bad, but **ashamed.**” -Stacy\*, age 33

“I don't like that excitement that you get **when you think you're pregnant and you find out you're not and now you're so disappointed** because it was never there. I don't like that feeling. And I've had that feeling in college. And every time it was so disappointing like I'm, like **heartbroken...So, I went on birth control because of those constant disappointments,** like the disappointments more like, like it was just like it was really upsetting anxiety...**The rational side of me was like, but this is a good thing [to not be pregnant].** You're still in school, you're not ready...” -Mary\*, age 30

\*All names have been changed.

## OBJECTIVES

- 1) Introduce & apply the concept of transitory fertility through analysis of how women not currently seeking fertility treatment manage their bodies in various spaces
- 2) Call for more ethnographic investigations for female fertility to advance the operationalization of transitory fertility in clinical spaces

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## METHODS

- Remote study in medically underserved area of Cobbs Creek, West Philadelphia in collaboration with Sayre Health Center (SHC)
- Snow-ball sampling with Community Health Needs Assessment
- Semi-structured telephone interviews, recorded, transcribed, de-identified and coded deductively for major themes

## DISCUSSION

- Framing fertility as a dynamic experience of ebbs and flows, instead of a binary one.
- Periods of infertility or hyperfertility inspired the same shame, resentment, and guilt as in women who are biomedically labelled as infertile.
- Emotional experiences such as these are not limited to women who actively seek treatment in a clinic setting.
- Biomedicine has standardized treatment for women who have trouble naturally conceiving, whose bodies are not ‘cooperating.’

- We must assess the role of clinical treatment programs in sustaining the feelings reported here.

## REFERENCES

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