

REVIEW SYMPOSIUM

Pregnant bodies, fertile minds: gender, race, and the schooling of pregnant teens

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This book delivers precisely what one would expect from the title, and more. It is a study of some of the pregnant and mothering young women who attended a particular educational programme for ‘pregnant teens’ in the United States over a five-year period. It is a sympathetic ethnography of the girls that eyes critically their education. It provides a sharp, feminist and race-conscious analysis of the structures and dynamics of the ‘regime’ (my word) in which they are being educated, and of the political culture that produces this—and its contribution on educational policy and (inadequate) practice alone makes it highly valuable. However, its primary focus is on stigma, and the individual management of stigmatized and shamed identities. It examines the ‘layers of social and psychological forces at work in the education and/or miseducation of pregnant teenagers’ (p. xvii). What distinguishes Wendy Luttrell’s contribution to the new literature on teenage pregnancy, therefore, is that it concerns the experience of teenage pregnancy, rather than the politics. It is about the minds and subjectivities of these rather particularly embodied students. As a result, it has something to offer the study of cultures that share this individualizing blame and shame around non-approved sexualities or fertility, as well as quite broadly for educational approaches that too often construct ungendered, asexual and undifferentiated pupils as the objects of schooling.

Pregnant bodies, fertile minds takes an ethnographic approach that centres on representation and self-representation. Like an ‘ethnography of issues’, it focuses on a contemporary social conflict from the perspective of those who have been defined as ‘the problem’, and like ‘documentary ethnography’ it uses ‘self-representational activities as a way to enter the girls’ life worlds and to examine how particular psychological and social processes work themselves out in these self-representations’ (p. 43). Luttrell wants to ‘convey something about selfhood, identity and agency that many other books about poor and working-class pregnant teenagers have not’ (p. xvii), and in so doing hopes to gain understanding of ‘a piece of the self- and identity-making process that is not well-enough understood’ (p. 45).

To elicit the girls’ representations of themselves, Luttrell uses an innovative set of methods based on creative artwork. She asks the girls ‘first, to “perform” their

pregnancy stories; second, to make a “Who am I?” collage using images and words from their favourite teen magazines; and third, to make a collaborative book of self portraits with written self-descriptions’ (p. 41). Verbal discussion of the artwork is a crucial part of the method. The girls describe their intentions for and the process of constructing their pieces, examining how they saw themselves being addressed by and answering to others and how they wished they had been seen. Indeed it was the lively, animated discussion among the girls that lead to the development of the first part of the method when Luttrell noticed that, in contrast to the confident ‘performances’ they gave when chatting about their weekends or narrating critically their experiences with men or teachers, the girls produced no stories of self-hood (‘this is who I am and this is why’) when interviewed. Using the magazines for the collage not only provides a comfortable starting point, it gives a sense of the culturally dominant meanings and the girls’ awareness and active negotiation of them: it shows ‘the interplay between that which the girls created and those they “found” already in the culture as part of their self-making process’ (p. 44).

Luttrell describes in an engaging, very likeable style her observations and reflections on the ‘deep hanging out’ she did between 1992 and 1997 in the Program for Pregnant Teens (PPT) in an industrial city in North Carolina. She explicitly places herself as a white woman in a programme largely serving and staffed by Black women. The specificity and particular location of the fieldwork does not limit the value of the insights or the applicability of the analysis. In the end, Luttrell’s contribution is methodological as well as analytical, and she offers pedagogical and methodological reflections and suggestions for improving practice.

The first two chapters provide critical accounts of the political and educational backgrounds in the United States. In ‘Shame, Blame and the Stigma Wars’ she provides a political framing for her study, describing the way teenage mothers’ motives are scrutinized in stigmatizing, class blind, racialized ways, and are seen as ‘looking for love’ in ways other than so-called normal mothers. Luttrell eschews psychological approaches that focus on the individual but neglect social and economic factors, and instead looks at the experience of being a pregnant teenager as a struggle between a girl and her world, as opposed to within an individual girl. Indeed this has its echo in her methods: in the reworking of existing cultural imagery in the collage-making. Instead, Luttrell believes that the ‘campaign against teenage pregnancy serves to translate what is a political problem into a problem of individual dependency’ (p. 36). The political problem is, she believes, the social instability brought about by globalization, economic restructuring and diminished forms of social welfare. The stigma contests that are waged in America’s anxious ‘war’ on teenage pregnancy deflect attention from the economic, political and social injustices that are themselves the causes of the intense feelings and conflicts about dependency, nurturance and protection (p. 37).

The following chapter ‘Separate and unequal’ locates this educational programme in the literature on the schooling of pregnant teens, and educational responses to young people’s sexuality and bodies generally. Luttrell identified at this PPT three curricular features of previous studies of educational programmes for pregnant or

parenting teens. First, education was itself presented as a responsibility of the girls, moreover a responsibility they bear for others: 'your child needs you to be educated' was a favourite mantra of the teachers: 'if you won't do it for yourself, do it for your child' (p. 23). This 'educated motherhood' discourse does, unsurprisingly, form a key element of the girls' accounts of being on the programme ('I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for my baby').

Second, Luttrell, like others, found curriculum 'absences and silences', especially around sexuality, bodies and pleasure. Not only was female sexual desire not an official curricular topic at the PPT, it was, ironically, even more suppressed here than in mainstream education. If and when it ever was discussed, it followed the 'education as responsibility' approach described earlier. This included the message that 'as girls, they were responsible for practicing "safe sex" or abstaining from it, and not that, as girls, they were entitled to an education that would provide them with a sense of their own sexual desires and power vis a vis boys' (p. 23).

The third feature was the social redemption messages that included strict behaviour rules (or, rather, mostly condemnation of their flouting), such as how the girls ought not to 'parade themselves', and should be 'respectable' and 'discrete' because by being pregnant they are already setting a 'bad example'. These constructed education as the way of redeeming the self, through which the girls could 'deliver[ing] themselves from their problematic status as teenage mothers' (p. 22). Luttrell highlights how the 'education as responsibility' approach, whether related to pregnancy, motherhood or sexuality, frames educational conflicts and discussions in terms that may limit a girl's sense of self-regard and importance, rather than support or enhance it.

In the three empirical chapters in the middle section, 'Pregnant with meaning', Luttrell presents rich and engaging yet ordered accounts through which she develops her finely tuned analysis. In chapter 3 ('Self-portraits: from girlhood to motherhood') she describes how many of the girls chose to represent themselves in the past, as children, rather than in the future. She felt these (accounts of the) portraits to be 'nostalgic and evoking a sense of loss about the past' (p. 49). She considers this in relation to the representation of young mothers as 'babies having babies' and the significance of childhood, growing up and age in their accounts. Luttrell tries to capture both the idiosyncratic and the culturally patterned nature of these self-representations, in which 'the girls crafted responses that shed light on their multiple worlds—worlds of childhood, womanhood, motherhood, heterosexual romance and consumerism—and that highlight their growing awareness of how race, class and gender inequities shape their participation in and aspirations about these worlds' (p. 45). They show their efforts to manage feelings about life events and hardships, and, she believes, in portraying 'the complexity of their wants, wishes and wills, surpass standard notions of agency' (*ibid*).

The discussions sparked about the meanings of childhood lead onto the girls discussing beauty, fashion, femininity and what it means to be a girl, along with racial identity and culture in African-American communities. There was much discussion of the racialized hierarchies of 'beauty', and a heated exchange about the implicitly white

meaning of being ‘an American’ in the account of a white girl. The girls recognized the racialization of poverty and teenage pregnancy in public perception (which is a distortion of the welfare figures), as well as the racial imbalance on the PPT. In each successive year group, after enrolment, the white girls’ day-to-day attendance on the course lessened so that from being a minority at the outset, they ‘disappeared’ from the programme by withdrawing from classes in favour of ‘home study’. Perhaps doctors were more apt to recommend bed-rest for white girls, or perhaps education did not assume the same role for them, since the remaining girls were convinced that ‘all the white girls drop out of school’, but also alluded to a snubbing or disassociation: ‘white girls who get pregnant don’t want to be associated with us’. Luttrell explores earlier feminist analyses of the historical framing of white girls as reformable, but black girls as irredeemably unruly and deviant, as well as the tradition of Black people running schools for Black students. In spite of educational reforms and race equality legislation, pregnant white working-class girls here were still being educated separately from working-class girls of colour.

Each method provides a different means for the girls to represent themselves to themselves and to others, and allows Luttrell different insights into their psychologies. Filling a blank sheet using pieces of painted papers to produce one’s self-image ‘offers a view of a girl’s relational world—how she placed herself in time, place, and in relationship to parts of herself or to others’ (p. 44). Chapter 4 (‘Making the self-which-I-might-be’) and Chapter 5 (‘Showing and telling pregnancy stories’) present Luttrell’s analysis of the girls’ work: showing processes of splitting—in the separation of mind and self from body, and in the either/or framing of sexual agency (to do ‘it’ or not); and idealization of ‘good mothers’ and denigration of ‘bad mothers’. The girls’ accounts similarly construct good and bad girls regarding sexuality: ‘bad girls’ show and act publicly on their sexual desires, whereas ‘good girls’ carefully conceal them. The ‘good girl’ category further divides into the self-denying girl or the helpless victim. Luttrell’s analysis draws on her feminism (the sadly familiar cultural baggage such as sexual double standards and veiled misogyny that are apparent in the girls’ accounts) and an object relations approach, which I feel could have been granted more attention. More specifically, the girls’ awareness of being viewed and scrutinized by others is painful. They are hurt by the recognition that they are seen as ‘lazy’, ‘depressed’ and ‘irresponsible’, but with grief comes insight too. They are in the process of becoming more self-aware, and express their mixed feelings or fear—‘from feeling miserable or immobilized, to being in awe of their changing bodies—they become more aware ... about their power and possibilities as women’ (p. 59).

A detailed analysis of this ‘pregnant teens’ educational programme would be worthy enough of a book, but what makes it particularly valuable is that Luttrell offers the conclusions of her analyses and observations in two fields, as noted earlier: making carefully qualified suggestions for educational practice (Chapter 7, ‘Split at the roots: rethinking educational practice’), and for methodological practice in ethnographic approaches in the social sciences (Chapter 6, ‘Entering girls’ worlds’). She is typically careful and modest in her approach to these chapters, and offers not a ‘neat, handy toolkit for improved ethnographic or educational practice’, but concrete examples of

‘that is how it happened, this is what she said, what I said and how we came to understand together’ that she hopes will be of use to others (p. xviii).

She does indeed place the girls’ stories and self-representations centre stage, but admits ‘curating’ the girls’ art forms and stories. She describes her approach to interpretation as an impressionistic ethnographic interpretation that is like ‘getting a joke’, although she invites the reader to consider the visual images through their own interpretive lens, and to mine the material for alternative analyses. She notes the power of their feelings and sense of agency as sexual beings, daughters and future mothers, but resists simplistic conclusions because she does not want to replace one stereotype with another. I enjoyed her understated, non-egotistical presence in the fieldwork, through which she reveals some of the dilemmas of rapport and maintaining the trust of both the girls and the teaching staff in the everyday (such as when the girls want to play music which she knows is not actually allowed). I also appreciated her reflection on the writing of the book: how she reorganized the chapters many times, serving different readings/emphases and blends of analysis and reflexivity—having herself to grapple with the limits of representation. I think she gives qualitative methods of the ‘hanging out’ variety a good name.

Luttrell suggests that her research methods themselves (the self-representation activities and framework for analysing them) offer a pedagogic approach whereby educationalists can use them therapeutically to help pregnant teenagers ‘wrestle with the ways they see themselves and think they are seen by others’ (p. 144). Teachers can influence girls’ images of themselves and their bodies, and help them explore and express their feelings by not denying the reality of maternal ambivalence. Facing this leads to growth and development, and must be tapped, not ignored, in the schooling of pregnant girls. For young people in general, she argues for more room for play; for the provision of protected space for moral and identity-related creativity and expression; and she believes that a ‘necessary task of schooling is to help young people make and revise themselves in their own image rather than turning their self-definition over to others’ (p. 144).

The girls’ account of how the programme differs from mainstream school shows a gratitude for the most measly of concessions. Being allowed to take time off for medical appointments or to eat when hungry were what they said distinguished the programme from school. Yet these seem such basic requirements for pregnant women, they highlight the unreasonable inflexibility of the school regime—or the firm hold that ‘school’ (culture) has on (these girls’) ‘education’. (Is there any reason why their education need be in this old-style of schooling, which some of them had rejected anyway?) Indeed, the very ‘normality’ of schools restricting eating and drinking can be questioned anew when the body in question draws attention to itself by ‘showing’, and revealing that it is the pregnant body that is being so disciplined. I wondered whether pregnant women in prison are allowed to eat and drink when they want to, as I thought about the punitive control over these young pregnant women by virtue of their age and the school’s ‘normal’ disciplining of the pupil body.

The pregnant body itself provides a site for (some) teachers and the programme to convey negative messages to the girls, albeit implicitly. ‘Showing’ is a recurrent theme

in the teachers' and students' accounts and brings conflict. When the pregnancy begins to show, the pupil's body no longer conforms and, furthermore, it flaunts their sexual activity. When the girls show their pregnant bodies they are deemed to have a 'bad attitude'. The indirect negative messages communicated by the PPT's physical setting sticks in my mind. The building is woefully inadequate and unsuitable. It is at first housed in a long-standing temporary adjunct to the school that has no heating and no lift for the two flights the girls must climb to reach it. When it is relocated in a building at the edge of the site of an abandoned school, there is heating, but the lighting is poor and there are no educational facilities such as a library in reach. The most vivid image I have comes from the fact that the desks are of the old fashioned type where wooden desk and bench are joined, and so are completely inflexible and barely big enough for some of the girls to get their pregnant bellies behind. Not only have they 'done wrong', but they themselves, their bodies, are wrong. Paradoxically, establishing such a programme in order to provide equal access to education for pregnant teens (under 'Title IV' legislation) ends up further marginalizing them: they are excluded from mainstream education, socially and geographically marginalized—in effect, discriminated against on the grounds of their pregnancy instead. The culture of the unit goes against the idea of providing them with education 'as a right', instead it is 'a responsibility' to 'do it for your child'.

Luttrell's (1997) earlier work with an earlier 'generation' of women who had been forced to leave education when they had become pregnant had shown that, for them, the problem was not in being pregnant, but in the school's response (p. 14). 'Special' provision does not seem to have eradicated the problem, just shifted it into insidiously psychological grounds. This new generation are painfully and angrily aware of the hierarchies of class, race, gender and age they were up against and the stigma of teenage pregnancy. This time, however, they are bound into the system and meanings of education that claim to offer their only chance of improvement and redemption while at the same time delivering punitive measures and derogatory messages.

The perils of representation were played out in each of the research activities. The girls face the struggle of representing themselves and their pregnancies so as to 'break the gaze' of those who would judge or belittle them (p. 58). Despite their 'frontline' position in matters relating to adolescent sexuality and parenting, educators have been curiously quiet in the debates over sex education (p. 15). In their day-to-day practice, however, they have a vital role to play in helping pregnant teens in their psychological survival and their management of stigma.

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Pregnant bodies, fertile minds tells the stories of and examines the self-portrayals of a particularly marginalized group, pregnant girls, most of whom were African-American and living in poverty. Luttrell designed her study to provide multiple opportunities for her participants to put forward their own interpretations of their lives, and she presents the girls as complex and in a way that counters the damaging and pervasive stereotypes of teen mothers. She highlights their struggles as well as their creativity in the face of structural inequalities. Moreover, Luttrell's rich ethnographic material allows her to convey the pregnant girls' views without betraying their political interests, for example, in more adequate social provision.

Luttrell's book is based on an ethnographic study of the Piedmont Program for Pregnant Teens, located in a public school in an industrial town in the southern United States. Over the course of five years, Luttrell came to know 50 pregnant girls, most of whom were 14 or 15 years old. Centrally concerned with issues of representation, Luttrell designed three art-making activities—a collaborative book of self-portraits, 'Who Am I?' media collages, and improvisational role plays of the girls' 'pregnancy stories'—to elicit the girls' self-representations; these were supplemented by participant observation, journal writing and formal interviews.

A concern for representation can be seen to guide the division of the book into three parts. Part I details the sociocultural, historical and curricular contexts of the study. Luttrell demonstrates that the stigmatizing societal representations of teen mothers limit both how they might imagine themselves as well as the school responses to the pregnant girls' multiple needs and desires. The girls' self-representations are at the heart of Part II, where Luttrell examines how relations of race, class and gender as well as particular psychodynamics are at work in these self-representations. Part III explores the politics of representation in ethnography (e.g. whether researchers can truly represent less privileged others) and also includes Luttrell's meditation on the implications of her ethnography for educational practice.

The book is written in a highly accessible style. Although theoretically sophisticated and drawing from a number of fields (contemporary psychoanalysis, sociology and anthropology of education, and feminist and anti-racist studies), Luttrell rarely lapses into jargon and is careful to provide clear definitions and enough background for her multiple audiences to appreciate the links she is making between her empirical study and the theories that inform it.

Pregnant bodies, fertile minds is unusual in linking a critical sociological approach with a psychoanalytic one, and it is this link that yields some of the book's best insights. For example, in Chapter 2 Luttrell first outlines the 'stigma wars'; that is, the competing discourses—and ideological and material interests underpinning these discourses—about teen pregnancy and motherhood. Having thus illuminated the various social conditions and cultural forces that lead to shaming and blaming pregnant girls, she turns to an examination of 'the psychodynamic conflicts that fuel these stigma wars' (p. 35). She cogently presents an explanatory framework for understanding why so many people are drawn to certain ways of framing teen pregnancy (e.g. 'babies having babies') and not others. Certain 'images and

stereotypes serve to allay or contain our own deep-seated fears' over the 'loss of maternal protection' (p. 35–36). In the case of the pregnant girls themselves, their anxieties may be heightened by the fear that they will be labelled 'bad' and therefore unworthy of protection. As Luttrell argues, 'the identity- and self-making processes made available to the girls through these opposing ideal types' of 'good' versus 'bad' 'inhibits their growth and development' (p. 37).

Luttrell's analytic focus on self-representation, understood both psychologically and in a creative sense, rests on three key concepts: the self, agency, and 'body-smarts'. Drawing from the psychoanalytic work of Kathy Ewing and Heinz Kohut, Luttrell uses two definitions of the self. The first:

refers to self-representations—the relational self, that part of mental life that is formed out of identifications with significant others, which may be explicit and conscious or implicit and outside of conscious awareness; this is 'the culturally shaped self that is the object of anthropological study' ([Ewing, 1990,] 245). The [second] is used by Kohut (1971, 1977) in his self-psychology, which has to do with primary psychic constellations—self as agent or self as actor. Ewing argues that this view of a self is most infused with culturally shaped biases about being bounded and autonomous (Ewing 1990: 245–255). (p.195, n. 1; emphasis added)

I was most intrigued by Luttrell's discussion of the girls' agency, particularly in the chapter focused on the pregnancy skits the girls performed, drawing on some theatrical exercises in the tradition of Augusto Boal's theatre of the oppressed. In two scenes that the girls spontaneously elected to perform over and over—one a clinic scene between pregnant girl and nurse, the other a home scene where a girl tells her mother she's pregnant—Luttrell discerns an 'alternative' understanding of agency on the girls' part. Luttrell defines the girls' agency as 'expressing a desire to control their surroundings' (p. 49), and she finds it highly meaningful that in their skits, they did not refer to 'choices' (e.g. about whether to deliver and raise their baby), but rather to 'decisions'. So unlike conventional wisdom, the girls did not assume themselves to be individuals abstracted from historical and material constraints (e.g. cultural and economic subordination) making unfettered choices. Instead, they took up the position of 'decision makers who have not chosen the conditions under which they must take action' (p. 116).

On the one hand, the scenes stress that a girl's agency lies not in how she separates herself from her baby or how she sees herself as autonomous from another, but rather, how she is connected to and responsible for others. But, at the same time, these same scenes pit the 'idea' of the child as innocent and ideal against the 'real' pregnant self who lacks 'real' choices. (p. 126–127)

Given the prominence of agency-in-relation-to-structure debates among social theorists over several generations, I would have welcomed Luttrell placing her discussion of the concept more explicitly in relation to some of this theorizing. Toward the end of the book (p. 181), she does quote Dorothy Holland *et al.* (1998), who in turn draw from Bourdieu's practice theory. Luttrell's use of the word 'desire' in her own definition of agency (quoted earlier) suggests a psychoanalytic influence. Along with poststructuralist thinkers as well as critical theorists, Luttrell notes that neither the girls in her study or she

could 'fashion a representation that is independent of these discourses' about teenage sexuality, pregnancy and motherhood (p. 26). But in comparison with at least one variant of poststructuralist theorizing of agency that reduces subjectivity to mere 'effects' of discourses (where an individual is constituted within the terms of one available discourse or another), Luttrell's discussion of the self retains a more robust notion of individual agency in relation to dominant discourses. She makes frequent reference to the girls' 'creativity' in defining themselves, for example.

But what about the pregnant girls' collective agency? This begs deeper exploration, given that pregnant girls are perceived as a group for various political reasons and find themselves physically grouped together in classrooms, government programmes or daycares. Collective agency, according to Snow (2001), is the action dimension of collective identity or a shared sense of 'we-ness'. Such 'we-ness' is felt as 'a common cause, threat, or fate' and can be fostered through the experience of collective action. Thus, some questions regarding pregnant girls arise. Which specific discourses of social justice (or feminism, anti-racism, anti-poverty, youth rights, etc.), in particular, assist young women in their search for autonomy and control? What concepts or analytic approaches might allow us to connect self-development and individual agency to the collective empowerment of young women?

Luttrell's analytic focus is largely elsewhere. Nor, as I say, does she draw many explicit connections between the girls' conception of agency and prominent academic ones (i.e. psychoanalytic, practice theory, poststructuralist, neo-Marxist). Nevertheless, her chosen focus intriguingly melds the cultural and the psychoanalytic. The various creative materials produced by the girls proved to be an ideal way to examine the interdependence of the cultural and the psychodynamic, the 'found' (e.g. the dominant discourses voiced by the nurse characters in the role-plays, magazine advertisements) and the 'created' (e.g. the girls' improvisations, the selection and juxtaposition of images and words in their media collages).

This interdependence of dynamics (of structure and agency, if you will) is at the heart of what she calls the girls' 'body-smarts' (a term borrowed from Carla Massey [1996]). Evoking the double meaning of the word 'smart', Luttrell means by body-smarts a form of 'dual awareness': the girls rightly perceived that their pregnant bodies were viewed as different and less than by others, which caused pain; they also, via the self-representational activities and reflection, became aware 'about their power and possibilities as women' (p. 59). Luttrell's discussion of body-smarts reminded me of feminist poststructuralist and other theorizing about agency and critical literacy and its potential in anti-oppression education. In this context, agency is signalled by a speaking subject who can move within and between discourses; can see how various discourses subject her; and can use the terms of one discourse to counteract, modify, refuse or go beyond the other, both in terms of her own experienced subjectivity and in the way in which she chooses to speak in relation to the subjectivities of others (Davies, 1991). 'Critical social literacy', therefore, 'involves the development of a playful ability to move between and amongst discourses, to move in and out of them, to mix them, to break their spell when necessary' (Davies, 1997, p. 29).

Indeed, Luttrell deliberately set out to demonstrate the pedagogical potential of the

self-representational activities she designed in nurturing her young participants' body-smarts. In an alternative approach to educational practice that she calls (following psychoanalyst Adam Phillips [1998]) 'restoring the artist', Luttrell asks the provocative question 'What would schools look like if educators took a stance of interest and curiosity rather than discipline and punishment toward girls' fertility?' (p. 177). More broadly, she asks her readers to imagine an educational programme 'that nourishes relationships; helps students recuperate their losses; recognizes social and personal conflicts, including how different bodies matter; and seeks to integrate rather than split students' multiple interests and identities' (p. 179).

But what are the political obstacles to this alternative approach? Given that bureaucratic organizations, schools included, are normalizing environments operating within the larger power structure of globalized neo-liberalism, what are the possibilities and limits of Luttrell's educational vision? She whets the appetite for further discussion of norm-challenging institutional practices and strategies designed to foster the inclusion of pregnant girls and teen mothers and challenge class, race and other barriers to full school participation. These might include adopting a school-wide policy of accommodating extra life demands on teen mothers, creating community buy-in, building political support within schools, and advocating with and for teen mothers.

I found Luttrell's ruminations on educational practice, including her focus on the transformative power of play, highly appealing and suggestive. The links to the psychological realm that she identifies and explores (e.g. the splitting of mind from body, acknowledging maternal conflicts and ambivalence) seem particularly fruitful for teasing out pedagogical strategies and entry points for teaching/learning. Attention to the psychodynamic realm can also help educators to be more aware, and to begin to think through, the mixed emotions in a relationship (teacher-student) where race, class and gender power relations are in play. At the same time, I wonder about the sort of preparation teachers (especially in a conventional secondary school setting) would need to successfully link self-exploration with an examination of social inequities, given the deep emotions likely to be tapped. Luttrell herself explores how she held back from probing certain racially charged comments and incidents in her school-based ethnography, noting that this reflected not just her racial and class privileges and 'personal desire to avoid racial conflict'. She saw her hesitation as a 'human conflict, shared by white and black Americans alike, between knowing and not knowing, thinking and not thinking about powerful emotional experiences that involve social distinctions' (p. 160).

Thus, educators hoping to follow up on some of Luttrell's arts-based suggestions for educational practice would be wise to know themselves and their students well and to be well versed in the sorts of emotional responses that self-representational activities are likely to evoke. Some issues are no doubt too personal or painful, for example, to be enacted through role-play with an entire class. Others might be worth some risk-taking, but teachers would need to think through and articulate clearly the ground rules and potential risks with their students ahead of time.

Luttrell's position as visiting researcher in the world of the pregnant girls was quite different in its emotional and power dynamics compared with that of a teacher in the

institutional position of assessing the girls' learning. Nevertheless, the way Luttrell conducted her ethnography serves as at least a partial model for the teacher–student relations that she envisions. I admire the respect that Luttrell displayed throughout her study for the participants, for the research process and for readers. In each of the chapters that make up Part II, for instance, she provides a full sense of each girl, particularly in the context of the pregnant teen programme, and along the way we catch glimpses of her respectful way of being with them and interpreting their self-portraits, media collages and skits. We learn that one girl had been subjected to some childhood violence, but she preferred not to speak of it or for Luttrell to write about it—preferences that the ethnographer honoured. In another instance, Luttrell shares that another girl made a slip of the tongue when speaking to her self-portrait, a slip potentially rich in meaning if pursued. But instead, Luttrell refrained from (premature?) interpretations and simply asked the girl to hold up her portrait and view it from a distance.

Without losing sight of the girls' individuality, Luttrell helps her readers to see analytic themes across the creative materials, including 'how they experience the cultural phenomenon and social problem of "teenage pregnancy"' (p. 43) as well as race, gender and class dynamics at work. She is careful to ground her theoretical constructs in the everyday cultural practices of her participants. As the researcher, she presents herself as a situated, embodied, historical character in her book, yet never in a self-indulgent way. This approach serves to remind her participants and her readers that she is a partial knower with responsibilities to both groups. The following passage gives a flavour for how Luttrell tries to hold a more artistic, affective way of knowing in tension with more distanced analysis:

In writing about the girls' conversations, stories, and art forms I have struggled not to set up a hierarchy between the girls' words and my interpretations. While I believe the girls' forms of self-representation stand on their own, I don't believe they speak completely for themselves. There is a great deal of interpretive work—the girls and my own—that I have tried to make explicit so that readers can entertain their own interpretations as well. (p. 42)

In short, this study opens up important questions for researchers about girlhood, sexuality, race, gender, self-making and identity-making, and agency, particularly in relation to power and social dynamics. For ethnographers and potential ethnographers, the book yields valuable lessons about doing sustained participant-observation research with youth as well as about dilemmas of representation. Policy-makers and others will gain insights into how the multiple images circulating in public discourse affect the ways in which pregnant girls, teen mothers and other young people organize and represent their lives, especially in the realm of sexuality. Educators will learn about alternative approaches to educational practice that assume that fostering creativity and relations of trust among and between students and teachers should be given far more priority than the current high-stakes testing climate will ever permit.

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In most countries there has long been, and often still is, a tradition in which young mothers, but not young fathers, leave school before the official school-leaving age. In a recent review of the situation in England and Wales, the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools found a wide range of practice. Some pregnant young mothers benefited from leaving conventional schooling and attending specialist pupil referral units. Others did equally well by remaining in school. For example:

When one of the year 11 girls at a Midlands school informed the head of year that she was pregnant, the head of year discussed the matter with her before bringing family and staff together to discuss how best to offer support.

The parents were initially concerned that their daughter would be asked to leave the school. This was not the case and the girl, her parents, the father's family and the school worked together to plan how best to provide support during and after the pregnancy.

During the pregnancy, with minor adjustments, she continued to follow the Year 11 curriculum. In the final weeks of the pregnancy she received tuition at home. The appointed tutor worked with her in school before her home leave. This helped to ensure that the tutor could provide a curriculum similar to that in the school.

After the birth, she returned to school. Her parents, and those of the father, provided good support for her and her baby. This enabled her to continue her studies through to GCSE examinations. (Ofsted, 2002, p. 31–32)

In her excellent study of teenage mothers in Canada and the United States, Kelly (2000) notes that such mothers are scapegoats for social anxieties. They are portrayed in the media and elsewhere as stupid sluts, as children having children, as teen rebels who flaunt their non-conformity and treat their babies as objects, as vulnerable girls whom nobody loved, as victims of child abuse, as welfare moms, as dropouts and as neglectful mothers. Kelly studied two schools in depth. Not surprisingly, she found that school-age mothers need flexibility from their schools with regard to such things

as attendance and workload expectations. Interestingly, she noted that in both schools the young mothers were not alone in needing such flexibility:

Some students were living independently, either with social assistance or away from their reserve (reservation). Still others were working long hours, either to supplement their family's income or to care for younger siblings. Still others were sometimes needed by immigrant parents to serve as translators in important matters affecting the family. Some school staff members, although relatively materially advantaged, also found it a struggle to meet family and work obligations around the rigid school timetable. (Kelly, 2000, p. 117)

In a study of pregnancy policies in the education systems of sub-Saharan African countries, Bagele Chilisa found that in many countries the practice of expelling pregnant girls from schools continues to this day. In some places, the practice is enshrined in law; in others, it is maintained by informal custom. Only a small proportion of girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy re-enter the school system. Indeed, given the competition for school places in a number of countries, Chilisa concluded that 'expulsion of girl mothers becomes a way of creating spaces for boys' (2002, p. 32).

To this literature on the schooling of pregnant young women, Wendy Luttrell has added a most valuable contribution. *Pregnant bodies, fertile minds* is a wonderful read: at times poignant, at times amusing, occasionally surreal (e.g. the wooden school desks were too small for students in the later stages of pregnancy). Always informative and thought-provoking, it values its subjects, makes contributions to the literatures of sex education and social science methodology and deserves to become long read and widely cited.

Pregnant bodies, fertile minds is the result of an ethnographic study of an institution pseudonymously called the Piedmont Program for Pregnant Teens (PPPT). From 1992 to 1997, when the PPPT was dissolved, Wendy Luttrell, in the time-honoured manner of educational ethnographers, spent time in classrooms, ate lunch with the girls (as they called themselves), sat in on parent-teacher conferences, and drove the girls on field trips and sometimes to their homes or clinic appointments. In addition, and methodologically innovatively, she designed a series of activities to elicit the girls' self-representations. These activities included weekly journal writing 'Who Am I?', media collages, improvised role plays of their 'pregnancy stories', and a collaborative book of self-portraits accompanied by texts.

Over the five-year period, Luttrell, a self-described middle-class, middle-aged, white university professor and mother, worked with 50 girls at the PPPT, 45 of whom were black, three of whom were Mexican and two of whom were white. All grew up poor and in working-class families and most were between 14 and 15 years of age. Luttrell organizes her findings into three parts. Part I considers the girls' everyday experiences of school in the light of competing discourses and stereotypical images of teenage pregnancy. Part II examines the girls' self-representations—with Luttrell seeing herself as having 'curated' the girls' art forms, the stories they told and the conversations she had with them (no simplistic assumptions here about researchers not affecting those researched). Part III considers methodological and conceptual concerns.

As someone who is interested in sex education, in social science methodology in general and in ethnography in particular, I enjoyed all of this book. However, there is much of value in here to someone interested in only one of these aspects. So much of the book relies on rich interpretations of detailed descriptions that it is difficult in a review to provide more than a flavour of the writing. Here is one instance:

It was in the third year of my research, and Grace asked if I would play ‘a pregnant girl at the clinic.’ Stella must have registered surprise or worry on my face because she said, ‘You can do it, just look over at me if you need some good lines.’ I grabbed the props [a hospital robe and a magazine] and sat impatiently jiggling my leg as if I had been waiting a long time to be seen. Shantae, who was playing the nurse, walked up with her clipboard and gruffly announced my name, ‘Wendy Luttrell.’ I stood up, feeling a bit shaken hearing my name called out so publicly and in such an authoritative tone. We moved to a space set up with a long table and two chairs. The ‘nurse’ ordered me to lie down and roll up my sleeve. She forcefully pulled at my arm and tightly wrapped the make believe blood pressure rope around it until it pinched. Before I could even say, ‘Stop—that hurts,’ the ‘nurse’ said, ‘It has to be tight for it to work.’ Then, without missing a beat, she started firing off the standard series of questions about sexual conduct. ‘How many times have you had sex? You haven’t been using protection have you? How many men have you been with anyway? You probably can’t count how many.’ Her voice grew louder and harsher and I heard someone in the audience gasp. I was unable to speak, even though I kept opening my mouth to try. Tears began to fill up in my eyes and I could hear Grace say, ‘Wow, she’s good, she’s pretending to cry.’ With tremendous relief, I heard Stella yell, ‘freeze.’ As I stood up, tears spilled down my cheeks. I looked out at my audience who were applauding, complimenting me on my outstanding ‘acting job.’ I up gathered enough composure to say, ‘Well I wasn’t acting. I felt scared and ashamed. Nurse Shantae really intimidated me.’ My confession drew laughter at first, and then a moment of silence before Stella said, ‘Well that may be how you feel but you can’t ever let on that you feel that way.’

Luttrell goes on to analyse this scene in some depth and then to consider the ways in which the language used by the girls revealed their sense of self and agency. For example, in the 100 improvisations only one featured an adoption story and just two openly explored abortion. When abortion was discussed, it was seen as violence, not in the pro-choice terms of Luttrell’s own position.

Luttrell concludes that at the heart of the ‘war’ against teenage pregnancy currently waged in the United States lie conflicts about changing social conditions with attention to economic, political and social injustices being deflected. But her main concerns are not sociological. She uses a psychoanalytical framework derived from Klein to explore how the girls see their relationships with their mothers, and this allows her to provide new insights into how the girls viewed themselves—in particular, into the way in which many of them spoke with deep sadness about having disappointed their mothers while at the same time insisting that their mothers would eventually come to cherish their grandchildren.

In conclusion, what I find of especial value in Luttrell’s work is her willingness to try new ways of producing knowledge, her consistent respect of the ‘girls’ with whom she

worked, her determination to interrogate her own actions, assumptions and understandings, and her ability to write an engaging story.

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