

DRAFT

**Seeking Equal Opportunity:  
Literacy in the lives of pregnant and parenting teens**

Heidi L. Hallman  
Email: [hhallman@wisc.edu](mailto:hhallman@wisc.edu)  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

First International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, University of Illinois,  
Urbana-Champaign, IL, May 5-7, 2005

**Abstract:** The passage and implementation of Title IX guaranteed equal education to all teen mothers. In response to this mandate, many school districts created separate programs to meet these students' needs. This study investigates the curriculum at one such separate program, Eastview School for Pregnant and Parenting Teens. Illustrating how programs like Eastview's can be oriented toward equality and feminism rather than exclusion and remediation, this paper challenges the assumptions that separate programs need be "lower track" options for the girls who attend them.

Work that has previously described separate programs for teen mothers (Kelly, 2000; Luttrell, 2003) has noted the potential these programs have to focus solely on the aspect of the girls' identity that addresses their motherhood. However, by examining the literacy practices at Eastview, a more nuanced portrait of curriculum and schooling for pregnant and parenting teens can be depicted. Through investigation of the curriculum, the literacy practices that take place in the classroom, and the narratives told by the students who attend Eastview, the identity of the pregnant and parenting teen can be considered as one that is complex and multifaceted. Instead of presenting a "resolved" vision of what the schooling of pregnant and parenting teens should look like, this study investigates how an understanding of the literacy practices and literacy curriculum at Eastview can assist scholars in better understanding how to "reassign" the identity of the pregnant/ parenting teen.

## **Introduction**

Teen motherhood is a reality but also a discursive production. The term "teen mother" became a term that, before the mid-1970s, was not used (Pillow, 2004). Instead, attention was focused on unwed mothers of all ages. For many people today, however,

the term calls up what Luttrell calls the “dominant image of the pregnant teen: a black, urban, and poor female who is more than likely herself the daughter of a teenage mother” (2003: 4).

Nancy Lesko locates the rise of a related term, the *adolescent*, in her 2001 book, *Act Your Age! The Cultural Construction of the Adolescent*. Noting the use of the term adolescent as connected to the “rise to a modern nation-state,” Lesko positions the “normal” adolescent as someone who transitions into good and responsible citizenship. The “abnormal” adolescent, then, is someone who engages in behaviors considered deviant and threatening to his or her transition to “normal” adulthood.

Popular discourse positions the teen mother as deviant in response to the normal/ abnormal construction of the adolescent. These young women’s behavior and pregnancy is considered as challenging their transition between childhood and adulthood. Viewed as situated within the norms that shape society, Wanda Pillow’s recent (2004) book does an excellent job of tracing how the problem of teen pregnancy is located within and cannot be separated from the economic, political, racial, and moral climate of any era. The way society has gazed upon teen and unwed mothers throughout the last century has been always intimately connected to this climate.

In response to better understanding the politics that shape the issue of teen pregnancy, several scholars (Luker, 1996; Kelly, 2000; Luttrell, 2003; Pillow, 2004) have provided works that challenge the dominant construction of the teen mother. These works have aimed to highlight and historicize the characterization of the discourse(s) shaping teen pregnancy. Dierdre Kelly (2000) explores the construction of the language used about pregnant and parenting teens by characterizing discourses about teen pregnancy as

a “stigma contest”:

This contest is waged among those who continue to believe that adolescent pregnancy should be stigmatized as a deterrent to early sexual activity and welfare dependence, and those with rival interpretations of the meaning of teen pregnancy and motherhood. (2000:67)

As this stigma contest continues to be waged, what evidence is there for rival interpretations of the issue of teenage pregnancy and parenthood? How does the context of schooling interact with the narratives and meanings pregnant and parenting teens create? These questions shape this study of curriculum and literacy for this group of “at-risk” students.

Through an illustration of themes that emerged from a semester long study of a language arts classroom for pregnant and parenting teens, I present a case for viewing some separate programs for pregnant and parenting teens as potentially feminist spaces. In using the term “feminist spaces,” I call on the notion that identity can be multifaceted and complex. Instead of viewing motherhood as the only role that shapes these teens’ identity, I argue that a curriculum can be feminist in nature if it is oriented toward a layered and fluid understanding of identity.

### **The Schooling of Pregnant Teens**

The schooling of pregnant teens continues to be a debated topic within the consideration of the schooling of “at-risk” youth. Kelly (2000) writes that across Western industrialized societies, schools face a crisis of consensus over inclusiveness”(pg. 6). Defining inclusive schooling as the ideal of including a wide variety of students, particularly those who have been traditionally excluded, either formally or informally, Kelly understands her investigation of two schools in Canada as

two cases of schools attempting to move away from viewing pregnancy and parenthood as a reason for grouping students for differentiated instruction.

The existence of separate schools for pregnant and parenting teens in the United States is common. The ability to create such programs emerged from Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, prohibiting the exclusion of students from their education program on the basis of pregnancy, parental status, or marital status. (See Kelly, 2000, pp. 10-11 for thorough description of the history of the schooling of pregnant teens). Though many school districts in the United States have responded to Title IX by creating separate schools to serve the needs of pregnant and parenting teens, this has sometimes forced pregnant and parenting students to choose between a separate school that has daycare facilities and a school that holds the status of a “regular” high school, that which is the only access to a college preparatory curriculum.

Few studies have captured the experiences of teens who attend such schools. One recent example is Wendy Luttrell’s (2003) person-centered account of teen pregnancy, which highlights the stories of the girls who attend a school for pregnant and parenting teens. Luttrell’s work is a contribution to the literature documenting teenage pregnancy by focusing on a particular time and place. Luttrell’s work documents the experiences the girls she works with have in school by engaging in particular activities that center around “self-representations,” activities that she views as potentially liberating. We can learn through Luttrell’s work that pregnant and parenting teens do not only take up the assigned identity that society at large often gives them; they, instead, conceive of themselves as multifaceted and competent young women.

Luttrell’s study uses activities that Luttrell designed in order to prompt this kind

of critical reflection. Her discussion revolves around activities that prompted the girls' investigation into their lives and selves. Though this study is not a study of the school's curriculum, it does prompt several questions concerning the schooling of pregnant and parenting teens. One central question asks whether or not some schools, such as Eastview School for Pregnant and Parenting Teens, are already doing some of these activities that promote critical self-reflection.

An investigation of a language arts curriculum at a school for pregnant and parenting teens can contribute to the current knowledge about the schooling for pregnant and parenting teens. Prompted by the acknowledgement that a dearth of research exists concerning the curricular decisions for pregnant and parenting teens, I ask how the curriculum at Eastview School for Pregnant and Parenting Teens positions the young women as students, mothers, and adolescents. Through the interplay between the curriculum and the narratives of the teens, I am able to illustrate the dialectic between the process of schooling and the subject of schooling, the student.

### **Theoretical Orientation**

Using a sociocultural theory of literacy (Barton, 1994; Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 1996; Street, 1984, 1995), I identify how the literacy practices and events in which the teens engage offer a window for viewing how programs like Eastview can encourage teens to "reassign" the identity of the pregnant/ parenting teen. Using a literacy lens helps frame my understanding of the relationship between curricular content and the meanings subjects make as a result of their participation in school.

Literacy scholars who have worked to understand literacy as a social practice have viewed local literacy practices and events as constitutive of larger social processes

and indicative of the social positioning of the participant who engages in them. This viewpoint emphasizes that the social, cultural, and historical identity of the participant who engages in the literacy practice is influential in understanding the participant's valuing/ devaluing of particular forms of literacy.

The notion of literacy practices denotes those practices in which literacy has a role (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). Practices, however, are not observable units of behavior; they also encompass values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships (see Street, 1993, p.12). Practices are shaped by social rules which regulate how literacy is used and who has access to it. Literacy practice can be thought about as "cultural ways of utilizing literacy" (Barton & Hamilton, 2000).

The term "literacy event" is used to describe concrete activities in which literacy has a role; events are observable episodes and are situated within and shaped by practices. The idea of literacy practices and events, terms used by scholars who define their work as the "new literacy studies" (as in Barton, 1994; Gee, 1996; Street, 1984, 1995), is derived partially from a Bakhtinian notion of language analysis. Bakhtin would suggest that the beginning point for understanding discourse resides in the social event of verbal interaction (Bakhtin, 1986). In addition to this claim, language is viewed as inherently dialogic: every utterance responds to other utterances and then shapes itself in anticipation of a response. Bakhtin's understanding of the dialogic nature of language has implications for how I understand salient themes present at Eastview. Instead of viewing these themes as distinct and separate, I have found them to be overlapping in nature. Parts of one theme anticipate tenets of another.

Work that has embraced a sociocultural view of literacy has offered literacy

researchers a framework by which to understand people's situated use of and participation in literacy practices; studies of curriculum have been part of this work (Dyson, 1995, 1997a, 1997b; Ormerod & Ivanic, 2000). However, to date, there are no studies of curriculum which address the schooling of this particular population of students. Examining the classroom curriculum is especially important in learning more about the schooling of pregnant/ parenting teens, and all students labeled "at-risk." Because all curricula, learning, and literacy is ideological (Gee, 1996), the meaning the girls make about their schooling is closely related to how the school positions itself in relationship to the girls' learning.

## **Method**

### *Context*

This study is part of an on-going research agenda that examines both the language arts curriculum at a school for pregnant and parenting teens and the narratives of the students who attend this school. Eastview Program for Pregnant and Parenting Teens, the site of investigation, is a separate program within the public school system of a large Midwestern city. It is a public school affiliated with three other alternative programs for "at-risk" youth. Eastview is a self-selected school, meaning that pregnant and parenting students may remain in or attend any of the other four public high schools in the town if they choose to do so.

The researcher was aware of Eastview's program as a result of placing preservice teachers there for practica or student teaching. The language arts teacher, Bob Schaeffer, whose teaching is highlighted in this paper, has been a strong supporter of the teacher education program at the city's public university.

## *Procedure*

Several data collection methods were used throughout the study. These included non-participant observation, participant observation, interviewing, and the collection of written documents.

### *Non-participant observation*

I conducted 40 hours of non-participant observation from January-April 2005. In my role as non-participant observer, I attended the language arts class of one of Eastview's teachers, Bob Schaeffer. I collected field notes concerning curriculum content and teacher-student interaction, including quotations of both students' and teacher's comments.

### *Participant observation*

I participated in several events with the students. These included field trips to local plays and museums as well as on-site celebrations such as pot-lucks. All participation was initiated by invitation from the teacher.

### *Interviewing*

I conducted four informal conversational interviews with four students at Eastview. I audiotaped and transcribed three interviews, and took notes during one interview.

### *Collection of written documents*

I collected all of the assignment handouts that Bob Schaeffer, the teacher, designed for the language arts class.

### *Data analysis*

Through the observation of particular literacy practices in the classroom (Barton

and Hamilton, 2000), I was able to see reoccurring patterns particular to both the site and a social theory of literacy (Barton, 1994, pp.34-52). For example, defining particular roles people took in the classroom was a way to understand how the students were being positioned at Eastview. Through revisiting field notes I was able to identify patterns that referenced different aspects of the culture of Eastview. I then looked to my second data source, student interviews, for clarification of these patterns.

Analysis of students' narratives collected through an interview process assisted me in constructing "themes." Themes were then built around the data I had collected about patterns in literacy practices and patterns in students' narratives. Finally, textual analysis paid attention to the linguistic, visual, and physical features of texts used in the classroom, which clarified the definition of these themes even more. Through the observation of literacy practices, the narratives students told, and analysis of texts used in the classroom, I was able to define salient themes that shaped the curriculum at Eastview School for Pregnant and Parenting Teens.

### **Findings and Interpretations**

While at Eastview, I learned many things about the way the curriculum and the school positioned the girls who attended the school. Themes that encompassed both the positioning of students and the curriculum of the school became evident through the examination of my data, and though distinct themes emerged, they were filled with tensions and variegations. Themes, then, were not unified with a singular interpretation of them; students and teacher both spoke to the themes, though sometimes in different ways. Exploring these tensions within the themes allowed me to view Eastview's program in a more nuanced fashion. This portrait is an effort to work against portraits

that are essentialist and reductive. Too often themes present unified visions of a particular site which, in turn, reinscribes current practice. The tensions present within the themes give rise to illustrating how the teens who attend Eastview do not merely have one role, that of mother, nor does the school have one purpose, that of “salvation.”

Through the examination of my data, themes that emerged as most salient included: (1) positioning the teens as both mothers and students; (2) viewing the school as both a place of salvation and a place of community, and (3) positioning the young children as both the hope for the future and the hope for their mothers’ future.

### ***Theme 1: Positioning the girls as both mothers and students***

*Bob introduced an assignment for the day that asked girls to write in their journals in response to the prompt, “What are you good at?” As Mai read the prompt aloud she laughed and said, “I don’t know, Bob!”*

*“You don’t know? What do you mean you don’t know?” Bob asked.*

*“I’m not good at anything. I can’t think of anything,” Mai responded.*

*“Don’t you sing? I thought that I heard that you sing...what about cook? Don’t you cook at the restaurant?”*

*“Well, I guess. I don’t know. Maybe I could write ‘babysitting.’”*

*“Babysitting? No...write something besides babysitting.” Bob rolled his eyes.*

Every Friday for part of the class hour the girls at Eastview use their time in to write in their “baby journals.” The baby journal entry is guided each week by a prompt; often these prompts have a connection to the girls’ children, hence the name “baby journal.” However, the journal prompts do not just ask the girls to engage in conversations about babies and mothering. They ask the girls to be students, critically engaging in the world they inhabit.

The prompts vary widely in topic. Some examples include writing about the need for more nutritious food at the school, writing about a field trip recently taken, or writing

about a change in season. Some examples of the journal prompts include the following:

Baby journal 4C

Feb. 18, 2005

You have been examining the treatment of women both here and worldwide. As an agent of change, what are you going to do for your child, not only to protect them from the misconceptions of women in society, but also to educate them on the injustices of the past and those that still exist in the world. Will your method be different depending on the gender of your child? Why or why not? What methods of affecting change best fit into your lifestyle?

Baby journal 6C

March 11, 2005

Until what age are you responsible for your child's actions? Why is there such a push to make parents responsible for the actions of their children? Is this fair? How are you going to give your child the opportunity to make responsible decisions and act in a responsible way?

Baby journal 3C

Feb. 11, 2005

Write a paragraph or two describing your special skill or unique talent or hobby. What can you do well? What are some things that have contributed to your success in this area? How can you continue to grow or improve or stretch yourself to improve even farther?

The prompt about unique talents/ special skills from February 11, 2005 caused many girls to ponder intently as they wrote their response. Many of them thought about things related to their children, as illustrated in the previous vignette. In this conversation, Bob encouraged Mai to think about the skills, hobbies, or talents that she considered separate from those she used to parent her son, Alex. Though this might be viewed as denying the girls' the chance to respond positively to their parenting skills, Bob viewed it as a way to encourage the girls to think about themselves as inhabiting multiple roles. "Mother" was, and is, certainly one of these roles, but throughout the semester's baby journal prompts, one can see that Bob views the role of student as very important as well.

Deena, like Mai, struggled with her response to this prompt. Deena, like several girls, thought about things she did before becoming pregnant. I knew Deena was a salsa dancer by the writing "salsa mami" on her backpack, so I asked her about it.

Heidi: You were telling Anna a minute ago that you are good at salsa dancing. What's that like? How'd you get into that?

Deena: I met this guy and then her got me into it. He knew other people who did it. We were partners for a year. Yeah, we were going to go to competition but I got pregnant. And I want to go after I have the baby but I might be too busy. And it's really hard to get into competition.

Heidi: So, when you dance you can dance to whatever music they put on as long as it's salsa?

Deena: Yeah.

Heidi: Are there certain moves you have to learn?

Deena: No. You just listen to the music and you feel it. I don't know. (Laughs.) I'm like so concentrated when I'm on the dance floor.

Heidi: That sounds fun.

Deena: Yeah, it is.

Deena made the decision to write about salsa dancing, though at first she wasn't sure if that would count since she was not currently dancing.

The idea of positioning the girls as mothers/ students is not something always readily embraced in separate schools for pregnant and parenting teens. Zellman (1981) points out in an early study that academic learning for pregnant and parenting teens is secondary, and that most people believe that a girl's pregnancy and early motherhood shuts out the possibility of educational and career success.

Kelly (2000) discusses how many teens who are pregnant/ parenting were considered "unsuccessful" students prior to their pregnancy. Perceptions that students who are pregnant/ parenting are functioning at a "lower level" still abound and Kelly notes that many separate programs serve almost as a lower track from the "regular" high school. The idea of the school for pregnant/ parenting teens as "lower track" illuminates the multiple ways the school itself is positioned by both teachers and students.

Since separate programs are created to envision a curriculum and environment that is better suited for this population's learning, debate will likely always ensue about how much emphasis to place on academics versus parenting skills. Students also have differing responses in regard to answering this question. Some want the school to focus

on teaching parenting skills while others see the main function of their school as a place of community and support.

***Theme 2: Viewing the school as both a place of salvation and a place of community***

*I would rather be here [Eastview] because here it really shows you how to be a parent. Like there [previous high school] there is just regular classes. They don't show you, you know, what to do and how to do it. Cause I don't think...I think that if I wasn't to come here I wouldn't know what to do. You know, how to be a mom.*

*Krystal, age 17, Eastview student*

*Kao (age 18, Eastview student): "I think I've learned a lot at Eastview, like, in all subjects."*

*Heidi: "Have you learned a lot about parenting here?"*

*Kao: "Yeah, some, but I learned a lot about that from my mother-in-law."*

While Krystal identifies Eastview as the place where she learned everything about being a mom, Kao attributes her acquisition of knowledge about parenting to her mother-in-law. These two different views are representative of the spectrum of girls' views concerning learning about parenting at Eastview. While some girls view Eastview as an "ideal" school, others find it a transitional place for them, a place that is appropriate for them because the school may understand their life circumstances better than a "regular" high school.

Krystal's view ultimately categorizes Eastview as a place of salvation. In equating Eastview with a place of salvation, a White, middle-class ideology of mothering (Glenn, 1994) frames the activities in which the girls participate. This ideology does a number of things to reinforce ways of mothering that appear in our society as good and natural. Some of these tenets include: employment as oppositional to mothering, the child's needs as those which must always be put before one's own, and an espousal that "children need their mothers, especially when very young."

Teen mothers are automatically positioned outside these tenets of good mothering. In order, then, for them to take on the identity of a good mother, they must be remediated in certain ways and shown particular ways that they can learn to be good mothers. In many people's minds, including teachers, places like Eastview can serve to fulfill these teachings.

My first day at Eastview included a librarian giving a talk to the students about the importance of reading to one's child. In opening the lesson, she asked,

“How many of you can think of a book that was read to you as a child?”

Though a couple of girls mentioned a few responses, such as the “Bernstein Bears” and “Good Night Moon,” others mumbled to each other,

“my parents didn't read to me.”

The librarian validated those experiences that spoke to the ideology of good mothering. Other comments were either not heard or ignored.

Schools that educate pregnant/ parenting teens often use the dominant ideology of mothering to maintain their focus on parenting education. At Eastview, the students have five classes: language arts, math, science, social studies, and prenatal/ parenting class. Kelly's (2000) book points out that many students in her study found the “family management” texts to be abstract and out of date, and preferred to learn about how to be a mother informally, from each other and by talking with family members and day care providers.

Students like Kao, who relied on her mother-in-law for knowledge about parenting place an emphasis on their *already formed* ability to be good parents. For them, Eastview exists not as a place of remediation or salvation, but as a space of

community and support. LaTasha, a student at Eastview, cites the support she received at Eastview as the strength of the program, versus Krystal's citing of the knowledge imparted on her as the strength of the program.

Heidi: "What do you think the strongest point of Eastview's program is?"

LaTasha: "The strongest point is the support. When you're pregnant and you have kids like that young people need a lot of support. And, I mean, anything could happen. And here they, I mean, at the same time they teach you they support you. So, like, if you were in a big school, your teachers just, you know, you do your work and ...besides that, you and the teachers don't connect. You do your work and that's it. Whereas here they ask you about what's going on in your family and they basically get in your life whether you like it or not and that's a good thing."

Eastview's curriculum and pedagogy upholds these two views simultaneously with students embracing a wide spectrum of views about how much knowledge they need versus how much support they need. Another theme intertwined with this dichotomy of knowledge/ support addresses the positioning of the students' children. It is also one that has implications for the first theme, that which discusses the positioning of the student at Eastview as both mother and student. This final theme that emerged from my study at Eastview alludes to the numerous questions about the construction of childhood and mothering.

### ***Theme 3: Positioning young children as both the hope for the future and the hope for their mothers' futures***

*A letter to the editor from a local man was published recently in the city's newspaper. A week earlier, Eastview had been on the front page of the local paper, describing its program and some of the students enrolled in it. Reacting against this article, the local man's letter stated how Eastview "encouraged" poor choices by its very existence. In fact, that was the very heading the letter had been given: "Be careful of encouraging poor choices." The letter then went on to explain how decades ago, the man's cousin had "made a mistake" and had a child out of wedlock. She, however, took responsibility for her mistake and got a job to support herself and her child.*

*When the girls at Eastview read this letter, they had many things to say about it. One of the first things was, "But I am being responsible. I'm still in school."*

It is not uncommon to encounter viewpoints similar to those held by the local man who wrote the letter to the editor. However, it is also not uncommon to hear that teenage

mothers stay in school for their children. In fact, Kelly (2000) reports that this was the story she heard over and over in her research: teen mothers reported that they stayed in school or went back to school because of their child.

The construction of the child at Eastview was shaped through the curriculum, the views of the teachers, and the girls. While the child was not consistently viewed as innocent and pure, this was the view most often held by both students and school. Fitting with a dominant ideology of good mothering, the child was seen as the hope for the future. In a lecture about reading to one's child, the librarian stated that "children come into the world not knowing anything. It's your [the girls who attend Eastview] responsibility to teach them."

The child as the hope for the future was built around the notion that concrete ways of interacting in the world could be learned and could therefore guarantee a child's successful participation in the world. Endorsing the "school as salvation" motif, this notion of the child as blank slate also positions the mother as one who can acquire the knowledge to guarantee success for her child. That knowledge is considered to be available at Eastview.

The stories many of the girls told reflected a different construction of the child's future. They also had hopes for their children as did the school. However, the girls' hopes were framed as absent of strategy to make them realizable. Krystal says in an interview,

"I don't know, but I hope the best for Jewel [her baby]. I really hope she would go to college and, you know, finish high school. And I hope she don't be a teen mom like me cause it's hard. But you know, things happen."

In contrast to the librarian's active stance in urging the girls to be involved in the events that take place in their children's life, Krystal's stance is more passive. While framing her hopes for Jewel she refrains from referencing her own agency in Jewel's life.

Counter to this passive role, some teachers at Eastview encouraged the students to think deeply about their own choices for their futures, not just the futures of their children. Recognizing that the girls' own futures will likely be closely tied to the futures their children have, Bob encouraged the girls to think about their choice to stay in school. Positioning the children as hope for the mothers' futures instantiated the notion that schools for pregnant and parenting teens aren't just about parenting the children. They are also about educating the mothers.

Every week at some point I would hear one of the girls say that she wanted to drop out of school. Since the girls are only allowed to remain at Eastview for three school semesters, as the spring progressed many of them were starting to think about where to continue their education in the fall. Though some girls responded by laughing and saying to the person who wanted to drop out to "at least wait until the summer to drop out," Bob engaged this student who was questioning staying in school in conversation about why she wanted to drop out. Then, helping her think of schooling options, Bob would always support her decision to investigate possible programs in which she could enroll. Instead of positioning himself as a lecturer on the merits of staying in school, Bob would always support the girls in their contemplation of how they could continue their schooling. They were positioned by him as competent people who could choose what is best for them. Pregnant and parenting teens as a group have been perceived of as having learning, emotional, or behavioral problems. Some teachers, like

Bob, favored the idea of treating the girls as competent individuals while other staff, such as the librarian, consistently positioned the girls as in need of remediation.

### **Discussion and Implications**

Eastview Program for Pregnant and Parenting Teens, due to the tensions outlined in the three main themes present: (1) positioning the teens as both mothers and students; (2) viewing the school as both a place of salvation and a place of community, and (3) positioning the young children as both the hope for the future and the hope for their mothers' future does not present a "resolved" vision of what the schooling of pregnant teens should look like, yet it does reassign the identity of the pregnant teen as an individual who is both mother and student. This reassignment, a critical finding, can serve as a bridge to better understanding what kind of curriculum can best serve these teens. This finding can also assist us in looking more closely at separate programs for pregnant and parenting teens. Often demonized, it is possible that these programs contain elements that serve students in positive ways.

Consequently, Pillow's (2004) call for an examination of the curriculum for pregnant teens is well justified. Even though policy surrounding the schooling of pregnant teens has been documented (Luker, 1996; Kelly, 2000; Pillow, 1997, 2004), little has been written about the teaching and learning that goes on in these schools. Framing the possibility that schools such as Eastview can be decidedly feminist, Pillow frames the need for the questions I ask in my work about the schooling of teen mothers. Instead of understanding these schools as previously documented in literature as exclusionary and remedial, schools that educate pregnant and parenting teens, like Eastview, can move to challenge notions that have traditionally framed the education of

teen mothers. Many girls who attend schools like Eastview, through their narratives and actions, are able to challenge dominant versions of schooling for groups of students historically labeled as deviant. While questions still abound concerning whether or not separate schools for pregnant/ parenting teens are the best choice for students, my research has uncovered the existence of many positive things occurring at Eastview.

## References

- Bakhtin, M.M. (1986). The problem of speech genres. In C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Eds.), *Speech genres and other late essays* (pp. 60-102). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Barton, D. (1994). *Literacy: An Introduction to the Ecology of Written Language*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Barton, D. and Hamilton, M. (1998). *Local Literacies: reading and writing in one community*. London: Routledge.
- Barton, D. and Hamilton, M. (2000). *Situated Literacies: reading and writing in context*. London: Routledge.
- Brandt, D. (2000). *Literacy in American Lives*.
- Dyson, Anne Haas. (1995). Writing Children: Reinventing the Development of Childhood Literacy. *Written Communication, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 4-46*.
- . (1997a). Rewriting for, and by, the Children: The Social and Ideological Fate of a Media Miss in an Urban Classroom. *Written Communication, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 275-312*.
- . (1997b) *Writing Superheroes: Contemporary Childhood, popular culture, and classroom literacy*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Gee, J. P. (1996). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in Discourses* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Falmer Press.
- Glenn, E.N. (1994). Social Constructions of mothering: A thematic overview. In E.N. Glenn, G. Chang, and L.R. Forcey (Eds.), *Mothering: Ideology, experience, and Agency* (pp. 1-29). New York: Routledge.
- Kelly, D. M. (2000). *Pregnant with Meaning*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Lesko, N. (2001). *Act Your Age! A Cultural Construction of Adolescence*. New York, NY: Routledge Falmer.
- Luker, K. (1996). *Dubious conceptions: the politics of teenage pregnancy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Luttrell, W. (2003). *Pregnant Bodies, Fertile Minds*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ormerod, F. and Ivanic, R. (2000). Interpreting the physical characteristics of children's project work. In Barton, D., Hamilton, M., and Ivanic, R. (Eds.)

- Situated Literacies: reading and writing in context.* London: Routledge.
- Pillow, W. S. (1997). Exposed Methodology: The body as a deconstructive practice. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 10(3), pp. 349-363.
- Pillow, W. (2004). *Unfit Subjects*. New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Street, B. (1984). *Literacy in theory and practice*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press.
- Street, B. (1993). (ed.) (1993). *Literacy in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Street, B. (1995). *Social Literacies: Critical Approaches to Literacy in Development, Ethnography, and Education*. London: Longman.
- Zellman, G. (1981). *A Title IX Perspective on the Schools' Response to Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand.