

The Political Geographies of Pregnancy

Laura R. Woliver
Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002.

Reviewed by Jan E. Thomas

The Political Geographies of Pregnancy examines a broad range of reproductive issues and illustrates the ways in which women's reproductive power is being eroded. The book's five central chapters each address one of these issues: reproductive technologies; the human genome project; abortion; adoption and surrogacy; and legal controls over pregnant women's bodies. This broad spectrum of topics draws attention to the variety of subtle and not so subtle mechanisms through which pregnancy and reproduction have become disembodied from the pregnant woman and her lived experience. Throughout her analysis, Laura Woliver draws on feminist standpoint theory, feminist ethics of care, and human dependency theory. As a political scientist, Woliver is particularly interested in bringing women's voices into reproductive policy-making and practice.

To illustrate the pervasiveness of the "shifting terrains," several themes are woven throughout the book. First is the inverse relationship between medical technology and women's agency. While more technology should give women more choices, the reverse in fact has been more typical as new technologies become "standard" procedures (ultrasound, fetal monitoring, prenatal testing, for instance). A second important theme is how the focus on political and technological control of reproduction has shifted attention away from the personal, social, political, and economic context of pregnancy. Women's access to abortion or genetic counseling, economic pressures faced by some surrogate mothers, and the lack of drug treatment programs for pregnant addicts are all rendered invisible when reproduction is viewed as a medical event and the fetus is accorded political personhood, separate from the woman.

A cautionary theme is the potential abuses of these new "shifting terrains" of reproductive power (intentional and unintentional). For example, the chapter on the human genome project, suggests new genetic information might be used by insurance companies or employers to discriminate against people with specific genetic traits. As reproduction becomes the terrain of politicians, law enforcement officers arrest pregnant women for using drugs. Will they soon arrest pregnant women for smoking or having a glass of wine?

A final theme involves the corrective lens that Woliver feels we need to adopt—an ethic of justice and care. How would policy be different if we replaced values of autonomy and independence with values of nurturing and care? What if policies were made to reflect the accounts and context of the people they affect? The conclusion explores these issues with a lengthy

example of mothering special needs children. In this example, the author pulls together the various themes and tries to show the interconnections between the issues of technology, new genetic knowledge, and cultural understandings of motherhood.

In *The Political Geographies of Pregnancy*, Woliver moves beyond an analysis of the shifting locations of reproduction (the “geography”) and examines the political dimensions of these changes. The book is a good overview of the variety of ways in which the state and medical professionals exert control over pregnant women. I found the introduction especially useful, but the threads that link the chapters were tenuous and difficult to follow. The conclusion begins with a postmodern view of reproduction, the body, and situated knowledge before returning to the need for society to adopt a feminist ethic of care and justice. As Woliver notes in her conclusion, “the new reproductive arrangements must imagine women’s bodily integrity as essential to an integrated, coherent, individuated whole” (169). She is convincing in her argument that if the “terrain” of pregnancy and reproduction continues to shift towards medical and political control, our society will continue to move away from these goals. Women must regain control of their reproductive power.

Growing Up Again: Parenting Ourselves, Parenting Our Children. Second ed.

Jean Illsley Clarke and Connie Dawson
Minnesota: Hazeldon, 1998

Reviewed by Farah M. Shroff

This is a how-to book, written primarily for parents who come from “uneven parenting” (the authors prefer this term to “dysfunctional”) backgrounds. Clarke and Dawson define parenting as “the daily demand of knowing what to do, when to do it and how to do it and then doing it” (9). They explain the range of parenting styles as abusive; conditional care; assertive care; supportive care; overindulgent; and neglectful. Many pages are devoted to defining these different parenting styles; assertive and supportive care are considered the ideal types of parenting.

Many examples illustrate the differences between parenting styles, such as the following:

Situation: Teenage son is surrounded by pressure to use alcohol.

The parent:

Abuse: Regularly searches teen’s personal belongings, listens in on