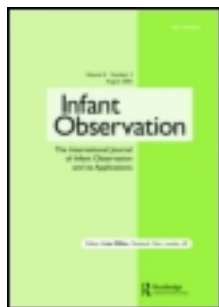


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Why teenagers have babies

Margot Waddell*

In trying to determine some of the factors which underlie teenage pregnancy, this paper offers a brief recapitulation of the nature and function of the adolescent process. It stresses the significance of the mother/baby/dyad in the light of the renewed infantile emotional states of the teenager. Special emphasis is put on the quality of early containment and on the internal world experiences of being parented as well as the external pressures of the adolescent world.

Keywords: the adolescent process; containment; puberty; Oedipus complex

Introduction

Adolescence is inevitably a tumultuous time. The normally regressive tendencies of the teenager are often especially pronounced when very early mother/infant relationships have failed to establish a strong enough sense of identity or a secure enough basis for managing the complex tasks that attend these transitional years. Such tasks include those of separation and individuation, of loss, of choice, of dependency, and the difficult process of moving from a place in the family to a place in the outside world. What tends to happen is that old conflicts, especially those of early attachments in infancy and of Oedipal struggles are being reworked – conflicts which test the quality of early containment and the internalization of principles and values which foster the development of the personality rather than hinder, or even arrest, the process of growing up.

If the ordinary struggles of the first five years – especially those involving passionate feelings towards one parent and intense hostility towards the other (including alternations between the two) – have remained largely unresolved, it may be that with the revival at puberty of these original feelings, now intensified by biological changes, extreme measures will be resorted to, to try to manage these new and untried responses. Sexual activity may represent an escape, through physical arousal and excitement, from the tumult of change and uncertainty. Un-resolvable internal conflicts are enacted externally. Thus, fears of abandonment and the loss of childhood relationships drive young people defensively into premature sexual activity.

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In seeking to understand something of the determinants of teenage pregnancy, I shall begin with a brief recapitulation of the nature and function of the adolescent process itself. I shall then focus, in more detail, on what specifically may underlie any particular teenage pregnancy – a pressing issue currently in view of the ever-rising number of these in Britain. I shall be thinking, in some depth, about the developmental picture, about the impact of the infantile emotional states and personal dynamics which tend, in the normal course of things, to be renewed during the teenage years. I shall especially be stressing the significance of the mother/baby dyad and also that of the complex triangular relationship which develops between mother, baby and ‘other’. These matters will, hopefully, be clarified with a variety of vignettes and observational material.

I shall begin with a few brief, but instructive, vignettes. A 25-year-old young man, Dave, reported that he had a baby with his then girlfriend when the two of them were 17. They had stayed together for about a year and then broken up because his girlfriend couldn’t bear his parents’ unremitting hostility towards her. He was devastated because he now scarcely saw his son in whose care he had been taking a big part. His parents’ objections were apparently about race and class. Dave described them as both snobbish and racist and felt that, certainly, a component in his risk-taking, sexual behaviour at the time, was his intense opposition to them and what they stood for. Although he had not seen it like that at the time, he said, he thought that somehow or other the pregnancy was deliberate, almost a choice.

Sharon said that many years ago, when she was 15, she had some unfamiliar tummy pains. Her general practitioner took some tests and a few days later called her back to the surgery. Looking grave, he told her that he had very, very bad news for her, very bad indeed. Effectively this would ruin her life. Stricken, Sharon waited for him to explain her fate. ‘You’re pregnant’, he said. Furious, Sharon had apparently jumped up, shouted at him that it might change her life but it wouldn’t ruin it, and ran out, slamming the door behind her. It was certainly tough, she said, but she never regretted giving birth so young.

Nineteen-year-old Sally told me that the only thing she felt bad about was *how* she had got pregnant, not *that* she had got pregnant. She had got her boyfriend drunk and had done nothing about contraception. She had just been desperate to have a baby. All her life she had felt this great ‘empty hole’ inside her and had ‘known’ that having a baby of her own was the only way it would ever be filled.

Two 15-year-olds, Tom and Susan, looked at me as if still in shock. Susan said that she’d noticed putting on a bit of weight but she’d also starting feeling somehow weird. Her doctor told her that she was six months pregnant. ‘It’s our General Certificate of Secondary Education year. This is a catastrophe’, she said. ‘We used to drink far more then’, Susan added, ‘and I suppose I often really didn’t know what was happening’.

These brief, and I am sure wholly recognisable comments, establish a central point: that teenage pregnancy stems from a wide range of motivations. Far from being simply the result of ignorance, stupidity or accident, pregnancy is often an expression of complex impulses and feelings, whether conscious or not. It is an expression of a 'choice' of sorts. I shall give a further, longer example, before exploring in psychological terms some of the determinants of the kinds of internal, as well as external processes and pressures which characterise this age group and its typical stresses and vulnerabilities. For working with the emotional needs of pregnant teenagers and very young parents involves a sense of the specificity of adolescent concerns, so that we can, in each case, derive some idea of what this particular pregnancy means to this particular person.

I have chosen to describe 14-year-old Christine, at greater length than a brief account elsewhere (Waddell, 1998/2002), because her dilemmas and conflicts are typical of many young teenagers and are suggestive of the themes that I shall be exploring later. Christine had been referred for counselling because of her increasingly challenging behaviour, her moodiness and rapid swings between infantile and pseudo-adult states of mind. She had long been a troubled girl, tending to act on impulse rather than to think. She had become a problem to herself as well as to those around her. The last straw, as far as her mother and her school were concerned, was when Christine started stealing, mainly objects belonging to her mother or grandmother – a wedding ring, earrings, a watch, and, in the most recent incident, a large sum of money. She had spent most of the money on grown-up, sexually-alluring clothes which she ostentatiously wore in what seemed like an invitation to be found out.

Christine had been brought up by her single mother who had become pregnant by a casual boyfriend when she was 16. Christine had never met her father. Her mother, whose own father had died when she was very young, had had several relationships during Christine's childhood, though none of them serious until recently, when newly-met Paul unexpectedly moved in. It was at this time that the stealing had begun. Christine's behaviour rapidly deteriorated and arguments flared. By her own account, she would try to drive a wedge between her mother and Paul and, for the first time, her attitude towards her mother became sulky and oppositional. She would wander around the house in a state of semi-undress; when her mother objected, Christine would tell her that she was only jealous because she was becoming a fat old bag. Her mother, a trim and attractive 30-year-old, was described by Christine as being alternately in tears about 'losing my daughter, my baby girl', and furious about her daughter's indiscipline and provocations. Paul was deemed unreasonably angry and possessive of his new partner and was said to have shouted at Christine, 'We'll have to throw you out if things go on like this'.

Christine outlined to the counsellor her plans to move out of her own accord. She would get a flat, do it up and have a baby. But, she added, suddenly tearful, she would need to have her Mum behind her: 'I couldn't do it alone'.

It is evident how vulnerable Christine was to actually getting pregnant. Her story brings together a number of factors that are typical of teenage pregnancies. Her own mother was a teenager when she first conceived; as a young woman who had herself been brought up effectively by a single mother. Christine's grandmother had done much of the caring for her immature, unhappy and rather volatile young daughter's baby while the daughter worked long hours in a local bakery. In other words, though loved, Christine did not enjoy the kind of consistent emotional attentiveness that contributes so much to a baby's getting to know him or herself, and to a familial climate of security and care. She had only had to share her mother with her grandmother and had certainly regarded both of them as her own exclusive possessions. She was quite unprepared for the impact of Paul's arrival on her mental equilibrium, and had few internal resources to control the anger and desperation that his arrival stirred in her.

What emerged in the counselling sessions was that underlying the intensity of the impact was the fact that Christine, as so many of her age, was also fearful of growing up at all, of separating, of becoming a woman, of finding a regular boyfriend, going out to work and leaving the dubious containment of what family she had for the unknowns of the world outside. She was especially terrified of being ousted from her relationship with her mother, to whom she had been only insecurely attached. The apparently robust and feisty young woman yielded to a frightened and insecure child part of herself, confused about where she really fitted in, lacking confidence or much sense of self-esteem.

It is of note that Christine started stealing soon after Paul moved in. At puberty, stealing is one of the most common manifestations of 'acting out'. It may represent any one of a range of meanings: perhaps of restoring what is felt to have been lost; here a mother/daughter relationship. It may be aggressive – that is, to deprive someone else of a treasured possession out of primitive envy and rage, or of precious things of which the person himself or herself feels deprived, and consequently impoverished. In Christine's case there may well have been feelings of guilt and a desire for punishment in relation to her attitude to Paul. Was this, in other words, a protest? Or was it a statement about something having been stolen from her to which she had a right (the commitment symbolised by the wedding ring was something which she now felt that she herself lacked)? Was the problem one of anxiety about her own attractiveness (it was feminine things that were stolen – a ring, a necklace, a purse, clothes, a watch)? Was there also a jealous attack on her mother and the desire to take her mother's partner away from her, a desire enacted by the flaunting of her own sexuality? Whatever the specific reasons there was clearly a general anxiety about change and growing up, about losing the relationships on which she was so dependent.

All these factors would naturally, though probably not consciously, contribute to the kind of infantile neediness and fear of being left out that is often central to the picture of teenage pregnancy. If there is a boyfriend in the frame, as was peripherally the case with Christine, there may be a fantasy of

being able to create a 'real' family – a mum and dad and a baby scenario, the idealised realisation of what for three generations in her family had never been. Equally, there may be a fantasy, based on identification with the baby, of having the enduringly infantile part of the self looked after by the mother whom she probably never had in the terms that she needed. ('I want my mum behind me to bring up my baby at home'). The deprived child-like Christine seeks to recreate a situation in which she can continue to have her own infantile needs met by entrusting her own baby-self to her mother who is then also her partner in parenting. Thus any aspect of paternity is relegated to a functional and dispensable position. Christine wanted her mother to remain her mother and not be a sexual partner to Paul. So she set herself up in competition. There was no underwear, the counsellor was told, beneath the tracksuit that was sported around the house, and there were explicitly sexual garments bought with the spoils of Christine's forays into stealing. She feared that she could not count on her mother's continued emotional support for her daughter's necessary feminine independence and her need to establish a secure heterosexual relationship of her own. To feel, deep down, uncertain about being able to count on external and internal loving resources not only drove Christine to steal the symbols of commitment and femininity, the concrete representations of feared emotional deficit, but also, when the internal experience of deprivation was mobilized, as with Paul's arrival, to run the risk of enacting the most basic of internal scenarios – that of becoming pregnant in order to preserve, revive, repair or re-live the original mother/baby link.

The prevailing states of mind for teenagers tend to favour action rather than thought, and to provoke infantile rather than adult responses. For any young person, the integration of the mature sexual body into the unsettled experience of personal identity is a major feat. But for those who, like Christine, lack the internal and external experience of solid parenting, the pseudo-solution may well take the form of sexually risk-taking behaviour of a kind that unconsciously replicates, in actuality, precisely the situation of deprivation that cannot be consciously thought about. The teenage mother may interchangeably be identified with an idealised version of her own disadvantaged mother, or, equally, with the baby who is felt now to enjoy total maternal care, a source of infantile fulfilment, but also, often of envy for what never was. Almost every teenager who chooses to get pregnant will talk in terms of the desire for 'unconditional love', both for and from the baby. Sadly, the harsh reality of caring for a baby with such immature emotional resources seldom fulfils this imagined ideal.

Whereas the circumstances of each person's life are unique, nonetheless Christine's situation contains the elements and determinants of many stories of teenage pregnancy. To the personal, individual details must be added the cultural and political picture – not so much our immediate concern, but certainly one requiring a mention. For in this country, we need to bear in mind the backfiring of recent government policies of sex education. The idea that readily available and confidential contraception for teenagers would reduce pregnancy rates has taken an

unexpected turn. As the press recently reported, Britain tops the league table of teenage mothers in Western Europe, despite also having a record number of school-age abortions. It seems that the availability of standard contraceptives and morning-after pills without parental consent is normalizing underage sex, and reducing the more ordinary disincentives and natural inhibitions. The press also points out the tendency for early single parenthood to be a generational matter, as was the case with Christine. When parent-led individual responsibility, for which the seeds are sown in the earliest years, is lacking, then internal primitive anxieties of the sort from which Christine suffered may well result in sexual activity. Some sociologists stress the decline of the conventional family structure in this country, by contrast with other parts of Europe, as being an important factor in the turning of a blind parental eye to the activities of the young.

In these circumstances, pregnancy may not be just an accident but rather a conscious or unconscious choice. Where the paternal presence has been peripheral or absent, there is often some considerable contempt, on the girl's part, for young men who themselves, perhaps, suffering from lack of self-esteem and from having inadequate role models, tend to privilege sexual conquest over intimate relationships and to regard contraception as definitely *unmanly*. Even if there is a sense of commitment between the young and immature couple, this tends to be of a somewhat 'dolls' house' kind in which reality is seldom consonant with the imagined picture. The kind of couple that adolescents manage to become, whether transitory or more lasting, whether destructive or developmentally helpful, is very much dependent on the kinds of couple, or absence of couple, that they have experienced from the first, as we have just seen with Christine. What we have also seen, both with her and with the young people described earlier, is just how tumultuous ordinary adolescence can be.

I shall now write, in more detail, about those normally regressive tendencies of the teenager which are often especially pronounced when early mother/infant relationships have failed to establish a secure basis for managing the tasks that attend these later years. If the ordinary struggles of the first five years, especially those involving Oedipal conflicts have remained largely unresolved, it may be that sexual activity constitutes an escape, through physical arousal and excitement. Unresolved internal conflicts tend to be enacted externally. Thus, fears of abandonment and loss of childhood relationships drive young people defensively into premature sexual activity.

These are years when there is a simultaneous drive towards both integration and fragmentation: years characterised by drastic defences against the psychic turmoil involved; years when there is a strong pull towards a pairing relationship of a kind which, it is important to say, can represent a vast range of diverse internal states which defy ordinary generalisations. For example, the establishing of an early 'long-term' relationship *may* indicate an unusually mature capacity for intimacy. But it may, just as possibly, signify an avoidance of adolescent disturbance by means of a pseudo-adult identification with 'being-a-couple'. By contrast, an apparently promiscuous approach to sexuality

may represent just that – a reliance on multiple sexual experiences as a defence against a feeling of inadequacy and unloveability. But (to put the matter equally schematically) such an approach *may* indicate an exploratory and constructively experimental struggle to resolve the adolescent's dilemma. In which case, serial sexual partners could be a way of seeking a relationship not so much through mindless erotic adventures, but through the capacity to risk loving and losing in the name of fully engaging with life. There are, of course, innumerable positions beyond and between.

For the last part I want to concentrate on the two areas of infantile experience that I have already mentioned – the process of containment and the nature of Oedipal struggles, in order to link them to later developmental difficulties. Freud (1933) once wrote, 'If we throw a crystal to the floor, it breaks; but not into haphazard pieces. It comes apart along its lines of cleavage into fragments whose boundaries, though they were invisible, were predetermined by the crystal's structure' (p. 59).

The notion of planes of cleavage affords a way of thinking about the underlying operation of forces which often only become apparent later on, especially so in adolescence, when the stress of whatever undertaking it might be reveals cracks and fissures, vulnerabilities and weaknesses, which, though they may long have been present in the personality, have not been manifest hitherto. The nature of these underlying forces predominantly relates to the baby's early experience, particularly to the extent to which mental and emotional states were, as it were, held and understood by the mother or primary caretaker. It is these forces which shape people's inside lives, which influence the sort of internal picture that people build up of their parents which, as we all know, may bear little resemblance to the external realities.

I shall give a brief example of a picture exhibition in the gallery of a primary school in order to indicate how very differently a group of five-year-olds experienced a small flood which swept through their village when a dam further up the mountain burst and water came rushing down the hillside. Each child had a similar experience, obviously, of the depth of the water and the degree of danger, or lack of danger, involved. But the pictures they painted were fundamentally different. Very briefly, one child had depicted a church tower with a small huddle of people at the top and water almost reaching the parapet. The sky was dark and scary with clouds scudding by and no moon in sight. There were sharks and whales thrashing in the water and a look of terror on everybody's face.

The picture beside that was entirely different. It could almost have been a Bank Holiday. There were puddles on the ground, buckets and spades, a few rubber balls and plastic ducks. The sky was bright with a smiley sun up in the corner. There were red Wellingtons around and signs of water but, on the whole, simply rather small and shallow pools.

The third depicted a parental-looking figure with a sack marked 'Provisions' on his back, leading a group of children in crocodile formation up some half-flooded

steps now above the water line. The line was drawn more or less exactly as it had been in reality.

A fourth picture was very precise, ruled with lines and measurements between the village square, the church, the butcher, and prolific labels, 'This is my house', 'This is where my Gran lives', 'This is my school' and so on.

A fifth picture was simply a black wash of paint with no figurative representation at all.

The first child clearly brought to the experience of the flood an anxious perception of things. Set-backs were catastrophes. The dangers that were perceived in the external world were a great deal exaggerated. Perhaps this child had anxious parents who *did* view set-backs as catastrophes and were not able to help their child with his or her unrealistic fears and fantasies. By contrast, the second picture was equally unrealistic. The flood, real enough in itself, had been wholly under-rated and turned into some kind of manic Bank Holiday atmosphere with a few puddles and, as I say, many Wellingtons. The third picture, as you will have realised, approximated much more closely the actual event. This child carried with him, or her, an internal picture of a parent who would always have foresight, who would provide, who had a realistic expectation of life, and who was able to protect and lead the children wisely to safety. The fourth child seemed to suffer from something quite obsessional, in that no ordinary imaginary expression of things was possible, simply quantification, labelling and exactness – a defence against anxiety rather than a capacity to express it symbolically. The fifth child was simply too utterly overwhelmed by the experience to find any symbolic means of representing it on paper at all.

Each of these children was demonstrating the nature of what we would call their 'inner world', a world which has been forming since the moment they were born – indeed, I would argue, well before they were born. Internal reality is by no means the same as external reality.

As I have suggested, two significant determinants of the culture of this inner world are the nature of the original mother/baby relationship and, later, the way in which a third term is introduced into that first dyad. Later in her life, Melanie Klein (1959) wrote conclusively that, 'nothing that ever existed in the unconscious completely loses its influence on the personality' (p. 262). She observed how we can gain insight into the way: 'our mind, our habits, and our views have been built up from the earliest infantile fantasies and emotions to the most complex and sophisticated adult manifestations' (p. 262).

Let us take a simple example from the beginning of the life-cycle: as a mind is observed encountering another mind, it is possible to identify both the seeds of those factors which may nurture, and also of those which may obstruct potential mental and emotional development. The following extract is from the quoted notes (Waddell, 2006) of an observer who, as part of her training in child psychotherapy, would spend one hour a week in an ordinary household watching the interactions between the baby and his or her family.

Fred at 4½ months

When I came in today, Fred was sitting in his bouncy chair in front of the washing machine, watching the drum going around. His mother was leaning back against the worktop facing him. Laughing, she said that he was going mad with it. He was indeed, very excited. As the machine rumbled and spun, so he waved his arms and legs. But the excitement peaked as his Mum, in imitation, made a low, rumbling sound deep in her chest. While she did this Fred's face was alert and watching, listening intensely to the sound. His mouth was open as if he was literally 'taking her in'. Every time she finished her performance, his arms and legs were released in a frenzy of activity: his legs stiffening and suddenly drawn back against his chest, his arms waving up and down, his hands alternately clenched and shooting open, all fingers rigidly extended. He made a variety of explosive noises: squeals, lip-bubbling, dribbling and spraying saliva, rich chortles which seemed almost like laughing. As if exhausted by these outbursts, he would lapse back into relative stillness while his face tensed in expectation, his eyes riveted to his Mum's face, waiting for her to take up the 'dialogue'.

When, for example, she turned to talk to me, to tell me that Fred had discovered the mouth-bubbling only this week, Fred remained tense, but his expression changed, as if a light had gone out. This happened two or three times. During these interruptions, Fred seemed to wait patiently, suspended, his face losing its animation but ready to re-engage as soon as she turned back to him, which she did quite quickly on each occasion. I found these interludes quite painful and felt relieved when she would turn back to him just before he could become too disappointed and therefore distressed. (She seemed to have a remarkable sense of precisely when this point might be and each time avoided it.)

This observational extract is suggestive of all sorts of possibilities – ones which may or may not be borne out as the pattern of Fred's relationships with his mother and family unfold, and the quality and intensity of the kinds of exchange so vividly described here can be gauged and reflected on over time. A baby's fascination with the visual effects and changing sounds and rhythms of a washing machine is a common enough sight. But, as it emerges, Fred's chair has been positioned not so much to distract and preoccupy, as an older child might, for example, be placed in front of a television, but rather in such a way as to be part of a richly shared relationship with his imaginative and intuitive mother. The observer, too, is sensitive to the specificity of the exchange. Fred's ecstasy and anticipation of fulfilment seems to involve the sense of a 'taking in', perhaps even of a 'drinking in', of a joyful quality of reciprocity and recognition – as if mother and infant is each conveying 'how wonderful you make me feel'. Fred is expressing his delight by every means at his disposal, the small degree of delayed gratification seeming only to add to the intensity of his eventual pleasure.

It is clear that when Fred has to share his mother's attention with a third – the observer – some significant psychic events are set in train. The observer finds herself painfully identified with Fred's distress, his disillusionment and

disappointment at another relationship intruding on his feeling of perfect rapport. But she is also, nonetheless, able to appreciate that this mother has a capacity to register and understand what is within Fred's compass, and to re-focus her attention before its absence extends beyond him. In quite simple, yet subtle, ways we can trace how the minutiae of the observation of simultaneous external and internal emotional events suggest the beginnings of profoundly important patterns of developmental possibility. Movingly, the observer describes how the light seems to go out of Fred's world when he loses the passionate intensity of his mother's gaze and involvement. And yet he is able briefly to sustain the absence of the former exclusivity and to re-ignite lost pleasure as soon as he re-finds his mother because, as the description makes clear, she 'knows', and unconsciously 'times', the degree of frustration that her son can bear.

Here we see, in embryonic form, the beginnings of a baby being able to tolerate the introduction of a third party into the primary mother/infant dyad. In some analytic frameworks, this would signal aspects of the early Oedipal constellation. Freud took up Sophocles's version of one of the Greek myths in order to illustrate what he found to be a universal 'complex', as he called it, in human nature. He noticed, in himself and others, the tendency to love the parent of the opposite gender and hate the parent of shared gender. From a very young age the person struggles with feelings of love and hate within, and struggles, in particular, with not being the centre of the world of the person he or she loves. The Greek myth depicted parents who were worried by the Delphic Oracle foretelling that their newborn son, Oedipus, would kill his father and marry his mother. In fear of such a terrible eventuality they left him on a hillside to die. The myth describes how these events did come about and were felt, by Freud to depict universal phenomena in human nature.

In other psychoanalytic ways of thinking, the quality of early experience just described in relation to Freud might offer evidence of a mother's desire reciprocally to get to know her baby, thus allowing him, if it is a boy, to get to know her and himself in her, as a step towards knowing himself in himself. Thus the observer's reflections, inward as she seems to be with Fred's disappointment and with his mother's confidence, enable us to derive a sense of how this mother's understanding of her son's mental and emotional capacities contributes, in turn, to his own capacities to tolerate anxiety and frustration and to learn that disappointments need not be disasters. One infers that these very capacities to take in are already quite developed in Fred and that the gap between desire and satisfaction has long been bridged by a rudimentary form of 'mental holding' or 'reverie', as the psychoanalyst Bion puts it, which the observer is both witnessing and also experiencing and learning from. A modicum of anxiety, if contained, is part of getting to know oneself and of developing one's own resilience.

To go back to the picture gallery, we can see the consequences of the varying early experiences of the containment of anxiety amongst the young painters

described – the range of defensive strategies clearly adopted very early on to manage anxiety in the absence of any properly secure internal structure for so doing. It is important to keep this in mind when thinking not just about infancy and young children but about the whole life cycle and, most especially, as I have suggested, the teenage years when these issues of frustration and anxiety, of loneliness and confusion, are so particularly evident. The adolescent who, as a baby, enjoyed the kind of experiences which were part of Fred's everyday life, would be much better able to withstand the stresses of this inevitably tumultuous time if able to draw on an internal version of a parent who can support extreme states of mind in the way that Fred's mother so clearly could, as could the parents of the third little painter whose emotional resources would seem to have resided in early experiences of wise and well-balanced parenting.

In my own practice, I have often come across teenage pregnancies occurring in the context of a mother having a last baby, to the absolute horror of her teenage daughter who had long believed that her parents no longer had a sexual relationship, in fact probably had never had intercourse since she herself was conceived! A mother's late pregnancy is an intense shock in most circumstances and it is not surprising that the response to it should be the child herself suddenly becoming sexually active and clearly at risk of getting pregnant, whether in competition with her mother, or in desperation at losing the previous mother/baby relationship (that between her mother and herself), or in a state of jealous destructiveness at the parents' ongoing sexual relationship. Whatever the reason, one can see the adolescent's difficulty in dealing with extreme emotional pain without seeking to enact some version of the pain, usually destructively.

To come back to our first examples, I hope that it will now be clear how central to the adolescent psyche are the two contributions to an understanding of human development just described, the theory of containment and that of the Oedipus complex. It is in the interrelationship of external circumstances and the internal weighting and freighting of the kinds of psychological mechanisms I have been tracing that the respective motivations, whether conscious or unconscious, for pregnancy among teenagers reside. It is here that we will be able to make those crucial discriminations between whether the original mother/baby relationship is being attacked, preserved, repaired, re-lived or revived. And these distinctions are of crucial importance for the present and future welfare of all those involved.

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