

Daphne Cockwell
SCHOOL OF NURSING



The Good Mother: Experiences of Canadian Adolescent Mothers Living in Rural Communities

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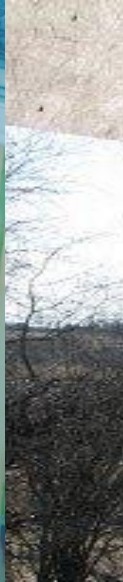
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Everyone Makes a Mark

Outline

- My Story
- Literature Review
- The Methods
- The Findings
- Implications and Recommendations

My Story



Literature Review

Literature suggests a myriad of health risks for both mother and baby:

- Lower socioeconomic status
- Lower education
- More stressful life events
- More emotional distress
- Poorer maternal adjustment
- Prematurity
- Low birth weight
- Delayed development
- Lower cognitive abilities
- Lower attachment
- Behavioural issues
- Negatively affects the family unit



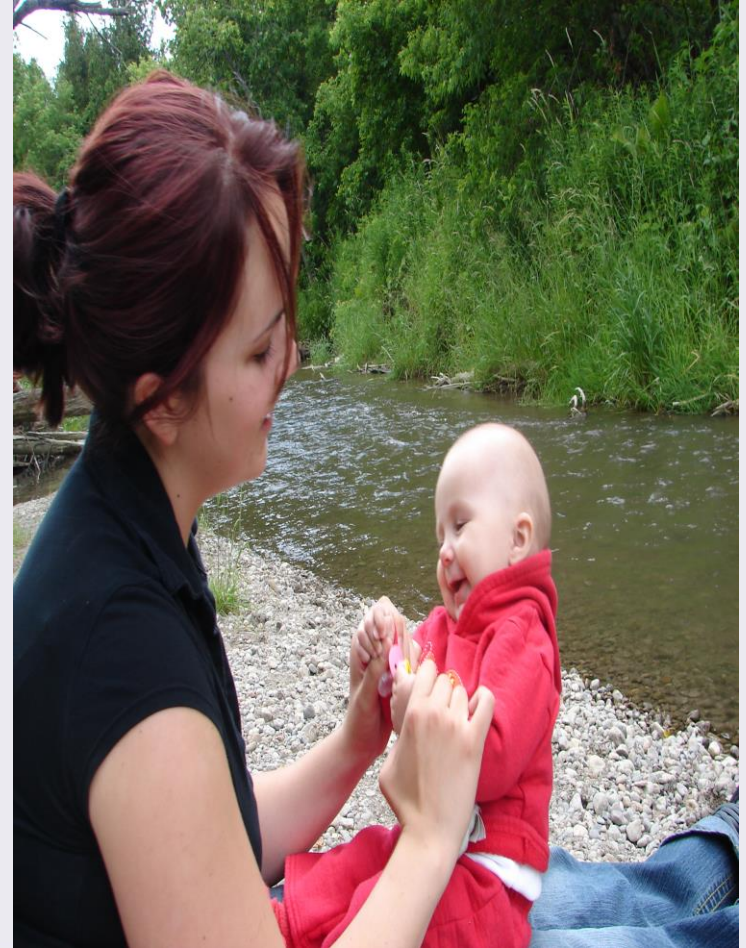
Literature Review

The Social Problem

- Controlling for social disadvantage significantly reduced/eliminated the negative effects of young maternal age
- Flawed studies used for gov't policy

The Rural Experience

- Paucity of literature from a rural Canadian context
- Existing studies focused on pregnancy prevention, birth outcomes, mental health, attachment



Research Question

What are the experiences of first-time adolescent mothers living in a rural community, with an infant under one year?

The Method

Critical theoretical lens

- Encouraged reflexivity
- Helped me to listen to the stories

Narrative inquiry approach (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998)

- Eliciting and analyzing the narratives of individuals
- Understand and bring insight into participants' experiences
- People are inherently storytellers
- Stories are a useful way of holistically explaining an experience

Study Methods

- 3 participants recruited
- Semi-structured interviews
- Journal entries elicited
- Data analyzed using a categorical approach (content & form)
- Personal reflexive accounts monitored through journaling

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Appendix A Recruitment Poster

**Are you a teenage mother living in a rural community?
Is your baby under 12 months old?**
Interested in participating in a study about being a young mother?

I am a Master of Nursing Student at Ryerson University. For my thesis, I am interested in the stories of young mothers living in rural communities.

You will be interviewed about your experience as a teenage mother and given a journal to share your insights about being a mom in a rural community. The time commitment will not exceed two hours.

Interested? Please contact:
Karen Campbell, RN, MN Student
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This study is being supervised by: Dr. Corinne Hart, Associate Professor, Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing, Ryerson University

Participants

Caitlin: Everyone has a story	Anna: Don't judge me, I'm a good mom	Bella: I am alone
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 17 years old• Baby girl 3 months• 1 prior pregnancy• History of drugs, drinking, and school truancy• Well-known in town	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 18 years old• Baby boy 2 months• Lives with mom & brother• 3 prior pregnancies• Lowest education but enrolled in high school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 18 years old• Baby boy 10 months• Geographically isolated• Complicated relationship with infant's father• Suffered symptoms of post-partum depression

The image depicts a stage with red curtains. A spotlight illuminates the center of the stage floor, where the text is displayed. The curtains are drawn back, revealing a dark stage floor and a light-colored backdrop.

Presenting Self as the Good Mother

The Good Mother

“I’m a good mom. I know I’m a good mom. My doctor even says I’m a good mom so that’s okay. I’m not doing anything wrong. I am doing everything right. Well, what I think is right. ... I do want to do that.” (Caitlin)
“Like some teenagers, just pawn their kids off on their parents ‘cause [their parents] enable them to, but I wouldn’t do that.” (Anna)
“I do everything right.” (Anna)



Overarching Narrative Idea

1. Judgement & Stigma
2. Everyone Knows You and Your Business
3. Social and Physical Isolation
4. Being an Autonomous Mother
5. Presenting the Good Father
6. Rural Adolescent Mothers' Supports



Judgement & Stigma

- Resisted existing stereotypes
- Influenced their ability to socialize
- Most offensive when it involved Children's Aid Society (CAS)

“It’s a spite call... it wasn’t deserved” (Caitlin)

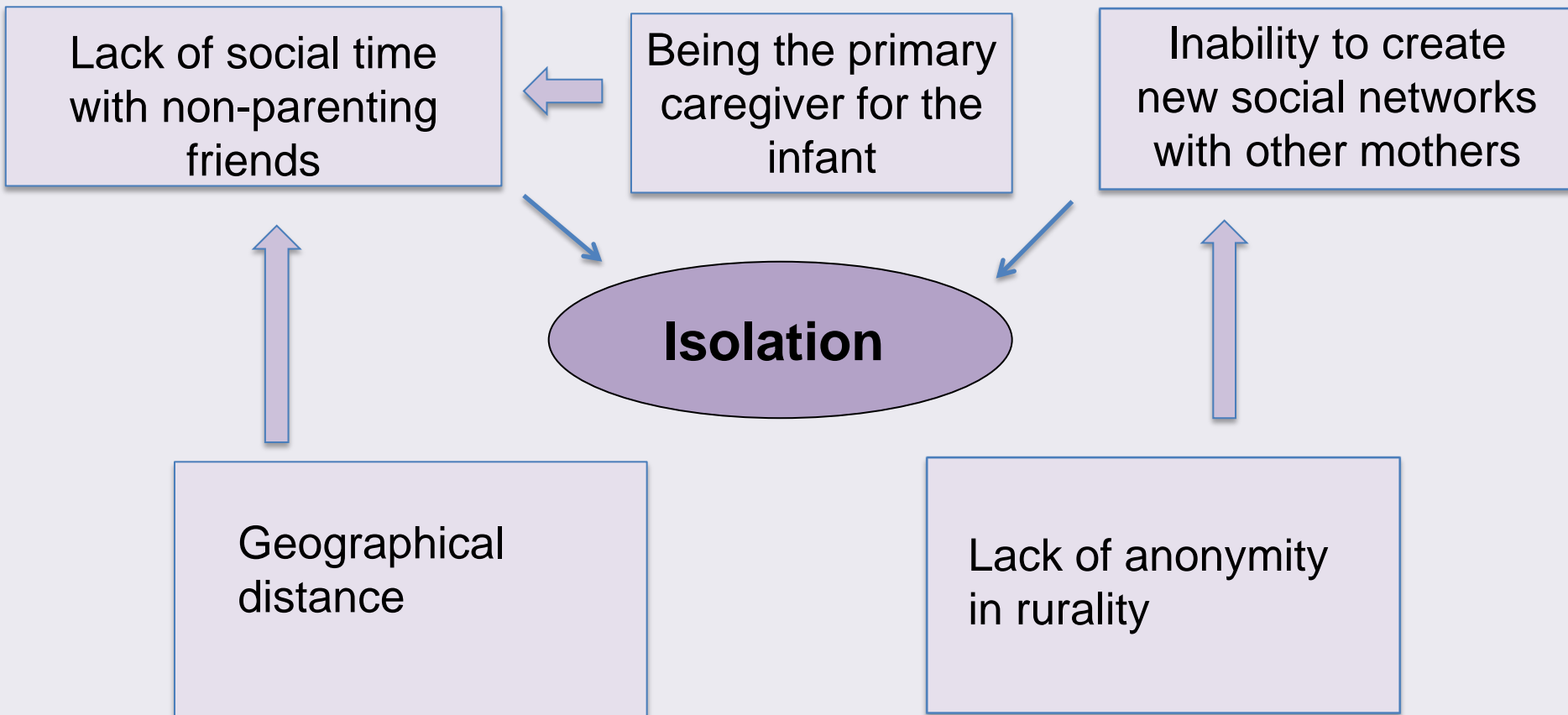
“Like if you are in town ... a lot of people stereotype you and basically say you are a bad mother because you are a young mother and that you shouldn’t have kids.” (Anna)

Everyone Knows You and Your Business

- Cast in both a positive and negative light
- Lack of anonymity found across all narratives
- Limited the ability to construct a new image

“Cause it’s not like a start like a fresh start where you can start your family because everyone already knows you. Everyone already knew you were pregnant and everyone already assumes what’s happening in your life [pause]. So, there is no privacy.” (Caitlin)

Social and Physical Isolation



Being an Autonomous Mother

- Authenticated the good mother presentation
- Determined to reach independence
- Education as a means of independence
- Relationship as a means of independence

“I’m determined to get this credit because school ends in June and I’m determined to get this one credit because I know I can do it and a child. He’s not going to stop me he’s just going to encourage me more because I’m going to think ‘ok well it’s in my best interest to get a career..colle... *(sighs)* high school diploma’ so that I can get a career and then show him the good examples.”
(Anna)

Presenting the Good Father

- Desire to present the “good” father was present in all narratives
- Participants overlooked undesirable behaviours to maintain the good father

“He just kinda like every time [the baby] cried he would pass him to me”
(Anna)

“The baby loves him a lot” (Caitlin)

“He’s a great father...”
“He’s great with him but he can get frustrated” (Bella)

Rural Adolescent Mothers' Supports

Family Support

- Main source of financial and emotional support
- Rural lack of affordable housing
- Maternal family as a positive support
- Paternal family as a negative influence

Professional Support

- Could have a negative impact on presentation as a good mother
- Aware of health services but did not access them
- Perceived lack of confidentiality
- Distance as a geographical barrier

Implications for Practice, Education, & Policy

- Consider relationship-based, strength-building programs with rural adolescent mothers
- Promoting social networking through online/text
- Incorporate rural nursing into education programs
- Use of narratives as a pedagogical tool
- Development of health policies supportive of adolescent mothers

Recommendations for Future Research

- Consider the effects of presentation of self on the development of self-identity
- Understand the decisions rural adolescent mothers make surrounding intimate partner relationships
- Development of new peer support models for rural contexts
- Development of nursing interventions that assist rural adolescent mothers



References

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Toronto, ON: Anchor Books.

Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mahiach, R., & Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative Research: Reading, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.