

Eradicating Social Isolation for Adolescent Parents, Viewed through Biopsychosocial Lens

Aliona Manvae

School of Social Work, Boston University

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Prof. Hope Haslam Straughan

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Introduction

Adolescence

Ages: 10-19

- Puberty and sexual maturation, incl. sex, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases
- Cognitive sophistication & reasoning, shift in circadian rhythm
- Developing identity, incl. tighter peer connections, bullying, peer pressure
- Movement towards autonomy & independence, incl. substance use, driving
- Deviance, violence and crime

Adolescent ("Teen") Parents

Ages: 15-19

- 14 teen births for every 1,000 births in 2021 (Osterman et al., 2023)
- Disproportionately marginalized by social class, race, ethnicity in USA
- Challenges: novel parental responsibilities, social stigma, strained relationships, mental health problems, health challenges of both mother and baby, and other factors.
- Outcomes: social isolation and adversity for parents and child

Social Isolation

"Social isolation is a silent killer – as dangerous to health as smoking. National and global health organizations have underscored the hidden, deadly, and pervasive hazards stemming from feeling alone and abandoned." (Eradicate Social Isolation, n.d.)

Literature Review

Prenatal Circumstances

■ MOTHERS' SUBOPTIMAL HEALTH

Adolescents were more likely to initiate prenatal care late, not take folic acid before or during pregnancy, have poor prenatal health behaviors, have lower breastfeeding initiation and duration rates than adult women. Adolescents were more likely to rate their own health as suboptimal. (Kingston et al., 2012)

Teenage mothers had 9.8% rates of depression during pregnancy while 20-34-year-old ones 5.8%. They self-reported higher tobacco, marijuana, and alcohol use during pregnancy than adult mothers. (Wong et al., 2020)

■ DISADVANTAGED PARENTS

Fertility rates for adolescents in minority groups, excluding Asians, were at least twice as high as those for Caucasian teens in 2021 and prior years. (Osterman et al., 2023)

Teen fathers are disproportionately minority (Black or Latino), from low-income, often single-parent households. There is evidence that they had lower academic competence, engaged in more delinquent behavior (e.g., vandalism), and had peers who engaged in more anti-social behaviors. (Bamishigbin et al., 2019)

■ STRAINED RELATIONS

Teens' parents experience unexpected shift to early grandparenthood, while often still raising their own children, and caretaking for aging parents. (Grant, 2021)

33% of unaccompanied female youth have been pregnant. 50% of unaccompanied youth have had a pregnancy experience. (National Network for Youth, 2010)

Literature Review

Perinatal Circumstances

■ CHILD'S HEALTH OUTCOMES

Articles on the outcomes of adolescent fatherhood (k = 23) yielded consistent evidence that their offspring are at greater risk of being preterm or low birthweight and psychological disorders as compared to the offspring of adult fathers. (Bamishigbin et al., 2019)

Children of the youngest teen mothers are less likely to have received well-baby care in the first year of life, have less cognitively stimulating and less nurturing home environments. (Moore et al., 1997)

■ DEPRESSION

14% of teen mothers and 7.2% of adult mothers experience postpartum depression (PPD). Both teen and adult mothers were 5 times more likely to experience PPD if they received no support or minimal support after the birth of the baby. (Kim et al., 2014).

Late adolescent fatherhood was significantly associated with 3rd-year paternal depressive symptoms, especially for fathers who did not work for regular pay. Those who reported low social support were more likely to be depressed at 3rd and 5th years. (Lee et al., 2011)

■ LONELINESS AND SOCIAL STIGMA

Prevalence of perinatal and parental loneliness for the first 5 years ranged from 32% to 100% for parents of all ages. (Kent-Marvick et al, 2022)

Three separate studies in Australia found that teenage fathers are perceived to lack maturity, morality, competence, warmth, and capacity to parent, independent of whether they were employed or not. (Sheeran et al., 2021)

Literature Review

Postpartum Circumstances and Outcomes

■ POWER OF SOCIAL SUPPORTS

Teenage parent support programme group fostered a supportive environment and led to a reduction in social isolation. Free transport and childcare onsite was a key component. (McGeechan et al., 2018)

Recognising their adolescent needs and building a parent education program based on concrete, playful experiences with plentiful opportunities to interact with peers seem to be keys to successful intervention. (Birckmayer, 1995)

(a) supports and services; (b) safe, secure, and affordable housing; and (c) community help teen parents raise their children in healthy ways. (Tremblay et al., 2021)

■ LACK OF SOCIAL SUPPORTS

Both teen and adult mothers were approximately 5 times more likely to experience PPD if they received no support or minimal support after the birth of the baby. (Kim et al., 2014)

Adolescent fathers who reported low social support were more likely to be depressed 3 and 5 years after birth. They are at increased risk for dropping out of school, face dwindling opportunities for employment, and are more likely to be involved in illegal activities. (Lee et al., 2011)

■ PARENTS' PROSPECTS

Teen parents experience fewer academic and vocational opportunities and an associated increased risk of poverty (Long, 2009).

Exposure to adverse childhood events and neighborhood and domestic violence resulted in gang involvement and illegal activities, substance use and psychological distress. (Recto & Lesser, 2021)

Mothers with a history of sexual and physical abuse were more likely to have an insecurely attached infant, showed more hostility toward their child at preschool. (Pasalich et al., 2016) 5 ■

Literature Review

Repeat teen pregnancies

15% of teen pregnancies in 2018 (Harding et al., 2020)

With fewer physical health complications (Maslowsky et al., 2021)

■ **POOR OUTCOMES FOR INFANTS**

Repeat (vs first-time) mothers had higher prevalence of negative pregnancy-related behaviors, which often led to poor perinatal outcomes for infants: inadequate prenatal care, smoking, inadequate weight gain, and sexually transmitted infection during pregnancy. They were also less likely to breastfeed. (Maslowsky et al., 2021)

■ **EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES**

Depression, history of abortion and relationship factors, such as partner support, increased the repeated teenage pregnancy risk. (Maravilla et al., 2017)

Feeling lack of control, ambivalence and lack of decision-making about seeking another pregnancy were frequently endorsed by mothers who had experienced a second pregnancy. (Conroy et al., 2016)

■ **EDUCATION-RELATED FACTORS**

Education-related factors, which included higher level of education and school continuation were found to be protective. (Maravilla et al., 2017)

Use of long-acting reversible contraceptives considerably reduced repeated teenage pregnancy risk. (Maravilla et al., 2017)

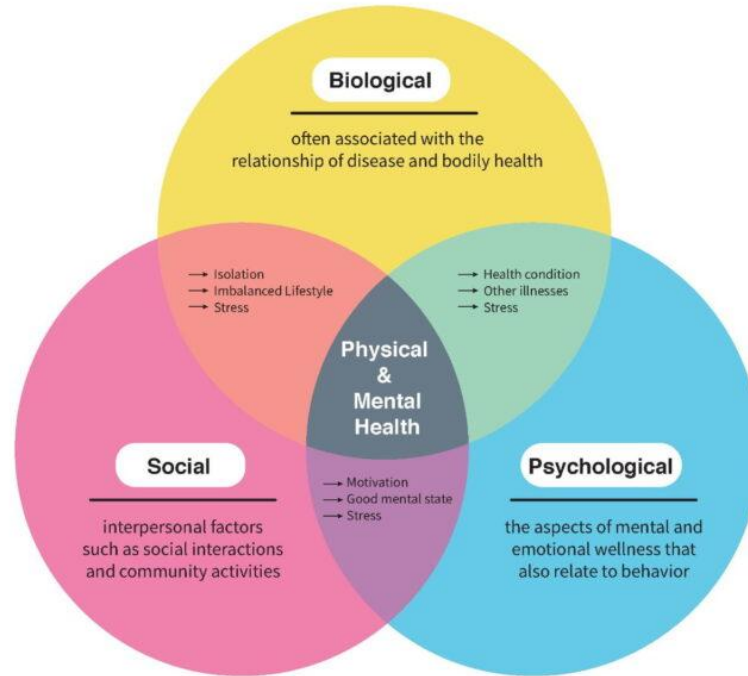
Literature Assessment

- Mostly deficit-based approach, focusing on prevention of pregnancies
- Actively researched, delayed data
- International research
- Themes of the adverse outcomes on the mother and child
- Topic of teen fathers beginning to gain attention
- Missing research and data on:
 - outcomes for teen parents' kin
 - outcomes of teens as single parents vs. remaining partnered
 - long-term studies of effects on the children of teen parents



Application in Social Work

Biopsychosocial Theoretical Framework

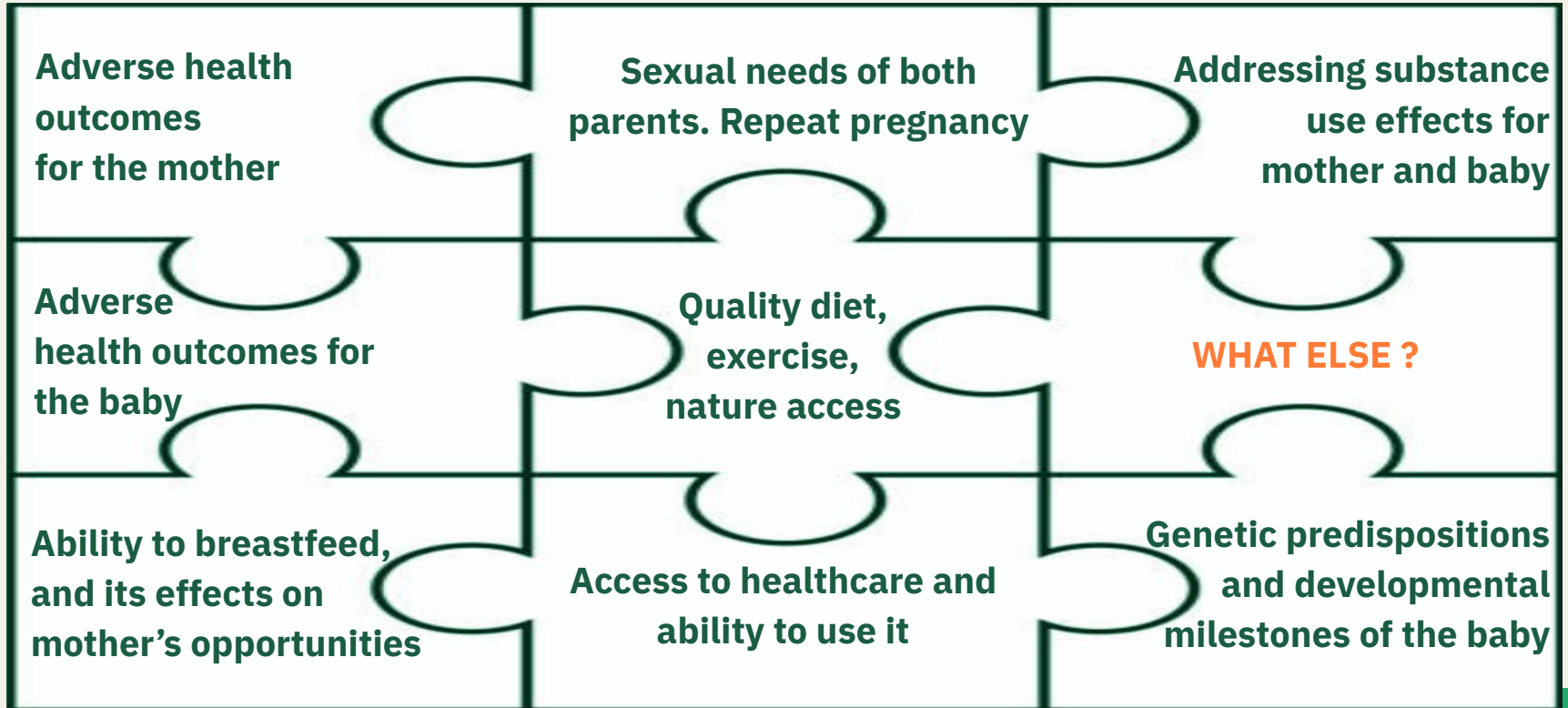


Graphic: Chrystie Tyler



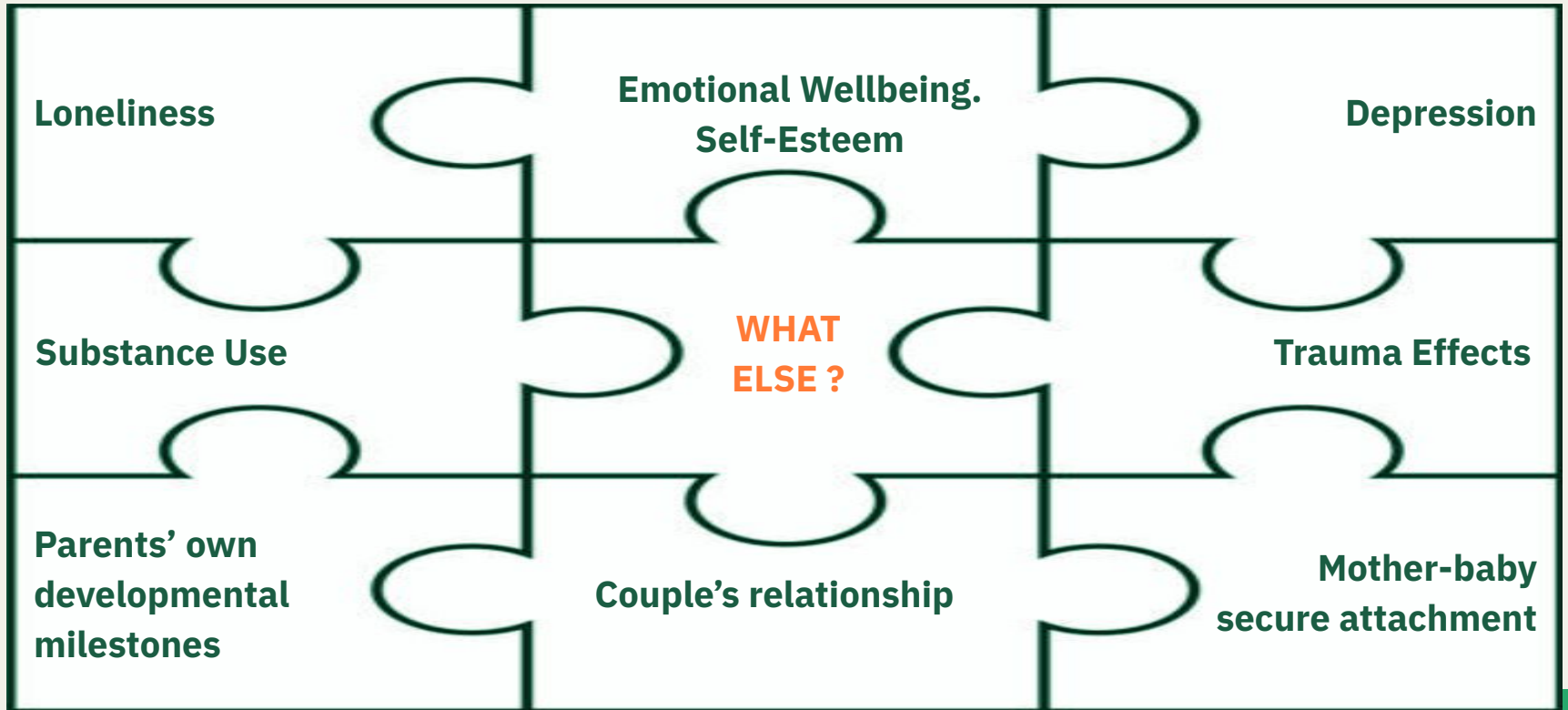
Application in Social Work

Biopsychosocial Theoretical Framework: **Biological Level**



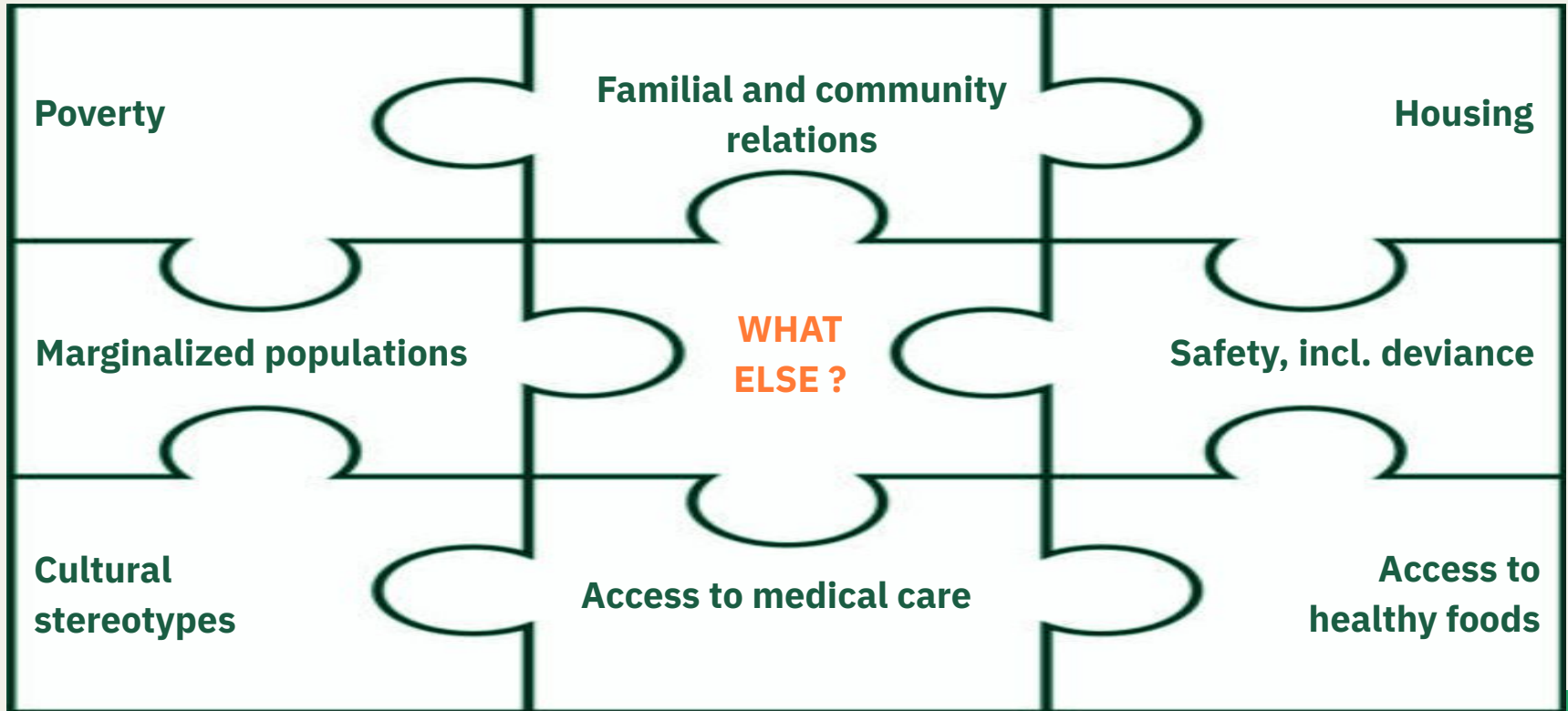
Application in Social Work

Biopsychosocial Theoretical Framework: **Psychological Level**



Application in Social Work

Biopsychosocial Theoretical Framework: **Social Level**



Recommendations

A sunburst graphic with a dark green circle in the center containing the text 'Supports & Services'. The circle is surrounded by several dark green triangles of varying sizes, some pointing outwards and some inwards, creating a starburst effect.

Supports & Services

- Support for parents to tend to their own adolescent developmental needs, including creating opportunities for them to have fun and have occasional time-off from parental responsibilities.
- Active support for teen fathers, including employment opportunities, mentorship and mental health care.

A sunburst graphic with a dark green circle in the center containing the text 'Safe secure affordable housing'. The circle is surrounded by several dark green triangles of varying sizes, some pointing outwards and some inwards, creating a starburst effect.

Safe secure affordable housing

- Affordable safe stable housing, with onsite childcare and wraparound services, such as life skills development, education, job preparation, career planning, financial literacy and mentorship.

A sunburst graphic with a light blue circle in the center containing the text 'Community'. The circle is surrounded by several light blue triangles of varying sizes, some pointing outwards and some inwards, creating a starburst effect.

Community

- Enlisting wider community to form supportive non-kin relations as mentors, adoptive families, childcare helpers for both parents.
- Focusing on building positive maternal identity and fostering secure attachment between parents and children.

Exemplary Resources



PARENT TO PARENT
USA

p2pusa.org

Parent-to-parent USA offers **parent-to-parent mentoring** and emotional support for families of individuals with disabilities and/or special health care needs. It is currently functioning in 39 states.



Moms2Maven

Moms2Maven Collective in Lexington, KY, empowering teen moms by offering stable and safe **transitional housing** with holistic **wraparound services**: life skills development, education, job preparation, career planning, financial literacy and mentorship.



SMILE-MOM

Single Moms in the Metaverse for Interaction, Learning, and Encouragement - a virtual-reality support program for single mothers in South Korea to assist transition to motherhood and address postpartum challenges. (Woo & Chae, 2025)

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Thank You!
Questions?

