Understanding the lived experience of Lone Mother’s travel patterns: A Thematic Synthesis of the Literature

The role of transport in access to employment and social mobility

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Introduction

- My PhD is written in an autoethnographic format to reflect my own lived experience and the lives of others and combine the researcher and participant experience.
- Men and women’s travel patterns have repeatedly been shown to differ (Church et al, 2000, Rosenbloom, 2004).
- Women make significantly more complicated journeys as part of their social and cultural roles (Turner & Grieco, 2000).
- Different access to transport is a major producer of gender inequality—restricts access to knowledge and power.
Discourses of Lone Mother’s

“One of the biggest social problems of our day” (Redwood, 1993)

“The root of all social ills”

Victim blaming policies

Problematic – seldom viewed in a positive way

How to portray teenage parents: less Vicky Pollard, more real stories

Enough with Vicky Pollard-style irresponsible teenage mums in the media, says Prym Face. Young parents are tired of being forced into a certain role in the public eye – and finally the Monkeywood theatre in Manchester is telling their true stories.
Demographic trends in Lone Mothering

1 in 4 households in the UK are lead by a single parent

91% of Single Parent households in the UK are lead by women (ONS, 2015)

Least likely of all groups to own a car.

47 per cent of children in single parent families live in relative poverty, around twice the risk of relative poverty faced by children in couple families (Gingerbread, 2018)
Auto-ethnography-Themes from a personal narrative

- The goal of using personal narrative (as research) is to fuse the ‘form’ with the ‘content’ and the ‘literary’ with the ‘scientific’, creating a social scientific art form, to reveal the hand of the researcher rather than construct authority through absence (Ellis & Bochner, 2000)

- Autoethnography is a mode of self-reflective or introspective writing that connects personal autobiography and experience with broader social, cultural meanings and contexts (Drabble, 2018)
Literature Review – Methodology

- Thematic synthesis (Thomas 2008)
- Peer reviewed journal articles & grey literature 2000 to present day
- Key words driven by an autoethnographic approach
- Database searches across Transport, Geography, Education and Social Sciences literature
Review Process: Thematic Synthesis

Total number of papers found through data base searches

Abstracts and Titles screened

Full documents screened

Full papers mapped against keywords

Full papers included for review and synthesis of results

Excluded for duplication, language, not on topic, full paper unobtainable

Further articles identified by hand searching
Results

- Dominant themes relating to mobility:
  - Time
  - Economic activity
  - Poverty: economic inactivity strongly correlated with poverty
  - Accessibility: Complexity of journeys, reliance on formal & informal support

- Lack of evidence of lone mother's travel patterns in relation with labour market outcomes
Mobility patterns: Time

• Most preferred mode of transport - the car – seen as necessary for juggling time/spatial constraints

• Walking – promoted as positive for health but not always practical-limits distance

• Mobility significantly constrained by time-complex trip chaining

• Shorter commute times to employment – limiting opportunities
Access to transport is a key issue in finding and sustaining work (SEU, 2003).

Cost and availability of transport is a factor in reconciling jobs with caring responsibilities (Graham & McQuaid, 2014).

Lack of access to transport restricts access to healthcare and resources such as food shops.

Location of work childcare and school are key determinants of effective co-ordination.

Transport problems (experienced or anticipated) act as a disincentive to work.
Lone Mother’s in Employment

- Employment for single parents at an all-time high in the UK
- Sustainability reliant on the interdependence of many factors
- Time poor
- More likely to be in low paid work-poor contracts
- Forced car ownership
- In work poverty
Lone Mother’s: Economically inactive

- Value of stay at home parenting
- Vulnerable to isolation
- Conditionality of welfare support
- Worsening picture for larger single parent households
- Perceptions/fears that work doesn’t pay

Benefit cap: single mothers make up 85% of those affected, data shows

DWP records show 134,044 households had support capped, with single mothers accounting for 114,337

A 2013 demonstration against welfare cuts including a benefit cap trial. Photograph: Patricia Phillips / A Jam / Alamy
Any Questions?

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