The Intersection of Transportation Disadvantage with Economic and Social Justice among Mothers Experiencing Homelessness
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Family Homelessness

- Over 200,000 families were homeless on a single night in the US in 2015
- The majority are headed by single mothers
- Commonly homeless due to domestic violence, poverty, lack of access to affordable/quality housing
Challenges for Homeless Families

• Fragmented access to and inconsistent quality of services
• High rates of poverty
• Often experiencing unprocessed trauma
• Almost 1/2 of families served in transitional settings fail to realize permanent housing
• Many single parents lose custody after becoming homeless
Policy Environment

• Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness
  – Executive initiative
  – Housed within the Interagency Council on Homelessness Executive initiative
  – One of the four goals is to end homelessness among families, youth, and children by 2020
  – http://usich.gov/opening_doors/
Transportation…
For some, the Car becomes Home

no place to sleep
For others, transportation is the public transit system

- Lack of access to transportation frequently cited as a barrier to accessing:
  - Employment
  - Health care
  - Services for children

- Scarce studies exclusively focusing on transportation experiences among the homeless
Current Study

• Transportation emerged as a key component in an evaluation of services for women experiencing homelessness with their children in Dallas County, Texas.

• Qualitative data related to transportation were analyzed to understand the impact of transportation disadvantage on social participation and identity.
Setting: Dallas County, Texas
City of Dallas

- Estimated 2015 population = 2,553,385
- Estimated housing units July 2015 = 985,403
- Median value of a home 2010-2014 = $129,200 (nationally, $221,800 in 2010)
- Mean travel time to work 2010-2014 = 26.2 min (nationally, 25.1 min. in 2009)
Poverty and Homelessness in Dallas

- Nearly 20% of individuals living below the poverty level, 2010-2014
- In 2016, 3,100 persons were counted as homeless on a single night
- Family homelessness increased 60% between 2010 and 2014
- In 2016, 1,777 families (households with an adult and child) were counted as homeless on a single night
- Approximately 24 homeless service providers
Wheel-and-Spoke System

The central service center is roughly here
Study Design / Procedures

- Concurrent mixed-methods
- Quantitative measures – demographics and service utilization (among mothers)
- Qualitative methods – open-ended items with probes
- Interviews conducted primarily in-person and audio recorded
Sample

- Purposive / convenience sampling
- Mothers received a $20 gift card
- Total sample – 21 mothers; 13 stakeholders (service providers, elected officials, philanthropists, etc.)
  - 71% African American
  - 19% White
  - 10% Latino/a
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structured survey with close and open-ended questions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Semi-structured interviews with probes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Demographic data</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Standardized cost-benefit questionnaire about services used (not reported here)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative</th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPSS version 21</td>
<td>Atlas.ti used to code transcripts using open and axial techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect sizes (Cohen’s d-index, $\phi$)</td>
<td>A codebook was developed initially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small sample size precluded extensive statistical analysis</td>
<td>Themes consistent with the codes derived from the codebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigor criteria included:</td>
<td>Rigor criteria included:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Peer debriefing</td>
<td>• Peer debriefing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Audit trail</td>
<td>• Audit trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Deviant case analysis</td>
<td>• Deviant case analysis</td>
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</tbody>
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## Characteristics of Mothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TH ((n = 11))</th>
<th>PSH ((n = 10))</th>
<th>Cohen’s D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>28.91 (5.50)</td>
<td>30.90 (9.06)</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># children</td>
<td>3.09 (1.70)</td>
<td>2.30 (1.06)</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past-month income</td>
<td>$715.27 (267.64)</td>
<td>$1,280.00 (1,082.05)</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past 12-month income</td>
<td>$901.56 (523.38)</td>
<td>$1,337.95 (1,319.54)</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. TH = Living in transitional housing; PSH = living in permanent supportive housing
### Characteristics of Mothers

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<th>TH $(n = 11)$</th>
<th>PSH $(n = 10)$</th>
<th>$\phi$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>36.4 (4)</td>
<td>10 (1)</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>27.3 (3)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>9.72 (11.17)</td>
<td>9.05 (6.38)</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Own car</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.1 (1)</strong></td>
<td><strong>80.0 (8)</strong></td>
<td><strong>.72</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** TH = Living in transitional housing; PSH = living in permanent supportive housing
Qualitative Results

Wasting time

Broken Bridge

Social Exclusion

Parenting in public

Missing opportunities
I have sat in on a couple of case manager interviews with homeless individuals or families and one of the huge issues for people that are trying to get their benefits, you know, manage through a variety of systems, is transportation. So we give ’em bus passes. You know but then they’ve gotta go ride a bus here and ride a bus there and try to get to this office… they try to get over to that office. Transportation is a huge issue and I’m sure it is for families, you know, just complicating the factor is more people.
Wasting Time

Oh yeah, because I can tell you that it’s hard, especially when you’re on the bus line to get around, because the buses sometimes, say from here to downtown to the daycare. It is going to take over an hour or something to get there.

- Mother
Wasting Time

One way. Cause you have to hop so many. And, depending on the time of the day, the buses run every hour. You know what I mean?

- Mother
Missing Opportunities

I mean to get somewhere on time and to even like get places from back and forth, you know, like appointments. You gotta be at an appointment, and say you miss the bus by a couple of seconds. You have to wait a whole ’nother hour. Or you get on a bus and it breaks down or something happens you lose out on a lot of different opportunities at different times.

- Mother
Missing Opportunities

Because, like, you know with food stamps… that’s why if you stay in this area and don’t have a car, you can’t get to the food stamp office.

- Mother
Parenting in Public

[Transportation’s] not the best, especially with little kids. Like we had to get up like at 5:30 in the morning just to make the bus. And where we were staying wasn’t very far from here and it took us like an hour and a half. And then you’ve got little kids and mine have red curly hair and for some reason people want to touch ’em all the time, and it just creeps me out and it creeps my kids out.

- Mother
Parenting in Public

I have access to the bus. Sometimes it’s hard to ride the bus with a sick kid or it being cold and not wanting to get him out because he got RSV [Respiratory Syncytial Virus] not too long ago from bein’ out and gettin’ on the bus. And as you can tell, he’s a little congested.

- Mother
Interpreting the Results

- **Poverty**
  - Capability deprivation
  - Poor living

- **Transportation Disadvantage**
  - Reliant on inadequate public transit system

- **Stigmatization**
  - Poverty becomes transparent

- **Social Exclusion**
  - Left out of: Community-level policy decisions, Access to shopping, Community events
Transportation Implications

• Public transit is designed for single individuals, not families
• Buses are not the answer
• Transportation needs to be:
  – On-demand
  – Door-to-door
  – Able to navigate relatively wide geographic distances
  – With capacity for riders with baggage (grocery bags, diaper bags, strollers, etc.)
Transportation Innovation

- A low-cost, subsidized Uber or Lyft for families in temporary housing situations?
- Zipcar car sharing amongst shelters, subsidized housing, and service providers
Thank You!

Questions?

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References


References


