

Lone Motherhood in Chiangmai, Thailand Towards Reducing Social Stigma and Increasing Social Support

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Abstract: In this study, the initial findings from a research study undertaken in Chiangmai, Thailand will be presented. This study aims to explore pathways into and through lone motherhood in Chiangmai, Thailand, with a particular focus on the way in which social stigma and the range of forms of social support shape lone mother's experiences. For the purpose of this study, lone mothers will be categorised into 5 groups, unmarried pregnant women: UM (women who are pregnant without partners and have no other children), never married mothers: NM (women who had children before they were married and raise their children alone), deserted mothers: DS (women with children who have been deserted for at least 6 months), Divorced mothers: DV (women with children who have divorced (registered) for at least six months) and widows with dependent children: WD (women who have children under 20). The face to face in-depth interviews aim to explore perceptions and experiences of social stigma and social support and also provide a range of opportunities for women and provide suggestions to improve the position of lone mothers in Thailand.

Key words: Lone motherhood, social stigma, social support, deserted mothers, experiences, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, the family structure in Thai society has undergone considerable change. Family forms, other than traditional nuclear and extended families are beginning to emerge including, older couples caring for grandchildren, same sex couples and families and single-parent and lone mother families (Denzin, 2008). The divorce rate in Thailand has increased dramatically since, 1997. There were 62, 379 divorces in 1997, soaring to 109, 312 in 2011, a rise of over 75% (ONESDB., 2013; ML., 2008; MSDHS., 2013). This has resulted in significant changes to the family structure with single parent households rising to 1.6 million in 2011 (ONESDB., 2013). More than 80% of these single-parent families with children are female-headed households (DWAFFD., 2006). Data on female headed house-holds has shown steadily increasing numbers. From 2002, female headed households were 26.2% of all households and rose to nearly 35% in 2012 (DPAML., 2009; OWAFD., 2009). In Thai-land as in other countries, lone mothers remain one of the most vulnerable groups in society (Chant, 2003).

Background of the study

Lone mothers in Thailand: In Thailand, there are very few lone parents receiving mainstream welfare such as healthcare and education with most of the support being provided by family, parents, siblings and friends (Pokpong, 2009). Lone mothers often require support such as income, employment, childcare, maternity leave, social

networks, education and training, housing and health care. However, in Thailand there are currently very limited forms of state support and these are not specifically for lone mothers. The Thai government provides up to 3,000 baht for some of the poorer population including lone mothers, in the form of cash or goods no more than three times per family per fiscal year (MSDHS., 2009). While many lone mothers are active in the labor market, they are more likely to work in the informal sector which although, it may be more flexible, allows them to take care of their children. The jobs are usually low paid and do not accrue social security benefits (Wiwatwongwana, 2013). As they work in the informal sector they are excluded from support such as social insurance, the major scheme providing financial assistance to people in need. Thai lone motherhood has been associated with stigma in different ways. It is not only that unmarried pregnancy and birth out of wedlock are all highly stigmatised but abortion is also associated with stigma. Recently, Kumar *et al.* (2009) introduced the term "abortion stigma" in Thailand. It is defined as "a negative attribute (e.g., promiscuous, sinful, selfish, dirty, irresponsible) ascribed to women who seek to terminate a pregnancy that marks them, internally or externally as inferior to ideals of womanhood" (Kumar *et al.*, 2009). In addition, the authors identified relationships between the social and political processes which include the social expectation of motherhood, the opposition to both Buddhist principle and law and stigmatisation (Kumar *et al.*, 2009). It can be said that all of these would restrict women's choices. For women having illegal abortions, support providers such as

hospitals have expressed negative attitudes toward these women by implementing a double standard of services (Tangmunkongvorakul *et al.*, 2006).

The findings in my PhD research showed that all categories of lone mothers experience various forms of stigma through processes such as labelling and discrimination. In addition, lone mothers receive very little support, almost no support from the father of the child and inadequate support from the government. Importantly, a relationship was found between stigma and social support whereby lone mothers did not expect or demand support because they perceived themselves through the prevailing labels and forms of discrimination as a “bad” daughter, “bad” wife and/or “bad” mother (Wiwatwongwana, 2013).

This research: This project is the continuation of the findings of my PhD research and was aimed at addressing both the social stigma experienced by lone mothers and linking them with sources of support. It was intended that this project would extend the knowledge about the experience of lone motherhood to gender and social policy debates as well as to debates about gender and social and cultural practices in Chiangmai, Thailand where the number of lone mothers has been increasing. Since, single-parent households have increased to 1.3 million families in 2009 (OWAFD., 2009), it is a fact that most mothers will be one parent raising their children alone. Recent statistical information relevant to lone mothers stated that Chiangmai is an interesting area to conduct a study on this issue due to the high ratio of marriages to divorces throughout a 10 years period from 2004-2013. It could be said that Chiangmai is ranked fourth in the country while in 2000 the index of living of female headed households ranked as high as number five across the country. While Morrison (2004) suggested the young women in Chiangmai are becoming more sexually active before marriage than before because of increasing personal freedom for those who experience adverse outcomes of sexual activity including unwanted pregnancy of infection, report facing indifference, victim blaming, or the threat of abandonment by their partners (Morrison, 2004; Tangmunkongvarakul *et al.*, 2005). In addition to the interest in this study, is the fact that the network in Chiangmai has been chosen as a branch by the Family Network Foundation (the only organisation in Thailand providing direct support to help single parents). The network established in Chiangmai named “Pli-Chor” is coordinated with the development of women’s organisations and other families in Chiangmai.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Qualitative research was chosen because the purpose of this research was to uncover the processes of

becoming a lone mother and the experiences of lone motherhood. Qualitative research seeks answers to questions about how social experiences are created and given meanings by focusing on the socially constructed nature of reality (DPAMI., 2009). I chose to use semi-structured interviews because they are more focused on topics, themes or issues being explored. It provides an interview guide or schedule, the questions, probes and prompts which are written in the form of a flexible interview guide which is used during a research interview (Crabtree and Miller, 1999). In using semi-structured interviews, participants had the opportunity to express their ideas and feelings as well as draw on their knowledge and experience (Corby, 2006). Interviews were conducted with all types of lone mothers (total 25) in Chiangmai, Thailand. However, this study presents the initial findings of 4 lone mothers from different categories, namely, Bee, a 24 years old NM living with her 2 and a half years old son, Milk, a 24 years old DS living with her 4 years old daughter, Lee, a 38 years old NM for the first time and DS for the second time living with her 10 years old granddaughter of her daughter who also became a lone mother and Lah, a 29 years old WD for the first time and DS for the second time, living with her 2 and half and 10 years old daughters.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Relationship and marriage: Similar to my thesis, difficulties were found in categorising lone mothers due to the fact that lone mothers are vulnerable to be deserted. After becoming a lone mother, most of all, they are prone to experiencing devaluation and discrimination which in some ways has an impact on their later relationships (Wiwatwongwana, 2013). Also, explaining Thai marriage was seen as problematic, especially, the patterns of marriage found in the study. Although, the marriage pathways in Thailand can be formal as via a ceremony or registration or informal as via solely a religious ritual, cohabitation or elopement (Cherlin and Chamrathirong, 1988; Limanonda, 1995), the findings show *ผูก-ข้อม-ไม้-ข้อม-มือ* Phuuk-Khor-Mai-Khor-Mue” (“*ผูก*/Phuuk” which means tie and *ข้อม-ไม้-ข้อม-มือ* /Khor-Mai-Khor-Mue” which means wrists) was found to be an important part of the Thai marriage ceremony (Wiwatwongwana, 2013) and seemed popular among people living in Chiangmai. In addition, “*ใส่-ผี*/Sai-Phee or *เสียบ-(คำ)-ผี*/Sea-Phee which means provide a fee to appease the spirits” was mentioned by scholars working on the study of the Northern Thai or Lanna culture (Thiracitto, 2010). This is also a common practice of the participants during the marriage ceremony, especially, for those who got involved with pre-marriage sexual activities. For example, when Lah narrated about the relationship with the father of her first child as such:

“I met him when I helped my parents opening a **ร้านเหล้าตอง** (Ran-Lao-Tong) (a local whisky shop). They liked him, it was about six months after I met him and I moved to live with him, ... , (asking about the marriage), ... , yes, we did “**ใส่ผี** /Sai-Phee” and “**มัดมือ** Mud-Mue or **ผูก** Phuuk” as the traditional way, ... , he had to feed our **ผี-ปู่-ย่า** Phee-Puu-Yah (meaning the spirit of the ancestors)”, ... , it was 5,000 baht for “**ผี-ปู่-ย่า** /Phee-Puu-Yah” and another 5,000 baht for “**มัดมือ** /Mud-Mue”

Relationship breakdown and the promiscuous men: Findings confirm that promiscuous men are the major cause for the break down in relationships. For example, Bee said that:

“After I came back from the hotel I went for an apprenticeship (the place she met her husband) and he regularly visited my home, ... , But the day we went to a wedding party of my neighbor’s, I found out that he had another woman, ... , I thought he would say sorry to me but no he blamed me. He said the reason he had another woman was because I was too sensitive and cried too often. He couldn’t take this anymore. My brother went to talk to him after he knew the story, then he disappeared, ... , (Bee, 24 years old never married mother with a 2 and a half years old son)

Again, Lah also revealed:

“For my second child, I was pregnant after he (the father of her second child) moved in to live with me, ... , Actually, we had small fights during the time, ... , Why, ... , you know he was a bus driver, right? At that time, he often didn’t come home, ... , each time was about a week. So, I noticed that he might have another woman. It was obvious when I called him as usual but he didn’t pick up the phone. One day I planned to find the answer why he had changed. I called him first and he didn’t pick up my call as I thought. Then I went to where he had to pass for parking. Can you believe that I saw another woman, and she was sitting there beside him? At that moment, I decided to break up with him, so, I sent him a message saying, “Come back to get your stuff and leave” (Lah, a 29 years old WD with a 10 years old daughter and then DS with a 2 and a half years old daughter)

Repeatedly, Lee also narrated her experience with a promiscuous man:

“I also had two children with the father of my second child, ... , he was smart, he passed the test for working in Japan. Before going to Japan, he had to be trained in Bangkok. Can you imagine?, ... , then there was no cell phone like today. I tried to contact him using the landline but he disappeared for a week. Then I noticed that he might have another woman and it was right. He said that he was going to break up with her but I didn’t know what happened. He called me after that and said the woman was pregnant, ... , you know, I had been waiting for him for months at his family’s home in Lampang (a province not far from Chiangmai), ... , I then decided to leave, ... , you know what? He also left the woman and child for another woman, ... , it was a joke, 1 day I visited my second and third daughter the youngest asked me, “Mom, if dad has HIVs, what we should do?” (Long laughing) (Lee, a 38 years old NM and DS with a 1 years old granddaughter of her daughter who also became a lone mother)

Along with the effects of promiscuous men, a patrilocal residence has been found as another cause of broken families among lone mothers in Chiangmai. According to Milk. “After” **อยู่เดือน** Yoo-Dearn” (lying by the fire after childbirth), his mom told me I should stay with her. Her house is located in the Hang Dong district which is not far away from central Chiangmai. Actually, I was happy living with my mom. She did everything for me including cooking and cleaning for me and taking care of my baby. I was also forced by my mom to move there because she didn’t want his mom to feel bad towards me. I was living there for one month with patience and then I decided to come home and never go back there again, ... , (Milk, a 24 years old DS with a 4 years old daughter).

Social stigma: According to Wiwatwongwana (2013), lone mothers suffer from matters that are assigned to overlapping categories. The examples in her study show the label on their lone motherhood was related to premarital sexual activities. Such participants found themselves assigned to more than one category of lone mothers. Although, “**ท้องไม่มีพ่อ**” (getting pregnant without a father/husband) was more likely to be found attributed to unmarried pregnant women. it was also the label applied to a DS. In Chiangmai, **ท้องไม่มีพ่อ**

was also found among lone mothers in different categories. For example, Milk, a 24 years old DS living with her 4 years old daughter, Bee, a 24 years old NM living with her two and a half years old son and Milk, a 24 years old DS living with her 4 years old daughter had been condemned as **ต้อง-บา-มี-ป้อ** /Tong-Ba-Mee-Por” (similar to **ท้อง-ไม่-มี-พ่อ** /Tong-Mai-Mee-Por” which means getting pregnant without a father/husband). In other words, the participants have been stigmatised by way of “stereotyping”. According to Goffman (1963), stigma is the relationship between an “attribute and a stereotype”. As a result, it was possible to see a range of labels applied to one type of lone mothers. In addition, it was found other types of social stigma related to being a lone mother in Chiangmai were somewhat the same as those that were found in Bangkok. However, they were narrated in the local language of the northern Thai people. It was called **คำ-เหมียง** /Khum-Muang”. The labels were also related to women as the cause of separation (their fault) and they include **ผ้า-มัน-ผู้ผ้า-มัน-เลย-ป่า-เอา**” or in Bangkok it refers to **มี-ชู้** /Mee-Chu” which means a woman having an affair **มี-ต่าหนี** which is similar to **เมีย-ที่-บก-พร่อง** meaning being a bad wife and or **หยิ่ง-ต้อง-ละ-ผ้า, หยิ่ง-ต้อง-ผ้า-ละ** which means abandoned woman or unwanted wife. In addition, some were labeled as polluted women such as or **มี-สุก-ติด**” meaning a woman had been married and has dependent children. Moreover, bad women/ mothers were another type of stigma attached to the participants. For example, **พ่อ-มัน-มี-ไหน** Por-Mun Mee-Nhai” which means (lit) “where is the father?” and **สง-สารลูก-มัน-เนาะ** Song Sarn-Luuk-Mun-Noh” referring to (lit) “such a pity child” meaning the mother is bad. No-tably, presently, a new label found in Chiangmai referring to a lone mother is **-แม่-หญิง-ขาย-ตัว** Pen Mae-Yhing-Khai-Tua which means being a prostitute.

Experiencing stigma: Indirectly, it was found that the lone mothers in Chiangmai had a perception of devaluation. They perceived as being stigmatised by family and their neighbours. Asked about the usage of contraception Milk responded by saying.

Umm, ... , Mom didn't teach me how, I knew it myself. But she said, “have you seen our relatives, ... , what happened to them, look at them, ... , you have to learn by yourself”. I think that my mom implied, “do you want to get pregnant without a father? Do you want to end up with your future like that? Do you want to live alone with your children?”

And when she became alone mother, she narrated, “At first, I didn't hear anything from them (when she got pregnant). But after I became a lone mother and moved back to my home, I have heard some say, I was pregnant before I got married (informal one). It was like I lied to my husband that he is the father” (Milk, a 24 years old DS with a 4 years old daughter). Lee described the reason why she decided to move to Bangkok after she became a second time lone mother.

It's like every time when I go back home, I am pregnant or bring back a child, ... , I didn't hear it by myself, ... , it's like, ... , when I am away from home, I go to work as a prostitute, ... , some even said that my workplace is Sukhothai (about 216 km from Chiangmai), ... , (smile sheepishly)

In addition to the belief that as lone mothers they would be devalued and discriminated against, the lone mothers in Chiangmai reported that they had experienced such stigma in different forms of discrimination from their community. Like Bee, she shared, ... , some people met me at the local market and they insultingly asked me where have you been to get pregnant from?. Some were terrible and they even asked me, “are you pregnant without the father (of the child)?” (Bee, a 24 years old NM with a 2 and a half years old son). Furthermore, recently Lee met a new man and once when she went to visit his home, she heard his mom say **อี-เหี้ย-ตัว-ไหน-พ่อ-ต้อง-เอา-เข้า-บ้าน-อู-มา-นี่** which refers to (lit) “who is this bitch? Don't you (her son) dare bring her home, ... , yes, she intentionally spoke to his son when I was there.”

Coping with stigma: According to Link *et al.* (1989), the stigmatised person usually copes with stigma. Wiwatwongwana (2013) states that protecting themselves against rejection, being denied opportunities and having the experience of feeling different from others reinforced, lone mothers resort to many strategies, for example, “secrecy” (keeping their pregnancy secret), “withdrawal” (limiting social interaction to those who tend to accept their circumstances), “education” (giving people information), “challenging” (defending themselves against negative attitudes) and or “distancing” (trying to separate themselves from other lone mothers to avoid those attitudes). Among lone mothers in Chiangmai as I have found so far, secrecy was applied by a lone mother but it was not for the pregnancy. For Lah, being a second time lone mother because the husband left for another woman and at that time he still was around. She explained, “I didn't want my daughter to become a victim, ... , knew her father had to come to buy food in the local market

where I worked. When my daughter wasn't there, I threatened everyone not to tell her that he was her father, ... , You know what, he finally left his job (a bus driver) and moved to live in another place. I think he felt ashamed for what he did to us, ... , It must be him not us (Lah, a 29 years old WD with a 10 years old daughter and then DS with a 2 and a half years old daughter).

In addition, withdrawal was another way that lone mothers in Chiangmai used as their coping strategy. For example, Lee said she did not want to go back to her family after she left her husband's home in Lampang because there was a rumor about her being a prostitute. She expressed,

“There are not so many people near my home who know about the father of my second daughter, I wasn't living at home since I met him. So, after breaking up, I went to work at a department store for a while (living at home). I then decided to stay away from home. So, I went to Bangkok to be a caregiver for the elderly. But after one month, I left the job again I went to find a job in Ayuthaya (not far from BKK) I didn't think too much. I just wanted to work and stay away from home that's it (Lee, a 38 years old NM and DS with a 10 years old granddaughter of her daughter who also became a lone mother)

Unlike the Bangkok lone mothers, the findings show the popular way participants coped with stigma was shame and self-blame. According to Scheff Yang the emotion of shame is central to stigma. Shame not only has psychological outcomes including affecting self-esteem and causing depression but it is also able to shape the way of coping with stigma. While shame could be seen non-verbally as long pauses, lowering of the head and a shaking voice and crying, verbal expressions of the shame will be found in the participant's stories such as feeling guilty or inferior. Referring to Bee, she blamed herself for “being a lone mother”. She exploded.

My brother did tell me not to do something bad during the apprenticeship. I felt guilty that I didn't follow my brother's teaching (her brother has supported her since her mother left her for a new husband). I went to tell him about my pregnancy with tears” (Bee, a 24 years old NM with 2 and a half years old son)

In addition, it was found some lone mothers in Chiangmai blamed themselves as the person responsible for their daughter or son having no father which led to problems both physically and emotionally. Bee sadly said,

“Since, the day he (the father of her child) found my posts on FB, I thought that I couldn't live with him anymore I had been crying and hugging my daughter for nights. I told her that I was so sorry to make her having no father I think it's because of me doing this to her if I was patient, my daughter would have both mom and dad (Bee, a 24 year old NM with a 2 and a half year old son)

For Lee's first child who became a lone mother (she left her daughter with her mom since the child was young), she (sadly) said.

You know, Nueng (her daughter) finished only grade six. I think it's because of me she had never lived with me. Living with grandparents, she might be lonely. It seems like she had no one I found out she didn't go to school since she entered grade seven because the teacher came to visit the home and reported about her absence. I couldn't do anything. I think if I was with her, she wouldn't have turned out like that. I feel sorry for her. I didn't even have the time for her now, I am taking care of her daughter after she became a lone mother. I think I am paying for my mistake abandoning her Sometimes I think her life is just like mine is it about repeating again?” (Lee, a 38 years old never married and DS with a 10 years old granddaughter of her daughter who also became a lone mother)

From the teachings of Buddhism, Karma has been understood to indicate an individual's moral acts of their personal store of merits. Lone mothers in Bangkok were found to associate Karma with a kind of self-blaming (Wiwatwongwana, 2013). Here, it is implied as another way a lone mother coped with stigma. Milk revealed.

Umm the fact is my relatives, they are just like this, like me it is like having a baby but no father. In my “Soi/ ซอย” (side-street), it is just like a mystery. My relatives beginning with my auntie got married and had children but finally she had to break up with her husband because he left for another woman. And then another auntie, her husband was seeing another woman when she got pregnant. He left her and told other people that he wasn't the father it's my destiny

Social support: According to Crocker *et al.* (1998), social exclusion can be viewed primarily as a discriminatory response and is part of the process of stigmatisation. In other words, a lone mother who is stigmatised may be socially excluded from her community as a result of being devalued and discriminated against relating to the stigma attached to lone motherhood. As discussed above, lone mothers have been rejected by family and/or community due to their status of lone mothers and some coped with this stigma by isolating themselves from others. The resulting limitations on social interactions and access to social networks, somewhat leads to reduced access to social support in one way or another.

From the initial findings, it was found that the major guardian was the mother. Especially for Milk and Bee, with their mother's support, they had the opportunity to go back to school after the delivery. Milk explained how she has been raising her daughter.

Actually, my parents are like my daughter's (she got pregnant when she was about to finish grade six) they love Toon very much and mainly provide monetary support I tried to find a good job after I graduated. I have just started my full-time job for three months but the salary can cover only my expenses" (Milk, a 24 years old DS with a 4 years old daughter)

Also, Bee said, once my mom knew about my pregnancy, she came home and helped me with childcare she also wanted me to ask for financial support from the father now my mom moved back to live here with me permanently" (Bee, a 24 years old NM with a 2 and a half years old son) Family support has played a vital role among lone mothers' families in Thailand (Jirawat-tananon, 2002; Jiumpanyarach, 2011; Sanitwong-na-ayuthaya, 2005). It was found that lone mothers in Chiangmai have their own family as the primary supporter offering financial, emotional and childcare support. Lah described, "I have my own business (selling the northern Thai sausage in the local market). I can give my daughters money to go to school. My mom could help me for childcare and my brother has been helping me for the ride. My first daughter comes to help me after school..." (Lah, a 29 years old WD with a 10 years old daughter and then DS with a 2 and a half years old daughter) In addition, Lee had been through the difficulty of being a lone mother with her mom. She explained.

"For my first daughter, she calls her grandma mom but calls me auntie because she had grown up with her. My mom was lucky as her second husband was a good person. He also helped my mom take care of my daughter (sadly said) since, my daughter was only two months old, my mom talked to me, "just go for work it's useless to stay at home". I then left her with my mom since, then" (Lee, a 38 years old NM and DS with a 10 years old granddaughter of her daughter who also became a lone mother)

While support from the child's father was rarely found, it was provided by his mom with the condition that the child has to live with her. Milk narrated.

After Toon turned 2 years old, he has come to pick her up to visit his mom. Toon sometimes came back with instant powder, clothes and little money. His mom used to offer me a lump sum to open a small business but I must go to live with her

It happened to Lee also: At first, I took my third child with me when I left my husband's home in Lampang. After three days his mom and dad came to me and asked for the child back. I only thought she (her daughter) could have a better life living with the father's family they had money, so, I let them take her back" (Lee, a 38 years old NM and DS with a 10 years old granddaughter of her daughter who also became a lone mother).

Little support from men with less expectation from women: According to Wiwatwongwana (2013), the question, "What do you want to see changed?" is associated with social support. While the majority of mothers proposed that the government provide them with assistance, many resisted the double standard in expectations between Thai men and women and wanted to see men held responsible for their children. Despite the fact that they have not really attempted to get a response from their child's father, they just want it. From the findings, it is very likely to happen among lone mothers in Chiangmai. For example, Milk narrated:

“Once he (the father of her child) knew I got pregnant, he used to say that he would be responsible for Toon (her daughter). At that time, I was studying in the last semester. He even told me to drop out from school. Do you believe that I have never seen his money since, we broke up? His mom used to offer me a lump sum to open a small business but I must go to live with her. I said no and I don’t want anything from that family (husband’s)” (Milk, a 24 years old DS with a 4 years old daughter)

Lah also expressed: Bringing up my second daughter, I have bought instant powder and diapers myself. He has never supported me once. Oh, I remember now, there was once he passed his money it was only 300 baht. Please forgive me, I didn’t mean to look down at small money but I could say that wasn’t enough for just a can of instant powder His mom was worse. She has never come to visit her grandchild. Anyway, I have never called for their help. This is because I already decided to take care of my daughter by myself, so, I don’t need any a single baht from him and his relatives” (Lah, a 29 years old WD with a 10 years old daughter and then DS with a 2 and a half years old daughter)

Lee added: Speaking about the father of her first child), his mom came to see me before the delivery it was about 5-6 months. She asked me to call her after I delivered the child. She said she would buy me some children stuff like a mosquito net. At that time, my dad came to visit me. He was so angry when he knew about my story and said that, “it was my child and grandchild, so, I would take care of them” later on, he allowed the father’s family to visit my daughter sometimes but told me not to receive anything from them” (Lee, a 38 years old NM and DS with a 10 years old granddaughter of her daughter who also became a lone mother).

CONCLUSION

This is an ongoing study focusing on the way in which social stigma and the range of forms of social support shape lone mother’s experiences. It seems like now is too early to make a conclusion about the project. However, the initial findings found in my PhD research have been applied here to compare with the forthcoming results. It can be seen that there were both similarities and differences between the lone motherhood experience in both Bangkok and Chiangmai. These findings would lead to a critical analysis as the next step. And later on, I hope the project would extend the knowledge about the

experience of lone motherhood to gender and social policy debates as well as to debates about gender and social and cultural practices in Chiangmai, Thailand.

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