

ESRC – INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES

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Programme

CHILD MAINTENANCE: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND POLICY CHALLENGES



<http://www.york.ac.uk/spsw/research/child-maintenance-esrc-seminars/>

Family breakdown is an intensely private event affecting the lives of many people, yet there is a strong public interest as the state has a key role in supporting the children affected by parental separation. The plan is to deliver a series of six seminars over two years. These will open up debate about the tricky problem of the financial obligations of separated parents to pay child maintenance and the role of the state in meeting children's needs. We need to know more about how and whether different policy approaches work in other countries and to what ends.

The main aims of the seminar series are therefore to provide opportunities for knowledge exchange between international experts on child maintenance policy¹, policy makers and third sector organisations in the UK as well as to engage all parties in generating new ideas for national and international comparative research. They will help to advance our knowledge and understanding of the policy approaches and challenges faced in different countries and it will explore the quality of data sources and indicators used to measure child maintenance with a view to improving tools for comparative analysis. The series also aims to help promote and develop the International Network of Child Support Scholars (INCSS.org) to build research capacity.

The seminars are convened by Dr Christine Skinner from the University of York, funded through the Economic and Social Research Council's International Seminar Series Programme, and hosted by The Nuffield Foundation². In general, most of them are directed at policy makers, academics, researchers (including PhD students) and third sector organisations with an interest in the financial obligations of parents in separated families and the impacts on children, mothers and fathers.

Christine Skinner 30/5/14

¹ The definition of child maintenance relates to the private financial obligations owed by parents in separated families to their biological or legally adopted children.

² [The Nuffield Foundation](#) is a charitable trust and a key policy organisation closely connected to policy makers in the UK government.

Seminars	Dates
<p>SEMINAR S 1 & 2 (TWO DAYS)</p> <p>FIRST PRINCIPLES: COMPARATIVE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND PUBLIC ATTITUDES</p> <p>SPEAKERS' AND CHAIRS' DINNER IN THE EVENING</p>	<p>Thursday 27th and Friday 28th March 2014</p> <p><i>Seminar Venue London – The Nuffield Foundation</i></p> <p><i>Venue for Dinner TBA</i></p>
<p>SEMINAR 3 (ONE DAY)</p> <p>GENDER AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN DEVELOPING REGIONS: MANAGING OBLIGATIONS TO CHILDREN IN SEPARATED FAMILIES</p>	<p>Friday 27th June 2014</p> <p><i>Seminar Venue – University of York, York, UK.</i></p>
<p>SEMINARS 4 & 5 (TWO DAYS)</p> <p>POVERTY AND CHILD MAINTENANCE: INTERACTION WITH SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SCHEMES AND PROBLEMS OF MEASUREMENT</p> <p>SPEAKERS' AND CHAIRS' DINNER IN THE EVENING</p>	<p>Proposed dates Spring - Summer 2015</p> <p><i>Venue London – The Nuffield Foundation (TBC)</i></p> <p><i>Venue for Dinner TBA</i></p>
<p>SEMINAR 6 (ONE DAY)</p> <p>FAMILY RELATIONSHIP SUPPORT AND CHILD MAINTENANCE</p>	<p>Proposed dates Summer - Autumn 2015</p> <p><i>Venue London – The Nuffield Foundation (TBC)</i></p>

TWO DAYS: (SEMINARS 1 AND 2) FIRST PRINCIPLES: COMPARATIVE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND PUBLIC ATTITUDES

Date 27th and 28th March 2014

Venue: The Nuffield Foundation, 28 Bedford Square, London

The series begins with a two day event. Day one sets the scene and informs all participants of the first principles of child maintenance policies and the intended aims of policy in different countries. It is vitally important to begin the series by gaining clarity over the definitions of common terms used in countries – to gain a shared understanding as the same terms do not mean the same things; also a typical child maintenance case on one country is not so typical in another (Meyer and Corden).

SEMINAR 1: COMPARATIVE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND CHILD MAINTENANCE SCHEMES

Aims to address the following questions:

- What are the key legal principles of child maintenance schemes across different countries?
- Are the key principles and policy aims easily identifiable?
- What is the institutional apparatus for delivering child maintenance policy across countries – are there different models?
- What can we learn about the main challenges faced in different countries?

Presenters:

- Comparative Legal Framework:
 - Professor Mavis Maclean & Professor John Eekelaar
- Child Maintenance Systems:
 - USA - Professor Dan Meyer, University of Wisconsin-Madison
 - Germany - Professor Kirsten Schiewe, University of Hildesheim
 - Finland - Professor Heikki Hiilamo, University of Helsinki
 - Iceland - Professors Hrefna Friðriksdóttir and Guðný Björk Eydal, University of Iceland
 - UK and Comparative Analysis - Dr Christine Skinner, University of York
 - Funding Opportunities - Josine Opmeer, University of York

SEMINAR 2: ATTITUDINAL NORMS ABOUT CHILD MAINTENANCE

This seminar will aim to address the following questions:

- What are the attitudinal norms about the principle of child maintenance?
- What are the norms regarding how much should be paid?
- What are the different beliefs about what child maintenance is for?

Presenters:

- Professor Steve McKay, University of Lincoln - *Measuring the child support policies the public prefers: how best to do it and why it matters* -
- Professor Ira Ellman, Arizona State University - *What we learn about the public's policy preferences by asking them how much child support they would require in particular cases. How do their decisions compare to the law's?*
- Caroline Bryson, BPSR - *What child support principles do the public prefer? Do their preferences align with the amount of child support they would require in particular cases? Does contact matter?*
- Jo Miles, University of Cambridge - *What changes in a non-resident parent's contact with his children affect the public's judgments about how much child support he should pay?*

- Amy Skipp, NatCen Social Research - 'Kids Aren't Free': attitudes to child maintenance of single parents on benefit.
- Dr. Christine Skinner, University of York - Reciprocity and the symbolic meanings of child maintenance.

ONE DAY (SEMINAR 3): GENDER AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN DEVELOPING REGIONS: MANAGING OBLIGATIONS TO CHILDREN IN SEPARATED FAMILIES

Date Friday June 27th 2014

Venue: ARCC, University of York, York, UK, YO10 5DD

This seminar will consider the potential gendered effects of social change on family relationships in developing countries/regions. It aims to debate family breakdown and the impacts on gender roles re parenting, working and caring and the financial obligations to children in separated families. Some key questions it aims to address are:

- How are developing Welfare States reacting to rapid social change and what are the gender implications for families?
- What are the implications of social change on maintaining parental responsibilities to children after family breakdown?
- How are child maintenance (child support) schemes emerging in developing regions (East Asia and South America)?
- How do emergent child maintenance schemes compare to established child maintenance schemes in other countries (in the EU, USA, and Australia)?

This one day seminar is primarily aimed at PhD students/early career researchers who are studying or working in Britain exploring family change in developing countries-regions. It will provide opportunities for this group to present papers and engage in debate with their peers, as well as receive feedback from key experts in the field.

We will put a call out for abstracts from this group of researchers on a range of social policy and sociology websites (For example the British Sociological Association, The Social Policy Association and the East Asian Social Policy Research network sites). Two to three relevant papers will be shortlisted for presenting and others will be offered the opportunity to provide posters.

- *East Asian Welfare States and gender* – Dr Sirin Sung (Queens University Belfast)
- *Fatherhood in Shanghai: a comparison between intact and separated families* Dr. Qiong Xu (University of Worcester)
- *Has Childcare Become Less of a Burden in South Korea? Exploring the nature of pre and post reform childcare provision.* Dr. Sung-Hee Lee (University of Bath)
- Discussant – Emeritus Professor Gillian Pascall (University of Nottingham)
- *'Family Change in Colombia: Current Issues and Future Challenges for the Child Maintenance System'*. Laura Cuesta, (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
- *'Family Change in Peru: Single Mothers and Child Maintenance Receipt'*. Vanessa Rios-Salas (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
- Discussant – Dr Kay Cook, RMIT, Melbourne Australia.

2 DAYS (SEMINARS 4 AND 5): POVERTY AND CHILD MAINTENANCE: INTERACTION WITH SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SCHEMES AND PROBLEMS OF MEASUREMENT

Date TBC –Spring - Summer 2015

Venue London (TBC)

These two seminars will examine the comparative and UK evidence on the potential contribution of child maintenance payments to reduce poverty. Uniquely, it will attempt to show how child maintenance schemes interact with social security systems in different countries. It will also explore measurement issues and definitions of child maintenance and the benefits and limitations of current data sets to measure the effects of child maintenance on poverty.

These seminars will have an operational and research focus on poverty. They will therefore be of interest to policy makers involved in delivery of social security benefits and child maintenance systems and to third sector organisation with an interest in tackling child poverty as well as academics and researchers both nationally and internationally.

SEMINAR 4: POVERTY, CHILD MAINTENANCE SCHEMES AND THE INTERACTION WITH SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEMS

This seminar will focus on trying to make visible the interaction between social assistance provision and child maintenance schemes in order to show the outcome in terms of the real value of child maintenance money received. It will consider whether child maintenance provides any surplus value to the income packages of parents dependent on social assistance or whether it is partially or wholly subsumed within social assistance entitlements. It is not about a comparison of 'how much' money an individual parent might receive in one country compared to another, but rather a way of exploring whether in principle at least child support/ maintenance money has any real value once you consider how it might be bundled up with social assistance payments. Also, it will consider what is known about the impact on poverty of the payer.

Possible Presenters:

- Finland – Professor Heikki Hiilamo and Mia Hakovirta
- Iceland – Professor Guðný Björk Eydal and Professor Hrefna Friðriksdóttir
- Germany – Professor Kirsten Schiewe, University of Hildesheim
- USA –Professor Dan Meyer
- Australia – (TBC).

This mix of countries will provide a unique set of comparisons – both across a range of different social security systems, as well as within groups of countries that are considered to be quite similar in terms of welfare state typology and social security provision. For example Finland and Iceland form part of the Nordic countries and are considered to offer generous social assistance benefits whereas the UK and US are considered as more residual systems offering minimal support.

SEMINAR 5: MEASURING CHILD MAINTENANCE OUTCOMES COMPARATIVELY

This seminar intends to explore key data sets providing information on child maintenance payments. It will explore a number of issues:

- Which key data sets have been used for measuring child maintenance outcomes?
- The difficulties that have arisen in understanding child maintenance measures across different countries and different data sets (administrative records and surveys).
- The difficulties of assessing the impact of child maintenance payments on poverty across countries.
- The challenges of assessing the value of informal child maintenance contributions and contributions in kind on poverty.
- The challenges of assessing the value of informal child maintenance contributions and contributions in kind on child well-being.
- What can be learned from the construction of child well-being indexes?

Possible presenters

- Luxembourg Income Data - Professor Heike Hillamo and Dr Mia Hakovirta (TBC).
- Specifically designed child maintenance surveys:
 - Survey data separated families – Caroline Bryson
 - Non-resident fathers – Dr Christine Skinner
- UK - Family Resources Survey and Understanding Society – Professor Steve McKay
- UK - Millennium Cohort study – Professor Kathleen Kiernan (TBC).
- Child Well-being Indices – Professor Jonathan Bradshaw (TBC).
- Child perspectives on material resources – Dr Tess Ridge (TBC) Dr Gill Main (TBC).

ONE DAY (SEMINAR 6): RELATIONSHIP SUPPORT AND CHILD MAINTENANCE

DATE TBC- August - September 2015

Venue London (TBC)

This seminar would aim to investigate what goes on ‘inside’ parental relationships to explore how parents can or cannot reach agreements about child maintenance obligations. It is timed to explore the new policy changes in the UK on providing relationship support and it will aim to make comparisons with Australia’s approach. It will also consider interventions in the UK designed to support collaborative parenting in separated families and the outcomes this is expected to create regarding child maintenance compliance.

Possible presenters:

- Overview of policies on relationship support for separated families in the UK – DWP (TBC)
- Innovations in supporting co-parenting, Director One Plus One – Penny Mansfield (TBC)
- An Australian perspective on relationship support services - (TBC)
- Child Maintenance Options Service in the UK – DWP (TBC)
- Third sector provider of relationship support services (TBC)
- Results from Understanding Society on child maintenance obligations in the UK- (TBC)