



Department of Law & Criminology

Families & Children Research Cluster Webinars

Webinar Series 2021-2022

Autumn Term

| Date/Time | Speaker(s) | Topic / Title |
|------------------|---|---|
| 20/10/2021 | Dr Hedi Viterbo (QML) Yuval Saar-Heiman (RHUL) | Topic: Children's rights discourse Title: The Complicity of Child Rights in State Violence: Lessons from the Israeli-Palestinian Case? Title: Unpacking the relationship between poverty, social inequality and child protection policy and practice: A poverty-aware and rights-based perspective |
| 17/11/2021 | Dr Shona Minson University of Oxford | Title: The rights of children whose parents are sentenced in the criminal courts Dr Shona Minson, University of Oxford |
| 08/12/2021 | Dr Philip Bremner (RHUL) | Title: LGBTQ+ Parenting Journeys and Family Law: A Case Study Approach |

Title: The Complicity of Child Rights in State Violence: Lessons from the Israeli-Palestinian Case? - Dr Hedi Viterbo (Queen Mary University of London)

Abstract:

Using Israel/Palestine as a test case, Hedi Viterbo will argue in this talk that the children's rights discourse has become increasingly complicit in state violence. He will bring to light Israel's growing use of international children's rights law as a means of entrenching, perfecting, and laundering its oppressive control regime. In particular, this talk will focus on how both Israel and the liberal human rights community invoke children's rights in ways that legitimise harshness and apathy towards Palestinian adults.

Bio:



Dr Hedi Viterbo is a lecturer in law at Queen Mary University of London. Previously, he was a lecturer in law at the University of Essex, a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at SOAS, a visiting scholar at Harvard Law School, and a visiting researcher at Columbia University. His research examines legal issues concerning childhood, state violence, and sexuality from an interdisciplinary and global perspective. Amongst his publications is the co-authored book *The ABC of the OPT: A Legal Lexicon of the Israeli Control over the Palestinian Territory* (Cambridge University Press, 2018). His second book – *Problematizing Law, Rights, and Childhood in Israel/Palestine* – will be published by Cambridge University Press later this year.

Title: Unpacking the relationship between poverty, social inequality and child protection policy and practice: A poverty-aware and rights-based perspective - Dr Yuval Saar-Heiman (Royal Holloway, University of London)

Abstract: The individualized discourses associated with the neoliberal politics of ‘risk’ focus on individual deficit and responsibility and pay little attention to the social determinants of harm or the social contexts of families’ lives and thus largely ignore the complex, multifaceted causes of parental difficulties. Yet the detrimental effects of poverty on children are well documented with regard to a range of developmental dimensions and clear link has been established between children’s social deprivation, particularly as it may be reflected in their inability to live with their family of origin, and their life chances. While poverty has long been recognized as a violation of human rights, in the context of the child protection system, it is often obscured and children’s rights are often juxtaposed with parents’ rights, with the primary focus on children’s right to protection. The tension between perceived children’s rights and perceived parents’ rights intensifies in the context of poverty. Othering of poor families is rife in risk-averse child protection systems and reinforced by extremely imbalanced power relations with practitioners with the result that parents are easily blamed and held responsible for their children’s situation. In my presentation, I will argue that the parents’ rights/children’s rights binary is unhelpful and there is a need for a more complex understanding of children’s rights in relation to poverty and state intervention. More specifically, I will demonstrate how the Poverty-Aware paradigm—a critical framework for social work practice—offers an alternative conceptualization of children’s rights, one that promotes solidarity with parents and calls for

a relational and contextual ethical stance towards what are perceived as the best interests of the child.

Bio:



Dr. Yuval Saar-Heiman completed his PhD at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev's Spitzer Department of Social Work. His doctoral research addressed the relationship between poverty, child protection, and social work practice. Yuval is currently a Marie Skłodowska-Curie postdoctoral fellow at the Department of Social Work of Royal Holloway, University of London, where he is conducting a comprehensive study on parent advocacy programs in the UK under the supervision of Prof. Anna Gupta. His research aims to offer a comprehensive view of the development of parent advocacy programs, parents' involvement in policy design, and participatory practices with parents of children at risk of child abuse and neglect.

Title: The rights of children whose parents are sentenced in the criminal courts - Dr Shona Minson, University of Oxford

Abstract: Each year the parents of around 300,000 children in England and Wales, are sentenced to imprisonment. This presentation will consider the rights of these children, the contrasts between separation of children from parents in the family courts and the criminal courts, and the implications of such differentiated treatment for children, society and the state. How far should state punishment extend and who is responsible for the symbiotic harms of punishment?

Bio:



Dr Shona Minson's first career was as a barrister, working in family and criminal law. She moved from practice into academic research at the Centre for Criminology, University of Oxford in 2012. Her work analyses the observance of children's rights in sentencing decisions concerning their primary carers and has brought attention to the lack of concern for children whose primary carers are before the court for sentencing in England and Wales. She has produced films and briefing papers about the impact of custodial sentences on dependent children, for England, Wales and Scotland, which launched in 2018 and are embedded in training for the judiciary, magistracy, advocates, and probation. Her work has led to change in policy and practice. She is currently a British Academy Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Centre for Criminology at Oxford researching the experience of children whose parents are imprisoned during COVID-19 lockdowns.

Title: LGBTQ+ Parenting Journeys and Family Law: A Case Study Approach (Philip Bremner, RHUL)

Abstract: This presentation will outline a proposal for a project that explores the opportunities and challenges that family law presents for a range of LGBTQ+ individuals in their journeys to become parents. The project aims to adopt a multiple case-study approach by focusing on three types of LGBTQ+ families that have appeared in the reported case law in recent years, namely single gay men who become parents through surrogacy, gay men and lesbians who have and raise a child together and trans men who give birth to their child. Each of these families share the fact that the law does not, or has not until very recently, fully recognised the family they are trying to create. This proposal is still at an early stage and any feedback would be gratefully received.

Bio:



Philip is a senior lecturer in the Department of Law and Criminology. His research interests focus on comparative family and property law. Philip undertook a socio-legal, empirical PhD at the University of Exeter under the supervision of Professor Anne Barlow on the legal recognition of gay and lesbian co-parenting arrangements following assisted reproduction. His subsequent research has focused on family formation through surrogacy and other aspects of LGBTQ+ families. Philip is interested in examining the ways in which the law recognises diverse families including through the birth registration system and the effect of intimate relationships on property rights.

For further information, please contact **Professor Ravinder Barn**, Head of the Children & Families Research Cluster, Department of Law & Criminology. Email: r.barn@rhul.ac.uk. Please note that all of these events will be held online.