

International Seminar on
Family Demography and Family Law around the World

Montreal, Canada, 27–29 April 2020

Seminar organised by the IUSSP Scientific Panel on Family Demography and Family Law and the Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS), and hosted by the Centre Urbanisation Culture Société de l'INRS (Montreal, Canada).

CALL FOR PAPERS

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 31 July 2019.

Over the last decades, family structure and family dynamics have undergone tremendous changes. In family demography, these changes are typically interpreted as the consequences of deep transformations in values, attitudes and norms. These are defined and measured at the level of the individual, typically using a questionnaire, and, when aggregated, they are usually interpreted either as characteristics of a population – for instance in cross-national comparisons – or as characteristics of different groups within a country, say men and women, the less educated and the well-educated, and so on.

Although these approaches have proven fruitful, they leave aside the formal context within which actors must make the decisions and the choices that will lead to demographic events such as entering in a conjugal relationship, leaving one or having a child. Although these choices and decisions are without any doubt rooted in economic contexts, influenced by individuals' values and attitudes, and conditioned by what they perceive as norms, the range of what is possible and the “cost” of any specific decision or choice are largely an institutional matter and are shaped by law.

The diffusion of unmarried cohabitation would probably not have occurred if the millennia-old distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children had not been abolished in many countries through a combination of legislative changes and court decisions. The postponement of fertility would not have occurred the way it did, if contraception and abortion had remained illegal. Divorce, separation and step-families would not be as common as they are today if most jurisdictions in the West had not, willingly or not, come to terms with unilateral divorce.

As the last example suggests, the relationship between the changes in the demography of the family and the changes in family law is not a simple matter of cause and effect. Changes in law occur because of changes in behaviour as much as changes in law may favour changes in behaviour.

The purpose of the IUSSP Scientific Panel on Family Demography and Family Law is to foster the study of the connection between changes in family law and changes in family structure and family dynamics while assuming as little as possible about the specifics of the connection.

The purpose of the seminar is to gather together people who are working on relevant topics but are not yet meeting in seminars or meeting sessions devoted to the field. Members of the panel consider the seminar as an opportunity to prepare an edited book that would help set the field.

For the purposes of the Panel and of this seminar, family law is mainly private law, i.e. what is normally regulated by the Civil Code of a country, or its laws on marriage, divorce, separation, filiation, maintenance between relatives and inheritance. These matters are commonly intertwined with matters of “social law” (*Sozialrecht, derecho social, droit social*) and proposals that deal with matters of private law and social law will be welcome, but the focus of the seminar is not on the relationship between the social provision of welfare and demographic behaviour.

Topics of interest for the seminar include, but are not limited to the following:

- Do legal restrictions that forbid divorce, impose delays or any other such constraints on divorce have an impact on the spread of unmarried cohabitation?
- Do the rules regarding marital property or maintenance duties towards ex-spouses have an impact on the choice of unmarried cohabitation over marriage?
- Did the abolition of illegitimacy for the purposes of maintenance duties and inheritance make it easier to have children without being married and is thus linked to the rise of unmarried cohabitation?
- Does the legal connection between state provided support (e.g., social assistance payments or health care services) and maintenance duties between spouses or partners have an impact on out-of-union births?
- Do the rules defining the role and duties of ‘stepparents’ towards stepchildren following separation have an impact on the formation of step-families?
- Are the legal regulations prescribing the number of ‘parents’ that a child can have linked to an increase in births following the use of reproductive technologies?
- Can the lack of legal recognition of surrogacy lead to children being given up for adoption in case of disagreement between intended parents and the surrogate mother?
- Did the introduction of same-sex marriage or same-sex registered partnerships have an impact on the processes of union formation and dissolution among same-sex couples?
- What was the impact of the introduction of adoption by same-sex couples or by single people on family formation?

The organisers will also welcome papers that address international comparisons as well as those that use innovative methodological approaches applied to relevant topics.

Online Submissions:

The IUSSP Panel on Family Demography and Family Law invites researchers in the field to **submit online, by 31 July 2019**, a short 200-word abstract **AND** upload an extended abstract (2 to 4 pages, including tables) or a full paper, which must be unpublished. To submit and fill out the online submission form, please click here: [online submission form](#).

The seminar will be limited to a maximum of 20 completed papers. The working language of the seminar is English: abstracts and final papers should be submitted and presented in English. If the paper is co-authored, please indicate the names of co-authors at the end of the abstract. Submission should be made by the author who will attend the seminar.

Applicants will be notified whether their paper has been accepted by **31 August 2019**. Authors of accepted papers must upload the full paper on the IUSSP website by **15 March 2020**.

Possible outcomes from IUSSP seminars typically include publishing the papers as seminar proceedings, an edited volume or a special issue of a journal. As stated above, the Panel prefers an edited book. Papers submitted should be unpublished and, as for a journal or an edited book, authors, by submitting a paper, agree they will not propose it for publication to another editor until the committee makes a decision with regard to their possible publication.

Current funding for the seminar is limited; efforts are under way to raise additional funds, but the outcome at this point is uncertain. Seminar organisers cannot ensure that any travel support will be available. Applicants are therefore strongly encouraged to seek their own travel funding. Funding is contingent upon submission of a complete paper of acceptable quality by the deadline for papers.

For further information:

Please contact Seminar Organiser Benoît Laplante (Benoit.Laplante@UCS.INRS.Ca).

IUSSP Scientific Panel on Family Demography and Family Law:

Chair: Benoît Laplante.

Members: Laura Bernardi, Minja Choe, Céline Le Bourdais, Nora Sánchez Gassen, T.V. Sekher, Joice Melo Vieira.

IUSSP Council Liaison: Suzana Cavenaghi.