

The Wisconsin Workshop on Child Support: Research and public policy

As rising marital instability and out-of-wedlock childbearing put an increasing number of children at risk of living in a single-parent family, the question of financial responsibility for children takes on new urgency. One child in two born today will spend some part of childhood in a single-parent family before age 18. Only 60 percent of absent fathers pay anything at all toward the support of their children. And some 40 percent of families headed by women have incomes below the poverty line. Add haphazard legal and administrative approaches to assigning responsibility for children—approaches that have created gross inequities among families—and the gravity of the situation becomes apparent.

Recognition of this has led researchers at the Institute to design and undertake a major research endeavor that is empirically analyzing the extent and nature of child support arrangements nationwide and, in collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, is designing a reformed child support system for the state of Wisconsin (see *Focus*, 4:1, 1979, for a description). As part of that endeavor, a workshop with participants from universities and from state and federal government agencies was held in Madison on April 22 and 23, 1981. The papers presented at this workshop addressed the larger social, legal, economic, and psychological issues raised by the existing child support system and offered proposals to reform it.

The workshop was organized by Judith Cassetty, Assistant Professor of Social Work, University of Texas at Austin. A list of papers presented, with primary authors, follows.

Introductory session

The Role of the Federal Government in Child Support Enforcement, Louis B. Hays, Deputy Director, Office of Child Support Enforcement.

The Role of the State in Child Support Reform Efforts, Bernard Stumbras, Administrator, Wisconsin Division of Economic Assistance.

Session 1: The legal system

Child Support Enforcement: Legislative Tasks for the 1980s, Harry Krause, Professor of Law, University of Illinois. Critiques by H. Robert Hahlo, Professor of Law, University of Toronto; Isabel Marcus, Professor of Law, Government, and Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin.

Session 2: Patterns of support

Child Support: Who pays what to whom? Maurice MacDonald, Associate Professor of Family Resources and Consumer Sciences and IRP Research Affiliate, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Annemette Sørensen, IRP Research Affiliate. Critiques by Walter D. Johnson, Director, Family Support Project, Sangamon State University, Springfield, Illinois; Wendy Wolf, National Commission for Employment Policy; Alastair Bissett-Johnson, Professor of Law, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Session 3: The parental duty to support

Fundamental Issues of Child Support, Martin Levy, Professor of Law, University of Louisville Law School; Jessica Kingsley, J.D., University of Louisville Law School. Critiques by Edward M. Young, Center for Health Services Research, School of Medicine, University of Southern California; John Sampson, Professor of Law, University of Texas at Austin; Sheila Kamerman, Professor of Social Policy and Planning, Columbia University.

Session 4: Financial elements of the parental support issue

Developing Normative Standards for Child Support and Alimony Payments, Isabelle Sawhill, Economist, Urban Institute. Critiques by Barbara Bergmann, Professor of Economics, University of Maryland; Carol Bruch, Professor of Law, University of California, Davis.

Session 5: Nonfinancial issues related to parental support

Bread and Roses: Nonfinancial Issues Related to Fathers' Economic Support of Their Children Following Divorce, Judith Wallerstein, Professor of Psychology, University of California, Berkeley; Dorothy Huntington, Ph.D. Critiques by Martha Cox, Institute for Child and Family Policy, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; John Santrock, Professor of Psychology, University of Texas at Dallas.

Session 6: Options for reform

Current Proposals for Reforming Laws and Mechanisms for Collecting Adjudicated Support, Sanford Katz, Professor of Law, Boston College.

A Proposal for Reform of the Child Support System, Harold Watts, Professor of Economics, Columbia University.

A Proposal for Comprehensive Reform of the Child Support System, Irwin Garfinkel, Professor of Social Work and IRP Research Affiliate, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Child Support in the 21st Century, David L. Chambers, Professor of Law, University of Michigan.

Recent Institute Publications

American Inequality: A Macroeconomic History by Jeffrey G. Williamson and Peter A. Lindert. 1980. \$29.50.

Class Structure and Income Determination by Erik O. Wright. 1979. \$21.00.

A Decade of Federal Antipoverty Programs: Achievements, Failures, and Lessons edited by Robert H. Haveman. 1977. \$20.00 (paper \$6.00).

Earnings Capacity, Poverty, and Inequality by Irwin Garfinkel and Robert H. Haveman with the assistance of David Betson. 1977. \$14.50.

Financing Black Economic Development by Timothy Bates and William Bradford. 1979. \$17.50 (paper \$10.00).

Food, Stamps, and Income Maintenance by Maurice MacDonald. 1977. \$16.50 (paper \$8.00).

Improving Measures of Economic Well-Being edited by Marilyn Moon and Eugene Smolensky. 1977. \$21.00.

Income, Employment, and Urban Residential Location by Larry Orr. 1975. \$12.00.

Integrating Income Maintenance Programs edited by Irene Lurie. 1975. \$23.50.

The Measurement of Economic Welfare: Its Application to the Aged Poor by Marilyn Moon. 1977. \$16.25.

Microeconomic Simulation Models for Public Policy Analysis, Vol. 1: Distributional Impacts; Vol. 2: Sectoral, Regional and General Equilibrium Models edited by Robert H. Haveman and Kevin Hollenbeck. 1980. \$29.50 each.

The Politics of Displacement: Racial and Ethnic Transition in Three American Cities by Peter K. Eisinger. 1980. \$18.00.

Protecting the Social Service Client: Legal and Structural Controls on Official Discretion by Joel F. Handler. 1979. \$13.00 (paper \$6.00).

Social Movements and the Legal System: A Theory of Law Reform and Social Change by Joel F. Handler. 1978. \$20.00.