

University of Edinburgh

School of Social and Political Science

Social Work Subject Area

Julie-Ann Macqueen PhD Scholarship Projects 2024

Applicants may only apply for **one** of the two projects, not both, and you must upload a separate research proposal for your chosen project. This research proposal should be up to 1,000 words with the heading, '**Macqueen Scholarship Application**' and must outline how you would pursue the chosen option as a doctoral student. You must note the project option and supervisor it relates to on your proposal to confirm your choice.

You should upload your Research Proposal, along with a copy of your CV, to the PGR admissions portal along with your application to study a [PhD in Social Work](#) at the University of Edinburgh. You should cite the primary supervisor of your PhD to be the lead academic of the proposal for which you are applying. You must make explicitly clear which supervisor led option you are applying to pursue at the start of your research proposal.

You must have applied via the University scholarship application system by **21/03/2024** to be eligible for consideration.

Full guidance on the application process and who to contact with queries can be found [here](#). **We strongly advise you to visit this page before you apply.**

The MacQueen scholarships offer the payment of fees for either Home, EU or International holders of the scholarship, plus an annual stipend at the current UKRI stipend rate and an annual £750 research grant. Please note that the duration of the PhD award is for three years only if full time or six years part time (pro rata).

It is anticipated that an award decision will be made by the end of April 2024.

Option 1 Macqueen Scholarship 2024

Propoal title:	Single-parent families: experiences of fathers and grandmothers in South Africa		
Lead academic:	Dr Franziska Meinck	Email:	fmeinck@ed.ac.uk
Additional academics:	Dr Khudejha Asghar	Email:	kasghar@ed.ac.uk
External partners (if any):	Nicola Christofides (University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg) Nataly Woollett (University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg)		
Mode of study:	Full-time or part-time		
Propoal (max. 750 words):	<p>Background</p> <p>Globally, up to a quarter of all children grow up in single-parent families, where the parent lives alone with the child or children without a partner. There is an increasing evidence-base showing that children growing up in single-parent families have consistently worse outcomes across the life course. In particular growing-up in a single parent family is associated with increased risk for poor mental health (Weitoft et al., 2003), aggression (Kroese et al., 2021), and poorer educational attainment (De Lange et al., 2014), when compared to growing-up in a two-parent family. Single-parent families report consistently higher levels of poverty and parenting stress (OECD, 2022) than two-parent families.</p> <p>In South Africa, 42% of children live with only their mothers, 4% only with their fathers and 21% live without their biological parent and most commonly stay with a lone grandmother (2020). South Africa is therefore experiencing very high rates of single-parent families compared to e.g., Britain where only 15% of children are in single-parent households (Office for National Statistics, 2021). The limited research available from South Africa on single-parent families highlights a higher risk for teenage pregnancy, neonatal mortality (Ramaiya et al., 2014), sexual risk behaviours, suicidality in girls and hypermasculinity in the form of aggression and violence in boys (Morrell, 2006).</p> <p>However, thus far research has investigated factors associated with living in single-mother headed homes and little is known about single fathers and grandmothers who act as primary caregivers for children, or about intergenerational patterns of single-parenthood.</p> <p>Aims:</p> <p>This PhD project therefore has three aims: 1) to describe single parenthood in both fathers and grandmothers in South Africa; 2) to investigate factors associated with single parenting among fathers and grandmothers on all levels of the socio-ecological model; and 3) to examine intergenerational patterns of single parenthood and their underlying mechanisms.</p> <p>Methods</p>		

The PhD project will use a quantitative design using descriptive statistics and regression modelling thus making it suitable for a student with limited experience of quantitative methods. It could be turned into a sequential explanatory mixed methods study design where patterns in the quantitative data will be explained through interrogations of qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), but this component is not currently funded.

The quantitative data will stem from the INTERRUPT_VIOLENCE Study, a three generational longitudinal study on intergenerational violence transmission in South Africa, of which Dr Meinck is the PI. INTERRUPT_VIOLENCE will have three waves of data from 1650 participants interviewed in 2010/11 (mean age 13.5 years old), 2011/2012 (mean age 14.5 years old) and 2022/2023 (mean age 26 years old) and include data on the original participant's primary caregiver (aged 45-90) and child (aged 6-17). Data collection will be completed by December 2023 and as such the student will have a readily available dataset for analyses.

There is an option for the PhD student to collect qualitative data in South Africa in the fieldwork sites adjacent to the INTERRUPT_VIOLENCE Study with both adults and children. The annual research support grant could be used to fund this. If the qualitative data collection took place, the student will be based at the University of the Witwatersrand Rural Campus and will be well supported by the study team in field. Some experience conducting in-depth qualitative interviews and data analysis is a requirement.

Conclusion

The project will provide rich and reliable information on the factors associated with single-fatherhood and -grandparenthood in South Africa and will improve our understanding of mechanisms associated with intergenerational transmission of single-parenthood.

References

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Option 2 Macqueen Scholarship 2024

Proposal title:	Investigating the experiences of lone parents who are also caregivers		
Lead academic:	Dr Jackie Gulland	Email:	Jackie.Gulland@ed.ac.uk
Additional academics:	Dr Hayley Bennett	Email:	Hayley.Bennett@ed.ac.uk
External partners (if any):	External supervisors may also form part of the supervisory team		
Mode of study:	Full-time or part-time		
Proposal (max. 750 words):	<p>Background</p> <p>This project addresses the question of lone parents as both parents and as carers. Some lone parents are carers of disabled children, while others are 'sandwich carers', people who are simultaneously supporting their own children and disabled adult relatives or friends.</p>		

Social security and social care policies force people to identify in categories: either as carers or as parents, leaving little space for people who occupy multiple roles as both parents and carers. Social security conditionality also expects people to juggling these multiple roles with paid work or work seeking requirements.

Census information shows that 14 % of unpaid carers are also lone parents (England and Wales Census 2021). 41% of lone parents are aged over 50, an age at which many people find themselves also acting as caregivers for other relatives. Meanwhile it has been estimated that around 32% of disabled children live in lone parent households, (Yeandle and valentine 2013).

Relationships between parents, their children and other people they may support are also interdependent. For example, in a key legal case regarding social security, a lone parent was successful in ensuring that exemptions to the 'benefit cap' were extended to carers. The lone parent in this case had an interdependent relationship with her grandmother, for whom she provided care but who also provided support to the children in the family ([2015] EWHC 3382 (Admin)).

Social security policy has stringent eligibility criteria if people wish to claim carers' benefits (see Gulland 2023). However carers' benefits are paid at such a low rate that most claimants, especially lone parents, would also need to claim the means-tested Universal Credit. Work-seeking requirements in Universal Credit mean that most claimants must show that they are in paid work or making serious attempts to seek work. In-work conditionality means that even those who are in paid work part-time must show how they are seeking to increase their hours. Failure to meet these requirements can lead to benefit sanctions, reducing the income of low income families to below the poverty line (Adler 2018). There are some ways in which lone parents, carers and those with health conditions can seek to mitigate this conditionality so that their caring responsibilities are recognised. However lone parents who are also carers may struggle to explain the complexity of their lives to work coaches. Work coaches also have limited discretion in their responses to lone parents' challenges (Wright 2023).

Aims

The aim of the research is to explore the dual or multiple responsibilities of people who are both lone parents and carers. The focus will be on the interaction between these roles and the ways in which social security and wider social welfare policies influence lone parents' challenges regarding paid work and care.

Methods

It is anticipated that this will be a qualitative study, focussing on the lived experience of lone parents who are carers and carers who are lone parents. However new census data in both England and Wales and in Scotland will also be available, enabling the study to include an element of descriptive quantitative research to help contextualise the rich qualitative data.

We particularly encourage applicants who wish to use creative methods to support lone parents to share their lived experience of their situation. The successful applicant will have access to specialist advice from the School's Research Training Centre and from the Binks Hub (creative arts methods group).

The geographical focus of the study would be negotiated between the student, the supervisors and partner agencies. This could include a Scotland, UK or wider geographical spread. If the applicant wishes to focus on the UK, supervisors will use their existing contacts with relevant third sector organisations to assist with recruitment.

Supervisory team

The supervisors for this project will be Dr Jackie Gulland (social work) and Dr Hayley Bennett (social policy). They have extensive experience in social work and

social security policy and have expertise in a range of qualitative methods. Should the student wish to combine the study with quantitative methods, further supervisory expertise will be sought from within the School of Social and Political Science.

References

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Yeandle, S. and valentine, kylie (2013) 'Reconciling work and care for parent-carers of disabled children in Australia and England: uncertain progress', in T. Kroger and S. Yeandle (eds) *Combining paid work and family care: Policies and experiences in international perspective*

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