

# Intra-household distributions and children's subjective well-being

Gill Main

School of Education, University  
of Leeds

Email: [g.main@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:g.main@leeds.ac.uk)

## Outline

- Background
- Research questions
- Data and methods
- Findings
- Conclusions and next steps

## Background: central concepts

- **Child poverty**
  - Associated with negative outcomes (Griggs and Walker, 2008)
  - **Multidimensional**
    - Multiple conceptualisations
    - Multiple measures
  - Usually measured via adults/households
    - Household-level resources
    - Adult/parental perceptions of needs
    - Adult/parental reports
- **Intra-household distributions**
  - Research challenges assumptions of equitability (Pahl, 1989)
  - Gendered rather than generational perspective (Bennett, 2013)
  - Prioritisation of men over women and children (Pahl, 2005)
  - Prioritisation of children over adults (Main and Bradshaw, 2014)

## Background: protective role of parents

- Main and Bradshaw's (forthcoming) analysis of UK 2012 Poverty and Social Exclusion survey: In vast majority of households children are protected

	Children not poor	Children poor
No adults poor	56%	1%
Any adults poor	16%	27%
Any adults not poor	65%	5%
All adults poor	7%	23%

## Background: children's perspectives

- Children's perspectives and reports largely absent in material aspects of well-being
  - Ridge (2002): children and parents protect one another from full exposure to impacts of poverty
  - Main (2013): differences between children's and adult's perceptions of children's needs
- Tensions between well-being and well-becoming
  - Uprichard (2008): importance of focus on both
  - Potential for tensions between well-being and well-becoming needs
  - Potential for tensions between adults and children in prioritisation of different needs

## Conceptualising adult-child intra-household distributions

- Intra-household distributions between adults and children influenced by:
  - External factors
    - Socio-economic context
    - Cultural and social norms
    - Total resources available to household
  - Competing priorities
    - Between individuals
    - Within individuals
  - Power relationships
    - Gender
    - Age
- Key questions:
  - How equitable is the distribution of resources within a child's household?
    - According to whose definitions of needs?
    - According to whose definitions of equity?

## Questions

- How do children perceive the distribution of resources and their involvement in financial decision making within their households?
  - How do these perceptions vary between different groups of children?
- How do these perceptions relate to poverty/deprivation?
  - At the level of the household?
  - At the level of the child?
- How do children's perceptions of intra-household sharing and financial decision making relate to their subjective well-being?

## Data and analysis

- The Children's Society Well-being Research Programme
- School-based survey
- Random, stratified sample of schools based on % receiving free school meals; one class from each school surveyed
- Children in mainstream education in England, in the year in which the average age is 14
- Total sample of 1,000, reduced to 859 when cases with missing data on key variables excluded
- Analysis conducted using Stata's `-svy-` command to account for clustering at the class/school level

## Control variables

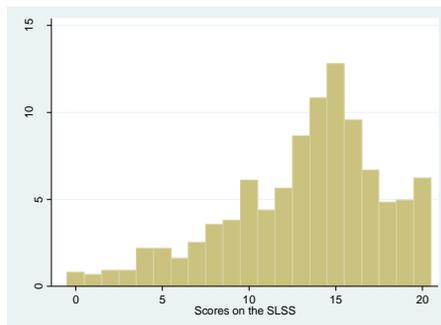
- **Demographics**
  - Gender
  - Family structure
  - Living with siblings
  - Caring responsibilities
  - Living in one or two homes
- **Material well-being**
  - Family Affluence Scale (Currie et al, 2008)
  - Child Deprivation Scale (Main, 2013)

## Intra-household sharing and decision-making variables

- **Child's involvement in financial decisions**
  - Thinking about how involved you are in how your family manages money, do you think you are:
    - not involved at all
    - not involved enough
    - involved about the right amount
    - a bit too involved
    - far too involved
- **Intra-household sharing**
  - Thinking about
    - how much your family takes your opinion into account about spending money
    - who gets what in your family in terms of money and possessions
  - do you think the way you are treated is usually:
    - Very fair
    - Fair
    - Neither fair nor unfair
    - Unfair
    - Very unfair

## Subjective well-being

- Huebner's (1991) Student's Life Satisfaction Scale, reduced to five items in line with Rees et al's (2010) recommendations.



## Findings: How do different groups of children perceive intra-household sharing and financial decision making?

- Most children perceive financial decisions and household distributions to be 'fair' or 'very fair'
  - 70% - financial decisions
  - 77% - household distributions
- Fewer children feel they are involved in such decisions at their preferred level:
  - 52% report under-involvement
  - 4% report over-involvement
- Minimal associations with demographic factors
  - Children with caring responsibilities slightly less likely to report the right amount of involvement in financial decisions
  - Children in lone-parent families report slightly lower levels of fairness in intra-household sharing

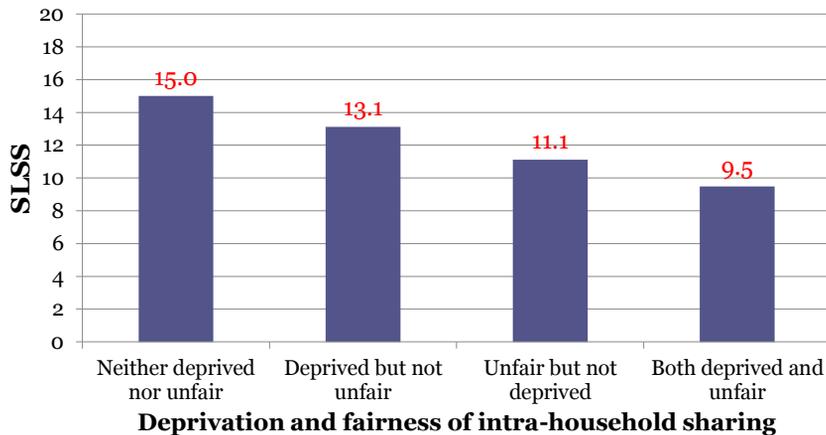
## Findings: How do children's perceptions relate to child deprivation and family affluence?

		Involvement in financial decisions (odds ratio)	Fairness of intra-household sharing (b)
<b>Gender (Ref: girl)</b>		1.30 NS	0.17 NS
<b>Family structure (Ref: two parents)</b>	Step family	1.05 NS	-0.18 NS
	Lone parent	1.22 NS	-0.28 NS
	Other	0.59 NS	-0.03 NS
<b>Siblings (Ref: no)</b>		1.12 NS	-0.28 NS
<b>Carer (Ref: yes)</b>		0.65*	-0.08 NS
<b>FAS</b>		1.01 NS	0.09*
<b>Deprivation</b>		1.30*	-0.31**
<b>Adjusted r<sup>2</sup></b>		N/A	0.14

## Findings: How do children's perceptions relate to SWB?

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
<b>Gender (Ref: girl)</b>		1.77**	1.60**	1.54**	1.62**	1.44**
<b>Family structure (Ref: two parents)</b>	Step family	-1.31 NS	-1.27 NS	-0.85 NS	-0.83 NS	-0.67 NS
	Lone parent	-1.32*	-1.06 NS	-1.01 NS	-0.94 NS	-0.70 NS
	Other	-1.31 NS	-1.00 NS	-0.19 NS	-0.36 NS	-0.28 NS
<b>Siblings (Ref: no)</b>		-0.31 NS	-0.41 NS	-0.20 NS	-0.16 NS	0.09 NS
<b>Carer (Ref: yes)</b>		0.40 NS	0.31 NS	0.26 NS	0.12 NS	0.24 NS
<b>FAS</b>			0.31*	0.03 NS	0.03 NS	-0.05 NS
<b>Deprivation</b>				-0.82**	-0.74**	-0.47**
<b>Involved in financial decisions (Ref: right level)</b>					-1.46**	-0.97**
<b>Fairness of intra-household sharing</b>						0.95**
<b>Adjusted r<sup>2</sup></b>		0.07	0.08	0.15	0.18	0.28

## Findings: How do children's perceptions relate to SWB?



## Conclusions

- Most children feel that resources are shared fairly within their households; but most children do not feel they are involved enough in household financial decision making
- Children's perspectives on their material living standards provide valuable insight
  - Into how we define and measure child poverty
  - Into how we understand intra-household sharing
- Child-derived understandings of their access to material resources offer insight into the links between material living standards and SWB
  - Child-derived measures more powerful than family-based measures
  - Perceptions of intra-household fairness more powerful than family or child deprivation
  - Perceptions of intra-household fairness and child-derived deprivation more powerful than perceived level of involvement in financial decisions
- Additional research with wider range of demographic factors, wider age range, and to develop better questions in consultation with children, is indicated

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## Thank you!

Comments/questions:  
[g.main@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:g.main@leeds.ac.uk)