

We've also been involved in a range of activities linked to the project:

- Conducted preliminary analysis of the project's survey data (ongoing)
- Worked with the OU's Press Office and the project's Dissemination and Media Strategy Group to prepare a press release about some of the survey's key findings (ongoing)
- Presented our initial analysis of the survey at the Department for Education (February 2012)
- Presented at the *Sexuality at Home* workshop, organised by University College London and The Bartlett School of Architecture (December 2012)
- Presented at Relate's AGM (November 2012)
- Participated in the Open University's 'Friday Thinker' blog (November 2012)
- Presented at Open University's Public Engagement in Research Group (October 2012)
- Visiting Fellowship (Gabb) at University of Jyväskylä, Finland (November 2012). Lectures and seminars included: What is Intimacy? Conceptualising Personal Relationships; Researching Intimacy: A Qualitative Mixed Methods Approach; Parenthood and the Intimate Couple, Data Workshop

Dialogue

One of the project's aims is to facilitate dialogue with others working in the field of relationships in all their myriad and diverse forms. Here we highlight just a few of the ways that we're doing this.

Affiliates

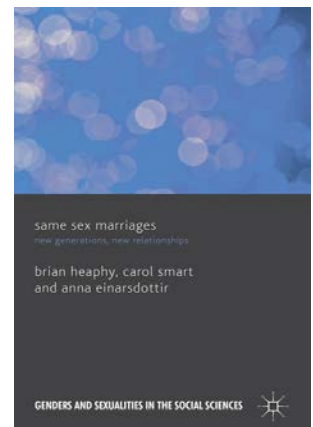
A number of organisations, individuals and research centres are affiliated to the project. Below are some updates on their work. Please get in touch if you are an affiliate and would like your research featured here.

'Just like Marriage?' Young couples' civil partnerships

This ESRC-funded study looked at the impact that entering civil partnership had on the relationship of same-sex couples, their friends and family, and focused on three key areas: household finance, (non)monogamy and family making.

The book from the project will be published shortly - Brian Heaphy, Carol Smart and Anna Einarsdottir, *Same Sex Marriage (forthcoming 2013)*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. You can see key messages from the study on the website of the Morgan Centre for the Study of Relationships and Personal Life.

www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/morgancentre/research/civil-partnership/findings



Relate and the **Tavistock Centre for Couple Relationships** (together with the Fatherhood Institute) are part of a new Department for Education backed trial to help expecting and first time mothers and fathers, including those in same-sex relationships. THE 3 OF US has been developed following research that shows having a baby is commonly a time when couples experience difficulties in their relationships. The service will offer support and advice on dealing with the emotional changes that come with having a baby.

www.the3ofus.org.uk

Oneplusone

Congratulations to the Director of OnePlusOne, Penny Mansfield, who was awarded a CBE for services to children and families in the New Year Honours list 2013. The award recognises the impact of Penny's work in the field of relationships and the role OnePlusOne's support services have played in strengthening family relationships. It also highlights the importance of relationship support on the current political agenda.

www.oneplusone.org.uk/2013/01/04/penny-mansfield-awarded-cbe-in-new-year-honour-list

What's happening out there?

Here are some items that have caught our attention and which we thought may be also be of interest to some of you. Do contact us if you have either a recent publication or some research findings that you think would be of interest to readers of the project's newsletter.

Media stories

Divorce in decline?

Reports in the media in December 2012 suggested a decline in the number of marriages in England and Wales that end in divorce and questioned the extent to which this could be an effect of current economic pressures.

www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2012/dec/20/divorces-down-2percent-england-wales

These reports were based on findings from the ONS, which included:

- The number of divorces in England and Wales in 2011 was 117,558, a decrease of 1.7% since 2010, when there were 119,589 divorces.
- In 2011, 10.8 people divorced per thousand married population compared with 12.9 in 2001.
- The number of divorces in 2011 was highest among men and women aged 40 to 44.
- Based on marriage, divorce and mortality statistics for 2010, it is estimated that the percentage of marriages ending in divorce is 42%, compared with 45% in 2005.

The ONS offered two competing theories relating to the effect of an economic downturn on the number of partnerships dissolving. One theory suggests that recession could contribute to a rise in partnership break-ups because of increased financial strain, changes in employment and related lifestyle changes. Some individuals may also believe they will get a more favourable divorce settlement if their income is presently low.

The other theory suggests that partnerships would be less likely to dissolve in an unfavourable economic climate because of an increase in family solidarity during difficult times and the need to postpone marital break-ups until the economy, and the value of their home improves.

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_291750.pdf

Same sex marriage

The government's plans for 'equal marriage' continue to provoke intense debate. More than 1000 Catholic priests signed a letter in The Daily Telegraph (January 2013) in which they voice fears about religious freedoms. And almost 60 MPs and peers have signed an open letter opposing plans for this legislation. The plans, supported by Labour, are due to be introduced before the next election in 2015.

www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-2075170

Facebook's new couple pages

There were very mixed responses in the media to Facebook's introduction of couple pages. The social networking site has established a new feature which automatically creates a merged page for couples who have listed their relationship statuses as 'in a relationship' or 'married'. The merged page includes a profile picture of the couple as well as events they have attended together and friends and interests they have in common.

www.channel4.com/news/cute-or-criinge-facebooks-new-couple-pages



Research debates and publications

Queer Homes, Queer Families: a history and policy debate

A major debate at the British Library in December 2012 considered changing attitudes to lesbians and gay men as home and family makers. The panel included Peter Tatchell; Professor Jeffrey Weeks, OBE; Dr Kath Holden; Professor Sasha Roseneil; Professor Alison Oram; and Dr Matt Cook with each speaker looking at these shifts in broader historical, social and cultural contexts. You can listen to Dr Matt Cook talking about recent changes and continuities in home and family life.

www.bbk.ac.uk/news/queer-homes-queer-families-a-history-and-policy-debate

A Revolution in Family Policy

Clem Henricson

Policy Press and the University of Chicago Press

This book is a culmination of ideas by the social policy analyst Clem Henricson, the former Research Director of the Family and Parenting Institute. It makes the case that family policy in the UK requires a radical rethink and it is intended to kick-start a debate on the future of family policy. It asks the million dollar question whether this philosophy of social betterment through manipulating the parent-child relationship is appropriate for family policy. The book also challenges the thinking behind the expectation that we can change a highly unequal society through the family route. Instead the argument is made for a family policy with its own *raison d'être*, free of other government agendas, because you believe in it as a function of society.

www.policypress.co.uk/display.asp?K=9781447300533&sf1=keyword&st1=henricson&m=1&dc=3

What is commitment? Women's accounts of intimate attachment

Julia Carter

Families, Relationships and Societies, Volume 1, Number 2, June 2012, pp.137-153

Commitment is a widely acknowledged concern among the general public as well as among academics and scholars. What commitment actually constitutes, however, is not easily defined. This article explores existing theories of commitment and how these fit in with the responses amongst young heterosexual women when asked what commitment meant to them. Certain defining features emerged as the most significant components to commitment in a romantic relationship. These include fidelity, love, longevity, social expectations and investments that are made within a relationship.

www.ingentaconnect.com/content/tpp/frs/2012/00000001/00000002/art00002



Exhibitions and book awards

Love and Devotion: From Persia and Beyond

29 Nov 2012 - 28 April 2013

Exhibition Room, Bodleian Library

Old Schools Quad, Catte Street, Oxford OX1 3BG

Celebrate the beauty of Persian manuscripts, and the stories of human and divine love they tell, in this exhibition featuring more than sixty visually stunning Persian manuscript from the library's collection. They will include rare examples of 13th- to 18th-century Persian, Mughal Indian and Ottoman Turkish illustrated manuscripts. These magnificently illustrated works come from one of the richest periods in the history of the book and give a fascinating insight into the great artistic and literary culture of Persia and its timeless stories. The exhibition is also available online in a series of image galleries.

www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/bodley/about/exhibitions/online/love-and-devotion

Dotter Of Her Father's Eyes

Costa Book Award 2012 (Biography)

Mary Talbot and Bryan Talbot

Part personal history, part biography, *Dotter of Her Father's Eyes* contrasts two coming of age narratives: that of Lucia, the daughter of James Joyce, and that of author Mary Talbot, daughter of the eminent Joycean scholar James S Atherton. Social expectations and gender politics, thwarted ambitions and personal tragedy are played out against two contrasting historical backgrounds, poignantly evoked by the atmospheric visual storytelling of award winning comic artist and graphic novel pioneer Bryan Talbot. Produced through an intense collaboration seldom seen between writers and artists, *Dotter of Her Father's Eyes* is intelligent, funny and sad - a fine addition to the evolving genre of graphic memoir.

www.mary-talbot.co.uk/dotter.php