

## Key Points from the Research

The research on couples involved interviews with 47 people in intimate relationships - either married or cohabiting for the first or subsequent time, or 'living apart together' (LAT). These were carried out in 2004 and 2005. In the case of our exploratory study of people 'living-apart-together', the interviews have been set in the context of a quantitative survey, carried out by John Haskey, then at the Office of National Statistics, which has attempted to find out how important this new form of relationship is.

- Risk was perceived to attach more to making commitments in the form of house purchase, or having children, than to the particular status of cohabitation or marriage. The arrival of children threatened to change the negotiated settlements that respondents had made.
- Respondents recognised that they were taking a risk in entering a relationship and sought to minimise it, usually by trying to make sure that they had something to fall back on financially.
- We think that for our interviewees this approach to entering a relationship was not so much an expression of selfish individualism and the preparation of an 'exit strategy', as a precautionary measure that actually enabled them to take the risk of partnering.
- For those people who had re-partnered, building trust was crucial and the nature of the relationship they chose to enter was part of this. Changes in relationship status were often part of the process of building trust and of achieving the goal of a more traditional partnership.
- 'Living Apart Together' represented a different kind of shared life to the people we interviewed. This group did not reject co-residential relationships but expressed caution about the type of sharing that they required, for example in terms of financial resources as well as space.
- Divorced LAT respondents often felt that co-residence would be too difficult for their dependent children from their first marriage. Never-married LAT respondents had different reasons for continuing to live apart from their partners

The research on parent-teenager relationships was carried out in 2005-2006 and involved interviews with both parents and children aged 12-16 in 26 dual earner families. . A further 50 interviews were carried out with 14 and 15 year olds in households with a variety of parental working patterns.

- Parents' perceptions of risk were strong, but had little to do either with their working patterns or with the actual behaviour of the child.
- Parents, especially mothers, tended to put boundaries around their work, with the aim of monitoring their child's *emotional* as much as physical wellbeing.
- Children who spent regular amounts of time in the house alone tended to welcome the time they had to themselves; however these children nevertheless expressed reservations about their parents' working hours, which included anxiety about the parents' well-being and about the effect of parental stress on parenting style.
- Work was not the most significant factor that separated parents from their children. Children were as likely to be away from their parents because of their own activities.

- While parents frequently kept in touch with their children when they were apart, the facilitation of independence was seen as a key role for parents.
- There did not appear to be a correlation between parents' work hours and the degree of independence afforded to their children.

**Lewis, Jane**, Sarre S. & Burton, J. (2006): 'Dependence and Independence: Perceptions and management of Risk in respect of Children aged 12-16 in Families with Working Parents' *Community, Work and Family* 10 (1): 75-93.

**Lewis, Jane** (2006): 'Perceptions of Risk in Intimate Relationships', *Journal of Social Policy*, 35, 1, 39-58.

**Lewis, Jane** and John Haskey (2006): 'Living-apart-together in Britain: context and meaning'. *International Journal of Law in Context* 2 (1): 37-48.

**Lewis, Jane** (2006) 'Repartnering and the Management of Risk'. *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family* 20: 1-18.

**Lewis, Jane** & Sarre S. (2006): 'Risk and Intimate Relationships', in P. Taylor Gooby and J.Zinn (eds.) *Learning about Risk*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Lewis, Jane** (2003): Family Change and Family Politics in the UK. *Journal for the Study of British Cultures* 9 (2) 2003: 209-222.

**Lewis, Jane** (2003): *Should We Worry about Family Change?* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

**Maclean, Mavis** (with John Eekelaar) (2005) 'Taking the Plunge: Perceptions of Risk-taking associated with Formal and Informal Partner Relationships' *Children and Family Law Quarterly* 17 (2)

## Working papers

Lewis, J. 2005: [Perceptions of Risk in Intimate Relationships at Entry to Partnership and with the Arrival of Children: the Implications for Social Provision](#) (SCARR WP5)

Maclean, M & Eekelaar, J 2005: [Taking the plunge: perceptions of risk taking associated with formal and informal partner relationships](#) (SCARR WP7)

Lewis, J.E. Sarre, S & Burton, J 2006: [Dependence and Independence: Perceptions and Management of Risk in respect of Children aged 12-16 in Families with Working Parents](#) (SCARR WP11)