

Participant Information Sheet: Married couples

Title of Project: The Healthy Relationships Knowledge Exchange Project

Researcher name(s): Professor Anne Barlow and Dr Jan Ewing, Law School, University of Exeter and Penny Mansfield, OnePlusOne (a relationship support and research charity).

Invitation and brief summary

The COVID-19 crisis has placed significant strain on intimate partner relationships. By interviewing couples in long-term relationships of various forms, we hope to gain a better understanding of how couples have coped during the pandemic to add to the evidence on couple coping mechanisms more generally. As you have taken part in this longitudinal study over the last 15 years, we would like to interview you again. Please read the information below carefully and discuss it with your family and friends or ask the researchers questions. Thank you for your interest in the project.

A. Why are we doing this research?

Research has shown that the stresses that a couple face and how they navigate those stresses can affect how the relationship develops. By interviewing couples who married 15 years ago, whom we have interviewed at intervals across this period, and a further 10 couples in relationships of at least 20 years (including married and unmarried couples in opposite-sex or same-sex relationships) interviewed 5 years ago, it is hoped that the project will provide an evidence base of how couples have coped with the stress of the pandemic. These insights will help to refine theories of coping and be used in the development of resources to support couple relationships.

Why we are asking you to participate:

You have been interviewed periodically since you married 15 years ago. For The Shackleton Relationships Project, in 2017 a colleague also interviewed 10 couples in relationships of at least 15 years. In the wake of COVID-19, we wish to re-interview both sets of couples to gather learning on how couples navigate significant life stressors. Provided they consent, we will interview the 49 intact couples interviewed for The Shackleton Relationships Project, so 98 individual interviews.

What will happen afterwards?

Your name will be changed on the transcript of your interview. Sections of the interview transcript, with all identifying details removed, may be published in the Summary and/or Final Report. In addition, sections may be used elsewhere, for example in academic or other publications, conference papers, public engagement activities or media publications. Sections may also be used in digital or physical training materials and relationship support resources for use in University activities or by OnePlusOne. The Final and the Summary Report will be made available on the project webpage at: <https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/law/research/groups/frs/> and we will email you a copy of the Summary Report and send you a hard copy if you would like one. The results will inform the development of OnePlusOne's online resources to support relationships: <https://www.oneplusone.org.uk/>.

B. What will happen if I take part?

Taking part would involve an online interview via Teams about your relationship since your last interview. The interview could be conducted via Zoom or by telephone if you prefer. The interview would last around 45-60 minutes and we would audio record it if you agree. We would interview your spouse separately but back-to-back on the same day, in the order convenient to you. You could stop the interview at any time or decline to answer any questions. The recording would be professionally transcribed. Sections of the transcript of your interview, with names changed and identifying details removed, may be published in journal articles, books, papers or reports but your personal details would never be disclosed.

Benefits of taking part

Possible benefits of taking part include personal reflection on your relationship. Your feedback will inform the wider learning from the project and the development of resources by OnePlusOne aimed at supporting resilient couple relationships. The findings may inform future decisions by policy makers.

Possible risks of taking part

The focus of the interview is on the positives of what makes long-term relationships work, but there is a possibility that reflecting on your relationship, could cause distress. To minimise this risk, you may decline to answer any question. We cannot offer counselling, but further advice and support can be obtained from The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (<http://www.bacp.co.uk/>) or Relate (<https://www.relate.org.uk/>). There is the small risk of you being later identified as taking part or data being intercepted in the event of a data breach. However, we have stringent data security protocols in place to protect against this. Your personal details are kept in a password protected document and your data will not be disclosed without your prior consent.

Why information that you give us might be given to others:

It is up to you what you tell us. What you do tell us will be kept confidential and no third party will be allowed to access your data (except as required by law or in the event that something disclosed during the interview causes concerns about possible harm to you or to someone else).

C. What happens next?

With what you have told us:

Your interview will take place either by Teams, or by Zoom or telephone if you would prefer. If by Zoom a meeting passcode will be used for security. The interview will be audio recorded only. If you choose Teams/Zoom then you may choose to have the camera off if you prefer. You may choose to use a pseudonym for the interview, but in any event a pseudonym will be used in the transcript of the interview with identifying details removed.

If you want to take back or withdraw what you have told us:

If, on reflection, there is something that you have said in interview that you wish to take back or withdraw, you may contact Jan Ewing or Anne Barlow (contact details below) at any time up to and including 31 October 2022 and that part of your interview will be deleted from your transcript and will not be included in any report or publication.

Will I be paid to take part?

You will receive a £20 Amazon voucher on completion of your interview as a thank you for taking part which would keep even if you later withdrew from the research.

What are my rights after taking part?

Participation is voluntary. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time up to and including 31 October 2022 without giving a reason by emailing Jan Ewing or Anne Barlow (contact details below). If you or your spouse/partner withdraw prior to that date, the further involvement of both participants will be terminated with immediate effect and the research data collected from this round of interviews will not be relied upon and will be destroyed. If you or your spouse withdraw after 31 October 2022 your interview data will be kept and sections of the transcript of your interview (with names changed and identifying information removed) may be published in journal articles, books, papers or reports but your personal and contact details will be deleted and you will not be contacted for further rounds of interviews (if any) in the future.

D. More details about how we keep your information

The University of Exeter processes personal data for the purposes of carrying out research in the public interest. The University will endeavour to be transparent about its processing of your personal data and this information sheet should provide a clear explanation of this. If you do have any queries about the University's processing of your personal data that cannot be resolved by the research team, further information may be obtained from the University's Data Protection Officer by emailing dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk or at www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection. If you are unhappy about the way in which your data has been handled you also have the right to make a complaint to the Information

Commissioner's Office (ICO) (see <https://ico.org.uk/>.) Interview recordings and transcripts will be held in confidence and used on an anonymous basis. Your name would be changed, and any identifying information excluded from the transcript (and any subsequent publications) to protect your identity. The digital recording of your interview will be deleted as soon as there is an authoritative written transcript of your interview. Your data will not be used other than for the purposes described in this information sheet and the accompanying consent form. Your personal data will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties, save as outlined above in 'Why information that you give us might be given to others'. Your personal and contact details will be stored separately from your interview transcript in a password protected document and, with your consent, may be retained for up to 6 years. We may wish to contact you about a further interview in this time but will only do so if you consent to this. All other documentation relating to the project, including the transcript of your interview (with identifying information excluded), will be held on the University's encrypted OneDrive account for a period of 15 years. The Final and the Summary Report will be made available on the project webpage at: <https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/law/research/groups/frs/>.

E. Future use and re use of the research data by others

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) fund the project. The ESRC promotes the preservation and storage of research data with acknowledged long-term value so that it remains accessible and usable for future research in a way that does not violate privacy. On conclusion of the research, provided you have given your written consent, your interview transcript (with identifying information obscured) will be offered for deposit and archiving at the UK Data Service (see <https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/>) and made available for use by the wider scientific community following an embargoed period of two years. In all cases professional research ethics will be adhered to and appropriate confidentiality maintained; in reports and publications we will seek to provide a balanced and scholarly depiction of research findings.

It is up to you whether you consent to the deposit of your interview transcript (with identifying information obscured). If you indicate that you would prefer not to have your interview deposited this will not affect your eligibility to participate in the research. If you consent but later change your mind, provided you notify Jan Ewing or Anne Barlow in writing (contact details below) by 31 December 2022 then your interview transcript (with identifying information obscured) will not be deposited in the UK Data Service. If your spouse declines to consent to deposit, then neither of your interviews will be deposited. Any interviews that take place post-separation will not be deposited.

If you do consent, then this will be on a 'controlled access' only basis. This means that only registered and trained users who have been approved (by the researchers or their nominee) will be able to access the data and access will be through a secure virtual private network. By controlling access, the researchers will be able to verify that the request for access is from a legitimate individual or organisation for genuine research purposes. The researchers will only grant access if the applicant is legitimate and has a genuine research interest.

F. Further information about the study

Who is organising and funding this study?

Professor Anne Barlow and Dr Jan Ewing will be conducting the research working with colleagues from OnePlusOne, including Co-Director, Penny Mansfield. The project is funded by an ESRC IAA Knowledge Exchange Fellowship (The Healthy Relationships Knowledge Exchange Fellowship).

How has this research been reviewed to look after the interests of those taking part?

This project has been reviewed by the College of Social Sciences and International Studies Research Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter (Reference Number 493864).

Further information and contact details

For further information about the research and/or to take part please contact: Dr Jan Ewing, The Healthy Relationships Knowledge Exchange Fellow, Law School, University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter, EX4 4RU. Telephone: 00 44 (0)7988622692. Email: J.Ewing@exeter.ac.uk. If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact: University of Exeter College of Social Sciences and International Studies (SISS) Research Ethics Committee: ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk.