

# Thematic guide: Sexuality studies (using qualitative data)

Issues of sexual identity, intimate citizenship, same-sex relationships and marriages...



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## Table of contents

Introduction.....	3
Searching for related materials .....	3
Other resources on sexuality studies .....	4
Summary of selected qualitative studies on sexualities .....	4
<i>SN 6332 Comparing Love and Domestic Violence in Heterosexual and Same Sex Relationships, 2005-2006</i> .....	4
<i>SN 5900 Gay and Lesbian 'Marriage': an Exploration of the Meanings and Significance of Legitimizing Same Sex Relationships, 2003-2006</i> .....	4
<i>SN 6109 Market for Migrant Domestic and Sex Workers, 2002-2006</i> .....	5
<i>SN 5190 Cross-Generational Investigation of the Making of Heterosexual Relationships, 1912-2003</i> .....	5
<i>SN 6047 Masculinities in Transition: Identity, Home and Workplace, 2004-2006</i> .....	6

## Introduction

Before the study of sexualities emerged as a topic of sociological interest in the late 1960s, it was given relatively little attention by sociologists, as it was simply viewed as an intrinsic and biological aspect of human behaviour.

However recent theories and perspectives on sexualities have come to include issues of sexual identity, intimate citizenship, same-sex relationships and marriages, HIV/Aids, queer theory and gender role formation.

The UK Data Service qualitative collections on the theme of sexualities include a wide range of such issues and feature studies such as:

- Smart and Mason's 'Gay and Lesbian 'Marriage': an Exploration of the Meanings and Significance of Legitimizing Same Sex Relationships' which explored the socio-legal, cultural and familial meanings and significance of lesbian and gay 'marriage' and civil partnerships.
- Hockey, Robinson and Meah's study 'Cross-Generational Investigation of the Making of Heterosexual Relationships' which looks at heterosexual relationships and how these are experienced subjectively.
- Donovan and Hester's 'Comparing Love and Domestic Violence in Heterosexual and Same Sex Relationships' which explored the scope of domestic violence in same sex relationships.

## Searching for related materials

The [UK Data Service catalogue](#) can be searched for data on sexualities using subject terms such as:

- intimacy
- sex work
- domestic violence
- identity
- gay/lesbian
- masculinities
- relationships
- sexual health.

Every data collection is accompanied by comprehensive documentation. These are open access and available to the public from the website and it is not necessary to be a registered user to access and download them.

The content of the documentation varies by collection, but usually includes information such as the initial proposal, interview schedule, description of methodology, end of award report, and so on. In some cases more details are provided, such as the coding schemes of the original researchers or examples of the consent forms used.

## Other resources on sexuality studies

[International association for the study of sexuality, culture and society](#)

## Summary of selected qualitative studies on sexualities

### [SN 6332 Comparing Love and Domestic Violence in Heterosexual and Same Sex Relationships, 2005-2006](#)

Donovan, C. and Hester, M.

This study sought to increase knowledge, understanding and scope of domestic violence in same sex relationships via the first comprehensive national community survey to identify similarities and differences between the experiences of those in same sex and heterosexual relationships. The qualitative interviews focused on 'best' and 'worst' relationship experience including questions on how they met, love, decision making, and domestic violence.

#### **Coverage**

Sample: people aged 16-65 who had experienced a same sex relationship in the UK; people aged 18-65 who had experienced same sex/heterosexual relationships in the UK.

Data: 800 quantitative; 59 qualitative interviews; self-completion survey; email survey.

#### **Topics**

- family life
- gender roles
- same sex relationships
- domestic violence.

### [SN 5900 Gay and Lesbian 'Marriage': an Exploration of the Meanings and Significance of Legitimizing Same Sex Relationships, 2003-2006](#)

Smart, C. and Mason, J.

This study explored the area of lesbian and gay 'marriage' and civil partnerships. It examined the socio-legal, cultural and familial meanings and significance for lesbians and gay men of seeking public or formal recognition of relationships. It looked at the ceremonies couples hold, who they invite, and whether they follow conventions such as the exchange of rings or whether they adopt radically different styles of ceremony.

## Coverage

Sample: same sex couples living in England between 2004 and 2005 held/holding commitment ceremony/partnership registration.

Data: 54 face-to-face interviews: 37 couples; 17 individuals.

## Topics

- same-sex relationships
- commitment ceremonies
- financial and legal issues.

## [SN 6109 Market for Migrant Domestic and Sex Workers, 2002-2006](#)

O'Connell Davidson, J. and Anderson, B.

This study explored attitudes towards, and experience of, the markets for migrant and sex workers in the UK and Spain. It examined continuities and discontinuities between domestic work and sex work, paying particular attention to broader attitudes towards race, gender, age and sexuality. Some of the main topics of the study included the reasons for employing domestic workers, attitudes towards employment relations with domestic workers, and experience of commercial sex.

## Coverage

Sample: People with experience of buying commercial sexual services. Control sample: employers of domestic workers; students; tourists.

Data: 446 quantitative; 68 qualitative interviews; self-completion survey.

## Topics

- domestic workers
- commercial sex
- sexuality
- migrant sex workers.

## [SN 5190 Cross-Generational Investigation of the Making of Heterosexual Relationships, 1912-2003](#)

Hockey, J., Robinson, V. and Meah, A.

Making intimacy and the practices of everyday life its core focus, this study asked how women and men manage and subjectively experience the institution of heterosexuality. The study used a life course perspective to investigate the processes through which women and men

have identified and constituted themselves as 'heterosexual' at various points across the last 80 years.

### **Coverage**

Sample: extended families with three generations of adults aged 15+ based in Northern England.

Data: 54 face-to-face interviews.

### **Topics**

- sexual knowledge
- courtship
- weddings
- parenthood
- separation and divorce.

## *SN 6047 Masculinities in Transition: Identity, Home and Workplace, 2004-2006*

Hockey J.

This study investigated ways in which men negotiate their masculine identity as they pass between work and home contexts, and how this changes as men manage transitions in their lives. The research took masculinity as a fluid, contested notion, and explored the ways in which multiple masculinities played out in individuals' lives.

### **Coverage**

Sample: male hairdressers, fire-fighters or estate agents and a female partner, wife, girlfriend, family member or friend based in North England.

Data: 110 face-to-face interviews.

### **Topics**

- masculinity
- identity
- transition
- work.

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We are supported by the Universities of Essex, Manchester, Edinburgh, University College London and Jisc. We are funded by UKRI through the Economic and Social Research Council.

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