



The Open University



## Rethinking Concepts: Families, Intimacies and Personal Relationships

BSA Families and Relationships Study Group Colloquium  
Co-convenors Dr Jacqui Gabb and Prof Elizabeth Silva

**Date: Friday 6<sup>th</sup> November 11.00-4.00**

**Venue: BSA Meeting Room, Imperial Wharf, London SW6 2PY**

This event aims to encourage critical dialogue on the value of prominent concepts used in the study of contemporary living, notably *families*, *intimacies* and *personal relationships*.

There is a wealth of empirical studies on household trends and people's experiences of living together and apart-together in the UK. Critical engagements have moved away from supposed crises in 'the family' or decline in commitment, proposing new ways of understanding the connections and practices that constitute relationality in personal, intimate and family contexts. We want to interrogate how conceptual frameworks have kept up with contemporary living. How do the prominent concepts of families, intimacies and personal relationships work for us? Do they enhance or restrain our capacity to know and make sense of everyday relation experience?

The colloquium will feature keynote presentations from:

**Dr Val Gillies**, Families and Social Capital Research Group, London South Bank University

**Prof Lynn Jamieson**, Centre for Research on Families and Relationships, University of Edinburgh

**Prof David Morgan**, School of Social Relations, Keele University

**Prof Carol Smart**, Morgan Centre for the Study of Relationships and Personal Life, University of Manchester

These presentations and pre-circulated position papers will lead into structured group discussion. The event aims to provide a dialogic environment to allow us to advance our thinking.

A set of questions will guide our proposed engagement:

- How far do the concepts families, intimacies and personal relationships help us to understand the ways people create togetherness? Do they illuminate or obscure the relational processes of everyday life?
- How helpful are these concepts for understanding new ways of relating? Are there other existing and/or new concepts that are more useful?
- What is the role of the concepts in grasping change and continuities in social life?
- What is the scale and size of 'the social' involved in each of these concepts? How does the personal divide/separate from the social?
- How do the concepts distinguish from each other or link up? Do they ever merge or do they remain distinct at some level?

Our engagement with these questions seeks to explore how ways of thinking and the formulation of arguments are embedded in theoretical debates that bring together understandings of personal and social worlds. We aim to produce a journal special issue generated through and from colloquium papers and participant discussion.

To facilitate discussion, the colloquium is intentionally small, with the number of participants being limited to 40 people. Places will be allocated through abstracts that demonstrate critical engagement with the key concepts and set of questions.

Abstracts of 200-250 words should be submitted by **Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2009** to Sarah Batt, research secretary in CCIG [a.s.c.batt@open.ac.uk](mailto:a.s.c.batt@open.ac.uk). Please put author name and short abstract title in the email subject, for example: Smith J. Happy families? Participants will not make formal presentations but will be expected to read the pre-circulated papers and to critically engage in small group discussion of the framing and concepts used in the study of contemporary living.

Cost: Registration **£35** BSA members and **£50** non-BSA members (including lunch and refreshments).