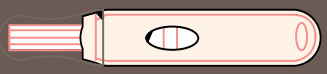
Research Update

DIGITAL DC JAN 25



With the arrival of 2025, it seems like a good point to send an update on our progress on the Digital Donor Conception study. We are now more than a year and a half into this four year project and it has been such a privilege to have the opportunity to listen to and learn from people's varied experiences of donor conception (both personal and professional). We would like to therefore say a huge thank you to everyone who has supported our research in so many different ways - whether that's taking part in an interview, helping to publicise the study or providing advice and support.

Research Progress

Data collection and analysis is now complete for phase 1 of the research. This phase focussed on professionals' perceptions of informal donor conception and included analysis of fertility clinic, regulatory and third sector organisational websites, as well as interviews with 14 professionals.



Phase 2 constitutes the largest phase of our study and explores the experiences of (intended) parents and donors who have used informal donor conception routes. We had an overwhelming response to our calls for participants and have so far interviewed 20 donors and 31 parents or intended parents. We are no longer actively recruiting participants and we are now in the process of anonymising and analysing the interview transcripts.

Transfer to Manchester Metropolitan University

In February, Leah will take up a new post in the Department of Sociology at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). The project will be transferred there from The University of Sheffield. The move has few implications for the project. However, we would like to transfer the data collected on the project so far. All research participants will be emailed separately to explain this process and they will have the option to opt out if they wish to. Please look out for this email if this applies to you. The project will retain links with Sheffield since Lexie Davis (researcher on the project) and Kate Weiner (project mentor) will continue to work here.

See below for Leah's new email address.



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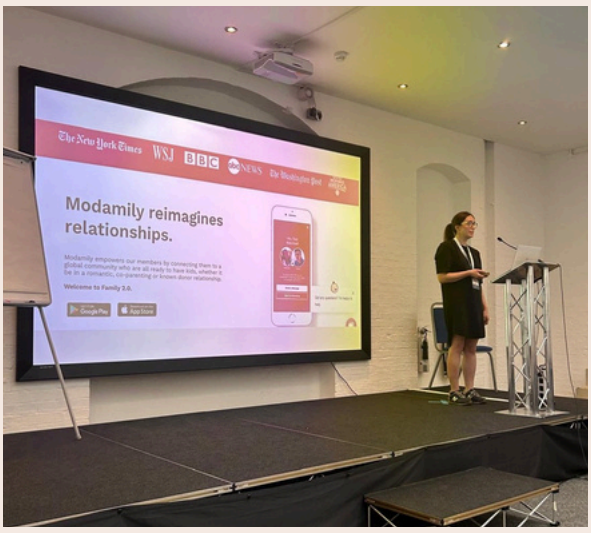
Next steps

In the coming months, our priorities will be to finish anonymising and start analysing our findings from phase 2 of the project and we expect to write our first academic publications.

We will also begin phase 3 of the project which will analyse the digital platforms often used to facilitate informal donor conception and explore how such platforms shape people's experiences.

We will also be spending some time reaching out to organisations and communities who are involved in or impacted by informal donor conception. We believe it is important to share our research findings at an early stage so that we can work with others to develop our next steps, including how to use our findings to improve support and recognition for donors, (intended) parents and their families (including donor conceived people).

Please do get in touch if you would like us to share and discuss our findings with your community or organisation.



How we are sharing our research

We have been sharing and discussing our findings throughout the study via various routes, seeking to reach a range of audiences.

Last year, Leah was invited to share findings from the study last year at the annual conferences of the British Infertility Counselling Association and the International Infertility Counselling Association. Leah also presented early findings at the British Sociological Association (BSA) 2024 Annual Conference (online) and the BSA Human Reproduction Annual Conference in Birmingham. Recently, Lexie also shared findings from the project at The University of Cambridge's Cambridge Reproduction Forum. Lexie has also been selected to present at a Brocher Foundation workshop in Switzerland on the theme of 'Men, Masculinities and Reproduction'.

We talk to journalists with the aim of ensuring that media representations of informal donor conception reflect the (varied and nuanced) stories of those who take this route to conception or donation. Last year, Leah was quoted in Australian publication Mamamia and spoke to producers from Chalk Productions pitching a new programme about informal donor conception. In January, Leah will be interviewed by Il Poste journalist Alessandra Peligrini De Luca for a new podcast on reproduction.

You may also be interested to read our commentary piece in Bionews (June 2024): https://www.progress.org.uk/moving-beyond-a-just-say-no-approach-to-informal-donor-conception/