

Overview of Centre for Family Research

Director of Centre

Professor Susan Golombok (from 1st January 2006)

Professor Martin Richards (until 31st December 2005)

Deputy Director

Ms Helen Statham

Reader

Dr Claire Hughes

Research Associates

Dr Liz Chapman

Dr Rosie Ensor

Dr Gail Ewing

Dr Tabitha Freeman

Dr Joanna Hawthorne

Dr Vasanti Jadv

Maggie Ponder

Dr Claire Snowdon

Dr Anji Wilson

Research Assistants

Lorna Jacobs

Alex Marks

Emma Newberry

Karen Sage

PhD Students

Shirlene Badger

Zeynep Gurtin-Broadbent

Martha Hart

Eric Jensen

Emeritus Professor

Professor Martin Richards

Distinguished Associates

Professor Judy Dunn

Professor Sir Michael Rutter

Administrator and PA to the Director

Ombretta Orsini (from 3rd April 2006)

Jill Brown (Administrative Secretary) (until 31st December 2005)

Support Staff

Susan Bedford (Research Secretary, from September 2006)

Anne Burling (Cleaner)

Janet Moore (Research Secretary, until July 2006)

Sally Roberts (Data Manager/Librarian) (until 30th November 2005)

Management Committee

Chair: Professor Peter Lipton (Department of History and Philosophy of Science)
Dr Mary Griffin (Secretary)
Professor Judy Dunn (Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre, Institute of Psychiatry, London)
Professor Susan Golombok (Director)
Professor Michael Lamb (Social and Political Sciences Faculty)
Professor Mavis MacLean (Centre for Family Law and Policy, University of Oxford)
Professor Jacqueline Scott (Social and Political Sciences Faculty)
Ms Helen Statham (Deputy Director)
Dr Darin Weinberg (Social and Political Sciences Faculty)
Ms Maggie Ponder (Centre for Family Research, until 31st December 2005)



The Centre for Family Research began the New Year with a new Director. Following the retirement of the Centre's founder, Professor Martin Richards, in December, Professor Susan Golombok took up the position of Director on January 1st. As part of this move, Susan's Centre in London, the Family and Child Psychology Research Centre, was incorporated into the Centre for Family Research.

We are delighted that Ombretta Orsini has joined us as the new Administrator of the Centre for Family Research and we greatly appreciate the ease with which she has taken over this role. Thanks are due to Deborah Clarke, Isabelle Portzenheimer, Norma Wolfe and Lisa Marlow in the Faculty Office whose help was invaluable in the early days of the transition. Following his retirement, Professor Richards has taken up residence in the tower (through choice not banishment) and has been awarded an Emeritus Professor grant from the Leverhulme Trust. To our great pleasure, Professor Sir Michael Rutter and Professor Judy Dunn have become Distinguished Associates of the Centre.

In recent months, the work of the Centre for Family Research has followed three strands: (i) non-traditional families (ii) early social development and families, and (iii) genetics/health and families.

(i) Non-traditional families

Since January, several new projects on non-traditional families have been initiated. Dr Vasanti Jadva, assisted by Michele Beeson, is beginning the fourth phase of a longitudinal study of assisted reproduction families where the child lacks a genetic or gestational link with one or both parents – surrogacy, egg donation and donor insemination families. On a similar theme, Dr Tabitha Freeman is examining the

psychological consequences of openness versus secrecy about children's genetic origins in families created by donor insemination. Vasanti and Tabitha have also been collaborating on a US-based study of the new phenomenon of half-siblings conceived by donor insemination making contact with each other via the internet. Lucy Owen has been completing the third phase of a longitudinal study of the psychological development of the first cohort of IVF children as they reach early adulthood – an opportunity to find out what they themselves think of the unconventional nature of their conception. Shirlene Badger is also conducting an investigation of young adults, in this case of 18 year olds who have been raised from birth in lesbian or single mother families. These studies have been funded by two grants from the Nuffield Foundation, a project grant from the Wellcome Trust and a generous start-up fund awarded by the University to Professor Golombok on her arrival in Cambridge. Dr Liz Chapman has also recently joined the team to conduct a somewhat different study - a clinical trial of a new condom – assisted by Dr Susan Walker as the Medical Advisor and Sophia Papachronopoulou Botassi. Zeynep Gurten Broadbent has spent much of the past year in fertility clinics in various locations and countries, observing their practices and interviewing patients, with a specific focus on the Turkish community both in Turkey and as minority groups in Britain and Germany.

A number of papers have been presented at conferences over the past year including a Keynote Address on lesbian families by Susan Golombok at the University of Pennsylvania, presentations on fatherhood and kinship by Tabitha Freeman at the Behavioural Studies Conference and the University of Cardiff, and talk to academics, clinicians and patient support groups by Zeynep Gurten Broadbent.

(ii) Early social development and families

The past academic year has been a good one for the Early Social Development and Families (“Toddlers Up”) research programme for three reasons. First, following her PhD, Rosie Ensor was successful in obtaining a highly competitive post-doctoral fellowship from the ESRC. Second, two successful grant applications to the ESRC by Dr Claire Hughes have brought in more than £500,000 of funds to follow-up the sample of children as they complete Year 1 of school. As a result, the research group has now expanded to a team of eight: Dr Claire Hughes, Dr Rosie Ensor, Dr Anji Wilson, Lorna Jacobs, Alex Marks, Karen Sage, Emma Newbury and Sue Bedford. The new phase of the research programme includes not only home and school visits but also special parties in the lab that include a magic show – we believe we are the first research team in the University to include a magician: Thank you Mr Rainbow! Third, the findings from the study are now being disseminated via invited seminars and conference presentations, e.g. the British Psychological Society Developmental Section meeting in September, and publications.

(iii) Genetics/health and families

For many of the research studies on genetics, health and families, this year has been one of nearing the end of data collection and the beginning of dissemination. The molecular genetics study to which the study 'Families, learning disabilities and genetics' is tied, has found gene alterations for a few families that have many males affected with intellectual disabilities but the majority will find themselves still without a diagnostic label. Findings from the study about research participation and about important issues for the family with regards care in a clinical and social context have been presented by Helen Statham and Maggie Ponder at a number of meetings including the Seattle club and RADAR's annual conference as well as submitted for publication. Helen Statham's EU funded study EDIG (Ethical Dilemmas in Genetic Diagnosis) began in September with a 1st meeting in Frankfurt and a 2nd workshop in Milan in March. This project is bringing together ethicists, analysts and empirical researchers from across Europe. The Cambridge interest is in variations in legal and policy frameworks governing prenatal diagnosis and how these relate to the experiences of pregnant women and their partners.

Shirlene Badger has continued her collaboration with Professor Stephen O'Rahilly and Dr Sadaf Farooqi on the Genetics of Obesity Study. She has discussed her findings on how obesity is understood as genetic in historical, scientific, personal and familial terms at a variety of national and international conferences including: 3rd International CESAGen conference, Elias in the 21st Century Conference, Contested Bodies of Childhood Conference, World Congress of Sociology and Vital Politics II. Gail Ewing has extended the range of her work on palliative care with a new study looking at the role of District Nurses in providing early support to dying patients and their families in their homes, complementing her recent research on the impact of the death of a family member on carers. This work was presented at the Research Forum of the European Association for Palliative Care in Venice in May 2006 and at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the Society for Academic Primary Care at Keele University in July 2006. Eric Jensen is now beginning his final year as a PhD student in the Centre, writing his dissertation 'Anglo-American Press Coverage of Therapeutic Cloning'. He has had one journal article published in 2005 and has two forthcoming. Claudia Downing's study of parenting in the face of late-onset genetic disorders has similarly reached the end of data collection and she is now focusing on dissemination and preparation of publications. Findings about how parents negotiate responsibility as certainty about parental risk is resolved have been presented at a variety of national and international meetings including the Seattle Club, two International Myotonic Dystrophy conferences and the World Neurological Conference on Huntington Disease. Claire Snowdon was successful in securing funding from the HTA to investigate bereavement in the context of neonatal and paediatric intensive care trials in collaboration with the universities of London, Cambridge, Newcastle and Oxford.

Visitors

We have hosted a number of Visiting Scholars over the past academic year who have contributed greatly to the work and social life of the Centre: Leonieke Kranenburg from the Netherlands, Dr Nina Hallowell from the University of Edinburgh, Fernanda Muller from Brazil, Dr John Morss from Australia and Dr Rosaria Esteinou from Mexico. It has been a pleasure having them with us.

Events

The most notable event in the Centre's diary this past year was the Symposium in honour of Professor Martin Richards. The Centre was established by Martin in 1966 and, due to his vision of how a truly multidisciplinary centre should function, has seen many scholars from diverse academic backgrounds pass through its doors, several of whom returned on 29th March to pay tribute to Martin and his work. The day was a great success thanks to Helen Statham's tremendous energy, commitment and attention to every tiny detail.

In the past year, the CFR Seminars have brought both distinguished and developing academics to the Centre to talk about their work and new research findings in a friendly atmosphere. An invigorating spectrum of topics was covered, with some of the highlights including Michael Lamb's talk on 'Helping children become competent informants in forensic situations', Fiona MacCallum's 'Parenting and child development in embryo donation families', and Shenaz Ahmed's presentation on 'The role of faith and religion in antenatal haemoglobinopathy screening'.

This year also saw the start of the Free School Lane Seminars, bringing together an interdisciplinary group interested in social bodies, genetics and reproduction. The seminars are co-organised by Shirlene Badger and Professor Martin Richards (Centre for Family Research), Dr Nick Hopwood, (History and Philosophy of Science), Dr Maryon McDonald (Social Anthropology) and Dr Susan Wallace (Cambridge Genetics Knowledge Park). Seminar topics during the year included reflections on the concept of the surplus embryo, biopolitics and biosociality, responsibility and ethics, and the people of the past.

On 5 May, King's College Cambridge hosted an international gathering of scientists and academics from a range of disciplines, including many members of the Centre for Family Research, who had come together to discuss the contemporary social roles of the human embryo in the interdisciplinary forum created by the 'Talking Embryos' conference. Throughout the day, lively debates spilled from session discussions to coffee breaks, creating thought-provoking and productive exchanges. Bringing together a diverse collection of disciplinary lenses to foster exchange in this single event allowed the emergence of a more complete, multi-dimensional understanding of some contemporary and pertinent dilemmas relating to embryos – and the organizers, Zeynep Gurten Broadbent and Eric Jensen, are extremely happy to hear reports that new interdisciplinary collaborations have arisen from the day's discussions.

Website

The Centre for Family Research has a new website. Please see www.sps.cam.ac.uk/cfr for more details on our members, activities and seminar programme for 2006/7.

On a more personal note, I would like to thank everyone at the Centre for Family Research and my colleagues in the Psychology Department and the Faculty, especially Helen Statham, Michael Lamb and Mary Griffin, for making my move to Cambridge as pleasant and stress-free as it could possibly be. We are also thrilled to announce the birth of Malaika, a daughter to Claire Hughes and Andrew Graham, who has been an active member of the Centre since 2 days old.

Susan Golombok, Director.