

40 Years of Family Research



March 29th 2006

Centre for Family Research &
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences
Cambridge

Programme

Centre for Family Research & Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Cambridge

9.30 Registration and coffee

10.40 Introduction

10.45 - 12.30 Session 1 Sponsored by the Lowenfeld Trust

Chair: Paul Light Early years: pregnancy, neonates and child development

Judy Dunn: Relationships and understanding others: lessons from naturalistic studies

Jo Green: **Psychosocial factors in the increase in caesarean and instrumental births**

Joanna Hawthorne: **Parenting in neonatal units and understanding babies**

12.30- 2.00 Lunch

2.00- 3.15 Session 2 Sponsored by the Hart Publishing

Chair: Sharon Witherspoon Socio-legal aspects of family life

Mavis Maclean: Family law and family policy

Virginia Morrow: Imagining the future: rethinking children and childhood in research

3.15- 3.45 Tea

3.45 – 5.00 Session 3 Sponsored by the Wellcome Trust

Chair: Angus Clarke Social and ethical dimensions of human genetics

Theresa Marteau: The Troubled Helix: A decade on.....

Nina Hallowell: **Families and genetics: the biological and social**

5.15 Conclusion & Reception Sponsored by Cambridge University Press

Chair: Susan Golombok

Martin Richards: Reflecting on 40 years of family research

6.15 Reception - Saltmarsh rooms, Kings College

Martin Richards

Martin has studied the family, in many aspects and from many perspectives, from creation to dissolution. He focuses on the interplay between thought and behaviour, revealing especially the ways in which understandings and misunderstandings of relations of inheritance and kinship influence what we do. He deploys a powerful empathic approach that enables him to see others from their own point of view. And he applies what he learns for the good, to policy issues of the greatest importance.

Martin has created a large extended family of colleagues, and provides remarkable support and guidance. He creates opportunities and helps people to make the most of them. This power is exercised with a combination of effectiveness, tact and absence of ego almost entirely alien to academic life. Martin is a nonpareil.

Peter Lipton

Chair, Centre for Family Research Management Committee
Professor of the History and Philosophy of Science

This symposium

To reflect on 40 years of Family Research as undertaken by Martin would require far more than one day. His interests have been much more varied than the three themes that provide the focus for today's meeting. It's quite likely, however, topics as diverse as the maternal behaviour in the Golden Hamster, the impact of imprisonment, fatherhood, sexuality, divorce will all be raised today.

The home for his research has been the Centre for Family Research, a unit that has evolved through many guises, from the Unit for Research on the Medical Applications of Psychology to the Medical Psychology Unit to the Child Care and Development Group, and becoming the Centre in 1992. This symposium will bring colleagues and collaborators from many academic disciplines to the Centre (within the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences) to discuss and reflect on Martin's work as a tribute on his recent retirement as Professor and Director of the Centre for Family Research. But the day is also a time to think of the future and the important questions for those of us still doing family research - and that includes Martin Richards

Helen Statham

Senior Research Associate Centre for Family Research University of Cambridge.

Session 1: Early years: pregnancy, neonates and child development

Chair: Paul Light *Professor and Vice Chancellor, University of Winchester*

I am retiring myself this year, with 36 years 'service'. I 'entered service' as a research assistant at the Unit for Research on the Medical Applications of Psychology (URMAP). URMAP was housed in what might generously be called temporary buildings in the back garden of a house in Station Road, buildings we shared, rather improbably, with a radio carbon dating laboratory. Martin Richards, with Judy Bernal, directed the Nuffield-funded longitudinal study I worked on, and Martin also supervised by PhD. I left in 1974.

For good or ill, I suspect PhD supervisors typically make a lasting impression on their supervisees. In my case, Martin Richards not only made a lasting impression but has been a lasting influence. This influence has in a sense been more a matter of style than substance; I have not followed the research paths that interested Martin, nor indeed the career path he took. But my developing sense of what it meant to be an academic and my sense of what academic leadership might look like were enormously influenced by him.

We used to joke that Martin's dishevelled 2CV was a car for someone who thought of himself as not having a car. Similarly his leadership was perhaps that of someone who did not think of himself as a leader. His personal appearance, often as dishevelled as his car, and his softly spoken style made few claims for the role and position of a leader. But lead he did.

It has been said (though I don't remember by whom) that the most important task of leadership is to create an appropriate culture for an organisation. Certainly in those early days, Martin's role in this respect was crucial. He recruited people who brought a variety of perspectives and abilities and created a climate which stimulated their creativity rather than cramped their style. Everything was informal, understated, laced with humour. But there was no cynicism; our underlying sense of purpose was grounded in an ideological commitment to make a positive difference in the world. How far any of us have succeeded in that is another matter, but the aspiration to do so was part of the shared consciousness that held us together as a research group. Like Rilke's Unicorn, we were fed not with corn but with possibilities of being, and many of us have been trying to fulfil those possibilities ever since.

Psychosocial factors in the increase in caesarean and instrumental births

Jo Green *Professor of Psychosocial Reproductive Health, University of York*

Martin has had a long-standing interest in childbirth, with important work throughout the 1970s looking at the effects of maternity care policies and practices on women and babies. By the 1980s, issues of 'choice and control' in childbirth were being addressed and Martin's important paper 'The trouble with choice in childbirth' (1982)¹ is still quoted today.

The "Great Expectations" study² arose from a grant held by Martin Richards, John Hare and Rhys Williams, funded by the Nuffield Trust and the Health Promotion Research Trust. Over 700 women from four Health Districts in southeast England completed detailed questionnaires antenatally and postnatally covering all aspects of their care around birth. Great Expectations became a well-known and influential study in the UK and abroad. We gave written evidence to the House of Commons Inquiry into Maternity Services that eventually led to the document Changing Childbirth (Department of Health, 1993). A second edition of the report was published by Books for Midwives Press in 1998. This carried a foreword by Kate Jackson, Director of the Changing Childbirth Implementation Team - a testament to the study's standing and influence on maternity care policy. The study has also been influential in the field of midwifery education, having been incorporated into numerous core texts for pre and post registration midwifery programmes, and thus becoming part of the evidence base that new generations of midwives use to inform the care they give to women.

This all begged the question of the extent to which women's expectations and experiences might have changed as a result. The Nuffield Trust and NHS Executive Northern & Yorkshire Regional Research & Development agreed to fund a 're-study', "Greater Expectations?"³ to investigate this question and today's presentation draws on that study.

¹Richards MPM (1982) The Trouble with 'Choice' in Childbirth *Birth*: 9, 253-260.

²Green JM, Coupland VA & Kitzinger JV (1998) *Great Expectations: A prospective study of women's expectations and experiences of childbirth*. Second edition. Books for Midwives Press

³Green JM, Baston HA, Easton SC & McCormick F (2003) *Greater Expectations: The inter-relationship between women's expectations and experiences of decision making, continuity, choice and control in labour, and psychological outcomes*. Summary report, Mother & Infant Research Unit, University of Leeds.

Relationships and understanding others: lessons from naturalistic studies

Judy Dunn FBA Research Professor, Social, Genetic & Developmental Psychiatry Centre, Institute of Psychiatry, London

Martin Richards' research in the 1970s provided a key framework for my own early work. Martin invited me to be a colleague in his plans for a longitudinal study of babies beginning at birth, involving naturalistic home observations throughout infancy, and following the children up to school age. Martin's enthusiasm for the project, his originality and imaginative interest were central to the research, and the lessons from that pioneering study were wide and important, both for developmental research and for obstetric practice. Just one of those lessons was the predictive importance of individual differences in early relationships, and the importance of a focus on both mother and baby for prediction to later development.

In my own work that followed the study with Martin, the great value of naturalistic observations was borne out repeatedly and in different domains. It was shown in for instance the links between socioemotional and cognitive development in the development of children's mindreading and their moral development, the role of communication and language in the emotional world of children, the significance of children's relationships with their siblings (neglected in systematic research until the late 1980s) and what we can learn from studying that relationship, the network of relationships with family and friends within which children grow up, and the significance of changes in the family network. The beginnings of my own research career lay in our joint study of the beginnings of babies' lives, and that wouldn't have happened without Martin's confident and creative approach to the study of families.

Parenting in Neonatal Units

Joanna Hawthorne *Senior Research Associate, Centre for Family Research, Cambridge & Coordinator and Trainer, Brazelton Centre*

In 1975, I became Martin's research assistant and then his research student, and the topics studied have fascinated me ever since. His research project on "Parental visiting of babies in a special care baby unit" was the first of its kind in England and one of the privileges of being involved was to meet many of the pioneers in the field both from the USA and UK. Martin introduced me to the Neonatal Behavioural Assessment Scale developed by Dr. Brazelton, a tool which has shaped the way I work with families, and which I now teach. Martin taught me how to work with the medical profession and encourage their understanding of parenting in a medical setting. In this paper, at first I describe issues arising from two studies in neonatal units, exploring practices and information-sharing respectively, and the difficulties for parents of premature and ill babies, as well as for staff working in these units. Secondly, I describe the role of a psychologist in a neonatal unit supporting parents' understanding of their babies using the Neonatal Behavioural Assessment Scale. Finally, I describe the work of the Brazelton Centre in Great Britain, where we teach health professionals about infant behaviour and ways to support early parent-infant relationships in hospital and community settings.

www.brazelton.co.uk

Hawthorne JT, Richards MPM, Callon M. A study of parental visiting of babies in a special-care unit. Chapter in *Separation and Special Care Baby units*. Eds. FSW Brimblecombe, MPM Richards and NRC Robertson. Spastics International Medical Publications, London 1978

Hawthorne, JT Psychological Aspects of Neonatal Care. Chapter in Robertson's *Textbook of Neonatology*, 2005

Alderson, P, Ehrich K, Hawthorne J, Killen M, Warren I. *Foretelling Futures: dilemmas in neonatal neurology. A social science research project 2002-2004. End of project report.* www.ac.uk/ssru

Hawthorne, J. Using the Neonatal Behavioural Assessment Scale to support parent-infant relationships. *Infant* 2005; 1(6): 213-18.

Session 2: Socio-legal aspects of family life

Chair: Sharon Witherspoon *Deputy Director, Nuffield Foundation, London*

One of the remarkable features of Martin Richards' work is not just the breadth of his interests, but the connections between them. His work not only spans but draws together interests in our human biology – in genetics and the physical process of birth – and interests in how these are socially organised, understood and lived – in families, in our thoughts about how we are linked with kin and how we decouple.

This has meant that Martin has made truly important contributions across a range of fields. I remember soon after coming to the Nuffield Foundation reading of some work he was doing on people's understanding of genetic relationships and thinking how brilliant it was of him to see that this was an empirical question and one likely to vary for different people in different societies at different times. It was more than just a quantitative way of asking anthropological questions (though it was that too): it was a way of using people's own conceptualisations of biological links as an intermediate variable in how families work.

In a way it seems to me that this is part of Martin's fundamental insight, one that has been central to his own work, but has also set an agenda for others: that the notion of family encompasses both biology and the social, and that both must be taken seriously as sites for empirical study. Maintaining this twin focus, and insisting on rigorous examination in an area that is all too often prey to one or other ideological viewpoint has been a great strength.

Of course, in different parts of the Nuffield Foundation we probably conceive of Martin himself in different ways. I know that my colleagues in the Nuffield Council of Bioethics, would probably think of him as a social geneticist, interested in genetic aspects of human behaviour, and a wise voice who understands both genetics and the social (and even rarer, someone who isn't a psychologist or psychiatrist with those skills). In my own area of work, his contributions to work on families and family law – especially keeping a central eye on how parental separation affects children and how that might differ under differing social arrangements – has been equally valued.

A final thought. Martin's research is not only work which sets a standard for others but work which has lured others to look at the issues that he has made his own. This is because he has engaged simultaneously with these issues, especially the family issues, both as intellectually exciting terrain, and as areas where informed engagement with social policy – and indeed social politics—was required. While it might have been easier for him if he hadn't, for instance, been drawn into policy discussions of parenting plans, the rest of us have cause to be grateful to him.

He has shown that one can retain intellectual integrity and still work to ensure that at least some policy discussion is informed by evidence. Across a range of issues he has taken part in wider debates, in the best traditions of scientific citizenship.

So he has not only sniffed out important questions and made unique contributions to exploring them, not only set a standard by the quality of his work, but provided an example of how to engage in wider discussions using that work. All these have been a great gift to all of us, and an example to which younger social scientists should aspire.

Family law and family policy

Mavis Maclean *CBE Co Director, Oxford Centre for Family Law and Policy, Department of Social Policy and Social Work, Oxford*

Working with Martin over the last 30 years has resembled an elegant game of tennis: there have been lobs into blue skies thinking, passing backhands of dazzling breadth of argument and net shots of cutting to the chase... and of course the ace serves.

His work on the impact on children of separation made a great impression on me, and we have both worked in this area ever since. His early work stimulated me to look at these issues in work with Michael Wadsworth using the 1946 cohort data. Martin then became interested in family mediation, which prompted me to look at other forms of professional intervention and support, and to study the work of family lawyers, first solicitors and currently the bar.

His work on Parenting plans made an important contribution to the development of policy in this area at the then Lord Chancellor's Department, now Department for Constitutional Affairs, and helped me in my role as Academic Adviser there through the last decade of family law reform.

His ability to cross disciplinary and national boundaries helped me to work between social policy and law, and made a major contribution to the setting up of the Oxford Centre for Family Law and Policy.

Imagining the future: rethinking children and childhood in research

Ginny Morrow *Institute of Education, University of London*

Martin invited me to join the Centre for Family Research in 1992, and I worked at the centre for five years, firstly working with Martin on a Joseph Rowntree Foundation project preparing a literature review on transitions to adult, looking at the importance of family support for your people. Subsequently we received funding from Joseph Rowntree Foundation for a qualitative research project to explore children's understandings of the concept of 'family'. The project enabled me to expand ideas about ethics, methods and sociological research with children that I had begun to work on during my PhD research - an area that I continue to work on as part of the 'new' social studies of childhood. Martin's support of myself and others in the Centre, particularly Judith Ennew and Antonella Invernizzi, has been important in encouraging what has become an exciting and important new area of study.

My presentation will draw on a pilot project recently funded by the Nuffield Foundation that Dr Jane Elliott (formerly a member of the CFR, now a colleague at Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Institute of Education, University of London) and I hold, that is analyzing a sample of short essays written by children who are part of the NCDS (National Child Development Study, the British birth cohort study based on a representative sample of over 17,000 infants born in a single week of 1958). When the children were aged 11 (in 1969) they completed a short questionnaire about leisure interests, preferred school subjects and expectations on leaving school, and they were asked to write a short essay on the following topic: 'Imagine you are now 25 years old. Write about the life you are leading, your interests, your home life and your work at the age of 25'. Apart from an attempt during the 1970s to analyze children's 'syntactic maturity', these essays have not been analysed before. My presentation describes the work Jane and I will be undertaking to code and analyze the essays, and I add some personal reflections about the following:

- * The centrality of social context in understanding the essays;
- * The ethics of social research with children;
- * How ideas about children and childhood are changing in social research, and also in social policy fields.

Session 3: Social and ethical dimensions of human genetics

Chair: Angus Clarke *Professor in Medical Genetics, University of Cardiff*

Martin's interest in human genetics developed organically out of his interest in "the family". He worked back to the root of things in his own particular way, pursuing his interest in children back to pregnancy and then further back to what comes before that. He published a set of key papers, beginning in 1989, on the issues that arise for mothers and families when they are faced by decisions about prenatal screening and prenatal genetic diagnosis. His approach was to look at the issues that arise for those involved and then develop ideas about how to tackle those issues or answer those questions. As always, he was generous with his thoughts and helped many of us develop our own set of research questions and even our own research programmes.

From the prenatal area, he extended across to another area where families were facing difficult issues in relation to genetic disease and genetic testing. This is the area of the familial cancers, especially familial breast and ovarian cancer. Learning from the families he studied, and in the process nurturing a vital group of junior researchers, he recognised the importance of lay understandings in contrast to the understandings of health professionals. While being fully at home in the world of the health professional and his concepts of risk and inheritance, Martin could think his way into other people's shoes and see that their concepts – even if "wrong" - would have important consequences for their use of genetic information and services. And this of course makes these lay ideas important to health professionals. More recently, he has developed an interest in historical ideas about inheritance – especially the application of certain eugenic ideas in the formation of "ideal" communities.

Martin has not only contributed in these ways to our collective understanding of genetics and its place in the lives of families, he has also made major contributions to the development of policy in the realm of human genetics. He has advised a number of social research centres focussed on genetics, influencing if not directing their research agenda. He sat on the Wellcome Trust's Biomedical Ethics Panel, and that was responsible for a major boost to the UK research into the social and ethical aspects of human genetics research and practice, supporting those who wished to see a range of research methodologies applied to this area. At an important time, he spoke up for investment in qualitative research, without which the worlds of clinical genetics and medical ethics would scarcely have begun to relate to each other. He worked on the Human Genetics Commission, chairing the working party that recently issues a report on human reproduction. And he has made important contributions in other ways – in writing and editing, as an examiner, on a Nuffield Council working party.

Martin has given his time and energy unreservedly – in part to further research itself but also to ensure that the social research and the human genetics research itself are used wisely, for the benefit of the whole community.

The Troubled Helix: A decade on.....

Theresa M. Marteau. Professor of Health Psychology, Kings College, London

The Troubled Helix (Cambridge University Press, 1996) grew out of a series of meetings that Martin Richards and I co-hosted in London and Cambridge from 1990 involving the few psychologists and social scientists in the UK with a growing interest in the social and psychological consequences of the new genetics. The book provides first hand accounts of those living with genetic risk, as well as reviews and critiques of the new genetics from many other perspectives including those of clinical medicine, sociology, psychology, decision theory, law, philosophy, anthropology and history. The book remains in print, with a health citation index suggesting that, while the volume of research in this area has increased rapidly over the past ten years, these initial critiques continue to have value.

Lay concepts of inheritance and the family have been an enduring interest of Martin's which he elaborated upon in The Troubled Helix. By illustrating how people's concepts of inheritance relate to their ideas of kinship he provides an eloquent account of why these often clashed with Mendelian explanations of inheritance. This work has been influential both in teaching geneticists and in stimulating research that takes as its starting point representations of the individual confronting novel information, a frequently neglected cornerstone of much psychology and sociology.

The focus of research activity in the psychological and social consequences of the new human genetics has evolved, while increasingly taking as its starting point the individual's salient concepts. Ten years ago, the research focus was upon the emotional impact of genetic testing. The emotional toll upon those undergoing predictive genetic testing has not been as great as expected. In part reflecting this finding and the growing interest in the genetics of common complex conditions, the research focus has now shifted towards understanding the behavioural impact of genetic risk information with a view to ascertaining whether including genotype analyses as part of risk assessments for such common complex conditions as heart disease or diabetes enhances or diminishes motivation to engage in risk-reducing behaviours. Recent studies highlight the utility of understanding this impact within the context of individual's representations of risks, the tests used to ascertain these risks and the actions suggested to reduce the risks.

Research on the psychological and social aspects of the new human genetics will continue to grow and evolve, enriched by Martin's past and continuing contributions that alert us to the importance of starting with the sense that the individual makes of the risks she or he confronts.

Families and genetics: the biological and social

Nina Hallowell *Lecturer in Public Health Sciences, University of Edinburgh*

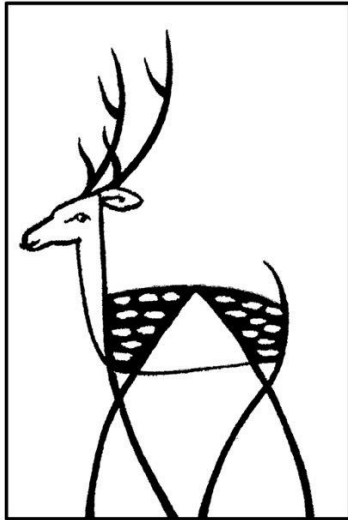
I joined the Centre for Family Research in January 1994 to work on an MRC funded project - Families and Genetic Disorders. The team was lead by Jo Green and Martin and included myself, Helen Statham and Frances Murton. The MRC project was, for want of a better word, multi –stranded, involving: a prospective study of genetic counselling for breast and ovarian cancer, a study of women who failed to meet the criteria for inclusion on a research register and a study of families affected with NF1 (Neurofibromatosis). What tied all of these together was the theme of lay understanding of genetics – and this provided a fertile ground for many academic arguments within the group at our Wednesday lunchtime meetings. During the course of the project I became fascinated with the ways in which our participants drew upon discourses of responsibility in order to justify their actions with regard to their genetic risks, and this has continued to be a constant theme in my research ever since.

In my presentation I will describe some recently completed research with men who have undergone genetic testing for hereditary breast and ovarian cancer. I will describe how the participants used the concept of responsibility to justify their decision to undergo testing while at the same time drawing upon deterministic discourses to absolve themselves of blame for putting their family at risk. I will argue that the juxtaposition of deterministic and voluntaristic discourses within these accounts is important for these men as it enables them to present themselves as caring, responsible parents.

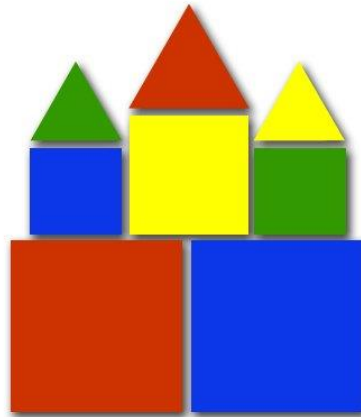
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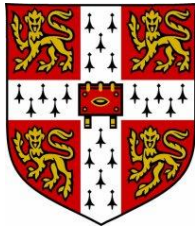
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