

Early years at the Unit for Research on Medical Applications of Psychology 1967-1974.

Joanna Ryan in conversation with Martin Richards 11th December 2015

Joanna Ryan was at the Unit for Research on Medical Applications of Psychology from the start to 1974 when she left for a lectureship in psychology at Goldsmiths, London. During some of this time she was also a Fellow and Tutor at Kings' College; the first woman in Cambridge to be Fellow in a college for men. Later she became a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and supervisor, in London, with many publications on psychoanalysis and its politics.

Joanna Ryan's URMAPP Publications

Grouping and short term memory. *Quart. J. Exp. Psychology.* 1969. 21, 137 -147.

Temporal grouping, rehearsal, and short term memory. *Quart. J. Exp. Psychology.* 1969.21. 148 – 155.

With J. Chivers and G. Redding. Rehearsal, and short-term memory in educatable subnormals. *American J. Mental Deficiency.* 1969.74, 218 – 222.

(anon) A subnormality hospital; a sceptical view of its medical function. *Science or Society? CSSRS Bulletin*, no 4, November, 1971.

IQ. The illusion of objectivity. In K. Richardson, D. Spears and M. Richards, (eds). *Race, Culture and Intelligence.* Penguin Books. 1972.

Scientific research and behavioural variation. In A.D.B and A.M. Clarke. (eds). 1973. *Mental Retardation and Behavioural Research.* London: Churchill Livingstone.

When is an apparent deficit a real deficit? In Peter Mittler (ed). 1973. *Assessment for Learning in the Mentally Handicapped.* London. Churchill Livingstone.

Interpretation and imitation in early language development. In R. and J. Hinde, (eds) *Constraints on Learning.* Academic Press, 1973.

Early language development; towards a communicational analysis. In M. Richards (ed). *The Integration of a Child into a Social World.* Cambridge University Press.1974, 1977.

Mental subnormality and language development. In E. and E. Lennenberg (eds). *Foundations of Language Development.* Vol.2. New York: Academic Press.1975.

The production and management of stupidity. In M. Wadsworth and D. Robinson, (eds). *Studies in Everyday Medical Life,* Martin Robinson.1976.

The silence of stupidity. In J. Morton (ed). *Psycholinguistics. Vol. 1. Developmental and Pathological.* London. Elek.

(with Frank Thomas) *The Politics of Mental Handicap.* Penguin Books, 1980. Free Association Books, 1987, 1997, 2003.

MARTIN: We are going to talk about the early beginnings of the Centre for Family Research in Cambridge University. So Jo, perhaps we could begin by talking about what you were doing and how you came to join what was then called the Unit for Research on Medical Applications of Psychology.

JOANNA: I had done my first degree in philosophy and psychology and then I did my PhD on short-term memory in the main Cambridge Department of Experimental Psychology, supervised by Alan Watson. But all the time whilst I was studying this, very empirical and scientific or pseudo-scientific form of psychology, I was always interested in what at that time would have said to be the more human aspects of psychology. And I was particularly interested in mental handicap because my youngest brother had what you would now call a learning disability, but it was mental handicap then. He was born with brain damage and had quite a severe mental handicap of an autistic kind. He was born when I was 17 and it made an enormous impact on me, and I remember when I was an undergraduate creeping into the library and trying to see if there were any books on what was actually called mental deficiency. And somehow feeling that I wanted to find out stuff, but this was sort of an illicit interest. Because that kind of thing was so much not part of the syllabus. And I originally wanted to do a PhD on learning disability or something more clinical. And they told me I couldn't because it wasn't scientific enough. So I slogged through three years of a PhD on short-term memory. All the time knowing I wanted to do something that was quite different and becoming increasingly critical of the paradigms that were required and on offer. And I must have spoken to [Oliver] Zangwill [Professor of Experimental Psychology] about my interests in this and he suggested after the end of my PhD, when I would have had to leave the department anyhow, that I apply to this fellowship or studentship, as kind of a post-doc thing, which I had never heard of. And it was called a Pinsent Darwin Studentship. And I think Pinsent might have been a 19th century psychiatrist and it was clearly funded by some Cambridge family. And because Zangwill had, which I certainly knew about, all this interest in neurology, and what was then called, unfortunately, abnormal psychology. He was quite supportive of my interest in this and steered me towards applying for this studentship. Of course, he may have even been on the board that gave it to me, I really don't know but I wouldn't be surprised if he was. And, that just coincided when he was supporting you to be in Station Road [Unit for Research on Medical Applications of Psychology]. And so he said I should go there and work there. So I had this studentship for two years, during the early two years of your grant. And I think I used that time to read quite a lot of the literature and try to think about it, but I really didn't have at that point a formulated research project. I think in my head I was full of sort of confusion, or feeling very split between the ultra-scientific methods I had been trained in and my interest in something that was so different. And I remember in the first instance and I don't know whether it was Zangwill who suggested it, I went to the local mental handicap hospital, the Ida Darwin, just to observe. And I was so affected by that, it was so awful. I mean the condition of the kids, and the adults as well, I mean I had never come across that level of extreme disability but I did stick around there for quite a long time. And I remember a weirdness, if I had spent the morning in the Ida Darwin with these non-verbal people, kind of they were all laid out on the floor and then I go into King's College for lunch with these super sophisticated people and I just couldn't put it all together somehow. But anyhow that affected me deeply. But it also made me decide that I couldn't really do research there, because the hospital environment was so dominating that any idea of trying to do research on mental abilities, it would have been very questionable. You couldn't have really formed a coherent group, I think I sort of realised that after a year or two of being there. But it did affect me deeply. And it made me think much more politically about the whole field, not just in terms of psychology. Like why were their conditions so bad,..., not just what caused people to have such drastic devastating deficits, but also how were they treated and how did the nurses treat them and all that. And that eventually inspired me to write my book later on after I

left Cambridge, on the politics of mental handicap. But the actual research I did I decided that I couldn't do it in the hospital and I would have to do it with children that were less handicapped, which is why I went and made contact with a lot of ESN [educationally sub normal] schools in the whole area. And that formed the basis of, my research for the application to Nuffield I think.

MARTIN: Yes, so basically what you are saying is that in the Ida Darwin the kind of institution was so overwhelmingly dominant that what you are looking at is institutionalisation, not anything to do with the cognitive abilities or the social abilities of these people.

JOANNA: Absolutely, and at that time I had read some of the psychological literature on mental handicap and it made me realise that quite a lot of the research actually had been carried out on subjects in hospitals. They never really said where they got their subjects, a lot of it was really, for exactly the reasons you are saying, not really very valid. But at the same time none of the experimental psychology stuff on mental handicap addressed the social conditions at all. All the biographies of these children and whatever, or the kind of care they were getting. But all this was going on at the same time as was a huge ferment around me, in terms of the student movement, the critique of authoritarian education. The beginnings of the critiques of experimental psychology. Which I lapped up, absolutely. And, at the same time I also decided that my research was going to be on language development and I am not quite sure why I got into that rather than other cognitive abilities or whatever. But it proved very fertile. But that introduced me to wider issues, not just staying within the confines of even developmental psychology. But having to consider things you know from philosophy and linguistics and some social psychology indeed. So I think at that time I was pulling in ideas from all over really. And it was a very fertile period, intellectually for me. And politically; I think I moved hugely during that time.

MARTIN: So during that time we both moved into the Station Road building [URMAP]. So you had an office there and were in that sense part of the group, such as it was. And there, and I think, fairly soon after moving there, there was the second grant proposal that went into Nuffield which provided I think it was 4 years support for various bits of work by different people, including the work that you and I were doing, which was ongoing, in what I guess we should call the [URMAP] group [in 5 Salisbury Villas] in Station Road.

JOANNA: Yes, I think I got three years of that and maybe that is because it overlapped with this Pinsent-Darwin thing, I can't remember. I am pretty sure I only got three years. And you and I were a couple for some of that time, but Zangwill never referred to that.

MARTIN: He never referred to much about anyone's social life I think.

JOANNA: No, but anyhow, we worked there, I suppose. I remember that you had a long office. There was a fairly long office where you and Judy [Bernal, later Dunn] were. And at first, I was in a tiny one that was opposite you. It was a little square room, because I remember, because I used to do supervisions with psychology students. They used to come and see me there. And I would be teaching in that little room. And then when the Nuffield grant started, I also had money for an assistant, who was Jenny Corrigall. And I moved into that much bigger room.

[Note added later by MPMR

There are copies in the archive of our annual reports to the Nuffield Foundation which describe work carried out under their grant, 1972 – 1975. This includes an account of you using a language teaching programme at the Ida Darwin, a method of teaching syntax in a structured fashion as devised by Dr G. Fenn. And video filming there of staff and patients. Later there is an account of a

study carried out at the homes of 8 families with 'mongol (Down's syndrome) babies'. This work was written up by Jenny (Jane) Corrigan as her PhD thesis. Her degree was awarded in 1978. *An observational study of the interaction between Down's syndrome babies and their mothers*. The assistance of Paul Polani of Guys Hospital in setting up the study is acknowledged. He would have been the consultant who saw the families and diagnosed the children].

MARTIN: Yes, and, by that time there were some others of course who had joined the group, including some PhD students.

JOANNA: Yes, there was Jenny and Elena and I supervised her.

MARTIN: You were her PhD supervisor.

[Elena Lieven. PhD 1980. *Language development in young children; children's speech and speech to children*. Elena did much else after her thesis study before she got round to writing her PhD thesis]

JOANNA: She did some brilliant work and I got very involved in it. And that is part of what I think is actually my most innovative work. I wrote about it, in that chapter, in your *Child and Social World* book.

MARTIN: *The Integration of a Child in a Social World*.

JOANNA: I mean even that title then seemed quite radical; for psychologists to be thinking about the social world.

MARTIN: Well, I went back and read some of it recently, including the introduction. And one of the interesting things now in that introduction is the way that we rejected the notion of socialisation and we were interested in acquisition and integration, rather than this notion that children were made social in some way by the world that they lived in. And how multidisciplinary the book is.

JOANNA: One of the things that has most stuck with me is that in developing, I mean Elena did this conversation analysis which basically had a critique of Chomsky's theory, without taking it on board. Because Chomsky's theory is so structuralist in a sense, and this idea of innate grammatical structures which pre-exist children's language learning, which then are kind of activated. And we had already begun a critique of that and were much more in favour of looking, probably influenced by your and Judy's work, at the actual interaction between mothers and babies, in terms of very early language development. I mean pre-words and beginning of words forming. So that we were very focused on the interaction and I remember it was like a lightbulb going on. I found, somehow, my way to Habermas and I think that was through feminism and critiques of the family. And he had this notion of intersubjectivity and this is what I introduced. And that has run, and run, and run. But that was so far outside the intellectual framework of experimental psychology, which I was trying to extricate myself from. And that was all seeming very exciting really. I think Elena and I sparked off each other a lot.

MARTIN: Can you say a bit more about the group as a whole at Station Road and how we functioned as a group?

JOANNA: Did we? Did we have group meetings? I don't remember group meetings; lots of individuals conversations.

MARTIN: Well we did, at some stage, we began a weekly seminar.

JOANNA: Oh, did we? Who came to speak?

MARTIN: Well, uh, I can't tell you them all off the top of my head. I remember there were for example, some of the people we both had known from our times in the States, including people associated with the Centre for Cognitive Studies [Harvard University], some of them visited Cambridge and they would come by and do a seminar. And we and other members of the group often spoke.

JOANNA: I remember Jerry Bruner coming.

MARTIN: Yes, he would be one of those Americans. Then of course not so long after that he actually moved to Oxford from Harvard.

JOANNA: It would be very interesting to see who did come, I actually can't remember that at all.

MARTIN: That is something that I think I can put together from our archive.

[In the archive we only have our annual reports to Nuffield for this period. These simply say we had many visitors and we made and received visits from other UK Psychology departments where there was work in developmental psychology underway. We were also very active in participating in study groups and workshops including some at the Ciba Foundation and those organised by Ronnie MacKeith and Martin Bax for the Spastic Society Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology group. As may be seen from both our bibliographies, many of our papers from this period were published in the collected volumes coming from workshops and study groups].

JOANNA: When we had those sort of meetings, was there a big room beyond your room?

MARTIN: Yes, and there was a big room downstairs, rather gloomy. With a big table.

JOANNA: I don't remember that at all.

MARTIN: I remember also using it for other things, like, when we were producing our agitprop mag called 'Science or Society', which, a group of us, including people from elsewhere in Cambridge beyond URMAR. Bob Young and others, associated with the British Society for Social Responsibility for Science [BSSRS /CSSRS] worked on. We produced this, it was a Cambridge focused publication, which had critical things to say about many of our colleagues in Cambridge and much more beside. But we used to put that together; we edited it and sometimes wrote things collectively, typed it up and duplicated it and stapled that together in that big basement room. Which I think other people also used a bit for meetings too. The other thing I remember in the summer was being out the garden. There was an old pear tree and we used to sit under that for our seminars.

[There is an incomplete set of *Science or Society?* / CSSRS Bulletin in the archive, this includes. *Science or Society?* No. 4 .Special issue. Medicine and Society. November 1971. This has an anon article 'A subnormality hospital. A sceptical view of its medical function' which I assume was written by Joanna. Another issue contained, 'The social irresponsibility of experimental psychology' which described some of the work of the Cambridge department which I wrote, I think].

JOANNA: Yes, the garden in the back. It was all very wild and uncultivated. Yes, I remember that. I did look at the BSSR website a few years ago, just out of some interest. And they don't mention the Cambridge group at all, which seems a great shame. But I think we were in contention with the London Group.

[BSSRS was started with a Meeting at the Royal Society in April 1969. The independent Cambridge Society, CSSRS, grew out of a discussion I was involved in during a 'teach in' at a University student protest sit in in October 1969].

MARTIN: I think there were some issues about that.

JOANNA: I think there were a bit, um...

MARTIN: Yes, I think there were a bit of an ideological difference, but I think the Cambridge group functioned very autonomously, and I think we probably were more radical than the group in London. I do remember they had an office in Poland Street and I remember we used to go down there for meetings and things at times.

JOANNA: And out of that did come the *Race, Culture and Intelligence* book, campaigning around IQ and stuff.

MARTIN: Yes, that of course followed the publication by [Arthur] Jensen of his infamous paper in the Harvard Educational Review. [How much can we boost IQ and scholastic achievement. .Vol, 39, Winter, 1969].

JOANNA: And that was '69 his paper, wasn't it?

MARTIN: It was, and then we organised a debate in Cambridge. [There was a CSSRS Study Group involving Judy Bernal, Susan and Ken Kaye, Elena Lieven, Caroline Hall, Joanna Ryan and Martin Richards, all URMMap members].

[18th July 1970. A special issue of the CSSRS Bulletin was published to mark the event which took place at the Cambridge Union. It includes summaries of the presentations by Arthur Jensen, Liam Hudson, Jerry Hirsch (Urbana USA) G.A.N. Smith, Stephen Rose and Martin Richards]

JOANNA: And there were demonstrations, even...

MARTIN: There were demonstrations, and I think we ended up on TV more than once talking about it all. I remember doing a head to head with Jensen among other things. Old Ludo [Ludovic Kennedy] was in the chair and when the camera was off him he would reach under the desk and take a swig from a bottle of claret. But that all became a great sort of rallying point around those issues of race, IQ and compensatory education.

JOANNA: And that also led me to do some work on IQ and obviously because I was interested and I was doing all the handicap stuff; but the actual conceptual basis, I remember doing quite a lot of what I now see as deconstructive work, but we didn't have that concept then. [Her chapter in the *Race, Culture and Intelligence* book, IQ – The Illusion of Objectivity.]

MARTIN: And we produced a Penguin ...

JOANNA: *Race, Culture and Intelligence*.

MARTIN: I remember doing it really well. But, yes, going back to the Unit, I guess it was still the case when we first arrived. There were some other people 'Dr Geddes's group' that were using some of the URMMap accommodation who were all part, technically, of the experimental psychology department, who were housed there, as a sort of overflow. I'm not quite sure how that functioned, but I think one by one they disappeared fairly early on [Other parts of the premises were occupied by others who were not part of URMMap. These included the radio carbon dating lab and a group of psychologists from the Education department headed by David Bruce. Sometimes some of that latter group came to some of our seminars, as did others from elsewhere in Cambridge.]

JOANNA: I can't remember anyone in particular, but I do remember feeling that we were kind of a radical outpost and that we attracted a lot of the dissident students. I remember a lot of the more

radical students coming for supervisions with me, and that we somehow saw ourselves not just apart from the experimental psychology, but in opposition to it.

MARTIN: Yes, I remember the name that was used by some of the students: we were the 'unit for anti-psychology'.

JOANNA: Oh, right, yes.

MARTIN: Recently I found amongst my offprints a typed paper entitled 'the social irresponsibility of experimental psychologists'. Yes, I wonder, looking back, what Oliver Zangwill thought of all that. He must have been aware that we were doing, taking a rather specific line on experimental psychology.

JOANNA: Yeah, but he was such a split person that it was very hard to know. I mean everything you said earlier to me about how important he was for the beginning of it absolutely fits. But like I was saying, I don't have any memories of him being very interested in what we actually did then. He was very avuncular in a way. He certainly was to me; because you know he really rode two horses, or however you want to put it, as Professor of Experimental Psychology and then his extensive neurological interests. Which really, I think, he was much more interested in than experimental psychology.

MARTIN: It is curious, looking back on it, that he was obviously very active, in promoting us, making sure we got jobs etc. And, he was a co-grant holder on that second much bigger Nuffield grant that we had. Which of course included some of those that he would have regarded as his people who were...

JOANNA: Who did it include?

MARTIN: There was someone called Ian Clifton Everett, who was doing work on dyslexia and reading. I think he was a researcher assistant of Zangwill's, but I am not quite sure how the money worked. [He was supervised by Zangwill. PhD.1975. Reading and perceptual organisation. A study of perceptual mechanisms together with eye-movements and EEGs in backward readers]. He was in the Unit at Station Road. And Graham Richardson was his PhD student. [PhD 1980. Spatial thought and verbal ability in children retarded in reading]. There is an archive conversation with Graham Richardson and Joanna Hawthorne, 2016]. But looking back, I have been quite surprised about how significant and important Zangwill was, both in ensuring that we had support and jobs and so on. But as you point out, having apparently rather little direct interest in what we were actually doing.

JOANNA: And also I mean he was so crafty, obviously. He was such a mysterious person. But, he would never overtly criticise experimental psychology. You know, he, in fact he wasn't critical of anything very much in that sense. He would never stick his neck out. But at the same time he obviously was quite a skilled operator in getting all these things together.

MARTIN: Yes. As you said, he was very split between things. He obviously had a concern for our lives as well as our careers. But you know, you would never guess it on the surface at all. But from the point of view of the Unit, it seems that after the end of that second Nuffield grant, I suppose two things had happened by then: I had the University lectureship in what became SPS, social and political sciences. And you were a Fellow and tutor in Kings [College]. And we had independent grant money, no longer the grant that he had been a co-grant holder of. It seemed to me that after that links with experimental psychology got more distant. [Paul Light was appointed University demonstrator in experimental psychology in 1972 and he was succeeded in that post when he left Cambridge in 1974 by Elena Lieven. Who, I think continued in that post until she left Cambridge in

1979. I too taught on the developmental psychology course and I have memories of bringing in borrowed babies to my lectures so I could demonstrate the abilities of newborns. I used to ask the class for a show of hand for who had ever held a baby less than a month old and seldom got more than a couple. I am not sure how long I continued with that teaching once I had begun teaching in SPS. I am not sure that there had been any teaching in developmental psychology in the Experimental Psychology department until we arrived in URMAP].

JOANNA: Oh, absolutely. I did lecture on the main experimental psychology course during the period of the grant, and I hated doing that as well. But I also supervised a lot. But once the grant ended, I was actually stranded as well, because I thought I had a fourth year at King's. I don't know what went on behind the scenes, but Oliver somehow landed me in that position. Oh, the grant, what had happened? Anyhow, it was all very difficult. But by that time I had moved to London, in my last year. I don't think I still had the grant. I think I was just at King's somehow. I also got involved in the beginning of the women's paper. That was going on as well.

MARTIN: The women's paper in SPS. [This paper was run by a collective of women. It was probably the first women's studies course at any UK university. Other URMAP women including Elena Lieven and Barbara Antonis were also involved].

JOANNA: Yes, that was very formative. And that would have started in the period of the main grant.

MARTIN: And I of course was also teaching developmental and social psychology by then in SPS. [I was appointed to a university lectureship in social psychology in 1970 for SPS and began teaching etc from its inception].

JOANNA: Yes, and I was the most senior person at that point in the whole group of women who got the women's paper together. So I was quite central to it. And I continued teaching to that extent. In a way, it was extraordinary that it ever got going; it was one of the first women's studies papers or courses in the whole country. And it was very, very interdisciplinary. [Later, the Cambridge Women's Studies Group published a book of interdisciplinary essays, *Women in Society*. Virago Press, 1981]. I certainly think my work at Station Road had made me appreciate how that was what you have to be if you want to be someone who has got a more social angle on psychological things. Without being social psychology, which we were also very critical of, because social psychology sounds as though it should be, but isn't. I think there were quite a lot of critiques of social psychology around, interestingly. As it then was, anyhow. It's probably different now. [eg. Nigel Armistead (ed.) 1974. *Reconstructing Social Psychology*. To which MPMR contributed a chapter together with colleagues John Shotter, Rom Harre, George Gross, Joan Busfield].

MARTIN: The point about interdisciplinarity seems important. Again, if you look at the *Integration of the Child* book, that of course had sociologists, it has a clinician, oh, and an anthropologist too. So that was quite explicitly interdisciplinary. Which I suppose has remained a feature of work in the Centre, ever since really.

JOANNA: Yes.

MARTIN: It is interesting in the early days how far we, I know, we were critical of experimental psychology. And, of course, I didn't have a psychology background at all, unlike you. But quite how far we were explicitly interdisciplinary at that time in our work, I'm not sure.

JOANNA: It's a very interesting question because we certainly didn't use that word or that concept, really. I don't think I knew it even. And probably I would have put things more in terms of politics, That was certainly the influence of the radical psychology of the time. That you had to take account

of it. You couldn't isolate pure psychology away from structures of power and conditions of people's lives. And I mean that eventually led me in the politics of mental handicap, to look to historicise really, the kind of psychology that was done on t mental handicapped people, through the ages. From the 19th century onwards. To put it into a historical and political framework and obviously a social one to look at, to critique the normative standards that had been held up. And so all of that was a product of the kinds of conversations, in lots of different places really, that we were having in the Unit and around the Unit. I do think I was very influenced by the students or at least a few radical students.

MARTIN: Well they of course were very important in the early days of SPS too, but I think that looking at my position at SPS, I think was very curious. I found this note in the archive the other day, a note from Oliver Zangwill. He'd had I think a preliminary discussion with Nuffield about what became the second much larger grant. And one of the issues that they'd brought up, was that they'd questioned what your position and mine were in the University. Because they normally they only offered support to people who had established university positions, and, so, what were our positions. And Oliver in that note to me had said, oh, I could assure them that you are likely to get a lectureship in experimental psychology in the next 2 or 3 years and he thought that you would get a college position. Well, as we now know, he was probably fixing that in the background.

JOANNA: But you know what, I don't know if it was retrospectively or then, but I think I felt quite put down by him, that somehow you were going to get the university lectureship and I was going to get the college one.

MARTIN: Well with good reason to, yes.

JOANNA: I mean, there was also kind of sexism in his avuncular nature, and I mean the King's College thing, do you remember we went to dinner with Geoffrey Lloyd who was a senior tutor, in Kings then? And basically that was see if I was alright be appointed to be the first woman fellow. That was all that happened. But...

MARTIN: Well, it was to check out our table manners basically?

JOANNA: Yes, or your conversation. And presumably you don't know whether that invitation from him to me was because of Zangwill, but presumably it was.

MARTIN: Well, I think it's also from that perspective not surprising that perhaps that I was a co-grant holder of that second Nuffield, and you were not. [It is unclear from the serving papers whether or not Joanna was a co PI. The actual grant application does not survive in the archive. You were simply one of those listed whose work was going to be supported by the grant. However, there are various papers which were clearly part of the application and they include CVs for Zangwill, Joanna and myself].

JOANNA: Yes, I mean I suppose, chronologically I was younger than you.

MARTIN: But yeah, and don't forget, you made history because you were the first female fellow at King's. And all the hoo-hah about that.

JOANNA: As Quentin Skinner said at the time, 'you will be a footnote in history'.... as written by him!

MARTIN: I suspect there is that footnote already somewhere in King's.

JOANNA: But that was the kind of atmosphere and actually it was a nightmare being at King's as far as I am concerned.

MARTIN: But just to briefly return to the interdisciplinary point. I think it was certainly for me an issue when, the University finally decided to set up what became SPS after many discussions and debates. And they created three jobs. One was a lectureship in social psychology. And, it never occurred to me to apply for it because whatever I was, I certainly wasn't a social psychologist. I remember that Oliver calling me into his office and saying, look, you have to apply for this. This is your job. Don't you know?

JOANNA: God, it is awful, isn't it.

MARTIN: I can remember being interviewed by all these people. Well, extraordinarily, they gave me the job. Then at that time there was a curriculum which included I think two papers in social psychology.

JOANNA: About which you knew nothing.

MARTIN: About which I knew nothing. And I immediately re-wrote the curriculum and one of them became developmental psychology. In fact I think they both did initially, developmental and social I think we called it. [Later Colin Fraser a 'proper' social psychologist was appointed and he taught social psychology. The psychology papers attracted most students of any SPS papers so creating an especially large teaching and examining load so it was relatively easy to make the case that the next appointment in SPS should be a social psychology lecturer]. And so it is partly an issue of... but they were certainly psychology. But of course the whole style of teaching in the early years of SPS was very multi or interdisciplinary, and we had those papers, like the women's paper, which were explicitly either cross disciplinary or non-disciplinary. At various times I constructed and taught others like it, including, Race, Alternative Societies, Social Aspects of Medicine, the Family.

JOANNA: Maybe we used the word 'cross-disciplinary' a bit.

MARTIN: Perhaps we did.

[On the back cover blurb for the Integration of a Child into a Social World we find, 'Throughout development there is an essential tension between the biological and the social. The infant and the social world are in constant interaction. Thus any serious study of child development is interdisciplinary, moving outward from psychology towards both biology sociology, and it is this interdisciplinary approach that unites the contributors to this volume'].

JOANNA: But I really wonder how he got things done, how it happened that they gave you the job and what role he played and who else he nobbled. Not to say it wasn't a good idea.

MARTIN: Well, what is extraordinary, you would never guess when meeting him, but he clearly wielded a certain amount of political power in the University. Which is really quite surprising; there is some people in the University, you can just see the way they behave on committees etc, where they get their power from. But him, you can't see him as winning the arguments in those contexts. But somehow he just fixed things, always behind the scene.

JOANNA: Yeah, but I think what happened with me is that he somehow got an understanding at King's. They had given me a year extra, because it was three years then, and of course it was never written down. Because when I went and saw Edmond Leech [Provost of Kings] at the end of the third year for the extra year, he said, well he implied that it was Zangwill's doing somehow. So really, I was being traded around almost.

MARTIN: It is also interesting to me now, going back to some of the work in that period, something that I came across as a PhD student working in animal behaviour / ethology at Madingley. There was

seminar series that was known as the Thorpe and Zangwill group. Which met on a regular basis. It was a kind of evening discussion group, we met after hall, in Jesus I think. It brought together people from experimental psychology and Chaucer road [MRC Applied Psychology Unit] and ethologists from Madingley [Sub department of Animal Behaviour].

JOANNA: And what kind of things would they be discussing.

MARTIN: Well they produced a book around this period that I was a research student, or maybe soon afterwards, which is called *Current problems in animal behaviour. A survey* (edited by W.H.. Thorpe and O. L Zangwill. Cambridge University Press 1961), and it's a collection of chapters on a whole series of issues you know from sort of hard line ethology, through to things you could identify as experimental psychology, or even almost neurology. Indeed, learning issues in immediate memory even, or at least learning theory.

JOANNA: So it wasn't just animal behaviour.

MARTIN: No. And there were even people like Donald Broadbent who came to those meetings. So Zangwill obviously had this idea of bringing people / things together, crossing disciplinary boundaries. I guess that was really important to me, that, I originally as post doc I went to him because I had money from Nuffield to do the Mother – infant observational study but I needed somewhere to base it and went to him and he said 'you know, we've got this space at Station Road'.

JOANNA: Yeah, that is interesting about the Thorpe/ Zangwill group because the whole issue of how those ethological methods applied to humans became such a big one then, wasn't it. And obviously you were very much a part of pioneering that. But presumably that must have been bubbling up from somewhere. Yeah, Zangwill was an unusual academic. It would be interesting to look at his publications before he got into neurology, to see what he did. Because he was very influenced by Luria, the Russian psychologist. He had, and the Russians then did a different sort of psychology which was a much more pedagogical in many ways, but also much more linked to what was then known about the brain and neuropsychology. And I can't remember what it was about Luria, it must have been some theory of language. But anyhow, Zangwill was always going on about him when he was teaching. So he himself had a very wide compass I think.

MARTIN: Yes, he had that clinical post as a psychologist at Queen's Square Institute of Neurology. And there is that too, and somewhere along the line his strong interest in psychoanalysis and Freud.

JOANNA: That's right. His father is in fact more famous than him. Israel Zangwill, he was a dramatist, and obviously Jewish.

MARTIN: Well, he was a Zionist too, wasn't he? A significant Zionist.

JOANNA: But I don't know where Oliver Zangwill grew up, presumably in this country. You know it is interesting, I don't know what his relationship to psychoanalysis was. That is really interesting. Do you think he was in analysis himself, Oliver Zangwill?

MARTIN: I think that would be a challenge....

JOANNA: Well, he knew Marie Singer, who was an analyst. And that was very unusual for a psychologist in Cambridge to be on good terms with a psychoanalyst.

[QV. In Memoriam. Marie Battle Singer. J. Child Psychotherapy, 1985, vol. 11. No.1. Born in Mississippi. Degree at Smith College. Did social work in Germany after the war. Later trained at the

Hampstead Child Therapy Clinic. Came to Cambridge in 1959 with her poet marine biologist husband, James Burns Singer. He died in 1964].

MARTIN: Indeed, I got to know her, through Oliver, I think.

JOANNA: How did we get to know her, probably...? But I mean, she had this drunken poet husband didn't she, or partner.

MARTIN: Well, I just realised that we'll know all the answers to these questions very soon.

JOANNA: Oh really.

MARTIN: Um, through the book that is soon to appear about Freud in Cambridge. By John Forrester.

JOANNA: Who has just died.

MARTIN: Yes, who has very sadly died recently.

JOANNA: Oh, ok, that's interesting.

MARTIN: It occurred to me just a few months ago that one of the things I ought to do is to talk to him about some of our origins, simply because he would know a lot more about that aspect of Oliver and the others.

JOANNA: He certain would have. I heard him give a very interesting paper.

MARTIN: I think that book is mostly about the pre-war period but, um...

JOANNA: Well, Oliver would have been around then. Because I, there is a good link, because I heard Forrester once give a talk about this guy called Tansley who was a biologist [Arthur George Tansley, 1871 – 1955. Pioneer of the science of ecology who introduced the concept of the ecosystem].

MARTIN: He was a plant ecologist, a friend of my father's.

JOANNA: But he more or less started the notion of ecology, but he went off to be analysed by Freud.

MARTIN: There is a very interesting paper to be written here. There is a whole history there. I mean there are very interesting connections. Those early ecologists had two other interests, many of them. One was Freud and psychoanalysis, the other was family planning. They were all...

JOANNA: Oh wow.

MARTIN: I don't think either of my parents had any interest in Freud. But my Mum was involved in the family planning clinic in Cambridge.

JOANNA: I suppose, one question is was Oliver Zangwill part of that.

MARTIN: I think the answer has to be yes.

JOANNA: Well we don't even know if he was in Cambridge then. Or maybe we do.

[Oliver Zangwill came up to Kings in 1932. Following a first in Natural Sciences he stayed on as a research student under Frederic Bartlett. He returned to Cambridge to the chair in experimental psychology in 1952. R.L. Gregory. 2001. Oliver Louis Zangwill. Biog. Mem. Fell.R.Soc.Lond. 47, 515 – 524].

MARTIN: I don't. I am ashamed to say that I know nothing about his pre-Cambridge career.

JOANNA: Yeah, absolutely. Because, clearly, without him there wouldn't have been our Station Road unit, really. He also made the whole intellectual spirit of it and were very formative in bringing people in, especially you.

MARTIN: Yeah, he created the space.

JOANNA: Very facilitatively.

MARTIN: And, early on. I guess you and I had put together a proposal for Nuffield for that second big grant that supported that much wider range of studies and people. I mean what they saw or what was described in the proposal as a group of people interested in child development. If we had been trying to promote that to Nuffield without Oliver, I don't think we could have done it. And, he could go along and tell them that it is fine to support these two people because they are going to get university positions in brackets 'I will fix it'. And I guess probably even Nuffield would have accepted that from him.

JOANNA: But though he was essential in that way, he absolutely wasn't in any sense interfering with what we were doing, and I mean it was a wonderful free space and I mean we were very much part of the times. We were both contributing to that and supported by it I think.

MARTIN: Well it got us essentially to a position that when the lease of the house in Station Road was ended by Jesus College, we suddenly had to find somewhere to work, and by then I had the post in SPS, but they didn't have any available accommodation. I remember being very surprised at getting a letter from the Secretary General, saying, we are worried about where you are going. And, that led to the offer of space in the Old Cavendish. We got first pick of that and that is how we ended up where we are now.

JOANNA: And what year did we move in there, because I was gone by then?

MARTIN: 18th of July 1977.

JOANNA: So you must have been in Station Road quite a long time after I left.

MARTIN: Yes.

JOANNA: Because quite a lot of people came. I was there for the first year of Gill Pinkerton and Cathy Urwin. [I think Cathy Urwin arrived in 1974. I supervised her PhD. 1979. Development of communication between blind infants and parents. I think Gill Pinkerton arrived a little earlier. But she never completed her PhD in Cambridge. She left Cambridge to gain practical experience of working with children and became a playgroup leader in London and did not return to Cambridge].

MARTIN: Maybe we should just say, you should just say something about your leaving.

JOANNA: Yeah, well.

MARTIN: I mean, you moved to London basically.

JOANNA: Well, I had the extra year and I was paid by King's and I was coming back to Cambridge to teach on the Women's paper, but I wasn't coming in to Station Road. My grant had ended. But I think I was still trying to write it all up.

MARTIN: Because you did publish some of that a bit later didn't you.

JOANNA: I think so. Well, I certainly went on writing about it.

MARTIN: Well, then you were working on your book by then.

JOANNA: Well, by then I decided I needed to. It was during that year when I was between, I don't think I had started that. I don't think I had the idea of the book. But during that year, when I had a room in King's and I moved to London with Sheila [Young], who had also been at Station Rd doing the beginning of a Ph.D on abortion, and we had moved to Kynaston Road, and I was going backwards and forwards. Teaching on the women's group. But I don't think I even came into Station Road then.

[Sheila Young, later reverted to Ernst. Had a SSRC studentship at the Unit from 1969. She interviewed unmarried mothers at the Bateman Street home for unmarried mothers where some spent their pregnancies. She later wrote a paper on the politics of abortion (Radical Science Journal, no2/3 1979.p.51). At the time she was part of the East London Big Flame Group. Later becoming radical/feminist therapist working at the London Women's Therapy Centre. QV her Obituary. The Guardian 24th March 2015].

MARTIN: But you were involved with therapy by then, weren't you?

JOANNA: I was, that's right. Yeah, that year, which was my second year of King's and the last year of the grant, I think. It was the big grant, or my last year of it anyhow. Or maybe it was my third year. I was going to London a lot to be in analysis with this not very good, helpful guy who Marie Singer had sent me to. So I was beetling up the A1 in my green minivan, for about two years I think I was, a lot. But I can't think how I ended my time at Station Road. Probably rather traumatically, or rather sort of unsatisfactorily.

MARTIN: Because you would have still been supervisor to Elena.

JOANNA: Elena, I would. And I think Jenny Corrigan was still working on the analysis of all the data.

MARTIN: So you must have been involved in one way or another with their work, still.

JOANNA: I must have been. I think I was rapidly moving to more politicised, feminist, and critical positions. And I think I found it very difficult to hold together being, even in the terms of the Nuffield grant, a fairly very straightforward researcher.

MARTIN: There is things like, I suppose you would have been formally, as far as the University is concerned, the supervisor of Elena. But as we know, Elena took 9 years to complete her PhD, which I think was an all-time record, even at Station Road. But of course she was very self-directed by then, so perhaps you ..

JOANNA: She was quite self-directed, it was quite a problem supervising her. We had a really good intellectual relationship, me and Elena. It was very good actually. Very productive.

MARTIN: And she did with others in the Unit too, of course. And there were other people then interested in language and language acquisition.

JOANNA: I mean, because at the same time, I haven't got the dates of when I was a teacher in my head, and how that intersects with the three years I was on the Nuffield grant. There was obviously quite a lot of degree of overlap. Um, but I think I found it very difficult to hold it all together. I mean, I definitely did. I mean, saying about the Ida Darwin and going to King's. But also, it was a very demanding job at King's because they'd... I was so stupid really. I was a tutor to students and that was fine. I like the pastoral bit. But they also made me tutor for accommodation. So I had to arrange every year where all the students, where everyone lived. It was a nightmare. So I don't

know how much research I did. I do remember doing the research. I do remember going around to all these schools. I used to set off in the dark at 7 in the morning and drive to Hertfordshire or somewhere, you know, test these little kids. But I can't remember. There must have been a time when I stopped doing that. But I never satisfactorily wrote it up, which I really feel bad about now. And that might have been the last thing I did at Station Road or just after that.

MARTIN: Well, I certainly remember all the pressures on you at King's and I think that was actually very important for me because after I had been given the lectureship in SPS, I think largely thanks to the machinations of Peter Laslett, Trinity offered me a fellowship and I said no. Poor old Peter felt very hurt by that, after all his work. But I had no regrets about it because I had just seen what colleges did to people. I mean it was fine being a research fellow at Trinity, and the only demand was to write not more than 400 words every year to the college Council saying what I had done. But seeing the teaching loads and the endless committee stuff and admissions and all the rest that the colleges demanded of everyone really. I was much happier in the University basically.

JOANNA: Well, and there was all the ridiculous rituals. I mean I never went in to high table, but they were very offended that I didn't. I never went into the senior common room, I couldn't bear it.

MARTIN: Well, we are probably drawing to the end of this conversations. I don't know if there is any other area that we have missed out and that we might talk about.

JOANNA: I think the thing that I would really like to emphasize, and we have already said it is what a creative time it was, intellectually, at the Unit.

MARTIN: That wasn't just the Unit, it was the unit in the environment.

JOANNA: Yes, but it was a very creative Unit. At least from my point of view. And I feel very pleased to have been part of that. And it enabled me to move from being trapped in the experimental psychology to somewhere completely different and it enabled you to get into SPS. Rather, we all together, we created that. And I think we, I mean you particularly you, made links all over the place, internationally and everything as well during that time, didn't you.

MARTIN: That's true and I think it had been very helpful being in the States and during that period making links. And, well I guess that was true for you too. And I think the times we both spent at the Centre for Cognitive Studies [Harvard] led to a lot of not exactly cross disciplinary, but sort of cross different traditions. Well, it was cross disciplinary.

JOANNA: Well, it wasn't so much for me I don't think. I was just doing more short term memory stuff then.

MARTIN: There is just one thing that struck me looking again at subsequent careers of people in the Unit. A very large number of people ended up becoming therapists of one kind or another.

JOANNA: Who are you thinking of?

MARTIN: Cathy Urwin would be one example. Sheila Young. Graham Richardson.

JOANNA: Gill Pinkerton became... I met her somewhere, she didn't become therapist did she? She became a psychologist.

MARTIN: She was working in day nurseries, I think. And, she decided that she wanted to do more of that before continuing with her PhD and then she never came back. So she never completed her PhD, but there are to me interesting links. Someone made this comment the other day, it was in fact part of a discussion I had with someone after Sheila's [Young / Ernst] funeral. And it was about links

with the Tavistock and so on, and the fact that, something I'd never thought about, and the use of our observational as a training technique...

JOANNA: Yeah, the baby observation stuff.

MARTIN: ... came straight from us.

JOANNA: Yes, it did.

MARTIN: I never realised that before, I think.

JOANNA: Well, if you read the baby observation stuff. It says quite clearly, it does reference you, certainly Robert Hinde and Bowlby of course was interested...

MARTIN: Well yes, but two slightly different things here. Because of ideas about attachment and so on, there is clearly a strong link between the sort of work Robert Hinde did. I mean he and Bowlby spent a lot of time talking about all of that and attachment theory and so on. But the, the slightly different issue of using observational techniques that is something that was in my original application. I was saying that the problem with work on maternal behaviour in people was that was all based on talking to mothers. I wanted to go out there and see what people actually do. A fairly naive position, but that was very strong, the idea that we could go and see. We would sit around and watch people with their children. We would sit around with hospitals, watching them give birth and whatever they did with their babies when they were born and so on.

JOANNA: Well that all goes on, and it, lots of courses now have compulsory observation studies. And it is a very British empiricism. It is really interesting, and Cathy certainly, she developed, she I linked up with her because she is part of a big Wendy Holloway research project on mothers and babies, and maternal identity in the East End. And Cathy ran the mother- baby observational part. And I was on a different part of that. I hadn't thought about the link with Cambridge, but that is absolutely right. I think there is probably a lot written about that. People But the other person we haven't mentioned at all is Judy, Judy [Bernal] Dunn.

MARTIN: Yes.

JOANNA: Because the Centre also enabled her to start a career.

MARTIN: Indeed, even before I put in that very first grant proposal, when I was already doing what I called my 'pilot observations' in those days, I talked to her about those and she did some even at that time and it was always the plan that when I got the grant that she would come and work part time and that was her, her first employment after having had children. There had been this long gap. You know she began originally at Madingley, maternal behaviour of rats.

JOANNA: Oh, yes.

MARTIN: She had started a PhD, but she didn't finish.

JOANNA: God, there is a lot of unfinished PhD's around.

MARTIN: There were in those days I think.

JOANNA: And maybe that wasn't such a bad thing.

MARTIN: No, she came back as it to join me and was very much a part of the observational study. And then, at a certain point later, Robert Hinde wanted to start human stuff and offered a job to

Judy. She went back. He'd by then become an MRC Unit and had a job for her within that. And she returned to Madingley.

JOANNA: Right, so when did she leave. She was there for quite a long time.

MARTIN: It was 1974.

JOANNA: But my memory of her was that then she wasn't so much a part of the intellectual ferment. I mean, she was obviously a highly competent researcher.

MARTIN: That may be so. It is interesting. She is still involved in the Centre, she is a member of the management committee. She's been involved in that since the time that Susan Golombok took over.

JOANNA: The other thing, I think there is something else to say about Station Road, though, which is apart from Paul Light, it was pretty much female, wasn't it, which was pretty unusual then.

MARTIN: Yes, still true in the Centre. Not so many years ago, I was the sole male for a time. It is something people joke about and people have puzzled about, but I think it's to do with the nature of our work as much as any employment policy.

JOANNA: You are reproducing your family situation.

MARTIN: Well maybe.

JOANNA: I am not serious about that.

MARTIN: At one point I have actually thought that we should selectively try to increase the number of men in the Centre, but yes, it is a very odd position, because I was just in a position that I felt, I hoped would not happen. You know, here was one man, running a Centre that was 99% women.

JOANNA: You were definitely the boss of the Centre. But I don't think we ever talked about it in gender terms at the time.

MARTIN: No. Well, I mean that is just something that I suppose evolved over time. Because I was the one constant feature in the Unit which later became the Centre. I, and particularly after those early phases, I was the person who basically wrote the grant proposals and that was really what made the Centre work. You had to have a flow of money coming in and that was really what I did as you know. After we got formally constituted by the university. They created a post called director and I was appointed to it, in the 90s. I argued for that formal structure in the later years, because there was an issue of what would happen after I retired. And because my chair wasn't an established chair in the university, it was a personal chair. It was perfectly possible that at my retirement the University could just close it all down and not replace me and simply appoint a new lecturer in social psychology. And I wanted to make sure there was a post of director of the Centre. And that involved putting the Centre into the Statutes, and I spent most of the last decade more or less before I retired making sure all of that happened. It did, and you know, so it all worked very smoothly and I retired and they appointed Susan Golombok and it's continued ever since. You could say that in formal terms the Centre did not exist until the 90s. Before that there was only an irregular body which existed in the spaces between the institutions of the University with me as some kind of *de facto* manager or director.

JOANNA: Don't you feel hugely proud of what you have done.

MARTIN: I do, yes, but I'm still very curious to know exactly how it happened. If you'd have asked me in those early days I wonder what I would have said. I was interested in creating some space in

which a group of people could work and I could work. I was interested in encouraging people from a wide diversity of interests and backgrounds to come and work and provide a stimulating environment in which we all could pursue research.

JOANNA: But somehow you had that idea in your head, which given you had done three years of maternal behaviour in hamsters in Madingley. What helped you get to that point. Obviously Robert Hinde was quite an important influence on you.

MARTIN: He was, but his influence really came for me when I was a part 2 zoology student and he and Thorpe had a course on animal behaviour, or it may have been called ethology in those days. And I was very taken by Robert Hinde's lectures, he talked a lot in those days about maternal behaviour. He was doing the rhesus monkey work.

JOANNA: It was all that Harlow stuff, yeah.

MARTIN: It was Harlow etc, and he would discuss attachment, and Bowlby, and the animal behaviour stuff. I was struck by something I thought was very curious. All attachment stuff, the nature of the tie between mother and child etc seemed to be based on animal research and no one seemed to be looking directly at people. They were doing detailed analysis of rhesus monkeys and their young. Day by day Robert and others would sit out there with a check board, hour on end, rain or shine, recording detailed interactions going on, doing their separation experiments. But no one was producing that kind of data in people. And right back then I thought, oh, that is what I want to do. But only after my hamster PhD was I in a position to do anything about it.

JOANNA: But why do you think you felt that?

MARTIN: I was just more interested, I guess, in people than in monkeys.

JOANNA: That is interesting because that is also in a sense what I felt. It is pretty obvious but I wanted to do something in psychology. But it was more about people than black boxes.

MARTIN: It seemed to me even as an undergraduate deeply ironic that, you know, there were these long discussions of attachment and what happened in separation, all based on evidence from monkeys, which was, well, not quite true for all the separation stuff, but it seemed to be really odd, I mean why go to this great length to set up a monkey colony in Cambridge with rhesus monkeys.

JOANNA: But people weren't doing that from the perspective that monkeys could tell you something about humans were they?

MARTIN: Yes, absolutely. I mean Bowlby was drawing on that stuff.

JOANNA: But was Hinde influenced by Bowlby or psychoanalysis?

MARTIN: Well, they initially ... Bowlby started reading some of the ethology and through some of that got to know Robert and they had a lot to do with each other. And they were endless study groups being set up at that time about, attachment and maternal behaviour. But a great deal of the data and studies people were talking about were animal studies. There were beginning to be a few that talked about mothers and babies and observational studies.

JOANNA: There were those Robertson's, those films that are still shown to trainees ...

MARTIN: My idea was that's what I wanted to do as a PhD student. And I was told that you can't do that. You can come and do animal behaviour at Madingley and not do people, we don't do people. Someone said at that point, I'm not sure if it was Robert, but someone said, look, if that is really

what you want to do, you better go and get a medical degree and then come back and then you might be able to do it.

JOANNA: That is ridiculous.

MARTIN: But I settled for hamsters and in retrospect it was a very interesting experience, I learnt a lot about how to do research.

JOANNA: Well it is very parallel to what happened to me as well, because I wanted to do a PhD on something that was more about people.

MARTIN: But you had to settle for short term memory.

JOANNA: On the other hand, like you are saying, it taught me an awful lot about methods if you like. And, certainly, in career terms it was a good start I think.

MARTIN: Well, on the back of the hamsters I got a post-doc, a couple of post-docs in fact, and a college research fellowship. Without that I wouldn't have been in a position to do the preliminary stuff I did in order to get the grant and set up the observational study that I eventually got to do at Station Road.

JOANNA: This is intellectual history really, isn't it?

MARTIN: Well, yes, indeed. Well, that is primarily what the history of the Centre is about, I think.

JOANNA: Sure, absolutely.

MARTIN: But hard to capture now I think because the whole context is so different. You made this point when we talked of what Cambridge was like, what was going on. That kind of ferment. The critical stuff about psychology, and the position of women, social responsibility of scientists and researchers, about politics in general, about education, all of that, and I mean it was a very stimulating environment for doing whatever we were doing.

JOANNA: Absolutely. Yeah.

MARTIN: Well, at this point I should thank you, I think.

JOANNA: Ok, good.

[END]

This edited transcript of our conversation was agreed and approved by Joanna Ryan and Martin Richards for the archive of the Centre for Family Research, 20th July 2016.