

Third Year Sociology Special Topic Research Project

An exploration of the meaning of family and how family is displayed, renegotiated, and reinterpreted in the face of family structural change



NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

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Dedicated to Josie

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Abstract

In today's society it is hard to define what 'family' is. There are so many diverse types of family; nuclear, divorced, remarried, gay/lesbian, childless, one parent. Life has become stressful and the pace of family life has accelerated. As a result some people suffer from family time poverty. I have taken Jane Finch's concept of 'display' and examined how a working class family negotiate and interpret family, in the face of family structural change. This is examined by interpreting how they demonstrate to each other that they belong to this particular family and that this family works. The meaning they attach to family can then be extracted. Qualitative research methods of semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis were used. This required a process of uncovering and discovering themes that run through the raw data which allowed me to interpret same. Another aspect of this research was to explicate from the raw data how social change in Ireland has affected the family which I selected for my research. This research offers a contribution to the already existing knowledge base data on both the concept of 'display' and life history analysis. The themes that emerged from the data were matri-centred kinship, work ethic and education. Findings from the research suggest that although family life has changed over the last century familial relations have continued to be supportive and bonds have been strengthened.

Introduction

The changing nature of family is evident in today's society. All we have to do is look around us and see that the nuclear family is no longer the norm. Different forms of family include: heterosexual and homosexual couples; one parent families; divorce/separated families; widow/widowers. No matter what the family type they have one thing in common; they all display in one form or another that they belong to a family. As social beings humans have a need to belong to a group; whether that is a biological family or group of people they class as family. My research is twofold. Firstly this research will explore the meaning individuals attach to family and how family is renegotiated and reinterpreted when family structural change occurs by using the concept of 'display'. Secondly it will explicate from the life history data themes that show how social change in Ireland on the macro level has affected my selected family of social actors on the micro level.

When I was researching articles for my literature review I came across Jane Finch's journal article on 'display'. It immediately sparked my interest and I wanted to incorporate it into my research project on family history and social change. People have always fascinated me so this research gave me a chance to delve into the lives of three people and explore their attitudes, opinions and the meaning they attach to their actions and experiences with regard to themselves and their family. Because family diversity is becoming more noticeable in Irish society I was interested in how people negotiate and interpret their relationships when change occurs within a family.

The topic of Family in the Irish context will be explored in a comprehensive literature review. Definitions of family will be discussed and how we have moved from viewing family as a structure to viewing family as a something which is fluid with diverse types.

In order to broaden the topic of family and household literature on extended kin will be reviewed. I will interview three cohorts of the one family and through the analysis of their narrative will endeavour to show this concept of 'display' in action.

Each member of my special topics group completed a family tree on their selected family. This allowed us to compile a statistical analysis from the data that was collected (Appendix A). The family, or individuals within the family structure, can be a really good source in which to view the larger social structure. We looked at the change in fertility rates; educational attainment; social mobility; job mobility. An historical overview of the social change in Ireland relevant for my analysis of the themes that emerged from the respondents' narratives will be included in the literature review also. An in depth methodology section will follow that will reflect how the research was carried out on a step by step basis including what obstacles I came up against during this process. The findings will be sorted under two headings; Display and Themes. Under these headings I will set out the emergent themes which were found in the transcripts, analysis of same, my interpretation and the meaning of the findings. I hope to apply the concept of 'display' to the data and contribute to the discussion on this concept.

Literature Review

The Family

The definition of family is varied depending on the context, whether that is from a legal context or a cultural context. Family is most commonly used to describe “people related to one another through blood, marriage or adoption that live together” (Newman 1999:6). The term family is also associated with “real and imagined relationships based on love, commitment, sacrifice and obligation” (p. 5). The latter definition describes the changing familial relationships such as heterosexual and gay/lesbian couples who cohabit. The Irish constitution defines family as “the natural primary and fundamental unit group of society” (Lalor et al. 2009:58). There are a plethora of family forms in Ireland today. Ryan argues that three factors which have influenced the prevailing family type in post Famine Ireland are: the dominant power and influence of the Irish Catholic Church; the comfortable coalition between State and Church; and protectionism prior to 1960. These factors culminated in sustaining the traditional family model (Ryan 1994:214). Since late modernity there has been a shift in personal relationships (Allan 2008). In Ireland there are approximately 1,159,989 households occupied by the nuclear family type and approximately 392,000 occupied by lone parent with child. The remaining 102,219 are occupied by co-habiting couples with or without children (Central Statistics Office 2012:25). The divorce rate in Ireland has grown from 0.4% in 1996 to 2.4% in 2011 (p. 8). There has been a rise of 550% of people who have re-married between 1996 and 2011 (p. 14). The number of female lone parents increased by 29% over the period 2001 to 2011 whereas male lone parents remained relatively stable (Central Statistics Office 2011:34). These figures indicate the diverse

nature of households in Ireland today. From a social constructionist perspective people construct their social and domestic worlds. They interpret their world by the influence of their cultural environment (Crotty 1998). Family has been described as a noun – ‘being’ a family. However from a social constructionist perspective family is constructed and therefore requires action (Allen et al 2011). From a configurational perspective family is not seen in the confines of the traditional nuclear family. This perspective allows for family diversity. From this perspective family is made up of people who share a feeling of familial connectedness and belonging (Hauri 2011). Morgan defines family more by the activities they perform or what he calls ‘doing’ family. Rather than looking at family as a structure, he notes that the activities people perform give meaning to their understanding of family at a particular moment in time (1996). ‘Doing’ a family practice is not only about what is done but also about how it is done (Morgan 2011:10). This sounds similar to what Finch argues. However for her displaying has a reciprocal nature in that the audience is important. It is about making sure that the audience knows that you belong to a certain family. Finch takes ‘family practices’ as a point of departure. It’s an extension of the idea of ‘family practices’ (p.61).

Family is something that changes over time. Some sociologists argue that the family is in decline while others argue that it is in state of transition. I would argue that the nuclear family model has become less dominant. However, that does not indicate family decline, it indicates family diversity. Some families are patri-centred, others are matri-centred. Young and Willmott carried out research over a period of three years in the 1950s on working class families in Bethnal Green, East London (Young and Willmott 1957). They found that the mother was very influential in this type of family. Although their research investigated why people wanted to stay in the location of

Bethnal Green after marriage, their research covered a wide array of family related subjects. One of these subjects was matri-centred households which was very common within that community. There were strong bonds in mother-daughter relationships due to the same commonalities in their lives. According to their research they argue that these bonds were strengthened mainly because of the instability of the economy of the past. Although the economy improved, these strong bonds still existed. Yanagisako prefers to use the term women-centred kinship network which refers to ‘the centrality of women in the web of kinship linking together sets of households’ (1977:208).

So far, this paper has looked at the changing nature of family within a household. I will now look at the extended family and intergenerational family relationships beyond the household, and then move on to how individuals ‘display’ that they are part of that family unit.

Extended Family

Even though marriage has become destabilised and family now takes on diverse forms, it is argued that the “two-generational model of marital and parental roles and stages” are still the primary concept for most people (Allen et al 2011). There are two forms of society, collective cultures and individualist cultures. Ireland fits the individualist culture model where personal freedom, personal identity and autonomy are valued and promoted. It is expected that a child will leave the family home and start an independent life. This is in stark contrast to the collective model which promotes intergenerational dependency (Newman 1999:41-52). With the change in the diversity of families brings the need for people to broaden their perspectives on who they included in their family and how they construct their family. How people talk about their interactions with others can tell a lot about the meaning they give to their relations and where they place

people within their circle of family, extended family, friends and acquaintances. Allen, Blieszner and Roberto (2011) carried out qualitative research on middle aged adults with the intention of examining how people viewed the roles of extended family and fictive kin. They found that there were various ways in which the subjects reinterpreted kin (p. 1156). They also found that those who were seen as fictive kin were held in the same regard as those kin based on legal ties (p. 1172). I will use the narrative from the interviews of three cohorts of an intergenerational family to examine the meaning they attach to family and where they locate people within their family and extended family. Christmas is not usually a topic which is addressed in family research however the celebration of Christmas will be used to help identify this location. By looking at rituals we can gather a rich source of data on people's private and family lives. Who is present at the celebration of Christmas or other family events, can be more important than what happens during the event; the assemblage, those invited to the celebrations, marks out those who belong to the family (Hauri 2011).

Family intergenerational relationship

To avoid confusion I use the term intergenerational rather than multigenerational since the focus is on "the relations between generations" as pointed out by Feliciano Villar (2008) in his article on the nuance between the terms. Twentieth Century Ireland had low marriage rates and high birth rates (McCarthy 1995). In 1950 the marriage rate was 5.4, the birth rate was 21.4 and the death rate was 12.7. In 2012 the marriage rate had dropped to 4.6, birth rate dropped to 15.8 and the death rate has also dropped to 6.3 (2 rates per 1,000 of population) (Central Statistics Office 2012). This shows that people are living longer and fewer children are being born. However the marriage statistic may account for first and second time marriages, since divorce became legal in

Ireland in 1996. The decrease in mortality rates means that there are more grandparents living longer who may act as a support network for their grandchildren and vice versa. Intergenerational support is an action; it involves 'doing' something for someone. Janet Finch (2007) argues that as well as 'doing' family we also 'display' family and argues that this concept of 'display' can be adapted to examine diverse family types.

Displaying family

The concept of 'display' is a relatively new concept. It is derived from the social interactionists framework, but Finch argues that this framework does not fit the concept of 'display' for three reasons. Performance has a major role in social interaction theory and this is not adequate for using the concept of 'display' since firstly, it is concerned with individual identity rather than how we interact. Secondly, the identity of the actor and audience is constantly shifting with the concept of 'display'; unlike the concept of performance which identifies clear boundaries. Thirdly, face-to-face interaction is implied by the concept of performance but this is not always relevant in the concept of 'display' since families can express and bolster family meaning indirectly by the use of photos, technology etc. (Finch 2007:76-77). "Family photographs are the visual representations of bonds, personal relations, interactions and shared emotions that express a social and individual conception of family configuration" (Gomila 2011). The need for 'display' arises from the circumstances when an action needs to be distinguished for everyday family action (Finch 2007:79). Finch encourages others in sociological research to refine and use the concept to study diverse family types. She writes that each individual has a subjective view of 'my family' which changes over time. Her argument is that family is 'displayed' as well as 'done'. 'Doing' family is a practice which moves away from family as a structure. For example, if parents or

siblings fail to stay in touch through the act of communicating with each other, the dynamics of the family cease to exist which leads to the cessation of the family in practice (Dermott and Seymour 2011). Finch argues that ‘display’ has become more relevant in contemporary society because of the diverse nature of family, since we have moved away from the nuclear family as being the dominant form. She defines ‘display’ as:

“the process by which individuals, and groups of individuals, convey to each other and to relevant others that certain of their actions do constitute ‘doing family things’ and thereby confirm that these relations are ‘family’ relationships”
(Finch 2007:73)

An audience is imperative in the concept of ‘display’. It is a process whereby affirmation is needed from the audience, but the message received must be the message that was intended by the action or family practice. ‘Display’ has a reciprocal nature. Dermott and Seymour (2011:13) try to clarify the ambiguities which have been a source of contention between Finch and some of those who have tried to explore this concept. These ambiguities arise from the questions of who represents the ‘relevant other’ and who should the acknowledgement come from. Finch suggests that the relevant other is the person who is experiencing display and not observing it; since the action of ‘display’ is not for the benefit of the observer (Finch 2007). However it has been argued by Dermott and Seymour that sometimes the outside observer or groups outside the family circle may represent the audience to which the display is directed. This might be the case in a scenario where a mother wishes to obtain custody of a child who has been taken into care. The intended audience in that case is the social worker (p. 15).

Identifying someone as being part of a family is not enough, according to Finch, since membership shifts through changing relationship. Rather it is how the character of the relationship evolves or “how individuals talk to each other, act towards each other and the assumptions on which their relationships are conducted” (p. 69).

Three factors are discussed as to why the concept of ‘display’ should be used in research on the practices of contemporary families: “family does not equate to household; the fluidity of families over time; relationship between personal and family identity” (p. 68). The first factor is of greater significance in contemporary society with the rise of diverse family types. With regard to the second factor we see an increase in the mobility of people in and out of relationships and residences blurring the character and range of family relationships. The third factor is related to choice. People have more freedom to choose their friendships and partners. Increasingly people are becoming more comfortable with being open about being gay resulting in ambiguities in who constitutes family. It is argued that ‘display’ is best used when researching the change in identity that comes with changing circumstances (p. 72). Finch goes on to say that display can come in many forms (p. 77). Physical objects such as “keepsakes” from those who have departed or the “giving of gifts” are indicators of the meaning that is associated with a specific relationship. Another form is through stories, tales or description of relationships. She argues that narratives help families “to be understood and situated as part of an accepted repertoire of what ‘family’ means” (p. 77). This concept has been used by a number of sociologists in their research on different aspects of family life. As far as I am aware this concept has not been used in research to examine how people display that they are part of a particular family when they find themselves having to renegotiate and reinterpret their family in the face of family

structural change. By using the event or celebration of Christmas I hope to examine this concept.

Historical overview of social change in Ireland

In order to review the state of the family in Ireland today it is relevant here to look at the social change that has occurred in recent decades with regard to planned programmes and policies. Being a post-colonial society Ireland lagged behind in industrial development compared to its European counterparts. De Valera's economic policy of protectionism of the 1930's which established national self-sufficiency began to be replaced by the 1960s. Then in the early 1970s Ireland joined the European Economic Community (EEC). This was a springboard for Ireland. It went from a rural society to a post-industrial urban society (Kiely 1995). Ireland's case can be viewed through the lens of modernisation theory. Two of the key features of this theory are a) social change is evolutionary b) different societies will meet at the same point even though they may be evolving at different speeds. The meeting point is the point where all societies evolve into modern industrial societies (Share et al 2014:41). Due to Ireland becoming more industrialised there was a move away from rural to urban. In the 1920s only 32.27% lived in towns that were populated with 1,500 or more people. By the 1970s over one third of the population lived in the urban centre of Dublin. These changes had an effect on Irish marriage and fertility patterns. Demographer Brendan Walsh noted that there was an upward trend in people getting married with a downward trend in fertility. First and second child birth rates grew in line with the increased marriage rates. This is known as the baby boom era. By the late 1970s the birth of fourth and subsequent children had fallen by 20% (Brown 2004:244-245). These trends were in line with other industrial societies.

The Commission on the Status of Women had a part to play in feminists giving a voice to Irish women. The Catholic Church endeavoured to keep a firm hold on Irish attitudes at a time when women demanded change in legislation. The marriage bar was in effect which disallowed married women to work in the Civil Service, health boards and local authorities. This changed in 1988 when the Employment Equality Act was enacted (p. 293).

In 1983 the case of *McGee v. The Attorney General* was brought before the Irish Supreme Court which found that married couples had a right to use contraceptives. They were made available though prescription only. In 1985 new legislation was passed which made over the counter contraceptives available to persons over 18 (Girvin 2008).

Ireland has now become a pluralist society. Factors that contributed to this transition were: the move from agrarian to industrialised urban society; the rise of women's movements in Ireland which gave women a platform to argue for women's rights on subjects such as education, employment, childcare, and challenge archaic attitudes of the Church and state; immigration of other races and religions into Ireland during the Celtic Tiger years; the rise of the media industry which gave the Irish public a choice to view other aspects of life and attitudes from around the world. Ireland is no longer a predominantly Catholic nation but a nation that is multicultural, multi-religious, but also caters for the non-religious. This is reflected in the school system.

The Irish educational system was quite unique in that it was run and controlled by the Catholic Church. The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism was set up in 2011 to try to cater for the increasing Irish pluralistic society. Its aim was to change patronage of some primary schools and allow for more diversity (Share, Corcoran, and Conway 2014:153).

Capitalist and neo-liberal values have had a big impact on the educational system. Labaree argues that there are conflicting goals within the educational system. These goals are *democratic equality* which is a public good designed to prepare people for political roles; in other words to make people good citizens. *Social efficiency* which is a public good designed to make productive new workers who will fill jobs in the labour market. *Social mobility*, a private good designed to make people compete for jobs. She argues that this causes 'credential inflation' (1997:43-58). In the Irish context this is evident in the job market. The Leaving Certificate that would have qualified a person to apply for certain positions has now been downgraded in the labour market. Now a person might need an extra qualification such as a Diploma or Degree to qualify for the same position.

Randall Collins argues from a contemporary conflict theory perspective that college diplomas are status symbols and dominant power groups use education as leverage to secure jobs for themselves and their descendents. Also from a conflict theory perspective John Meyer argues that economic trends have not played a part in the expansion of education since it preceded labour market demands. Rather the expansion is due to people believing in a democratic right to education. Pierre Bourdieu views education in terms of cultural capital that can be passed on to future generations (Sadovnik 2007:7).

Lynch and Lodge carried out in depth qualitative research on pupils and teachers in a number of schools to examine the equality agenda. They looked at the regimes of power and how power is exercised over them. This area of study will be relevant for my analysis of the data collected in the interview (2002).

Another aspect of social change is the living arrangements of families over time which is effected by social and demographic trends. Regina Bures suggests that by “understanding who lives with whom and the determinants of those patterns, we can better anticipate potential services needs over the life course” (2009:584). It also allows us to see the changes in the patterns of work, marriage and family.

Methodology

In this section I will discuss the methodology used and the manner in which it was undertaken. This research was guided by a post positivist inductive approach to the biographical perspective. Narrative descriptions enable us to glimpse at human activity as purposeful engagement in the world (Polkinghorne 1995:5). My research is biographical and therefore I selected one intergenerational working-class family to interview comprising of three cohorts; father, daughter and grandchild.

This research has two aspects to it. Firstly I want to identify what particular meaning the different cohorts attach to family, and how family is 'displayed' in the face of family structural change. Secondly I want to explore the themes that emerge from the data relating to social processes and through this establish the contexts and motives that enabled important changes in social life

I used a combination of qualitative methods involving semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. Qualitative analysis requires a process of uncovering and discovering themes that run through the raw data, and interpreting the implication of those themes (O'Leary 2004:195). The pre-existing concept which I am endeavouring to add to in my research is 'display'. As a result the interview schedule was designed to include the topic of Christmas celebrations to facilitate the gathering of relevant information from the respondents. The biographical perspective allows us to see the effects of change temporally and how people negotiate their way through an ever changing societal structure (Miller 2000:74-75). It also allows us to go beyond the exploration of culture and explore how people make sense of their own lives and experiences (O'Leary 2004:115). This is relevant to my research as I also want to

explore generational attitudes, beliefs and opinions through the life histories of the respondents and identify decisions and practices which are at the heart of social change.

Having secured the respondents' willingness to participate in my research, appointments were arranged to carry out the interviews. One of the cohorts arranged for the interview to take place in her parents' home. On my arrival she decided to postpone the interview because she did not feel comfortable, but asked if we could rearrange it. Since it was important to me that the respondents felt at ease and comfortable during the interview process another date and time was set up.

Prior to each interview the respondents were asked to read and sign a Consent Form which set out clearly some ground rules and how the information which they provided would be used (Appendix B). A Life Satisfaction Chart was made available to each respondent and they were asked if they would like to take a minute to map out the high and low points in their lives which might help them to recall significant events. Two respondents declined this invitation whilst the third filled in the chart (Appendix C). Interviews lasted between 45 to 80 minutes.

My initial intention was to use an unstructured interview technique where the respondents would narrate their life stories without any interruption from me. Unfortunately the first respondent found it very difficult to commence the interview with no real direction. As a result I returned a few days later with a set of questions which I hoped would make it easier for the respondent to commence and sustain the interview without changing the goal of this project exponentially. The interview process relies on honesty and openness. However, people also want maintain a level of privacy (O'Leary 2004:162). This may have contributed to first respondent finding it difficult to commence the interview on the first attempt. It may also be the case that he

is elderly and has a lot of years behind him so did not know what direction to take. I found that Respondent 1 constantly deviated from speaking about his family to speaking about random people. I found myself getting somewhat frustrated inside. However, on analysis of the data I found that his deviations enriched the data because it allowed for themes to emerge which might not have emerged otherwise.

I adopted this form of interview technique for the two remaining interviews. Although I went into the interviews with a list of specific questions I wanted the interview to remain non-directive. To facilitate this, once a question was put to a respondent they were allowed to continue speaking uninterrupted until they felt they had exhausted their answer, since discursive answers were the objective. All three of the respondents felt uncomfortable with the silences that followed them speaking. However, I wanted to give them a chance to continue speaking in case they recalled other memories. They usually indicated that they were ready to move on by looking at the notes in my hand, signalling me to ask the next question or by verbally expressing that they were finished. I was aware of my own uncomfortable feelings during the silences and as a result this allowed me to wait and observe.

I took notes immediately after each interview reflecting on what I had observed, my thoughts and any biases that I was aware of. Transcripts were typed up and an analysis programme was used to code and categorise the data using Weft QDA software. To analyse the data further there was a constant movement between my research question, the data and the literature, looking for unexpected findings, interpreting meaning and finally drawing relevant conclusions (O'Leary 2004:195). Pseudonym were given to the respondents but also to those mentioned in the narrative. Some place names were generalised or omitted in order to protect the identity of the respondents also.

The limitations of this research stem from the fact that it involved only one intergenerational family. As a result it could not be generalised to the whole of the working class or indeed the population as a whole. However one objective of this research was to investigate if the concept of 'display' could be applied when examining how people renegotiate and reinterpret family when changes occur in the family structure. In that vein I do feel that the research adds to the body of research on this concept.

Discussion and Findings

To clarify this part of my research I will set out again what will follow.

- Family background of each respondent.
- Displaying family
- Themes
 - Matri-centred kinship
 - Work Ethic
 - Education
- Summary of findings

Brief Family Background on each respondent

Respondent 1: **Michael** was born in 1931 and lived near Christchurch until he was in his teenage years. They lived in a tenement house with relatives living above him and within close proximity to him. He respected his mother as she was hard working, but a tough woman. He remembers always having to work, even before school he was up and out early to collect cinders for the fire to keep the family warm. His father was an alcoholic and Michael did not have anything good to say about him other than to say that he had left Michael's mother and went to live in Manchester for a period of ten years during which time there was no communications. He subsequently died there.

He spoke about his days in school and the corporeal punishment that he was subjected to by the Christian Brothers. His memories of his childhood and teenage years were remembered with fond memories because "you hadn't a care in the world".

He married a girl from Westmeath called Jacinta. They lived in various tenement houses in Dublin City until they got a Corporation house in a Dublin suburb. They had four daughters; Mary, Connie, Breda and Suzanne. Because he had to work hard to acquire money his memories of paying large amounts of money for items/gifts was strong. Being a good provider was very important to him although he does not have many detailed memories of events such as holidays or Christmas. His participation in such events was minimal other than supplying the finance. It was his wife Jacinta who look after the organisation of her family and such events.

He spoke about his brothers and sisters, some of whom emigrated to Britain having been married here. His daughter emigrated to Canada and he spoke of the time he spent on holidays there. For him portraying his masculinity seemed very important to him and this comes through in his values around hard work, protecting and providing for his family.

The loss of his wife of 60 years was devastating for him. She died in 2014.

Respondent 2: **Breda** was born in 1961 in Dublin. She is the third child of Michael and Jacinta and had three siblings. Her eldest sister, Mary, died suddenly in 2007. Up to the age of five she lived in tenement houses in Dublin before moving to a Dublin suburb. In the tenement house they had extended kin living above and below them. She went to school in the Tenters and left having completed 5th year.

Breda lived with her mother and father until she had her first daughter, Deborah, at the age of 24. She got married and moved to a Corporation house in Tallaght where she lived until she emigrated with her husband and daughter to Canada. Her time spent in Canada was a major time of emotional struggle for her. For the first number of years she suffered from depression

and a feeling of isolation was never far from her. She related this to missing her family. She had another two daughters while living there, namely Catherine and Jackie. They returned to Ireland for holidays on a few occasions within the twelve year period of emigration. She missed her mother most of all but her family visited her subsequently; her parents on numerous occasions.

In 2000 Breda returned home and moved into her parent's house for a few months. They rented for a year or so and then bought their own house in Kildare. Breda works full time as an Accounts Manager. As previously stated her sister Mary died in 2007 and another sister, Connie, got divorced about twenty years ago and subsequently remarried. She now has a second family. Breda feels that the dynamics have changed somewhat in her relationships with these families. Her relationship with her brother-in-law has changed tremendously since the death of her sister Mary. However she feels that her sister Connie's alcoholism has had a greater impact on the family than her divorce had. Breda's mother died last year and she is still deeply affected by her death.

Respondent 3: [Deborah](#) was born in 1985 in Ireland. She is the oldest of Breda's three daughters. When she was three years old her parents emigrated to Canada. Most of her childhood and early teenage years were spent living there. She had memories of her time there, holidays, Christmases, school etc. Similar to Breda, she spoke of feeling isolated in Canada. There was an awareness of not having her family around her while she lived there.

The transition of moving from school to school was difficult for her and also the transition of moving back to Ireland at the age of sixteen. Although her time in the Irish Secondary school system was not tainted with memories of physical punishment she spoke of it being akin to a prison. She completed her leaving certificate and went on to college for one year to study

Business. Soon after leaving college she secured a position as a Bookers Clerk and has remained in fulltime employment.

Her son, Eoin, was born in 2006. His birth was a life changing event for her. It gave her a new perspective on her life and made her reflect and appreciate what her parents had done for her; her respect for them grew. Deborah bought her own house a few years ago which was a high point in her life. Her relationships with her mother and grandmother seem to be the most significant relationships she has experienced (apart from her son). She is still grieving the loss of her grandmother.

Displaying Family

When looking at how people ‘display’ family Finch argues that there is a need to focus on two things: a) ‘social interaction’ and b) ‘the processes whereby social meanings are conveyed’ (Finch 2007:73). In my interviews I asked some probing questions about who the Respondents celebrated Christmas with, both in the past and more recently, to see who was considered part of the family at different moments in time because the nature of family is fluid. It would also allow me to examine how family members reinterpret and renegotiate family after a change in family structure.

Respondent 1, Michael, had very little memories of Christmas. As a child he remembered getting a drum on consecutive years and the gifts that his sisters received. The only other memory he had was of getting a lot of ham for his dinner. His comment was

there wasn't as much excitement about it (Christmas) back then

Then he was asked to talk about a typical Christmas when his children were small. Again he could only remember the type of toys his children received.

Respondent 2 – The same questions were put to Breda. Her answers were more detailed. She spoke of her childhood memories of Christmas:

after we got up and played with the presents we went over to Drimnagh (her granny and aunt Ruth's house) and brought our toys over there for them to see and I think we were the only ones who went over there. Well maybe P.J. was there earlier on, I don't know. We'd be over there all afternoon and into the night, maybe come home about eleven o'clock.

She spoke of having her mother and father come to her house on Christmas Day and it was important to her that she created memories for her children of them with their grandparents. Creating memories was also a priority for Deborah. Christmas day with her family and parents became a tradition for her. This was a continuation of the tradition that her parents nurtured. They developed other Christmas Day traditions also:

After the dinner we'd have a game of cards and we might play a few board games and there would be murder going on. Cheating, "who's cheating"? There was always cheating going on. But it was good crack now. Me ma use to have me cracking up because she'd be putting cards down for me da to pick up and give them to her on the sly. It'd be all hours in the morning when we'd be going to bed. She'd be enjoying it and they always stayed over. Sometimes she wouldn't go home for two or three days.

Respondent 3 – The same questions were put to Deborah. Her childhood Christmas memories took place in Canada, so the context is changed. She speaks of feeling isolated at Christmas when they first moved to Canada because they were on their own with no family around them.

The third or fourth Christmas over there we got to know the Wynn's and we'd spend Christmas in their house or they'd come to ours. That was kind of family then over there. That was an Irish connection with Irish society that we had over there [...]. All their kids were there and they were like our cousins because we didn't have any over there. So they were the family over there then.

Although they were not biological family they were considered family by her for the time she lived in Canada. This is in contrast to Breda's interview; she referred to the Wynn family only in passing. Further along in the interview Deborah elaborates on Christmas Day when they returned to Ireland:

When we moved home we would spend it in me nanny Jacinta's in the morning and when me nanny Fran was still alive we all went down to her house. Me da has four brothers and five sisters and we would all be down there. So me cousin would be there too and the uncles would be going around giving everyone a tenner, so you'd be leaving there with over €100. That was completely different to what we'd been used to in Canada. It was great getting to be with your own family and your cousins and having the laugh and everybody been squished into the little sitting room.

The gesture of the uncles giving each child ‘a tenner’ is significant. It represents and displays that they are part of this family. Finch argues that displaying has a reciprocal nature in that the audience is important (Finch 2007:61). This reciprocal gesture is between family members. The audience in this case is the receiver of the money but also the other children and adults present.

The comment “it was great to be with your own family” suggests that there is a difference in her perception between fictive and legal or extended kin. However this difference may come from hindsight. Whilst in Canada, Deborah’s family and the Wynn family celebrated Christmas in a similar fashion to their families at home. Presents were exchanged, food was eaten and games were played. It might be that as she grew older and experienced Christmas celebrations with her own family in Ireland that she could make the distinction. Deborah’s experience reflects to some degree the research of Allen, Blieszner and Roberto who found that people in their study adapted a normative ideology of kinship to meet their needs when they had no family of their own. This is a process of kinship reinterpretation. They found that fictive kin were seen on equal par to that of legal kin due to their current life circumstances (2011:1173).

Each respondent referred to their most recent Christmas. Jacinta: wife, mother and grandmother of the respondents had died eleven months previously. It was the first Christmas without her which led to restructuring within the family. The context and dynamics changed in that it was held in Michael's house. Two of his remaining daughters were present along with their children, partners and one grandchild.

This year we had Christmas here. Breda and Suzanne organised it. They brought over the food and we had dinner here. Breda, Gerry and Jackie stayed here Christmas eve but Breda and Gerry were sick so they stayed in bed until the afternoon. They had a bug or something and Deborah was sick around in her house as well ... but Catherine went around for Eoin and he stayed with us for the day. It was the first Christmas without Jacinta and I found it hard. It wasn't the same without her. They were all giving out the presents and stuff, and the dinner was lovely, but Jacinta wasn't here. She usually organised everything, the presents, the puddings ... God she made lovely puddings. (Respondent 1)

This narrative tells us who was included in the family celebration of Christmas. The giving of gifts to one another is also a sign of displaying that they belong to this family because this action conveys to the other that it has been specially selected for them and as a result conveys a message about their relationship (Finch 2007:77).

The organisation of this event took social interaction between members of the family, namely Breda, Suzanne and Deborah (Deborah contributed but was sick on Christmas Day). This may have been undertaken by phone call, email or face-to-face interaction. It is interaction that re-establishes relationships on a continuous basis (Finch 2007:74). This celebration seemed to have an implicit meaning attached to it; displaying to each other that they were part of this family and will continue to be united even though the death of

Jacinta has caused family structural change. Although the family are part of different households they class themselves as family.

Hauri found that people go to a number of gatherings over the Christmas period (2011). However while celebrating the main event; most celebrate it as a nuclear family. Relatives who most often attended the main Christmas celebration are grandparents. All those in attendance are from the family of orientation or members of the direct lineage in their family life. These reach across households. Great importance is placed on intergenerational relationships and the making of memories is important for the young children (Hauri 2011:52-53). This is consistent with the findings of this part of my research. However as stated above, depending on circumstance people can adapt a normative ideology of kinship.

During my interview with Michael he commented on and showed me some pictures of his wife. There were a number of pictures of her of all sizes, some with candles burning in front of them. Some pictures of his children and his grandchildren were visible also. The array of photographs represented moments of his family history; displaying, as Finch points out, that 'these are my family relationships and they work' (2007:73).

The concept of 'display' works well when exploring how people behave and act towards each other when they have a need to reassure themselves that they are a family and that their family still works. It can help to highlight how people negotiate their way through this process of family restructuring.

Having completed the interview process and transcribed same I identified some recurring themes emerging from the data. These themes included female centred kinship network or matri-centred kinship, work ethic and education. The following are my findings having analysed the data thematically.

Matri-centred kinship

The work of Young and Willmott on working class families is relevant to my findings (1957). Up until the 1960s the first and second respondents lived in the heart of Dublin with some of their extended kin living in the same tenement house or close by. Suburbs were built to cater for the overcrowding in Dublin City dwellings. Families started to populate the outskirts of the city. This relocation does not seem to have hindered the support that they received from mothers/mother-in-law or extended family. This support is a major factor that contributes to the maintenance of a matri-centred family. Female support is very important and acknowledged across the three generations. There is a lot of respect for the mothers of the respondents. However love is not vocalised, it is performed through the giving of gifts and supportive action within this family; this is evident in the actions that are performed and the way they speak about their mothers.

Respondent 1 – Michael

you were getting up in the morning at 7 o'clock to pick up cinders, down to the Bank of Ireland in Dame Street and all over the place. The cinders were for the fire for me mother. God she used to always have a great fire burning.

Michael narrates another story further into the interview:

While we were out Ruth asked me if I had £500.00 because she wanted to buy the house off the Corporation. Herself and me mother were getting it for £600. A few weeks later we went into the Corporation and paid for it. I wanted me mother to have the house. None of the others put any money to it. I told Ruth I didn't want the money back. I wanted me mother to have the house.

He emphasises twice that he wanted his mother to have the house. He wanted her to have the security of owning her own property. This may have been his way of showing her that he cared for and respected what she had done for his family.

Respondent 2 and 3

The same thread runs through both these narratives; the story of grandmothers and mothers helping out with the children. Breda had memories of her grandmother minding her and her siblings when she was a child. She spoke of her own mother helping her when she had her first child. Deborah had similar memories of her grandmother minding her while her mother went to work. They both felt they wanted to pay back in some way for the support that they had received from their mothers. Deborah says:

Eoin was a major life change. When I needed support I turned to Breda (Mam). She was a major support [...] Me mam actually took 6 months off work and looked after him with me. I couldn't ask for anything better; great support.

However, it was not only supporting daughters but also siblings and extended kin. Breda spoke of her mother, Jacinta, looking after the children of her sister when she died. Also Breda's sister, Suzanne, had her niece live with her for a time because of problems related to her sister Connie's alcoholism. Although family members are scattered throughout the country they are willing to go out of their way to support each other. For this family support, care and nurture are the characteristics of what it means to be a family.

Another factor in matri-centred kinship is the preferred interaction with the wife's relatives. Young and Willmott (1957) suggest that working-class women usually stay in contact with all their kin whereas working-class men are less likely to. They also suggest that because these husbands are obliged to interact with their wife's relatives, they neglect

their own. Anspach and Rosenberg's article on working-class matricentricity suggests that if a husband does not interact with his own relatives that the lack of contact usually has nothing to do with the wife and vice versa (1972). My research reflects Anspach and Rosenberg's findings on this aspect of kinship.

All of the respondents engaged with their own relatives to a certain degree. However, what was interesting was that the second respondent spoke of being close to her cousins Denis and Masie. She contributes this to the fact that her mother, Jacinta, had taken care of them when her sister died. As a result Denis and Maise visited Jacinta quite often. It is through these interactions that these bonds and links are continued.

Although there is some research on women-centred kinship networks that have been undertaken by sociologist on different kinships groups in some parts of the world, it is a topic that has been under examined in Irish research.

Work ethic

There are explicit and implicit narratives relating to hard work throughout the data. It is an attribute that Michael respects. In the first part of his narrative he refers to his mother being a hard worker. He also explains that he started working at an early age:

When you got walking you had to get out and work, you didn't sit around on your arse.

His father was undependable.

me mother always worked hard because me father was an alcoholic. He worked but drank a lot of his wages so she couldn't depend on him.

His mother had to work since there was no other way for her to get money to feed her eleven children. However Michael does not classify childminding and household work as 'work'.

The girls didn't do much looked after the younger kids.

If his mother worked during the day a lot of the childminding and housework chores would have been designated to the girls. Children in this family left school early.

You had to leave school at fourteen. Nobody had money then to go to Technical school because you had to pay fees.

With eleven children in the household there would have been a lot of chores to carry out. Michael's attitude is typical of the attitude of that period. During this period women were undervalued in numerous aspects of their lives.

He sees himself as a provider. He often refers to things that he bought; paying out a large sum of money for a pram is one example.

But em ... it was like when we went for the pram for Mary. I paid £32.00 for that pram. Jacinta said she'd love that one for her. Your man in shop couldn't believe I was paying cash. But loads of people wanted to bring Mary out for a walk so as they could push the pram. It was a real good pram.

He seems proud that he could provide a nice pram and that people acknowledged his ability as good provider by wanting to take his daughter out on walks in this lavish pram. Later he returns to the story of the pram and proceeds to tell how he had given it to his sister after much deliberation.

Well I was coming up Road a couple of weeks later and there I sees the kids with the pram and with bags of turf in it. Well when I think of what I paid £32.00 for and to see the way it ended up. There wasn't a scratch on it. I cleaned it and polished it before I brought it over to me mother's. I was often sorry because I would have sooner given it to someone who would have respected it and had better use for it.

On the surface it seems that Michael was appalled by the lack of respect shown to the pram which was still in good condition. But it is more likely the case that he was appalled at his sister's lack of respect and recognition for the hard work that had enabled him to earn enough money to purchase it.

The second and third respondents confirmed that they appreciated the help and support that had been given to them and they were prepared to reciprocate it. Although they have fulltime jobs; supporting their parents, siblings and extended family in the form of emotional or physical support was something which they were prepared to do without question.

Respondent 2 makes reference to her sister's hard work and that her brother-in-law lacked this trait.

And then of course all the drama with selling the house that our Mary worked hard for. I mean she was the one who worked all her life; he sat on his arse.

This narrative might suggest that she respected her sister for working hard and providing shelter for her family. Conversely, not making an effort to work on the part of her brother-in-law was unacceptable and frowned upon.

Although the first respondent is 84 years old and retired from manual labour a long time he is still continuing his role as provider. Two of his grandchildren are currently living with him. Deborah comments:

Jackie's staying with him now and Catherine moved in a few weeks ago as well because she got a job in town, so that's a bit of company for him. They can cook the dinner and clean the house for him now and earn their keep (laugh).

The last sentence was said in a jovial manner but there seems to be an implied message, which might be; don't expect a free ride, you have to work for what you get. Being a good provider in whatever shape that may take and working hard are interwoven in their meaning of family. Work is not limited to work in the labour market, it also comes in the guise of support and maintenance of family bonds.

Education

Schooling in the 1930s was more about teaching discipline and basic literacy than about gaining qualifications. Inequality in the educational system was far from the minds of students of that era. The following passage from Respondent 1 reflects a normal school day in the 1930s where corporal punishment was used to keep the children disciplined.

I remember when I was in school and I was after given this fella a dig and the Headmaster caught me. He called me up to the office and said "hold out your hand". He gave me three on each hand and I was leaving the office and he says "where are you going, get across that seat", he gave me six on me arse with a cane. Six on me arse, the ones I had on me hands I could sweat them out but me poor arse. To make it worse, there was a cane factory next door, so they never ran out of canes. I couldn't sit down. [...] Doherty was an auld bastard and he was always

eating chocolate. He's come down near you. If you done that (flinch your hand) he'd hit you across the knuckles then hit you on the hand. Bang ... The auld bastard. They were vicious. The only one, Galvin, he'd give you a wack alright but he wasn't like the others.

This passage shows the brutality that was rife in schools at that period. This brutality continued for a number of decades. Respondent 2 started school in the 1960s and she also commented on treatment that she felt was humiliating to her.

Then I remember going to school, being in low babies and I had Sr., she was a nasty old bitch. I remember I put me hand up to go to the toilet and she says 'no your not going to the toilet yet'. I put me hand up again. She says "no your not going to the toilet yet, we're doing something". She had this scrawny auld face with the glasses and I put me hand up again and she said "no your not going to the toilet, I told you we're doing something". And with that I went to the toilet on the seat. Drowned me self. She came over and pulled me out of the seat and put me up into the corner everybody was looking at me and says "look what she did. Now she can get and clean that". But like she left me sitting there in me wet clothes. She was a bitch that one. I hated her. Like everybody has some bad memories of a convent you might as well say. And even going through all the years, even if you had teachers that weren't nuns, some of them were bastards.

She had other memories of corporal punishment in secondary school which she narrated.

I remember in the Seco – what was her name. She had glasses. Oh. Mrs. Ridgeway, awh the auld cow. She was the Vice Principle as well. If you were late going into the hall in the morning, Jesus you got a wack off her.

It is obvious from these passages that her memories of school were not fond memories. Corporal punishment was abolished in Irish schools in February 1982 (Daly 2009). This is evident in the interview with Respondent 3. Her memories of her time in an Irish school are completely different but none the less unpleasant.

That school was okay as schools go I suppose. You never got a minute though. If you weren't wearing all the uniform they used to give out to you. I felt the pressure though when it came to exams. They were always telling you how important these exams were for your future. You couldn't move but someone was on your back about something whether that was your behaviour, your homework or something. Like you could be walking down the hall and a teacher would pull you up for being too loud or ask you where you're going. Felt like prison sometimes but that's the way most schools are I think.

This is consistent with the findings of Lynch & Lodge (2002). Part of their research focused on student voices around the issues of power and resistance in Irish schools. Some of the student issues that emerge from the research were a lack of respect; school as the site of pressure, control, surveillance and humiliation.

Another point that I wish to highlight from the third Respondent's narrative is the exam pressure issue. As stated in the literature review the Leaving Certificate qualification that would have qualified a person to apply for certain positions has now been downgraded in the labour market putting extreme pressure on students to perform well in exams.

It seems that although corporal punishment was abolished the school environment is still a place of conflict between teacher and pupil. However this attitude to school cannot be generalized to all Irish students nor can these issues be generalised to all Irish school environments. These narratives on schooling experiences relate to the experience of three

working-class family members attending working-class schools. It gives a good indication however as to why some Irish students still find school a difficult place to navigate and why the overall attitude of students to school has not changed drastically over the past number of decades.

Summary

The research conducted in this project aimed at exploring the concept of 'display' in a family who had experienced family structural change and how they renegotiate and reinterpret who belong to their family. The narratives of the respondents helped to provide a picture into the private worlds of three individuals who have their own perspective on their lives, decisions and experiences. Due to time commitments I was unable to explore the use of this concept in other areas of their family life such as divorce or addiction. These were subjects that were covered in the interviews. The concept of 'display' on divorced couples has been researched. However, as far as I am aware it has not been used to examine families of active addicts. There has been some research on gamblers in recovery and how they re-establish their place within a family (Dermott and Seymour 2011) however no research using the concept of 'display' has been undertaken on families who are dealing with active addiction which can have a rippling effect throughout the family and change the very fabric of family life. Restructuring is an ongoing, regular process when a family is touched by addiction. There are many things families do in order to survive the behaviour of the addict. People constantly have to renegotiate their relationships in this situation. It might be a very interesting topic of research. However, there are a plethora of scenarios in which the concept of 'display' could be used.

The second part of this research explored, through data analysis, how social change in Ireland affected my selected family of social actors in their everyday lives. Themes emerged from the data that allowed me to explore the aspects of matri-centred kin networks, work ethic and education. Other themes emerged also. For example, the drop in fertility levels; this was evident even within this intergenerational family; Michael having ten siblings, Breda four and Deborah three. Deborah herself has only one child. Both

women are working full time and own their own house which is an indication of social mobility. The age of school leavers has increased, which is evident from the narratives but also from the statistical analysis carried out by my special topics group. The average age of school leavers in 1920-1939 was 14 years for females and 15 years for males. By 1980 onwards it was 21 years for females and 20 years for males. Neo-liberal policies have contributed to educators putting increased pressure on pupils to do well and obtain good grade in order to advance to third level education. The narratives also highlighted the changes in living arrangements; the move from tenement housing where extended kin were living within the same house or nearby, to suburbia. This relates to urbanisation and Housing Policy initiatives. The biographical perspective allows us to see the effects of the macro social processes on the micro private lives of people. In this research it also highlights the fluidity of family and the life course of these individuals.

Although fertility rates have dropped, resulting in smaller family size, my analysis is that family bonds may have strengthened. A contributing factor may be that people are living longer and are prepared to invest more into their familial relationships. The fluctuation in the economy, job insecurity, high costs of childcare and a plethora of other social factors together with personal factors may also be a contributing factor as to why people are investing more time in their familial relationships.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Statistical Analysis created from Family History Data

Appendix B

| Consent Form | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being interviewed and recorded (audio) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Use of the information I provide for this project only | | |
| In understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Please choose one of the following two options:</i> | | |
| I would like my real name used in the above | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I would not like my real name to be used in the above | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Use of the information I provide beyond this project | | |
| I agree for the data I provide to be archived at Maynooth University | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the | | |

Yes No

information as requested in this form

I understand that other genuine researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

So we can use the information you provide legally

I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials relation to this project to

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------|-------|
| ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Name of participant | Signature | Date |

| | | |
|--------------|-----------|-------|
| ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Sandra Dunne | Signature | Date |

Project contact details:

Address: -----

Phone No: -----

Email: -----

Appendix C

Life Satisfaction Chart

Appendix D

Transcripts of three interviews

Transcript of interview with Respondent 1 - Michael

Interviewer: Start at the beginning and tell me about your life and your family.

Respondent: Well we lived near Christchurch. Me mother was great but me father was an auld so and so. He'd go out drinking all the bloody time. The auld fella fought in 1916 and 1922 and me mother ran guns for Cumann na mBan. I have 7 sisters, 3 brothers and myself. I didn't really know me grandparents. I met me grandfather one time but I was told by a cousin of mine that he was after giving Dolores a few slaps, a hiding like, up outside Christchurch one day and some man interfered. The man was telling him to stop. Well your man was supposed to have punched me granddad; he fell and hit his head off the curb and died. Dolores told her that. Dolores lived over us in the tenement. I wasn't fond of her. She had a bit of a bad streak in her. She was nosey and a blabbermouth. She'd always be hanging out the window seeing who was coming and going. All of my relatives lived in or around town (Dublin City) in tenements. We had two bedrooms so we were doing well. They were on different floors. But me mother always worked hard because me father was an alcoholic. He worked but drank a lot of his wages so she couldn't depend on him.

When you got walking you had to get out and work, you didn't sit around on your arse. You see my mother used to sell the sticks so if you weren't breaking sticks, you were getting up in the morning at 7 o'clock to pick up cinders, down to the Bank of Ireland in Dame Street and all over the place. The cinders were for the fire for me mother. God she used to always have a great fire burning. And the cinders were huge, not like the coal that came in later on; these where huge, like she got a good fire out of them.

The girls didn't do much, looked after the younger kids. They went out sewing when they left school. Lora worked in Spitficks and Nora worked in ... Nora made evening dresses and wedding dresses; every type of dress. Molly done nothing though, she thought she was some kind of lady, she wouldn't soil her hands, then she got married. Charlie, my youngest brother, was about three years old when she got married. She was in a flat in the Tenters, she got a house in Galtymore Road, and died there. I think she was 65. Nora died at 91. I think Lora was about 70 and Bernie died on the 28th February, 1968, she was young when she died. The auld fella died three months after her. 28th May. He died in England, Manchester.

Interviewer: How old where you when your father left your mother?

Resp: I was married when he left. I went up to the house one day (mother's house) and she said to me "the auld fella's gone". I said "is he, where is he gone". She said "he's gone over to England". He just left and went off to England. He was in Manchester during the war, working up there, and he went back up that way. There was two auld ones lived in a big house, and the house was on its own, it was still like it was during the war, dilapidated. We never got word from him. Not until he died. His brother came over, Pat. He says "Rita (his mother), I've a bit of bad news for you". "What's that Pat", she says. "Michael is dead". "Is he", she said. See that's all she said. "Is he". So me and Ruth went over. Lora was in the house and said "don't bring him home here" (to mother's house), see that's the type Lora was. A few years later me self, Jacinta and Ruth went out one night. While we were out Ruth asked me if I had £500.00 because she wanted to buy the house off the Corporation. Herself and me mother were getting it for £600. A few weeks later we went into the Corporation and

paid for it. I wanted me mother to have the house. None of the others put any money to it. I told Ruth I didn't want the money back. I wanted me mother to have the house.

Talking about Lora ... sure she nearly broke up Jacinta and I before our wedding. She said to me "oh I wouldn't be with them country ones, they'd live in your ear" and all this kind of thing. She upset me and I went down to Westmeath and I was nearly not going to get married. Then I said to myself hump it, we're together so long, there's no one going to destroy us and that was that. She reminded me of Dolores in ways. To me it was an evil bloody thing in her. She was a targer. Lord have mercy on her. Like Jim was here during the week when he brought over them things (file), he says to me "Michael, I've looked everywhere and I've tried around, there's no photographs of my mother's wedding". I says "no there isn't". He says "Paul doesn't know". Paul is the eldest you see, she had Paul before she got married. It was more of a ceremony. No big wedding. She got a room in Longford Street and she went from Longford Street to Drimnagh when he settled and that was her home.

It was like Mrs. Seers from up the road. She was telling me one day that she was going out with her husband Jim. And she says one night they went out and had sex then about two months later she told him she was pregnant. They got married and then she tells him a while after that she wasn't pregnant. He called her all the f's and b's under the sun and, he said "I'll make your life hell. When I want you you'd better get up them stairs". She has Alzheimer's now, but she use to sell on the Hill. I liked Moire. She was a hard worker. She used to travel up to Newry to collect stuff from the houses to sell on the Hill. She had good houses that she used to get the stuff out of. She always had great stuff. I remember one time she got a coat and she gave it to Mary-Ann for Moire, so where up around the Christmas time, and Aine - they were only after painting the wall there at Langers on the corner of New Market Street and New Market - and she said "Oh Moire let's see that coat on you, stand up there and she put Moire up against the wall that had been painted, ah she could be a bitch.

But I remember one time P.J. (his brother), this is a time when she (Aine - sister in law) was all right. And he bought a van out of Denny's but was time to sell it on. It had good tyres on it and I needed tyres for my van because the tyres weren't the best and there was some fella coming up to buy it, so she kept nicks at the gate in the yard and I switched the four tyres and the wheels; the whole lot. I think I put a bit of muck over them but your man still bought the van. She said she wouldn't tell P.J. and she mustn't have because P.J. would have said it to me. That was the only good thing she done for me.

Nora was in the WAF's and went off to live in Birmingham. Mona got married to Harry and went off too. Her downfall was running the pub (alcoholism). The same as Connie him bringing her home cheap drink from abroad and your man next door giving her in drink. I'd said "I'll throw him out". She said "no you won't, this is my house". So I couldn't touch him.

Siobhan and Liam went to live in London then. Of course Liam died over there and Harry died over there. There all bleeding dying and leaving me here. I suppose you can't kill a bad thing (laughs).

Interviewer: Tell me about when you got married and started your own family.

Resp: Well we lived in York Street. We got married down in Westmeath. We lived in York Street for a good few year. Then we got a house up on Rossmore. in Ballyfermot We didn't like it, only stayed for a couple of weeks and then we moved to a tenement in the Tenters. P.J. and Aine lived over us. I was sorry I ever went there because that bastard used to say terrible things to Jacinta. She didn't tell me then but when she did tell me she told me not to do or say anything to him. She said it's a long road for him yet. And I tell you he's getting it now. He was living in a caravan somewhere, in some friend's back garden. I don't know where he is now. He went into hospital for something and he had to convalesce for a week. Coleen (his sister) said you can stay for one week only and that's all she let him stay for.

But when we moved up here my youngest was just a little one and you used to say to Jacinta - Jacinta would say "are you getting up" and you'd say "no, we'll stay in the bed". She used to tell me that. When she started school, you'd go down with the other three and off to school.

I remember when I was in school and I was after given this fella a dig and the head master caught me. He called me up to the office and said hold out your hand. He gave me three on each had and I was leaving the office and he says "where are you going, get across that seat", he gave me six on me arse with a cane. Six on me arse, the ones I had on me hands I could sweat them out but me poor arse. To make it worse, there was a cane factory next door, so they never ran out of canes. I couldn't sit down. One auld fella, Doherty was his name, he became Head Master when O'Brien left the school. Doherty was an auld bastard and he was always eating chocolate. He's come down near you. If you done that (flinch your hand) he's hit you across the knuckles then hit you on the hand. Bang ... The auld bastard. They were vicious. The only one, Galvin, he'd give you a wack alright but he wasn't like the others.

Then if I told me mother. I must have done something or bumped off sometime and I said "oh". She said "what's that, let me see that, what did you do"? I'd say "nothing". Bang ... you'd get another belt off her. She'd say "there's another one". We used to be crucified. We were like Christ on the cross; you didn't know where the next belt was coming from. You had to leave school at fourteen. Nobody had money then to go to Technical school because you had to pay fees. The first job that I had was on a horse and cart. I used to collect rubbish, sticks, sawdust or anything that you make you a few bob. Me brother P.J. owned the horse. They were great times though. You hadn't a care in the world.

Moire got married, Nora got married. Mona got married. They didn't have big weddings then. The only one I knew who had a big wedding was Moire, and that was in the Square (Derby Square where they lived). Jacinta and meself got married down in Westmeath and had the reception in The Lane (family home). Ah I got fed up and I said "ah come on let's get back up to Dublin". We were driving home and P.J. and Annie were driving down to Westmeath. They got the time wrong.

I always remember coming in, I was after been over in New Market with Teddy, we were after doing a gearbox. Well when I came home the trousers were walking on their own. Full of fleas the place was. He used to do beds and the travellers used to pick up auld mattresses from anywhere and bring them down to him. He'd just tease them and then sell them on. He didn't throw any powder on them or anything. The place was walking. It never bothered the travellers. They must have been used to the fleas. They had a hard life though then. There were no gypsy weddings or anything like it. Like there'd be eight or nine of them living in a caravan at the side of a road somewhere.

It's like when Karen and Mary went down to Alice. Karen wanted to go to the toilet and Alice opened the back door and said "you have acres of land to choose from". Karen didn't know there was a toilet in the house. Alice was only messing, the toilet was right beside the back door. Alice, she was gas. She used to do terrible things Alice. (laugh).

Interviewer: Have you any memories of Christmas when you were a child?

Resp: I remember getting a drum and sticks every year; every single year for I don't know how many years. You'd be drrrumm, drrrumm , drrrumm on the drum. The girls usually got a doll or me auld fella would make them a wooden pram or something. I remember we got a lot of ham for the dinner on Christmas day though. There'd be loads of ham. But it wasn't like now. Wasn't as much excitement about it back then.

Interviewer: Tell me about a typical Christmas when your children were small?

Resp: Jesus, I can't remember. I know they used to come down and get their dolls and whatever presents were there from Santa, prams and things. And I remember buying my youngest a doll. I paid nearly a week's wages for it. When I came home you took the doll out of the cardboard box and started playing with the box. Mary says "mam, can I have it". So she gave it to Mary and Mary gave the youngest daughter something else. It had gold earrings on it. Bella was its name. I'll always remember that.

But em ... it was like when we went for the pram for Mary. I paid £32.00 for that pram. Jacinta said she'd love that one for her. Your man in shop couldn't believe I was paying cash. But loads of people wanted to bring Mary out for a walk so as they could push the pram. It was a real good pram.

This year we had Christmas here. Breda and Suzanne organised it. They brought over the food and we had dinner here. Breda, Gerry and Jackie stayed here Christmas eve but Breda and Gerry were sick so they stayed in bed until the afternoon. They had a bug or something and Deborah was sick around in her house as well but Catherine went around for Eoin and he stayed with us for the day. It was the first Christmas without Jacinta and I found it hard. It wasn't the same without her. They were all giving out the presents and stuff and the dinner was lovely, but Jacinta wasn't here. She usually organised everything, the presents, the puddings. God she made lovely puddings (laughs). Breda made the puddings this year with Jacinta's recipe ... she didn't do a bad job either. Sara came up that weekend and helped her make them.

Interviewer: Tell me about any major events that were life changing for you such as marriage, birth of children, house purchase, and emigration?
Describe some events?

Resp: Well Mary was the first (child to be born). I was grand having her. We'd go out walking with her, the two of us, my wife and I. Then she starts getting bigger and bigger. When we finished with the pram after my youngest child, we left it up in my mother's. It was in the bedroom for years with a rug thrown over it. She (mother) was always at me to give it down to Lora. I used to say "no", because I knew what Lora was like. I remember Lora was up in me mothers one day and one of the kids went missing, I don't know which one it was (13 kids). They were out searching for him everywhere ... up and down Drimnagh, Inchicore; all over asking people if they'd seen this child. I think it was me

mother who said “did you try the pram” ? ... and there he was curled up in a ball in the pram. So I said to my wife Jacinta “me mother keeps giving out that we should give Lora the pram for one of the kids. Jacinta said “but she has none of them that needs a pram”, because they could all walk at that stage. Anyway she said “ah give it to her, keep her quiet”. Well I was coming up Road a couple of weeks later and there I sees the kids with the pram and with bags of turf in it. Well when I think of what I paid £32.00 for and to see the way it ended up. There wasn’t a scratch on it. I cleaned it and polished it before I brought it over to me mother’s. I was often sorry because I would have sooner given it to someone who would have respected it and had better use for it. Ah sure they didn’t give a shite.

Interviewer: When your daughter, Breda, emigrated to Canada because of the recession in 1980’s, how did you feel about that?

Resp: Ah I didn’t mind her going. When I went over to visit them her life seemed to be alright. I liked it over there. I’d go back tomorrow. Well not now since my wife died. Years ago I would have. I liked the area she was in and it is a beautiful country. If your going on the road, Jez you’d want be like Flash Gordon. All the cars are zumm zumm past you. I got into Breda’s car. It was a big shaggin Pontiac or something and me never having driven on the opposite side of the road before. Ah James’s Street it was as wide as this room and sure Jesus I was going down one way streets and everything. Well when we got back to the apartment and pulled into the underground garage, Jacinta got out of the car and kissed the ground. Ah says I “Pope Paul again” (laugh).

Ah Jacinta would never get into a car with me again over there, not that I every tried to drive again over there; Holy James’s Street. Zumm Zumm Zumm Zumm; that all you could hear as the cars would pass you by on the road. Ah good luck.

I’d go to Canada any day rather than the States.

The only other thing I can remember is when Jacinta and the kids used to go down to Rush. I never went down to stay but I remember one time Jacinta leaving me sunbathing on the chair and I got burnt. She left me another time down in Butlins. I remember coming off some ride and I slumped down outside a restaurant. I remember Jacinta laughing at me. They went in to have your grub and I was still sitting there feeling sick. They just left me there. I’d been slagging a women beforehand because she looked drunk, she was staggering, but she had just come off that ride. Jacinta told me that’s what I get for slagging other people. I hated heights but Jacinta loved them. She’d get on anything. She was up for anything if she was going to get a laugh out of it.

Interviewer: Has there been any divorces in your family or an event that has changed the family structure in some way and describe how that has affected relationships within the family?

Resp: Well Connie got divorced from Dermot Shields about twenty years ago. I was delighted. I was always threatening to go down and give him a hiding. He bugged me. He was an ignorant pig. But he took the four kids while Connie went swanning off to Britain, so you can’t fault him for that. We didn’t see the kids much then. When Connie came back and built the house Wexford with Brian Murphy they’d go down and stay with them; so I’d see a bit of them then; but only because me self and Jacinta would go down to visit. They’re all grown up now. Where’s Lar? Germany, and Gerry’s in Wales. Before Jacinta died I saw them;

they called into the house when they were over, but I hadn't seen them for years before that. They're looking well. Of course I saw them all at Jacinta's funeral. You know that was the first time the whole seven of them were together in years and what does Connie do, she goes off and sits where she knew she'd get drink. I don't know ... only for Brian Murphy, the other three would be in care or something. It's a shame what she's done to them kids. Only for me youngest daughter Sara would be lost. She brought her up to live with her for a while and she's always on the phone to her. And me other daughter, Breda, she comes up and stays with her sometimes too and she stays here with me as well. She's a great kid.

I always look over there, you see that photograph, the third one on the left. You see her with the glass and she's I always laugh at that the way she is in it. And you see that other one there where she's in the red jumper, the last one in the centre. Where was that taken?

Interviewer: It looks like Bunratty Castle. You know the little cottages that surround the castle.

Resp: You know I was here and I couldn't remember. We were here and I said it to her one time "where was that love", she told me then but I still couldn't remember. That one there was taken on the night of her 60th in Mary's house. Her plate is down there, the one that Gerry made for her. "Nana, Happy 60th" and there's another one down in the shed. It's hanging up. I was saying to me self "I must take that down and bring it up". I think Lar made that one for her. I must bring it up because it will probably get broken or smashed down there.

Interviewer: Well we'll leave it there for the minute. If there's anything that I need to clarify I will get back to you, if that is okay?

Resp: Yes, that's fine.

Transcript of Interview with Respondent 2 - Breda

Interviewer: Start at the beginning and tell me about your life and your family.

Respondent: I remember living in Chambers Street and getting bathed in the bath in front of the fire. I remember what the rooms were like. There was only the two rooms, the kitchen and the sitting room. It was a tenement house. The bedroom looked huge, but I was only a child. There were two double beds and two big wardrobes. Ma and Da slept in one bed and Mary, Connie and me self, slept in the other bed. The kitchen table was in the middle of the floor with the seats around it. Upstairs was Aine's, down stairs was Audrey Pepper. Me self and Patrick McNulty used to sit on the stairs and he used to buy me a bar of chocolate. He'd share the bar of chocolate. He thought he was me boyfriend (laughs). The toilet was out the back of the house. I remember my sister Suzanne in the pram. Like there was a pub across the road. The sun shun over that side of the street in the afternoons so I used to be over there on that side minding her in the pram.

I remember me mother used to dress up and brought us for walks. She'd be dressed up in the 60's clothes; you know the dresses and the white stilettos. She was always dressed up to the 9's when she was going out. Really glam and she'd be only going for a walk to the park or something. If you had any chocolate on your face she'd get the hanky out of the bag and the smell of cigarettes off the hanky and she'd spit on it and wipe the chocolate off by rubbing your face.

There were loads of smells in Chambers Street. Across from us there was O'Keeffe's the knackers and that was the slaughterhouse and the smell of it. Then you had the smell of Jacobs; but the smell of them both together, Jezus.

Then we moved up to a Dublin suburb. I remember when we moved up to there, there was nothing. I remember me da brought us up and there were two windows in the parlour, we were jumping out the windows, running in through the hall then back out the windows playing chasing because we'd never been able to do that before, we weren't on the ground floor in Chambers Street.

Then I remember going to school, being in low babies and I had Sr., she was a nasty old bitch. I remember I put me hand up to go to the toilet and she says 'no your not going to the toilet yet'. I put me hand up again. She says 'no your not going to the toilet yet, we're doing

something like'. She had this scrawny auld face with the glasses and I put me hand up again and she said 'no your not going to the toilet, I told you we're doing something. And with that I went to the toilet in the seat. Drowned me self. She came over and pulled me out of the seat and put me up into the corner and everybody was looking at me and says 'look what she did. Now she can get and clean that'. But like she left me sitting there in me wet clothes. She was a bitch that one. I hated her. Like everybody has some bad memories of a convent you might as well say. And even going through all the years, even if you had teachers that weren't nuns, some of them were bastards.

I remember in the Seco – what was her name. She had glasses. Oh. Mrs. Ridgeway, awh the auld cow. She was the Vice Principle as well. If you were late going into the hall in the morning, Jesus you got a wack off her. She would throw me out of the class half the time. I didn't like her. That's the way it was then. I suppose, I think the teachers are more afraid of the students now than the students are of the teachers. Like they're able to answer the teachers back now, we didn't have any of that, you'd be in big trouble if you done that. And then in National School going up to Big Knickers office. Jezus – you came out with your hand red. And of course, Anne Maher out of Suzanne's class, she was always up there; every day (laugh). We'd be cracking up laughing.

And I remember walking home, we'd be fighting to get up and get the paper to deliver it to the priest in the Nicholas of Myra in Francis Street, getting paid with the cigarettes and the matches. A players or a woodbine; Jezus ... chewing the tobacco (laughs). That's the way it was. Well that's me schooling.

Interviewer: What memories do you have of your grandparents or extended kin?

Respondent: Well I remember my granny. I remember the time when she had Suzanne in her arms up at the back window. She was saying 'you go on down and play' and I says 'no, your alright, I'll stay here with her'. She said 'she's not going to fall over'. I thought she was going to fall out the window. Ruth shouted up 'she won't leave her alone'. She won't come down. She won't leave her alone'. So, me granny came down with me. God, she used to grab you by the leg. Jezus you couldn't move. She had a grip like a vice grips.

Like we used to go over Christmas day with their presents and we'd get presents off them. We were the only ones that got easter eggs off them. The other cousins didn't. We used to have all the Easter Eggs stacked up in the parlour because we weren't allowed touch them during lent. Then come Easter we'd devour them. She always had the loaf bread, the

turnover and she'd cut huge slices with a half pound of butter on one half and another half on the other half of the slice of bread. And she'd make us drink a cup of milk. You hated milk but you used to have to drink it. You'd only get lemonade at Christmas but that would be about it. You had to drink milk all the time.

Interviewer: Have you got any memories of your grandfathers?

Resp: Yeah, when we went down (to Westmeath), he was alive (mother's father). They'd (parents) bring a packets of cigarettes down to him. 40 Players it was that they used to bring down and we'd be fighting to see whose turn it was to bring him in the cigarettes. That's the only vague memory of him that I have; whereas I'd have more memories of me granny (father's mother). Yeah we would have been in our 20's when she died. I remember going over to the house when me self and Gerry got married. We went over in the wedding car. She was sitting in the parlour looking out the window. She couldn't really walk at the time. She was sitting there. I remember when I had Deborah she wanted to come over to me mother's on the bus to see Deborah. She says to Ruth "I'm going over to see her. I'm going down to get the bus over". So Ruth had to ring me da to go over and pick her up. And she says "no I'm going on the bus". She was determined to walk; she was out the door walking down the road and me da had to fly over and get her and bring her over to the house to see Deborah. She was in her late 80's then. I didn't know me granny was there. When I was coming out of the hospital Gerry says "there's a surprise over in the house for you". And I says "what is it?" And he says "you'll see". When I went in there was me Granny sitting there, you know the seat at the fire. "Let me see her" she says so I had to give her over to her. But I remember that and I remember when we got married and going up to see her in Drimnagh. Ah she was delighted. "Why didn't you tell me you were coming, why didn't you tell me?" And I says "I just decided", you know. Ruth says "if I'd have known you were coming I would have had a bottle of Champagne. And I says "I know, ya, you would alright" (Laugh). I says "I should have brought one over for you"; you know that kind of a way.

But I would have had more contact with me mother's side of the family. Like with Denis and Masie. Like as he does say, "we're brothers and sisters" and she says "ah we're sisters", and Samantha says "we're sisters". I do say "extended sisters and a brother", do ya know. It's the same with Jimmy Kearns. Like I'd have more with Jimmy and Rossa that I would have with any of the Desmonds ... and with Sean and Holly down in Westmeath and then Moira down in Leitrim; all on me ma's side. When we were younger I suppose we would have been with the Desmonds down in Rush, like Colette and Nancy and when Charlie lived over in I used to babysit them but as I got older I didn't see much of them. But it would have been more contact with Nancy, Colette, Patsy, those Desmonds. Not much contact with the Brannigans. Like we spent our summers with Colette, Nancy and Patsy ... but saying all that I'd have more in common with Denis. I think it was that he used to drop up the chocolate, the

dairy box. I used to hate going up to their house with the stockings for them and the nightdress for Masie. I used to dread it every Christmas having to go up there. I didn't mind going up if Ollie or Denis or Masie was there but no I hated going up and Jimmy Devlin would be sitting there slobbering over his dinner. No teeth in or anything. Times were different then though. Nobody had money really. Me mother just got them the stockings and nightdress. But there again when me Aunt Sarah died I remember living up there for a couple of weeks, maybe up to six weeks, or whatever, because me mother went up to look after Denis, Masie, Danny and Ollie. We were sleeping in the front room. I think that's why me mother had such a good connection with them because her mother died when she was young as well. And then she came up from Westmeath and was living with Sarah. Sarah used to come up to Chambers Street, when we lived there; Sarah was in Liffey Street which wasn't far away. So they could call down to each other. Then Sarah moved up to Park and then we moved up, so we were just up the road. I'd say it was difficult for them when (step mother) came along. And I think it was difficult for me ma as well because her sister was only a year dead when John Devlin remarried again. So that was kind of hard on her. Like me mother was so young and she was looking after us and looking after them (Denis, Masie, Danny and Ollie) as well. So tried to do her best for them and I think that's why Denis had so much contact with me ma over that. Because when he was going to London at 13, me mother was saying "don't go, don't go" and he say "I am going". Me mother gave him a fiver which was a lot of money then when he was going on the boat. That was about 50 years ago. He thought an awful lot of me mother like, and Masie. I suppose like Masie always had to mind the step brothers. Like she didn't have much freedom or childhood for herself. I used to have a laugh with Denis. When I used to go down the Brown Derby I used to meet himself and Samantha down there and we'd have a drink. So I didn't hang out with him, only at certain times in me life, it was throughout me life though, him and Masie. And then when I used to live in Tallaght he used to deliver me coal. Even when I went to Canada I used to talk to him and Samantha on the phone.

Yeah, when I moved to Canada I was very lonely and depressed or whatever, I could pick the phone up and ring him at any time in the morning. And the same with me ma, and they could ring me. Especially when we had a few drinks in us (laughs). Me ma, Samantha and Masie used to ring from outside Chasers on their way home from the pub. They used to get the phone card and they'd ring me and I'd be roarin crying. I'd be saying to the kids "I should be at home with them". Then they'd run out of money and a few minutes later they'd ring back. They'd be telling me about what was going on and sometimes there'd be a fight outside Chasers and I'd be saying "oh God I could be there looking at that". Make me more depressed than I was in Canada ... missing the craic. I used to get very depressed after they'd ring because the homesickness would get worse and Gerry used to get a lot of abuse off me. I blamed him for bringing me over to Canada, but not only that I didn't want to leave my sister on her own. Plus as well I didn't have anyone over there. I didn't have any friends for a long time, probably for the first three or four years anyway. I was really, really down at that time. When we moved into the house I kind of lifted a little bit and I made a few friends then. But

then after another few years I was kinda getting depressed again because I was still not being fulfilled. I missed me mother too much. And that's what it was. It was me mother that I wanted. And that's when I decided. ... When I came home for the four months that time ... the kids, they were crying, they didn't want to go back. That made my decision, I decided I wasn't going to stay in Canada, I'm going home. Yeah I used to get very depressed. Maybe if I'd have had a job, I think. Maybe I wouldn't have been so depressed, I would have been active. But I think I had PMS as well at the time and I didn't realise it because I used to bang me head off the wall and nearly lock me self in the bathroom nearly all the time and then I used to try and walk it off. I used to walk and walk and walk. I went down to a size 6. I think it was a way of controlling something. Everything else seemed to be out of my control but I could control my weight, which was something. I could say "well I'm going to get down to that weight" and I did. I didn't go anywhere about the depression or take any tablets. I just tried to work it out myself and doing what I thought was the right thing but it wasn't helping Gerry. He was getting it all from me (anger). I was blaming it all on him, he brought me over there whereas he shouldn't have. But there again, you know, I came back and I'm happy now that I up here (Kildare) because this is where I wanted.

When we came back and where looking for a house, Gerry didn't want to come out this far; he wanted to stay around Palmerstown, like local. Then I said we'd look in Naas where our Mary lived and then Yvonne was after putting a deposit on one of the houses over there and I said "well we'll go as far as there, have a look and see". We only came out of Naas, about 2 minutes outside Naas and he said "no this is too far". I couldn't believe it, he turned back. I said nothing. I sat in the car and then I said "I can't believe what your saying. We're only after coming back from Canada and your telling me this is too far". So I left it at that. The next week I said I am going up there and I am going to have a look. So we came up and went over to a area past Naas and when we were passing here I said "there, that's where I want to live". I came in and had a look and I said "this is the house I want". We got back in the car and he said "It's too far". So we went back to me mothers. I started roaring crying and I said "he won't buy me the house I want". And me mother said "buy her the house. She's after been through enough over in Canada for the past twelve years. She went over there for you. Can you not buy her that house". So the following week we came back down to Kildare and there were only the two houses left and I still wanted it, so we got it then. Then he got the job down the road which was grand and handy for him. We got Jackie into the school down at our Mary's so she sort of lived with Mary during the week. Our Mary would bring her to school and collect her and bring her home at the weekends. Mary looked after her, and it was great for our Mary because our Mary had nothing to do at the time. Yeah and that's that.

Interviewer: Tell me about Christmas, how it was celebrated and how it's now celebrated by your family, and if you had any family traditions.

Resp: Well the Christmases in me ma's were good. Stephen's Day she'd have a party and loads of their friends and family would come over. We'd be up dancing and they'd be drinking till all hours of the morning. But Christmas morning, like we used to be asked "where do you want Santa to deliver your toys? Like you could have them put at the end of your bed or down in the sitting room. And on Christmas Eve the fire was lit in the bedroom. Great memories, it created a real Christmas atmosphere. After we got up and played with the presents we went over to Drimnagh (Granny's house) and brought our toys over there for them to see and I think we were the only ones who went over there. Well maybe P.J. was there earlier on, I don't know. We'd be over there all afternoon and into the night, maybe come home about eleven o'clock.

I remember when we got older and everybody was gone out of the house. My youngest sister Suzanne was gone, Connie was married, Mary was married. So there was only me, me Ma and me Da. Like I'd go out Christmas Eve drinking and then Christmas morning you'd get up, cook the breakfast, have the breakfast and I probably went back to bed 'cause I'd be suffering with a hangover. Then that night they'd go over to Drimnagh. It wasn't until I got married and I was living up in Tallaght ... well the first year we went to me mothers and then the second year we went to Gerry's mothers. The year after that then I had me mother up for dinner; so for a couple I years I had them up before I went to Canada. Then when I came back and had me own house I had them up again. I liked doing it because it was for me and for them because she looked after Deborah for me for years. It was me repaying her and my appreciation of what she'd done for me. I wanted to give back and my kids can remember having them up and having all this so they have memories of Christmas with their grandparents. And they can remember when they were there for Christmas in Canada and then going up to Gwen and Charlie's. Like me mother would remember going up there on New Year's Eve, having a big spread with about 30 people there, you know. But it was always family orientated for me, like Christmas was. Like that's all I can tell you about that except the food and the drink was flying (laughs).

Christmas morning we'd just sit in there opening presents and talking, still in my nightgown. I'd be in that until two minutes before me mother would be heading up the road. I'd be still in it pj's and nightgown. We always had our breakfast; we made breakfast and sat down to eat it together. And then some Christmas mornings there might be a big row here between Gerry and the other three so it wasn't always happy camping. It would all depend on what humour Gerry and the others were in. If you didn't smile at Gerry he's be giving it loads. You'd have to give him a warning, three strikes and you're out (laugh). It wasn't always happy families.

After the dinner we'd have a game of cards and we might play a few board games and there would be murder going on. Cheating, "who's cheating"? There was always cheating going

on. But it was good crack now. Me ma use to have me cracking up because she'd be putting cards down for me da to pick up and give them to her on the sly. It'd be all hours in the morning when we'd be going to bed. She'd be enjoying it and they always stayed over. Sometimes she wouldn't go home for two or three days. We used to go up to Mile Mill, she loved it up there. I think it reminded her of Kerrigan's in Westmeath when Kathy and Pdraig were still alive. And of course we went up there when our Mary died. We ended up there the night of her funeral. So, it was the memories that she had up there also. She loved the atmosphere of the place and we always had great craic and she got to know a few of the characters up there.

This year was different though with me ma gone. We tried to make the best of the day but we were all feeling it I think. She used to be the life and soul of the place. I miss her. I know she was really going through the mill for the past few years and I wouldn't wish her back for that reason, but I miss even bringing her up to the hospital or just being able to ring her to see how she is. I miss just spending time with her.

Interviewer: Has there been any divorces in your family or an event that has changed the family structure in some way and describe how that has affected relationships within the family?

Resp: Well when Connie separated from Dermot (first husband) I was delighted because I told her not to marry him a couple of weeks before her wedding. And of course she went ahead and married him. And what happened? Four kids and he did the dirt on her. She's then left with four kids but what annoyed me with Connie was that when she was going to England, she asked Dermot to take two of them. You cannot do that to your kids. You cannot separate them and ask someone to choose between them. How can you decide who your going to take; that was terrible. But Dermot says, "no, your not taking any of them, I'm taking the four of them". You couldn't blame him. Like, she wasn't sick at the time (alcoholism), she wasn't at all sick, but she only thought of herself, again. She's very selfish. Now in the situation that she is in now, she's only to blame. It's her doing, nobody else's but it's not fair on her three youngest kids. The older four are grown up because Dermot sorted them out and now Brian Murphy is looking after the youngest three. Like with Philly and Con coming down to live with Connie in Wexford in the late years when Sean was about two or three, they were 15/16 at the time, they were old enough. But I don't know how the younger kids are not more fuck up than what they are because of her drinking. I feel sorry for her but I don't feel sorry for her, do you know what I mean. At the end of the day she fucked up her kids lives ... selfish. I mean you took Sara up to live with you to try and give her a bit of normality and get away from that one.

Now when Mary died I was distraught. I was devastated. It took me a year and a half to get over our Mary. Because it she was only down the road. I know a couple of weeks beforehand, no I'd say the year before she died I wouldn't talk to her because, I remember the day I came in to pick Deborah up and I walked into the sitting room on my tippy toes because I knew she's be going mad because I had stilettos on, and I was standing over the baby and I hears "Breda Desmond, get out of that sitting room with them shoes on." I says "okay". I walked into the kitchen and said "Deborah, out, come on, we're going" and I said "we'll never be in here again" and that was the last time I walked into her house until the week before she went to Lanzarote with me ma. Three weeks before she died. She told me ma that she was doing up her kitchen and she gave me ma her sink. So me ma asked Gerry to go and pick up the sink and I went down with him. That was the Thursday, I think, yeah they were going on the Saturday. Gerry asked me if I wanted to go down and I said "yeah I'll go down". So I went down and she was talking then I was leaving and I say's "look enjoy your holiday". Then the following week when she came back from Lanzarote she was coming to the house with me mother and I saw her then and when she was going I said "I'll see you, I'll talk to you during the week." When she was gone I said to me ma that she didn't look well. All that week I was saying to me self "I'll ring her and see if she wants to go out for a drink on Friday" and on the Thursday I said "no, I have to ring her" because we generally went down to Haydens or Lawlors for a drink. But then on the Saturday morning we got the phone call to say she was in hospital. But I always say to me self "I should have rang her. Don't be leaving things on the long finger". That's a big regret I have. I think it was the shock of Mary. I think I was more upset when Mary died than when me mother died. I was relieved when me ma died because of the suffering she went through and it's only afterwards you realise how much you miss her. But I know it was a happy release for her and she's not in any more pain. But I still want to see her, I want to hear her. And I still want to go out for a drink with her. I do be talking to her, especially when I'm driving, as if she's there with me. I say a prayer to her and Mary nearly every night. Where it took me a year and a half to get over our Mary, I think it will take me longer to get over me ma. Even there today and last night I was crying. I could go a week without crying and then all of a sudden it will hit me. Even in work, I'll have to run out to the toilet. It hits you at the strangest times and in the strangest places. I keep saying to myself "what is wrong with you, she's happy".

Now the relationship with Mary's kids has changed an awful lot because he has. Well first of all it was grand at the beginning, just after she died because Yvonne was there all the time. Like we were even saying to Tony, it's time you got a job or a women. He was doing their heads in. First of all he lost his wife, his soul mate. But I remember Janet (Tony's sister) turned around and says "he won't last long on his own. He'll have someone else soon". So I thought it would have been within two or three years of Mary dying and it was. I was right. Gerry saw him loads of times with different women going around Naas. First of all he lost his relationship with Stephen and the row down in Lawler's because of what he called Caroline. Now he shouldn't have called Caroline that in the first place because they were after helping them out by converting the garage into a bedroom for them. But there were

issues that Stephen had anyway with his father. But our Mary loved Stephen to bits. I think she was more afraid of Tony and she was in the middle of it so she went along with what Tony wanted which was to cut all ties with Stephen ... but she loved all her kids. She tried to do her best for them. Yvonne and Mary were really tight. And she ran around everywhere trying to get as much help as she could for Callum. And she wasn't the snob that everybody thinks she was. She just wanted better for her kids. But with Tony and his kids now ... he is going to need a lot of turning around, especially now that he's heading into his latter years, heading towards kicking the bucket, he'd want to say sorry to his son in Westmeath and his grandkids.

My relationship with Yvonne, Caroline and Callum hasn't really changed though. I wouldn't see them all that much but I would have some bond with them. I don't know whether it's because I used to torment them and used to have little tea parties with them when I lived in me mother's. Caroline reminds me of Catherine ... dramatic. Yeah she's Catherine all over. No I'd still be on the phone to Yvonne and still go to Christenings or family celebrations ... except Tony's wedding. That was a no no for me. I mean he shouldn't have brought his fiancé down to meet us the night of me mother's mass. I mean she was only a month dead and he brings her to introduce her to me da and the rest of us. That just wasn't on. I mean I know Mary is dead six years but it was her mother's mass and he's bringing his fiancé down to meet us all for the first time and we didn't even know he was engaged until that night and then he tells us he's getting married in December. That was a lot to take in in one night, especially when we were still so upset about losing me mother. I don't know what he was thinking. I've no problem with him finding someone else and being happy but he should have had a bit more sense than to do what he did when he did it. And then of course all the drama with selling the house that our Mary worked hard for. I mean she was the one who worked all her life; he sat on his arse. He didn't even give the kids any of the money he got on the insurance. Like they were good policies that our Mary had. That money went on putting an extension of your women's house and the wedding. Anyway, I'll say no more about him. The relationship I have with Callum now is grand. We can slag each other. And then Richie ... when Richie came along he was like my son. Especially when I was living in Palmerstown and my younger sister would be up all the time, and he used to stay with me. I'd be showing him how to ride a bike. But then she had him all the time to herself so when he'd come up to me he wouldn't sleep and I'd end up having to sleep on the couch with him for him to go asleep.

But like they have their lives as well, they're all grown up and have kids of their own ... it's up to them if they want to contact you and talk to you. But I do think they should be calling in to me da or ringing him a bit more. Like Caroline was home for Tony's wedding she had to pass by his house to get to Tony's and she never called in ... Yvonne collected her from the airport so they should have made the effort. I know she was only home for the wedding

but still, she hadn't seen him since me mother died ... it wouldn't have killed them to drop in and see how he is.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. If I need to clarify something would it be okay to get back to you?

Respondent: Yeah, sure.

Transcript of interview with Respondent 3 - Deborah

Interviewer: Start at the beginning and tell me about your life and your family.

Respondent: I can remember when I was small and living in Tallaght and then moving over to Canada. We lived in an apartment and then Catherine came along. Me nana and granda coming over to visit us there when she was, Catherine was born. I have a memory of them coming over and me Grandad driving the car over there. I actually remember that and I just remember when we got out of the car in the underground back at the apartment Nana Jacinta got out and kissed the ground because he had been driving on the wrong side of the road. What else do I remember from when they came over? Em.

It was a small apartment. Then I remember when my aunt Suzanne came. We had only bought the house when she came over. Jackie would have been born then. I can remember when we went up to Whistler and stuff with her. I remember in the car going up and we went to different places. Before she came over to us Karen actually came over to us when we still lived in the apartment before Jackie was born. I was very sick. I caught pneumonia; I remember being in the bed and Karen coming in. It was very snowy at the time when she came over. After Suzanne came it would have been my communion time and me other nana, Norma and Claire came over. Jackie would have been around one at that stage and I made me communion when they came over. We went to Disneyland. I remember coming home to Ireland as well. We came home for Christmas. I use to watch the Muppets on the TV in the apartment. I remember that as well. What else? Em ...

Em. I remember getting into trouble in school one time because I wasn't pronouncing my h's right. H. They say H over there. I remember Breda (Mother) coming over and giving out to the teacher about it. I noticed that I spoke a bit different from the other kids, and I knew I was from Ireland and would tell people that's where I was from, over there.

Me ma drilled it in to me that I was Irish. I had to translate for me ma. I was the translator. No one could understand her or the way she spoke, especially when we were in McDonalds or out shopping or something.

Me Da use to work late shifts over there. Like night time and me ma would have to collect him in the morning while I'd still be in bed. I remember being very isolated since we had no cousins over there. We were the only ones out of the ones we hung around with who didn't have a nana or granddad, they all did. They had cousins, aunties, uncles. I had none of that over there. All you had was your friends.

Interviewer: When you came home, how was that transition?

Respondent: That was harder coming home because I was older, I was 14. I didn't really want to come home; your at that stage when you have friends in your life. When we moved home it was harder, because we moved home before me Dad. He had to stay over in Canada and pack up the house. That was for three or four months. I didn't want to integrate, I thought like that I was Americanized, kind of because I'd been living in Canada since I was a kid and at that stage we hadn't been home in about four years. It took about a year or two for me to come around. We were living in me Nana's. There was me self, me mam, Catherine and Jackie in the room; killings every night; Michael and Jacinta in the back room. Catherine used to get shoved into the cot bed. Breda and Jackie were in the double and I had me own

bed. For a while we didn't have the cot bed, we only had big bean bags and Catherine had to sleep on them. (Laughs). We went to school in Ballyfermot. Me Da came home then and we got the house in Palmerstown. I was adjusting then. I was glad I was home and I felt then that we had family. Because I was able to go up and see my aunts, me nanny and granda, me cousins and ... There was more people that you felt you could rely on because you can rely on your family more so than people you might consider your family but who are not really family.

I was put into me cousin Linda's class. They told me (the school) that I had a cousin in the school and I said "who". I'd forgotten about her, and I don't know how because we went to see Peter Andre with her the last time I was home. You know your man that sing *Mysterious Girl*.

Then that was grand. Because we had been home so many times, I had friends here on both me nanny's roads. I had their numbers so I could ring them and say "look, I'm home". Then when I went into Linda's class I became friends with her friends and then eventually made me own friends as well. It was a lot harder for Catherine to integrate into the way of life here.

I really noticed the difference in things when I came back; the difference in cars, and types of music, and fashion. Completely different from what I was used to. The way of life was completely different. Like it was very family orientated here. And I could see how the Irish do really depend on their family. And to be around their family more than what you would see in Canada. And like that as well there are a lot of immigrants over there who probably don't have their family over there. If you got into a social thing like a football club then I suppose that was the way to meet people and integrate into that society. Because Ireland is a lot smaller and the community is smaller, everyone seems to know everyone more and we're connected more; more of a community over here than what it was over there.

It seemed a lot safer over here when we came home, because everyone knew each other. Like everyone living in each other's pockets, it was safer over here; like you didn't know anybody around the corner over there.

After a few years of living here I really noticed the changes. We were still in the punt, everything was cheap enough. I couldn't believe the difference. If you went to the store in Canada you wouldn't get much out of a dollar but if you went here with a pound you'd get a lot more, like a bottle of coke, a packet of crisps and a bar. But then when the euro came I kind of noticed the change then, I was about 16 then. The gangs were coming in a bit more over here then whereas I would have noticed that in Canada. Society was changing over here. It was becoming more gangster and the criminals were getting more media coverage.

We then moved out to Kildare. Me ma and da bought a house out there. I actually felt I was part of the travelling community (laughs). Because when I was in Canada I started school when I was in the apartment. I lasted two years in that school then I was four years in the next school and made friends there. Went to secondary for one year then moved to another one for one year. Then we moved home and I went to school in one place for one year and then finished off in Palmerstown school. I felt that that was kind of hard, all the moving around. You'd make friends in the school then have to move and you'd be the new kid again, starting all over again. That was the hard part, feeling that your the new person. Make friends again, make friends again and make friends again. For f.k sake (laughs). Having to explain yourself over, and over and over again. You get fed up with it. So luckily when we

moved to Kildare I think me mam realised that I just wasn't able to move schools anymore so she left me in the school in Palmerstown. That school was okay as schools go I suppose. You never got a minute though. If you weren't wearing all the uniform they used to give out to you. I felt the pressure though when it came to exams. They were always telling you how important these exams were for your future. You couldn't move but someone was on your back about something whether that was your behaviour, your homework or something. Like you could be walking down the hall and a teacher would pull you up for being too loud or ask you where you're going. Felt like prison sometimes but that's the way most schools are I think. When I was living in nana's we'd have to walk home through the Gales and we'd have a bit of laugh then. Or when we had money we'd go to the garage at lunch time and get a roll. We'd sit outside slagging all the boy racers in their pimped up cars (laughs).

Anyway after we moved to Kildare I used to come up and down with me ma. After a while I made two friends in Kildare, well I knew them from so I didn't feel too bad then. I was lucky to a certain extent because nearly every time we move somewhere I met someone I knew. But I did feel isolated before that because I was up there, I couldn't see me friends, I couldn't drive. I had school and it was a 45 minute drive to where my friends were so I couldn't go out during the week.

I went to college for a year after school and I got me self a job and I got a car so then I had more freedom around. Deborah was motoring (Laughs). So living there wasn't too bad then. I had met Dessie in the meantime and he had a car. He was very good. He used to pick me up outside the job in Ballyfermot and drive me home to Kildare and then have to drive back home. But sometimes he would stay over or I'd stay in his ma's. So that was that and then Eoin (son) came along.

Eoin was a major life change. When I needed support I turned to Breda (Mam). She was a major support. Me friends were quite supportive too. Gerry (Dad) became supportive. He got over himself. Well he had no choice. Well I was quite young; I had only turned 20 when I had Eoin. I was still living in Mam's. I felt quite comfortable quite quick, I adjusted to it easily and had great support from me mother and father and family. Family really helped me out with the likes of cots and prams and what you need for a baby, and they thought me how to look after him. Me mam actually took 6 months off work and looked after him with me. I couldn't ask for anything better; great support.

Eoin being born completely changed my life. You can't just think of yourself anymore. And then it also makes you really understand what your mother and father do for you. You don't realise that until you have your own children. You get great gratitude and appreciate then for them. You develop a greater appreciation and you don't take them for granted so much. It makes you really really reflect and see, gosh they really done a lot and they always had your best interests at heart, even though I might not have agreed with it at the time or whatever. But you really see what they've done for you. And then your priorities change. You become a lot more selfless, having to think of someone else all the time; women more so than fellas.

Interviewer: What was Christmas like in Canada for you?

Respondent: Well you would have really felt it (isolation) at Christmas. The first few Christmases we would have spent them on our own. Well the first Christmas. ... the second Christmas I think we came home (Ireland). The third or fourth Christmas over there we got to know the Wynns and we'd spend Christmas in their house or they'd come to ours. That was kind of family then over there. That was an Irish connection with Irish society that we

had over there. I remember they use to organise barbeque in the park and there'd be about 10 different families, all Irish. They'd have a full day barbeque, drinks, football, picnics and games for the kids. I remember that. Eventually me mam and dad made quite a few friends and that made it a bit easier in the later few years.

We came home in 2000 but for that New Years we went to Gwen and Charlie's. All their kids were there and they were like our cousins because we didn't have any over there. So they were the family over there then.

Interviewer: Are there any other highs or lows that you can remember?

Respondent: Yeah, after I had Eoin I moved out on my own and I learned how to be independent on your own with a baby, having a job, paying your bills, paying your own way. Then I started to save and bought me own house. Breda took me and Eoin back for 6 months to help me save more money and me and Eoin were able to buy our own house. So that was a real high point for me, getting on the property ladder. You just don't know yourself when you have your own place. Now I want a kitchen and an extension ... (laughs). I'm over the house now. I want to sell it, go to Vegas and splurge all me money, I'm sick of the house (laughs).

A major low point was last year when I lost me grandmother. That was devastating for everybody. We were so close so I was really devastated. I lived with her for a good majority of me life, like when I was born and before I went to Canada, when we moved back and she only lives around the corner. When me ma moved up to Kildare I stayed with me nana most nights when I was going to school. So we were very close. That was very hard; a very low point. When she was in hospital for the last week before she died me self and me ma slept in her room over night. We stayed with her.

Now I'm turning 30 and have to worry about me wrinkles. That's devastating as well. I know I said that in the same breath as I say me grandmother dying was devastating but it really is (laughs). I'll be getting the botox and the filler over the next ten years. Inject me with what you can (laughs).

Interviewer: Getting back to Christmas, you told me who you celebrated Christmas with when you were in Canada. Who would you celebrate Christmas with now and how would you celebrate it? Do you have Christmas traditions?

Resp: Well as I said when we were younger we didn't have family around, we celebrated it with close friends who we considered family. When we moved home we would spend it in me nanny Jacinta's in the morning and when me nanny Fran was still alive we all went down to her house. Me da has four brothers and five sisters and we would all be down there. So me cousin would be there too and the uncles would be going around giving everyone a tenner, so you'd be leaving there with over €100. That was completely different to what we'd been used to in Canada. It was great getting to be with your own family and your cousins and having the laugh and everybody been squished into the little sitting room. Especially when the Impy's came, there was six of them (cousins). So that was great. We were all down in the house at the same time. That was about three years before me nanny Fran died. As soon as you were out of school and you got a job you didn't get any money.

So then Eoin came along and it got smaller, me nanny Fran passed away. We started to spend Christmas in me mam's and maybe we'd go to Dessie's mam's in the evening or we'd stay in me ma's and see Dessie's family the next day. Me aunt Suzanne and her son, Richie, me nana and granda would come up a and have dinner in me mam's. That was nice and intimate, having nice family time together. We used to have a bit of laugh, we'd play a few games, maybe a game of cards and then sit down to watch a traditional Christmas film that they'd put on about 7 or 8 o'clock and then in more recent years we'd sit down to watch Mrs. Browne. So the year I got into my house, people came down to me for a change. Give me ma a break. That was nice because that was the last year we had with me Nanny Jacinta. Yeah it just goes to show you that it changes over the years but I think family would be most important to spend Christmas with. As I'm getting older it's becoming more important to me because of course I have the excitement of getting up with Eoin for Santa on Christmas morning so it's very important. It's not just about what I'm getting; it's the giving now that's important to me. I think it's important to get everyone around for Eoin to get to know them and hear the stories of what we ... how we've changed or used to celebrate it. Of course this year I was sick. We were supposed to have Christmas in me granda's since it was the first one without me nana ... I was supposed to bring the cooked chicken ... well the rest of them were there, Breda and Gerry, Jackie and Catherine, me aunt Suzanne and Richie. Eoin went up to Dessie's mam's in the morning and then Catherine came around and collected him. So I spent me Christmas Day between the bed and the toilet (laughs).

Interviewer: How important have friends been to you during your adult life?

Resp: Important, but not so much. I think with the transition of having Eoin I've really learnt that your family, your mother and father are really the ones who are going to help you out. Your friends will help you out to an extent but they can't help you out with the larger things in life; like getting your feet on the ground, getting sorted. They are not as important. You have to have friends but it's not as important.

Interviewer: Has there been any divorces in your family or an event that has changed the family structure in some way and describe how that has affected relationships within the family?

Resp: Yeah. You'd see people in a different light. Tony's situation has changed the dynamics. There's a distance. It has changed the dynamics. I mean, we barely see him, Yvonne or Callum. Me granda never sees or hears from them. Like the last time Tony was down he came into the kitchen and was sitting there having a cup of tea. Eoin turned around and said "who are you, your not part of this family". Well I nearly died. I told him to keep quiet and get on with his homework. Eoin must have heard us talking or something. Out of the mouth of babes as me nanny used to say. Eoin didn't know him because he hasn't been around much. With Yvonne, Callum and Caroline, that relationship just changed because their connection (aunt Mary – deceased) is gone. Even though they are our family they probably felt some sort of disconnection as well. And then with Nana gone as well there is even less of a connection. They wouldn't be in touch with me granda as much or come down to see him. They probably would have made more of an effort when me nana was there. I feel it for me Granda because he's feeling it. And then of course with the Connie situation; they live further away (Wexford). And with her situation (alcoholism) that changes a lot as well. You find it harder to make time for them. But with Sara (cousin) who stays in touch with us, you'd pity her. I actually feel so bad for her. I'd do anything for her and try to help her out whatever way I can because in that situation you don't want to see anybody having to go

through that. It's not nice. She is my little cousin. I will help her out and give her as much support as I can. So even though you don't see them you still know that they need your support. They would be going through what we went through in Canada because they'd be isolated down there and they would need that family connection.

I feel it for me granda as well with the way Connie is. I mean she hasn't even been in touch that much since me nana died and when she did try to come up she caused all sorts of trouble. Like we'll do our best bringing him over dinners and making sure there's someone there with him most of the time. He looks to me ma and Suzanne for a bit of support. Like Ruth died last year and her house is being sold so he get's letters from the Solicitor and they try to look after it for him or explain things to him about that. Jackie's staying with him now and Catherine moved in a few weeks ago as well because she got a job in town so that's a bit of company for him. They can cook the dinner and clean the house for him now and earn their keep (laugh).

Interviewer: Thanks very much. If I need to clarify anything is it okay to get back to you?

Resp: Yeah, sure.

Appendix E

Family Tree