

FAMILY CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

CONTEMPORARY
EUROPEAN
PERSPECTIVES

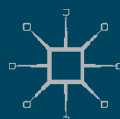
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Vida Česnuitytė • Detlev Lück • Eric D. Widmer
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Family Continuity and Change

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Preface

This edited collection, *Family Continuity and Change: Contemporary Perspectives and Findings on Family Lives in Europe*, is based on papers presented at the interim meeting ‘Family: Continuity and Change’, held by the European Sociological Association’s Research Network, ‘Sociology of Families and Intimate Lives’ (RN13) on 25–27 September 2014 in Vilnius (Lithuania). The editors selected the most promising papers that best responded to the book’s general purpose—that is, to give an extended and integrated picture of the family across Europe at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The book provides readers with fresh sociological research on family formation and practices in the perspective of continuities and changes, both across generations and during individual life courses. Authors from nine countries (i.e., Finland, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom) originally investigated family by developing and applying innovative theoretical and methodical approaches for a deeper comprehension of European family lives. They looked for answers to questions, including: How much continuity do we observe in family life? Where do we observe changes? How can continuity and change be identified and

measured? How can the observed continuity and change in family life be explained on a cross-national, national, social group, or individual level?

The chapters were chosen using a double selection process—one for conference participation and one for book contribution. The book's editors express special gratitude to Dainius Bernotas, Anna-Maija Castrén, Esther Dermott, Francesco Giudici, Doris Hanappi, Dirk Hofäcker, Domantas Jasilionis, Kaisa Kuurne, Miranda Lubbers, Clementine Rossier, Heiko Rueger, Marlène Sapin, Rossana Trifiletti, and Gil Viry for valuable notes that facilitated the selection of high-quality contributions from leading family researchers in Europe and significantly improved the quality of the book's content.

The main advantages of the book are threefold: (1) its innovative approach to family research, (2) its international dimension in terms of countries represented and compared in the empirical analyses, and (3) the novelty of its findings. We hope that this edited collection will be interesting reading for scholars, teachers, students, professionals, and others who are interested in scientific knowledge on family.

Vilnius, Lithuania
Wiesbaden, Germany
Geneva, Switzerland

Vida Česnuitytė
Detlev Lück
Eric D. Widmer

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1

Introduction

Vida Česnuitytė, Eric D. Widmer, and Detlev Lück

Most cited sociological works on family in the last two decades insist that dramatic changes in structures and relationships of families have occurred since the late 1960s. Some authors interpret those changes in very pessimistic ways, stressing that families have diversified so much that the family as an institution – the one basic cell of society with constant structures and universal functions – has disappeared, and with it,

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the very meaning of the concept of family (Beck 1986; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995; Popenoe 1993). Others express strong beliefs that the changes experienced by families in Europe during the last decades have enabled individuals to experience positive individualism within the family realm, with an emphasis on gender equality and individual autonomy. Pure relationships and confluent love (Giddens 1992) are said to have fully transformed the ways in which individuals shape their family life. Interestingly, those general views about the faith of the family came for the most part from scholars positioned outside the field of family sociology. For a number of years, sociologists doing empirical work on family have been critical of those general interpretations of the consequences of individualization for family life.

Although many family sociologists came to the conclusion that it was necessary to go beyond gross generalizations about the fate of 'the' family in modernity, much of their efforts were constrained within national borders, making family sociology the victim of methodological nationalism. Indeed, for a long time, there was a British family sociology, a French family sociology, a German family sociology, a Scandinavian family sociology, and so on, all with their specific issues and their preferred publishing outlets. With the creation of the European Union (EU), and its resolve to bring the social policy models of its state members and the demographic behaviours of their people closer together, the comparability of family models across Europe is on the agenda. The task of bringing together ideas of family sociologists from various European countries has been taken over by the research network on families and intimate lives of the European Sociological Association.

The goal of this book is to present a variety of empirical research on family change and continuity within the European space, with respect to three dimensions: family understanding or theorizing, family transitions across the individual life course, and family practices. Researchers from nine European countries investigate families, their conceptualization, transitions, and practices between persisting needs and flowing circumstances, between holding on to traditional routines and adapting to a fast-changing socioeconomic environment, and between individual agency and social constraints.

The contributors of the chapters in Part I, Family Understandings, propose theoretical and methodological approaches that extend the comprehension of family continuity and change. In Chapter 2, Brannen discusses particularities of family analysis across historical time and in individual life course, and how both appear in the narratives. Chapter 3 by Widmer and Ganjour proposes the use of an innovative methodological approach and qualitative comparative analysis to understand better what type of macrosociological conditions enable the family to remain salient in a national context.

Meanwhile, Lück, Diabaté, and Ruckdeschel in Chapter 4 identify a deficit of theoretical explanations for understanding why people stick with rather conservative family practices by stressing the importance of framing mechanisms or social representations associated with family life. They suggest the concept of 'leitbilder' as an updated cultural-theoretical approach for understanding how existing behavioural patterns persist, and why family lives adjust to new conditions less completely and more slowly than various theories predict. The proposed concept assumes that individuals have internalized guiding models, such as the 'normal' composition of a family, a 'typical' number of children, the 'perfect' timing for having children, or the 'right' way to distribute paid and unpaid work within the framework of a couple. Chapter 5 by Mazzucchelli, Rossi, and Bosoni comes back to the classical issue of whether the family is an institution by simply asking the question of respondents living in Italy, then relating their answers to a series of social characteristics.

The chapters in Part II, concentrate on continuity and change across the life trajectories of individuals. Chapter 6 by Česnuitytė focuses on the influence of personal networks on family formation processes in Lithuania. The author hypothesizes that formation behaviours are shaped not so much by inner motives but predominantly by social norms, which implies a continuity of family formation behaviours despite the decreasing importance of marriage. In a similar way, Chapter 7 by Moscatelli and Bramanti explores the influences of social networks on family-building among young Italian couples. The authors focus on the role of networks for the well-being of individuals and families and for value transmission in young couples' life projects.

An analysis of family membership and relationships in post-separation situations in Finland was carried out and is described by Castrén in Chapter 8. The analysis is based on in-depth interviews, and it focuses on family belonging and the emotional closeness of family members after a divorce or a separation. Ramos, Gouveia, and Wall, in Chapter 9, study the interrelations that exist between co-residence trajectories and personal networks. The authors hypothesize that close relationships are shaped by the articulation of both old and new principles of relational proximity such as kinship primacy, generational proximity, affinity criteria, and co-residence history. In Chapter 10, the final one of the Part II, Aeby and colleagues comparatively investigate the same issue in three countries: Switzerland, Portugal, and Lithuania. They show that the prominence of family ties in personal networks varies according to life stages, life transitions, and life events. Life experiences, such as growing up in a single parent family, leaving the parental home, moving in with a new partner, becoming a parent, and divorcing, shape the composition of personal networks. Overall, in all the countries considered, life transitions are shaped by a variety of demographic and economic constraints that make the experiences of individuals highly comparable across Europe.

Finally, Part III, Family Practices, focuses on what family members do and how family is 'done'. It describes what family life is currently about in various national contexts. In Chapter 11, Meil, Romero-Balsas, and Rogero-García proceed with the question on the interaction of social policy with parenting, focusing on parental leave in Spain. It provides an interesting account about the impact of changes in policy on childcare and the careers of men and women in a Southern European country. Chapter 12 by Smyth draws on interview material with 40 middle-class mothers across two research sites in the United Kingdom, comparing results with the United States. The chapter develops a typology of maternal role performance with the diversity of motives associated with motherhood. Chapter 13 by Brandth focuses on fathering practices and their changes between two generations among Norwegian farmers. Overall, this part reveals that there is currently abundant diversity in family practices but also much continuity between the present and the past and across national contexts. Chapter 14, the Conclusion, summarizes the changes and continuities in European family lives.

Based on original empirical works, this book presents manifold views on a variety of family issues within national contexts throughout Europe. A relational perspective is present in all contributions, although in diverse shades. The hope is that the chapters here will provide readers with the feeling that family sociology has achieved significant commonalities across national borders in Europe, and that it will facilitate understanding of complex family realities away from highly affirmative statements lacking empirical evidence about the historical faith of 'THE' family.

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Part I

Family Understandings

2

Approaches to the Study of Family Life: Practices, Context, and Narrative

Julia Brannen

The focus of this book is on the study of change and continuity in families, issues that can be studied from many different perspectives, which in turn raise a variety of methodological challenges. Sometimes the emphasis of family life studies is at the microlevel: on the habitual and every day – the quotidian aspects of daily life. A particular challenge therefore is to understand how family practices change or stay the same. In other studies, or indeed in the same study, we also may need to make sense of microlevel contemporaneous data about family lives in the context of the specific times and places to which they refer. It is particularly important, for example, to analyze what may be assumed to be timeless social transitions – that is, the transition of young people from financial and emotional dependency on their families to greater independence – in relation to the opportunity structures available at a particular time and in relation to the social and geographical locations of young people and their families.

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The point here is to take into account how the wider social and historical context itself changes as well as the practices of the actors whose lives we study. Further, given that our understanding of family life and the ways it changes (and stays the same) are based to some considerable extent on our soliciting informants' accounts, it is important to interrogate these accounts in ways that address the gap between what people do and what people say they do, in particular by bringing into our analysis a sensitivity to how narratives of the past are shaped by present perspectives. For descriptions of past events are infused with hindsight and by current events and perspectives.

This chapter focuses on the challenges that the study of changes and continuities in family lives pose by concentrating on three particular approaches. First, it discusses social practice perspectives that address the habitual or taken for granted practices that constitute the everyday. Second, it suggests the importance of historicizing family lives, in particular setting them in the contexts in which lives unfold and to which informants may not refer but are necessary for analysts to bring to bear in sociological interpretations. These two approaches in turn suggest that as researchers we need to interrogate the stories that people tell about personal and family change 'in order to be able to disentangle different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, to bring them into useful dialogue with each other, and to understand more about individual and social change' (Squire et al. 2013: 2). The third approach therefore involves adopting a narrative perspective. Together it is suggested that these approaches help to expand the study of family change. The chapter also illustrates how in several empirical studies these approaches have been applied in practice, in particular the research methods adopted.

Habitual and Quotidian Aspects of Family Life: Social Practice Theory

Practice theory has come to the fore in the social sciences in recent years to examine the habitual aspects of human behaviour that are not easily open to reflexive engagement. The approach is marked by recognition of the taken-for-grantedness of many everyday practices, 'practices that

are often hidden from view; part of an everyday and mundane world frequently so taken for granted that their meaning becomes lost' (Punch et al. 2010: 227). Thus, the approach is particularly useful to family researchers. There are several methods to the study of practices, the most relevant of which is Morgan's approach (2011) that has suggested that family life is what people 'do' (Morgan 1996) with reference to other family members, in contrast to an emphasis on what families 'are'. As Morgan (2011) argues, family practices can be strongly or weakly bound so that, in the latter case, nonrelated persons may be treated as part of the family; family practices also may constitute concentrated and closely linked sets of practices or they may be diffuse – that is, are carried out individually and with small, short-lived configurations of family members.

There is also the conceptualization of practices employed and developed by Reckwitz (2002) and Shove et al. (2012) in which they rather than individuals and institutions are the primary units of enquiry, with the concern here being to understand how practices combine and change. This theory of practice is an ontological shift in which the elements are 'qualities of a practice in which the single individual participates, not qualities of the individual' (Reckwitz 2002: 250). In this posthumanist inflection people are reframed as 'carriers' of practices (Reckwitz 2002). This approach focuses on the smaller constitutive elements (e.g., cooking, eating meals, and washing up) and the sequencing of and the linkage between these different practices. Shove et al. (2012) see practices as comprised of three elements: *competency*, *materials*, and *meaning*.

Competency refers to skills and know-how; materiality encompasses the broad array of objects that are involved in or comprise a practice; and meaning refers to ideas, aspirations, norms, and symbolic meanings surrounding a practice (Shove et al. 2012: 14). Practices have historical trajectories that provide for the study of social change through generating insight into how particular practices recruit and lose practitioners. Shove et al. argue that 'practices emerge, persist, shift and disappear when *connections* between elements of [competency, materials and meanings] are made, sustained or broken' (2012: 14–15, emphasis in original).

Many family practices are interrelated. I will take as an example the concept of food practices because they constitute a central aspect of everyday family life. In the case of cooking a family meal, a parent may

engage in a number of other practices (e.g., keeping an eye on children, monitoring their games or TV watching). In this way food practices can be seen as part of the performance of parenthood. As constitutive of parenting, they have the three elements as suggested by the practice theory set out by Shove et al. (2012). With regard to eating practices, parents inculcate in their children competencies, notably teaching them how to eat (e.g., table manners and so forth). They teach them the values of conviviality associated with meal times and impart nutritional knowledge. Parents also determine a great deal of the materiality of what children eat. Typically, mothers decide which specific foods to buy and prepare. Parents convey food meanings symbolically (e.g., through suggesting to children notions of the 'goodness' and 'badness' of particular foods).

As was found in our studies of food practices, they are difficult to examine (Knight et al. 2015). First of all, this is because many food practices are mundane; they are embodied and embedded in everyday routines and relations and therefore tend to be taken for granted and not easily open to reflection (Knight et al. 2015). Thus, doubt about people's ability to report behaviours has led to some questioning of the point of asking people why they do what they do (DeVault 1991). Second, food practices are moral; they are infused with issues of status and shame. Respondents may feel judged or ashamed or, for other reasons, they often may be reluctant to admit to behaviours or attitudes. Third, family food practices take place in the 'private' domain and are gendered – that is, reflect the continuing pattern of women's responsibility for food work (e.g., see O'Connell and Brannen 2016). In this context, it has been argued that the discourse available to talk about food matters is muted and women's food work is rendered invisible (DeVault 1991).

To understand family food practices a variety of methods are called for. Indeed, given the mundane, moral, and muted character of food, it may be preferable to use more than one method. Also, given that practice theory posits a link between structure and agency (i.e., the structural contexts that shape practices and the agency of the actors that perform them), it is desirable to employ methods that produce both intensive and extensive data. A mixed or multimethod research design may be called for. For example, we may use large-scale diary data that identifies which foods are eaten and how much per day (e.g., Townsend 1970) or diaries that quantify the time devoted to various activities (Gershuny 2001).

Diary data (e.g., the British rolling food survey, National Diet and Nutrition Survey) allow analyses of which foods children eat at particular ages during particular life stages. This survey offers one way of examining how the food practices of children change over time. Another way in which researchers can study food practices is by observation and use of devices to record behaviour. For example, Wendy Wills et al. (2015) investigated how kitchen practices influenced food safety and hygiene in the home. Using practice theory, they showed that what people did in the kitchen constituted a flow or sequence of 'small events' or routines that the interviews' respondents did not separately identify. The authors gave the example of cleaning practices that emerged as part of, or linked to, other practices that were not necessarily described by respondents as making an object or particular habit 'safe' or 'hygienic'.

Another source of data to examine food practices is historical archival material. Such data typically are not collected for the purposes of studying food. Here I provide an example from a recent methodological study conducted with my colleagues using the British Mass Observation (MO) Archive (see Knight et al. 2015, for the study's full description). Part of the MO Archive consists of diaries written by ordinary men and women between 1939 and the early 1950s (about 500). The MO diary data covered whichever aspects of people's lives the MO contributors chose to write about. In this project we studied family food practices based on a selection of diaries written in 1951 when rationing was still in force in Britain after World War II.

We found that food cropped up fairly frequently in the *women's* diary narratives of their everyday lives but often only in passing. Given the study's focus on the benefits and disadvantages of the data sources used, one of our conclusions was that diary writing is, like talk, limited by convention; writers may self-censor, consciously or unconsciously, seeking to represent a particular version of events or themselves. Some diarists certainly saw the MO diary as a place to reveal secrets and say things about their practices that were 'never mentioned to a soul', as one woman said, suggesting a certain sense of freedom from the pressure to meet social norms. Diaries, we suggest are methodologically useful in addressing what people do (practices), potentially avoiding some of the pitfalls of socially desirable responses that can be given in response to direct questioning in interviews.

Because of the limited material in the diaries, however, we also considered it important to contextualize it in a number of ways, including reading other accounts (e.g., news film footage of the period), as well as the campaigns launched by the Conservative Party against rationing as it sought to regain power from the Labour Government that had brought about the post-World War II reconstruction of Britain. We also supplemented the data with contemporaneous photographs of post-war Britain from other public archives and drew on other MO data – for example, menus from the period and a structured survey of working-class women's time use (Mass Observation Bulletin 1951). The positioning of the researcher as an 'outsider' also can reveal the 'taken for granted' and be as much a 'resource for listening' as for a shared understanding (Brannen 1988). In this study we were outsiders in terms of not having lived through the early post-war period in Britain and therefore had not been responsible for the data collection.

As a result of the limitations of relying on one method or data source in the study of taken for granted aspects of family life, we have, as in other family studies, adopted a mixed method research design (Brannen and O'Connell 2015). In a study of working families and the ways in which food fit into their lives (O'Connell and Brannen 2016), however, we employed extensive data from a national survey and qualitative interviews drawn from a subsample of the survey. We sought in the later qualitative phase of the study (the survey was carried out by a survey organization) to limit the risk of a social desirability bias with the parents – for example, through using open-ended questions, sensitively worded questions, and deliberately loaded questions implying certain behaviours are commonplace, as well as self-completion formats. We also carried out interviews with the children (aged 2–14) in the families. In addition, we employed other methods with the children, including visual methods and photo elicitation techniques, in which children took photos of situations related to food consumption and were invited to talk about the photos in both the interviews (O'Connell 2013).

To examine changing practices in families, the fieldwork took place at two time points with a gap of two years. One insight into family change at a microlevel offered by the study concerned the scheduling of meal-times, in particular the practice of families eating together (Brannen and

O'Connell 2016). From a practice theory perspective, it was clear that participation in 'family meals' – that is, who took part in the practice and its timing – was linked to other practices that related to parents' work schedules and to children's age and lives more generally, in particular children's extracurricular activities.

We saw, for example, how the trajectories of meal practices (i.e., the composition of meals and their scheduling) changed according to children's competencies and food tastes. As young children grew older, they began to eat with their parents and participate in the same meal. They also began to extend the range of foods they ate. The trajectory of the family meal also changed as the significance attached to its meaning changed. Parents who, when they were first interviewed, clearly subscribed to the norm of 'the whole family eating together' accommodated to the reality of not being able to eat together every night of the working week on account of the practical obstacles. Nevertheless, by still abiding with the practice on occasion, they clung to the norm.

Family Lives in an Historical and Generational Context

The second approach concerns adopting an historical contextual approach to the study of changing family lives. For some sociologists historical context where it figures into their work is often short term or taken for granted. In other sociological writing, history is referred to as grand epochs (e.g., The Modern Age or Postmodernity). Such sociological vocabularies are nonspecific and capture vast swathes of social change – with the result that they typically have rather short shelf lives and tend to be replaced by new vocabularies (Nilsen and Brannen 2014). However, families belong to historical generations. C. Wright Mills, a key exponent for making history central to sociology, gave three main reasons for doing so. The first concerns the importance of comparing diverse historical varieties of society (Mills 1980 [1967, 1959]). The second concerns the need to look beyond the short term and therefore the importance of understanding social change. The third reason is the need to avoid parochialism and provincialism. An historical perspective requires asking why some phenom-

ena have persisted, and what are the conditions that made this happen? Equally it requires looking for the conditions that have led to change or the disruption of a past practice or structure.

Historical generation has been a key concept in understanding social change. Karl Mannheim defined generations as '[i]ndividuals who belong to the same generation, who share the same year of birth, are endowed, to that extent, with a common location in the historical dimension of the social process' (Mannheim 1952 [1928]: 290). According to Mannheim, a generational 'unit' is formed when peers are exposed not only to the same phenomenon but also when they respond in the same way as a collective. Some historical generations lack a clear generational identity because of being sandwiched between generations that have a strong identification (e.g., the Baby Boomers and the War generation). Such sandwich generations are therefore termed according to Edmunds and Turner (2002) 'passive' generations.

A focus on families as generational groups also is important because family members were born into and grew up at particular historical times and places. At the same time, they also are integrated in a cross-generational succession and relationship. A family intergenerational focus alerts us to what is transmitted across generations over time and the life course covering a variety of phenomena including assets, values and aspirations, political beliefs, social status, and so forth. This focus therefore allows us to understand both change and continuity. Transmission depends on the resources that particular historical generations have acquired at particular periods – for example, cultural capital such as education and assets (e.g., state pensions and home ownership).

Thus, on the one hand, solidarity between generations may be undermined when members of the younger generation in a society experience a diminishing welfare state potentially leading to intergenerational conflict. Alternatively, intergenerational solidarity may be strengthened as younger generations receive substantial material support and services from older better-off generations. For example, the study of social inequality suggests that for those at the bottom of the wealth and income pyramid there is little trickledown effect from older to younger generations (Hills 2014). In contrast, at the top of the income and wealth pyramid, assets cascade down the generational hierarchy.

In adopting an intergenerational lens at the family level, it is necessary also to analyze how social class, ethnicity, and gender play out in particular historical eras. Furthermore, an intergenerational, historical lens shows the nature of family processes – that is, the dynamism and openness of transmission in families and the ways in which what is passed only becomes a transmission when it is received (Bertaux-Wiame 2005 [1993]). It shows how younger generations make their own mark on what is passed on so that in some instances what the younger generation may perceive as change may have more to do with the interpretation they place on their situations. For example, a younger generation may claim their material success in adulthood as being largely because of their own efforts while playing down some the advantages passed on to them from parents and / or the state (Brannen et al. 2004).

The study of family life through an historical lens suggests a number of methodological strategies, either singly or in combination. Cohort studies are common ways of studying national samples both longitudinally and at particular moments in historical time. Their advantages include the fact that their samples are further selected on the basis that they have experienced the same life course events in the same period (e.g., date of birth, or becoming a parent). The cohort's family life trajectory may be mapped over time and in relation to historical periods.

A second methodological approach is a life history method defined by Elder as a lifetime chronology of events and activities that typically and variably combine data records on education, work life, family, and residence (Elder 1985). The methods commonly used to examine life histories involve retrospective interviews that may take the quantitative form of event histories of large samples, or they may have a qualitative character consisting of a smaller number of biographical cases. The latter is exemplified in the oral history approach (Bornat 2008), and the biographic – narrative approach that focuses not only on events but also on the narrative interpretations of life stories (Wengraf 2000).

A third method is an intergenerational family approach. Here we may draw on various types of methods and research designs. For example, it is possible to take a subsample from a cohort study and to track and study members of the younger and older generations relative to the cohort members. The type of method used will depend on a number of factors:

the number of members of the intergenerational chain selected and available, the project's resources, and the nature of the research question. The most commonly adopted method is a retrospective interview with a small number of intergenerational chains selected purposively to 'represent' different types of families specified according to birth cohort (i.e., one generation), gender, ethnic origin, and social class (e.g., see Brannen et al. 2004; Brannen 2015).

Now I am going to illustrate how historical context was taken into account by drawing on a study of fatherhood across three generations (Brannen 2015). We included Irish origin migrants, white British men, and Polish migrants because migrants have been studied very little from an intergenerational family perspective. The study included 30 chains of grandfathers, fathers, and sons. Using a biographic narrative – interpretative method, we asked the men to tell us their life stories; we followed these up with unstructured narrative questions, and then used a schedule of semistructured questions (Wengraf 2000). In the initial analysis we separated the life history or chronology of transitions and events in informants' lives from their life stories, thus mapping a life history for each individual. We then compared these life histories across each of the generations and across the three ethnic groups looking for similarities and differences at the same points in the life course. We next contextualized these analyses in the historical literature and statistical sources about the particular ethnic groups. In the subsequent analyses we reintegrated the life histories with the interpretive material (see discussed in the third approach in the following section).

Harry, an Irish migrant grandfather, and his son serve as an example of the comparative life history analysis, demonstrating how biographies are shaped by the societies and times in which they grew up (Brannen 2015; Brannen et al. 2016). Harry was born in Ireland in 1946, the third of four children. When he was six years old his father's business folded. This was a time of considerable economic depression and mass migration from Ireland. In 1952 Harry's father went to England to find work. He became a carpenter in the construction industry. In 1954 when Harry was eight, his mother and siblings went to join the father in London leaving Harry with his widowed maternal grandmother who ran the family farm. Harry helped on the farm but also

attended school. When he was 14, his granny sold up and left Ireland, and Harry went to live with his parents in England.

Because the compulsory school age in England was higher than in Ireland at that time he had to attend school. He was sent to the local secondary school that offered no opportunities to do the academic examination taken at the end of upper-secondary schooling. Then this exam could be taken only by pupils who had attended selective state secondary schools and who had passed the state entrance examination to get into these schools. However, Harry was keen to progress in education, and he gained entry to a local Further Education college. At age 19 after much perseverance he won a place at university and with it a maintenance grant (available at the time from local authorities). The grant covered all his outgoings, not only the small fees (university fees are now extremely high in Britain). Within a year Harry, aged 22–23 in 1968–1969, graduated, became a teacher, married, and was a father with a young son.

Looking at Harry's biography we can see how he bucks the trend of the other Irish male migrants around this time. First, the timing of Harry's arrival in London was an accident of history, coming as he did when he was just young enough to be obligated by law to attend school. Moreover, as a working-class boy in Britain, he was unusual in wanting to further his education, an aspiration he explained in terms of coming from a 'brainy family' – even though none of his family had been to university. But Harry was fortunate. Although his family lacked the resources to support him, in the 1960s there were still state-funded grants and state-funded further education courses that were free of charge. As a new science graduate, Harry found teaching jobs easily in Britain's labour market of the 1970s. Indeed, he did a Master's degree and rose quickly in the teaching profession.

On the other hand, Harry was subject to some of the considerable discrimination to which the Irish in Britain at that time were exposed and to which he referred. As Harry said, he was okay but only as long as he stayed teaching in the state sector and in the inner cities. He recalled how he once applied to teach in a private school in the 1980s, the time of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) bombing campaigns that took place on both the British mainland and in Northern Ireland (i.e., part of the UK). He noted: '*...but I could sense that I was a little bit almost like a black man*

there you know. I could sense there was definitely – these were the governors, these were blue Tories–bloke called (Irish name), bloody hell, you know' (Harry's interview). Looking back, he reflected that his teaching career was cut off at the school deputy head level because of his Irish accent and Irish surname.

It also was important in the analysis of these data to take account of the following historical aspects of Irish society at the time (i.e., the mid-twentieth century) when Harry and other Irishmen migrated. One historical fact concerned the very high celibacy rate (late marriage and never married) among Irishmen. This meant that those who married – for example, Harry's father was more fortunate than his unmarried counterparts in Britain in being able to earn enough money to marry and support a family. A second contextual factor was the lack of educational opportunities in Ireland at that time. Secondary education was only for the small minority able to pay; the great majority left school at 14 with no qualifications, and thus they came to Britain with few or no skills.

A third factor was that Ireland was recovering from a civil war and had relatively recently gained its independence from Britain. The state of the Irish economy was dire with limited employment opportunities mainly limited to agriculture, a situation that fuelled the heavy migration flow. Fourth, on their arrival in the UK, Irish male migrants went into the poorly regulated construction industry that depended on Irish labour during the post-war years of Britain's reconstruction. Most Irishmen spent their whole lives in the industry. Finally, as the main migrant group until the middle of the twentieth century, the Irish were severely discriminated against.

Contrast Harry's biography with that of his first son, Kyle, born in 1969 in Britain. Kyle's transition to adulthood was straightforward and scheduled differently – a series of life course transitions that were sequentially ordered over a longer period compared with the life course of his father. Moreover, it corresponded to the normative trajectory of middle-class educationally successful British young people. Kyle attended an all-boys Roman Catholic state school between the ages 11 and 18 where he gained excellent examination results at the end of upper-secondary schooling. He won a place at a medical school to train as a doctor. Following this standard pathway into higher education, he waited several

years after qualifying as a doctor before getting married at 30. In contrast to his father who not unusual for the 1960s got married, had a child, graduated, and started his first job all within a year, Kyle and his wife, like many young couples in the 2000s deferred marriage, the purchase of a house, and parenthood.

The two men's trajectories suggest the importance of the structures of opportunities within each historical period. Harry's trajectory was more heavily constrained by class and ethnicity. The effects of discrimination, while not fatal for his career, were however far-reaching. Harry's and Kyle's stories also suggest continuity – that is, how cultural capital was transmitted and reproduced across generations as father and son both pursued upwardly mobile trajectories. The resources available to each of them, however, were very different. Harry drew on his own internal resources to sustain himself, in particular a strong belief in his genetic inheritance. The first to go to university in his family, this was made possible by the British welfare state still in place during the 1960s. By contrast in the 1990s, his son depended on the cultural and material capital of his middle-class parents and took his occupational success somewhat for granted compared with his father.

Narrative Analysis of Family Lives

In much research about family life the data produced have a narrative or storied character. People embark on storytelling when they have 'stories to tell', stories that relate to family and personal change (Brannen 2013). Research that includes family members across generations tells us about the passing on, breaching, and transformation of social practices in families.

Typically, storytelling is motivated through interview methods. But however expert the interviewer or comprehensive the questions we nonetheless are reliant as researchers on what interviewees choose to relate. This is why it is important to pay attention not only to what respondents tell us but also to what they do not tell us, and the ways in which they recount their stories. This is a crucial part of the process of analyzing such data, for data are produced in context. They depend on the

life course phase to which respondents refer. They are shaped by the historical contexts in which respondents' lives unfold. Most important, they are shaped by the current situations in which they find themselves. Consequently, respondents construct the past with hindsight, taking into account how they think in the present. Finally, data are produced in the context of the research encounter and the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee.

As Reissman suggests, narrative analysis refers to a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form (2008: 11). As Phoenix (2013, quoted in Bamberg 2006) suggests, many data take the form of 'small stories' told *en passant* that relate to everyday life and encounters with others. In the study of family lives, it is important therefore to pay attention to the kind of stories recounted and the ways they are told since these aspects of the data are integral to making sense of their meaning. Yet, at the same time, we have to be aware that all interpretation is partial, provisional, and anchored on shifting ground (Andrews 2013).

A story situates the self in particular ways some of which may be unintended or unconscious. In that sense what the narrator is saying is not so much consciously hidden but that needs decrease in the process of analysis (Josselson 2004). This does not mean that as researchers we should impose external interpretations on a story. Rather, it is about examining the whole interview – the jigsaw of material that the interviewee presents – paying attention to how it is presented and the sort of story the interviewee is seeking to tell. It also means paying attention to the silences in the account, some of which may have to do with the taken for granted historical and structural context of the period to which the story relates (Brannen 2013). We need to be attentive to the struggle in which a narrator is engaged in deciding what to relate and what not to relate. Moreover, how a story unfolds is a performance and is accomplished with audiences in mind (Reissman 2008) and in the presence of, and in collaboration with, an interviewer. Storytelling is a show that involves performing to and for audiences. The markers that go with speaking in a narrative voice include rhetorical devices used to persuade an audience; for example, direct quotations of speech as if the characters in the past were on a stage and recounting significant anecdotes.