

Cover Page

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RIFNET. A New Agenda for the Irish Family: Messy Realities & Messier Lives

Abstract

This special issue introduces new research on historical approaches to the Irish family. The articles in this collection have grown out of the Reconstituting the Irish Family Research Network (RIFNET), an interdisciplinary research cluster of scholars working on the Irish family. Covering families and family life from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, the issue explores several themes, including marriage, divorce, and separation; queer families and queer approaches to the family; pets, kinship, and non-human families; sibling relationships and migrating families. The publication of this special issue provides a timely reassessment of meanings and experiences of family in Ireland, coinciding with the March 2024 referendum on the Irish Constitution. The articles in this collection stand testament to the rich diversity of family forms and family experiences in Ireland, both past and present, and chart new pathways to guide future research.

Introduction

This special issue presents cutting-edge research on historical approaches to the Irish family, outlining new and exciting directions to guide future scholarship. The issue grows out of the Reconstituting the Irish Family Research Network, also known as RIFNET, an interdisciplinary research collaboration co-led by Leanne Calvert and Maeve O’Riordan. The project was funded jointly by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Irish Research Council (2021-23).¹ RIFNET aimed to champion the ‘messy realities’ and rich diversity of families that exist, and have always existed, in Ireland. As an interdisciplinary network of scholars, we aimed to restore to the centre of understanding those families who

have been overlooked, overshadowed, and omitted from narratives that rest on the idea of a ‘traditional’ norm. Tracing continuity across both time and space, the project investigated meanings of family on both sides of the Irish border, paying equal attention to what is now the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. This geographical and temporal breadth is reflected in the special issue. In addition to public-facing engagement activities and the creation of a digital exhibition on LGBTQ+ family life², the project hosted several research-exchange activities to bring together scholars working on the Irish family with the view to identifying new avenues of researchers. In April 2022, we hosted an academic roundtable at the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. Academic researchers, together with Museum and Heritage professionals, presented work on non-human families, queer families, Traveller families, unmarried mothers and reproductive health. This was followed in June 2022 with an online symposium, during which scholars presented new research on emotions and the family, kinship and ‘other-parenting’, migrating families, ministerial families, mixed-marriage, queer approaches to the family, siblings, singleness, and widowhood.³

This special issue introduces the work of five historians who collaborated on our project activities. Covering the period from the eighteenth- through to the early twentieth centuries, each of their papers thinks about family in new and different ways, and highlights aspects of family life that have yet to be fully explored in an Irish context. Our introduction begins by problematising the term ‘family’ and draws attention to why its definition matters in Ireland today. Next, it evaluates the state of the field by assessing major developments that have been made in historical studies of the family to date. It ends by reflecting on the contributions that our five essays make to both scholarly and popular understandings of the Irish family and suggests future directions for research.

Defining the Irish family

How do we categorise the Irish family? What is the meaning of ‘family’ in an Irish context? It was these questions that prompted the formation of the RIFNET project in 2020. Defining what is meant by ‘family’ is no easy task. Indeed, the definition and meaning of ‘family’ is an issue of hot debate in Ireland today. In the Republic of Ireland, a referendum will take place on 8 March 2024 to decide proposed changes to the Irish constitution as they relate to family and care. Irish citizens will be asked whether they support giving families created from ‘other durable relationships’ the same constitutional protections as those families made through marriage.⁴ This proposed change will alter the wording of Article 41 of the 1937 Constitution that currently recognises ‘the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society’.⁵ According to the Constitution, the ‘State’ is empowered with the duty to ‘protect the Family in its constitution and authority’, recognising that the ‘family’ acts as the ‘necessary basis of social order’.⁶ While the Constitution does not define what exactly is meant by ‘family’, the wording of Article 41 ties it explicitly to marriage. Article 41.3.1 makes this connection explicit: ‘The States pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, *on which the Family is founded*’.⁷ The referendum also proposes to radically alter the gendered language of Articles 41.2.1 and 41.2.2 in relation to care and the home. The current wording of the Constitution not only chains Irish women to the home and restricts their agency to its walls, but it also explicitly ties the success of the nation to the work of women in the home. Moreover, in line with other problematic aspects of the Constitution, the article conflates ideals of Irish womanhood explicitly to (married) motherhood.⁸ A new article (42B) aims to de-gender the associations between women and caregiving by recognising the ‘provision of care, by members of a family to one another by reason of the bonds that exist among them’.⁹

Proposed amendments to the Irish Constitution in response to changes to the Irish family are, of course, not new. In the last ten years, developments in marriage legislation

have prompted landmark amendments to the Constitution. Following a national referendum in May 2015, marital rights were extended to same-sex couples in Ireland. The thirty-fourth amendment to the Constitution subsequently recognised marriage between ‘two persons without distinction as to their sex’.¹⁰ Similar legislative changes have been made in recent years with respect to family and reproductive law in Northern Ireland. Coming almost five years after its legalisation in the Republic of Ireland, and seven years after marriage reform was achieved in England and Wales, marriages between same-sex couples were granted equal legitimisation in law in Northern Ireland on 13 January 2020 (McCormick and Stewart, 2020).

Constitutional definitions of the Irish family continue to draw criticism from scholars, politicians, and family-rights campaigners, not least because of the ongoing political and social controversies that frame the relationship between the family and the state (Connolly, 2015). As Lindsey Earner-Byrne deftly put it in 2023, ‘The Irish family is in the dock. Again’ (Earner-Byrne, 2023, p.270). Writing in response to the Final Report of the Commission into Mother and Baby Homes (2021), Earner-Byrne critiqued its findings for its ‘flattened’ and over-simplified conclusions as to the part played by the family in the institutionalisation of unmarried mothers. As she notes, the 2021 Report, just like other ‘official inquiries’, was not only guilty of generalising about the Irish family, but it had neglected to consider how the capacity of the family to act (or not act) was constrained by the ‘system of violent order’ which the state and church had themselves created (Earner-Byrne, 2023, pp 270-71). The Irish family, as a set of relationships, a cluster of ideas, and a system of power differentials, cannot therefore be understood in political isolation. The current debate on meanings of the family in Ireland has likewise been forged from political discourses that reify the connection between marriage and family. For example, the current wording of Article 41 not only privileges families made from marriage, but it also implies that the protection afforded to ‘marital families’ does not extend to families made outside of marriage. As Maebh Harding

and Deirdre McGowan (2023) have noted, this narrow definition of family sits at odds with the diversity of family forms in Ireland today. While many families do indeed reflect the nuclear form of married couple and their legitimate offspring, many other families do not. Single-parent families, cohabiting partners, civil-partnerships, fosterage, and blended families are common in Ireland. As Harding and McGowan astutely observe, ‘The ‘priority given to the family based on marriage conflicts with the reality of family life for many’ (Harding and McGowan, 2023, pp. 15-16). RIFNET explores the past of this familial complexity.

A definition of family that is wedded to marriage not only fails to capture the realities of many Irish families, but it also carries important constitutional implications for the equal rights of citizens. Marriage is, of course, integral to the biopolitics of the state (Willse and Spade, 2005). As V. Spike Peterson has argued, states have an ‘enduring interest in who counts as family and how families are constituted’ because the ‘making of states *is* the making of “sex”’ (Peterson, 2014, p. 605). Ultimately, marriage confers on some citizens access to resources for economic survival, while simultaneously denying them to others (Willse and Spade, 2005, p. 312). As Earner-Byrne emphatically demonstrated, ‘The concept of “the family” as an abstraction continues to serve the interests of those who wish to deflect attention away from systemic inequality and injustice’ (Earner-Byrne, 2023, p. 286). In Northern Ireland, the contemporary case of Siobhán McLaughlin, who successfully challenged a claim to Widowed Parent’s Allowance (WPA) as an unmarried partner is a good example of the inequities of non-marital families. McLaughlin and her partner, John Adams, shared four children and had lived together for twenty-three years at the time of his death. Her application for WPA was initially turned down on the grounds that she and her partner had never married. Following a series of legal challenges, in 2018, the UK Supreme Court ruled that the ‘blanket exclusion’ of unmarried cohabiting partners from bereavement benefits in Northern Ireland were ‘incompatible’ with the European Convention on Human Rights

(Simpson, 2019). Although McLaughlin was not married, the denial of the benefit was recognised to have discriminated against the children of the relationship.¹¹

The RIFNET project recognises that the image of the Irish family (on both sides of the border) as one formed by heterosexual marriage and made up of parents and their offspring under one household is, and has never been, reflective of the Irish experience. We likewise recognise that this model of family life has long been used as the basis of family regulation in Ireland to the detriment of women, men, and children. The several researchers who formed the RIFNET network worked on areas as diverse as modern fatherhood (Kiely and Bolton, 2018a; 2018b and Kiely and Tobin, 2019) to early modern cultures of care and dying (Tait, 2020; 2019), the LGBTQ+ family (O Sullilleabhán, 2014; Byrne, 2014;), singleness (O’Riordan, 2020; Meehan, 2023), siblinghood (Devlin, 2024, 2020; Leane, 2020), and marriage and divorce (Barclay, 2011; Foley, 2022; Harding, 2023; Murphy, 2022). Focusing on childless families, Traveller families (Bhreatnach, 2006; 2007) and Presbyterian families (Calvert, 2023; 2022a; 2022b; 2022c), our members examined ‘minority’ Irish families who fell outside the dominant trope of the Irish family as Catholic, heteronormative, fertile, and settled. Albeit working across different disciplines and chronological time periods, we were united in our desire to cast light on what we championed as the ‘messy realities’ of Irish family life.

Histories of the Irish Family

The Irish family has consistently been of interest to historians and, in particular, to scholars interested in understanding the changing demography of the family over time. Many major works on the Irish family, published in the 1960s and 1970s, were infused by a pulse to discover what was ‘different’ and ‘novel’ about the Irish family. Taking as their leave K.H. Connell’s (1957; 1962) pioneering (and heavily critiqued) work on the Irish population and

‘peasant’ marriage patterns, subsequent generations of historians set out to explain how and why Ireland changed from a nation marked by early and widespread marriage at the beginning of the eighteenth-century, to one marked by high levels of celibacy, late marriage, and low fertility by the next (Fahey, 2014, pp 66-69). A rich body of literature now exists on the demographic conditions of the family (O’Grada, 1995; Kennedy, Miller and Gurrin, 2013). Focusing on key turning points in Irish history, such as the Great Famine, other scholars dedicated much time to examining how the Irish family responded to economic and political ‘shocks’ (Lee, 1968; Walsh, 1970; Clarkson, 1981). As Calvert (2017a) reflected in relation to historiographies of marriage in 2017, Irish historians had been much ‘more concerned with examining the demographic conditions’ of the family than with the intricacies of family relationships themselves (Calvert, 2017a, p. 434).

While the family has consistently been of interest to Irish historians, the field was given new impetus with the emergence of women’s history as a discipline. When Margaret MacCurtain, Mary O’Dowd and Maria Luddy published their ‘Agenda’ for Irish Women’s History in 1992, the family featured prominently as an area that was ripe for exploration. Family papers, for example, were singled out as potential sources for unlocking the worlds of women in their own words (MacCurtain, O’Dowd and Luddy, 1992, p. 13) or to uncover the experiences of women who were employed in the ‘big houses’ of the Irish countryside (MacCurtain, O’Dowd, and Luddy, 1992, p. 11). The ‘Agenda’ also highlighted family papers as sources for learning about marriage, childbirth, and childcare (MacCurtain, O’Dowd, and Luddy, 1992, pp 16, 28-29) while church court records held the potential to tell us about attitudes to women and sexuality (MacCurtain, O’Dowd, and Luddy, 1992, p. 12). As scholars returned to the archive in their efforts to unearth Irish women, the family is where much of their work naturally began. The late-1990s subsequently saw the publication of several important edited collections of family correspondence. *The Drennan-McTier*

letters, 1776-1793 (1998-99), edited by Jean Agnew, being an excellent example. Indeed, this tradition has continued, as evidenced by the publication of *The Letters of Katherine Conolly, 1707-1747* (2018), expertly and beautifully edited by Marie-Louise Jennings and Gabrielle M. Ashford. As Frances Nolan and Bronagh McShane reflected in their recently published ‘New Agenda’ for women’s and gender history in Ireland, the ‘landscape has changed immensely’ for historians of women, due largely to the ‘marked increase in the publication of printed primary sources’ (Nolan and McShane, 2022, pp 209-10).

Historians of women continue to be at the forefront of scholarship on the Irish family. The family featured prominently in the latest Cambridge compendium on Irish history (2018); a development within the historiography that stemmed from those working in the field of women’s history (Buckley, 2018; Earner-Byrne, 2018; O’Dowd, 2018). Our knowledge of women’s roles in the family at all ends of the social spectrum and across different religious backgrounds have been greatly enhanced in recent years. The chronological spread of these histories is likewise impressive. The work of Sparky Booker (2018) and Tom O’Donnell (2020), for example, has expanded our knowledge of women, family, and fosterage in medieval Ireland. The early modern Irish family has likewise benefited in recent years by studies that focus on women: Anna-Maria Walsh’s book on the daughters of Richard Boyle (1566-1643), the first Earl of Cork, and James O’Neill’s (2021) piece on the experiences of women during the Nine Years War (1593-1603) being just two fine examples. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been well served by work on women and the family by Deborah Wilson (2015), Elaine Farrell (2012), Frances Nolan (2021), Leanne Calvert (2017a; 2018a; 2022b), Maeve O’Riordan (2018), Rachel Wilson (2009), and Sarah-Anne Buckley (2017). Work by scholars such as Clear (2015), Foley (2019; 2022), Earner-Byrne (2007), Grimes (2021), and McCormick (2010; 2015) has expanded our knowledge of women and the family into the twentieth century.

As of 2020, we now have (for the first time) full-scale monographs on both marriage and divorce in Ireland (Luddy and O'Dowd, 2020; Urquhart, 2020). Combined, both these books cover the period from the seventeenth- through to the twentieth century, providing a long *durée* overview on the making and breaking of marriage in Ireland. Importantly, both books also demonstrate the gap that existed between the ideals of marriage and the reality of lived experience. Marriages were not always happy, and those who entered into it were not automatically guaranteed economic, romantic or emotional 'stability' as a result (Earner-Byrne, 2022, p. 183). As Earner-Byrne noted, the work of Luddy, O'Dowd and Urquhart has brought into sharper the fictitious nature of that 'loud and persistent assertion that "heterosexual marriage" was a bulwark against social chaos' (Earner-Byrne, 2022, p. 179). As Ireland moves towards the upcoming referendum on meanings of family, these histories perhaps take on greater significance.

Families were, of course, made outside of marriage too. Covering the period from the nineteenth through to the twentieth-century, work by historians on illegitimacy, unmarried motherhood, and infanticide (Farrell, 2015; Kelly, 1992; Luddy, 2011; Rattigan, 2011; Redmond, 2018) has exposed the fallacies of the myth that the Irish were exceptionally chaste before marriage. Sexual activity was always a possibility both outside and before marriage in Ireland (Calvert, 2018a Luddy and O'Dowd, 2020; O'Neill and Adelman, 2020). Couples not only engaged in sexual activity before marriage, but many also engaged in long-term intimate relationships without ever moving towards marriage. Kept mistresses, adulterous affairs, co-habitation, and bigamy were likewise not uncommon in Ireland between the eighteenth and twentieth-centuries (Malcomson, 2006; Luddy and O'Dowd, 2020). As Leanne Calvert argued in relation to illegitimate parenthood, 'illicit sexual practices were just some of the driving forces that bound and blended families together' in eighteenth and nineteenth century Ireland (Calvert, 2022, p. 1148). More broadly, scholarship

on sex has blossomed, enriching our understanding of family planning and reproduction in Ireland, especially from the nineteenth century onwards (Delay, 2019; 2022; Earner-Byrne and Urquhart, 2019; Kelly, 2023; McAvoy, 2012, 2013; McCormick, 2011; 2015).

In addition to the making and breaking of families, much has now been written on experiences of the family life cycle. In the past ten years, our understanding of infancy and childhood (Buckley, 2017; Finan, 2010; Hatfield, 2019; Hatfield, Kruse and Nic Congáil, 2018; Luddy and Smith, 2014; Maguire, 2009) and youth and adolescence (Breathnach and Buckley, 2020; Cox and O’Riordan, 2015; Calvert, 2018b) has expanded across all levels of Irish society. Masculinity studies is also a growing field in Ireland, and several studies have subsequently placed men back in the home to explore their relationships with their children (Calvert, 2017b; Purvis, 2019). Gender historians of the Irish family have likewise enhanced our knowledge of the power dynamics between members of the family, particularly between wives and husbands. Scholarship by the co-leaders of RIFNET is a case in point. Working on families drawn from the landed classes in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ireland, Maeve O’Riordan (2013; 2015) has developed our understanding of how women and men negotiated love and sexual intimacy, and how elite women assumed their roles as household managers. Her work is complemented by that of Leanne Calvert on how married couples from the middling and lower orders negotiated their roles as husbands and wives, and as parents, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Calvert, 2017a; 2017b).

In the past five years, Irish histories of marriage and the family have also extended beyond heterosexual definitions. Research by Sonja Tiernan (2020) on the fight for marriage equality in Ireland, together with work by Patrick McDonough (2023) on queer activism, has significantly expanded our knowledge of queer relationships in modern Ireland. Mary McAuliffe’s pioneering work on the lives of several revolutionary activists has likewise demonstrated the vibrant possibilities for same-sex partnership in a time long before such

unions were ratified by law.¹² Our knowledge of queer relationships also promises to be expanded in the near future by new research projects on queer lives in Ireland; for example, Tom Hulme and Leanne McCormick's 'Queer NI: Sexuality Before Liberation' project.¹³

New Directions

The articles in our special collection build on this rich and exciting scholarship, moving the field forward in new directions. Given the current debates about the constitutional definitions of the family in Ireland, it is fitting to begin with Deirdre Foley's piece on marital breakdown in twentieth-century Ireland. Focusing on the case of Josie Airey, an Irish woman who fought a landmark challenge for access to legal aid during her battle to separate from her husband, Foley's article underscores how the heteronormative structures of the Irish Constitution failed to protect the interests of the women and mothers that it claimed were integral to the success of the nation. Such failures were also exacerbated in the case of poorer and working class women. As Foley astutely notes, 'While Irish citizenship has been gendered for decades, women without considerable means have experienced isolation from the full rights of citizenship most acutely' (Foley, 2024, p. X). Josie Airey may have 'fulfilled many of the perceived obligations of female Irish citizenship' through her marriage and motherhood, but these accomplishments were overshadowed by the breakdown of her marital relationship (Foley, 2024, p. X). In an era where the national ideal of womanhood was tied to the marital home, Airey's very public experience of marital breakdown was registered as a 'subversive act' (Foley, 2024, p. X).

Moving beyond marriage, the essays in this collection bring into sharper focus the many other ties that bind the family together outside of marriage and sex relationships. Shannon Devlin's article uses sibling relationships as a methodological tool for examining the family in nineteenth-century Ireland. Save some notable exceptions (O'Dowd and Fitzpatrick,

2022; Calvert. 2022a), including work by Devlin herself (2021), sibling relationships have been largely ignored in Irish historical scholarship. Drawing on two sets of siblings based on either side of the Atlantic, Devlin demonstrates the enduring strengths of sibling relationships over both time and space. Her contribution to our understanding of the family, however, goes much further than enhancing our knowledge of relationships that are ‘Often taken for granted’ (Devlin, 2024, p. 3) in Irish scholarship. As she notes, applying a ‘horizontal approach opens wider methodological opportunities’ (Devlin, 2024, p. 4). Realising the potential of the ‘digital genealogical archive’, Devlin’s piece reveals the benefits of working transnationally with census material, migration records, birth, marriage, and death records to fill in the gaps of the complicated nature of Irish family life in nineteenth-century Ireland (Devlin, 2024, pp 4,18).

The transformative potential of genealogical methods in overturning and challenging taken for granted assumptions about Irish family life is raised in Tom Hulme’s article on the lives of queer men in late nineteenth and twentieth century Ireland. Weaving together newspaper notices, census data, street directories, and criminal files, Hulme offers ‘a queerly different alternative’ to ‘difficult’ histories of intolerance and ostracism (Hulme, 2024, pp 12-13). The life of George Davidson is therefore presented in its totality, freed from the constraints of deviancy and criminality which shape queer histories that rely on sources limited to moments of ‘criminalised pleasure’ (Hulme, 2024, p. 2). Hulme creatively reimagines the position of queer men within their birth families, not as outsiders, but as protected members who the family unit shielded, as far as possible, from the law. As Hulme reveals, thinking queerly about the Irish family enables George to become visible not as a ‘helpless victim of oppression, or someone who had a sexual encounter in an alleyway’, but as a ‘son and brother who both gave and received love and care’ across his lifetime (Hulme, 2024, p. 2.).

The articles in our issue reaffirm the flexibility and malleability of the family. The borders of family are not fixed, and they transform for an individual over the course of their lives as parents die, emigration features or new meaningful relationships are formed. Perhaps we have been so bound up with the violent emphasis on an Irish family founded on heterosexual marriage that we have lost sight of the variety of families living in plain sight. Mo Moulton's article challenges us to think queerly about the structures and boundaries of the Irish family as they argue that Dorothy Stokes, an ostensibly unmarried woman, established her own household and family of dogs and lovers. By examining such case studies, it is possible, as Moulton observes to realise that 'the Irish queer family did not spring into being in 2015 as a narrow variation on the norm.' (Moulton, 2024, p. X). It had existed in a variety of forms long beforehand. Moreover, in keeping with RIFNET's aim to break down dominant paradigms that structure models of the Irish family, Moulton uses Stokes's example to reaffirm the 'yawning gap between a violently constrained family norm and the realities of life in Ireland' (Moulton, 2024, p. X). In common with Moulton's piece, Leanne Calvert's article explores the interpretative possibilities of thinking queerly and creatively about the Irish family and the relationships that give rise to it. Calvert considers what we can learn about the Irish family by recasting an eighteenth-century case of alleged crossdressing through the lens of queer and trans scholarship. Moving beyond an explanation rooted in crossdressing or same-sex intimacy, Calvert uses the case to create a 'methodological think piece' on 'uncovering queer lives *and* in queering historical practice' (Calvert, 2024, p. x). As she argues, there were 'many ways of "doing" family' in Ireland and it is only by freeing ourselves of binary modes of thinking that we will be able to 'appreciate the complicated and messy realities of lived experience' (Calvert, 2024, pp. X, X).

While we are very proud of the articles collected here and believe that they push the boundaries of research in new directions, there are also many gaping absences from this

special issue which would need to be included to make this a truly comprehensive agenda of family history in Ireland. While some of the articles refer to Irish-born individuals who performed family on either side of the Irish Sea or the Atlantic, the history of the Irish family also involved individuals from elsewhere who have made their lives here; either during more recent immigration since the late twentieth century, or those minorities who settled on Ireland's shores for whatever reason before that. Mixed-race history within Ireland is something which, save a few notable exceptions (Crangle, 2023), has been barely recognised within the historiography, though sociologists have begun this important work more successfully (Fanning, 2021, 2002). As historians in Ireland increasingly look outwards to critically assess Ireland's colonial legacies (Ohlmeyer, 2023; O'Kane and O'Neill, 2023; Wright, 2019), we hope to see further work on how Irish families contributed and participated in these processes.

This special issue would not be possible without the contributions of our several authors, who also benefitted from conversations and feedback from our wider network and participants. In particular, we would like to make special mention of Edmund Lynch, an LGBTQ+ activist and friend to our project, who passed away in October 2023. Edmund lent his time, contacts, and humour to us, and his assistance was integral to the success of our digital exhibition and public engagement event at the National Museum of Ireland. We thank him. As this is a special issue about family, it would be remiss of us, the editors and authors, not to note our thanks to our own families who make our work possible. The RIFNET project has mapped almost directly onto the beginning and the conclusion of the Covid-19 pandemic as we developed the funding application in April and May 2020. Over the lifetime of the RIFNET project there have of course been several lockdowns, members have suffered the loss of loved ones, celebrated the birth of their babies, battled house moves, emigration, academic precarity, new jobs and many other mundane challenges and opportunities. Our

Irish families, just like the families in our special issue, are messy and full of movement, and we love them for it.

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Notes

¹ Reconstituting the Irish Family Research Network (RIFNET) Project Page, <https://www.ucc.ie/en/iss21/researchprojects/researchprojects/earlieriss21projects/rifnetreconstitutingtheirishfamilyresearchnetwork/> (Accessed January 2024).

² Reconstituting the Irish Family Research Network (RIFNET), 'ReCollecting the Irish Family Digital Exhibition', <https://rifnet.org/> (accessed January 2024).

³ Reconstituting the Irish Family Research Network (RIFNET) Project Page, <https://www.ucc.ie/en/iss21/researchprojects/researchprojects/earlieriss21/projects/rifnetreconstitutingtheirishfamilyresearchnetwork/> (Accessed January 2024).

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/iss21/researchprojects/researchprojects/earlieriss21/projects/rifnetreconstitutingtheirishfamilyresearchnetwork/#events>

⁴ The family amendment proposes changes to the wording of two articles in the constitution. Article 41.1.1 will add to its clause the following **in bold**: ‘The State recognises the Family, **whether founded on marriage or on other durable relationships**, as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law’. The proposed change to Article 41.3.1 will remove from its clause the following **in bold**: ‘The State pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, **on which the Family is founded**, and to protect it against attack’. The Electoral Commission, ‘Referendums on family and care’ <https://www.electoralcommission.ie/referendums/> (accessed, January 2024).

⁵ Government of Ireland, ‘Irish Statute Book. Article 41’, <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/cons/en/html#article41> (accessed January 2024).

⁶ Government of Ireland, ‘Irish Statute Book. Article 41’, <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/cons/en/html#article41> (accessed January 2024).

⁷ Government of Ireland, ‘Irish Statute Book. Article 41’, <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/cons/en/html#article41> (accessed January 2024).

⁸ The ‘Care Amendment’ proposes to delete two articles from the constitution and replace them with a new Article 42B. If passed, this will remove the following: Articles 41.2.1 ‘In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved’ and 41.2.2 ‘The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home’. The Electoral Commission, ‘Referendums on family and care’ <https://www.electoralcommission.ie/referendums/> (accessed, January 2024).

⁹ The full text of Article 42B is as follows: ‘The State recognises that the provision of care, by members of a family to one another by reason of the bonds that exist among them, gives to Society a support without which the common good cannot be achieved, and shall strive to support such provision’. The Electoral Commission, ‘Referendums on family and care’ <https://www.electoralcommission.ie/referendums/> (accessed, January 2024).

¹⁰ Government of Ireland, ‘Irish Statute Book. Thirty-fourth amendment of the Constitution Act, 2015’, <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/ca/34/enacted/en/html> (accessed January 2024).

¹¹ In April 2017, Widowed Parent’s Allowance was abolished and replaced with Bereavement Support Payment (UK), a benefit that was denied to co-habiting couples. On 9 February 2023 the law was amended to enable co-habiting parents with dependent children to apply for support following the death of their partner. Department for Work and Pensions, ‘Explanatory memorandum to the bereavement benefits (remedial) order 2023, No. 134’, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2023/134/pdfs/ukxiem_20230134_en.pdf (accessed January 2024).

¹² Mary McAuliffe and Harriet Wheelock (Eds.) (2023). *The diaries of Kathleen Lynn*. UCD

Press. McAuliffe’s research on queer relationships has also fed into a new TG4 documentary,

Croíthe Radacha/Radical Hearts, that explores the intimate relationships of women during

the Irish Revolution: <https://www.tg4.ie/en/player/categories/top-documentaries/?series=Cro%C3%ADthe%20Radacacha&genre=Faisneis>

¹³ Queer NI: Sexuality Before Liberation Project Website: <https://www.queerhistoryni.com/> (accessed January 2024).