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ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

***Research on Adoption in Ireland
1952-2017***

**Dr Valerie O'Brien
& Dr Sahana Mitra**

Commissioned by the Adoption Authority of Ireland

**AN AUDIT OF RESEARCH
ON ADOPTION IN IRELAND –
1952–2017**

October 2018

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Commissioned by:

Adoption Authority of Ireland

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Abbreviations Used in this Report

AAI	Adoption Authority of Ireland
ARA	Adoption Rights Alliance
CCIAA	Central Council of Irish Adoption Agencies
CRA	Children’s Rights Alliance
DA	Domestic Adoption
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DoH	Department of Health
EA	Equality Authority
HB	Health Board
IASW	Irish Association of Social Workers
ICA	Intercountry Adoption
IVF	In-Vitro Fertilisation
HSE	Health Services Executive
LRC	Law Reform Commission
SW	Social Worker
WHB	Western Health Board

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PART I

INTRODUCTION

A request for tenders for the development of an audit of Irish research and an overview of policy and legislative change in relation to adoption was issued by the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) in February 2017 (See Appendix A – Adoption Authority of Ireland Tender Document 2017).

There were two parts in the request outlined in the Tender documentation (AAI Tender Document 2017: p. 1). The objectives of Part 1 as set out by AAI were as follows:

1. Identify completed and ongoing research across a range of disciplines in relation to adoption;
2. Audit the literature with a view to producing a written report and an Excel sheet to assist with the development of a typology/database (e.g. type of study, author, year, title, type of publication, sources of information, topics covered, sources of funding, link to website etc.);
3. Identify gaps in the Irish research literature on adoption.

The objective of Part 2 was as follows:

To produce an overview, between 5,000 and 7,000 words, of the development of adoption legislation, policy and practice since 1952, and up to the start of 2017. The overview was required to be: ‘written in a narrative style, and provide a brief analysis of the origins, impact and implications of the different changes’ (AAI Tender Document 2017: p. 1).

AAI outlined that the audit should be based on material which should be research based and analytical in nature, have adoption as a primary focus and have been conducted using qualitative, quantitative or mixed methodological approaches. This was to include:

- articles in professional journals (peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed);
- peer reviewed conference and symposia papers;
- commissioned research undertaken by consultants and researchers;
- systematic research undertaken by government departments, agencies or independent public bodies;

- relevant postgraduate research. (AAI Tender Document 2017: p. 2).

For the purposes of the project, '*research*' was defined as:

- the process of systematic enquiry aimed at answering questions and/or exploring phenomena using scientific methods (employing quantitative, qualitative and/or mixed methods/approaches); these methods may draw on the whole spectrum of systematic and critical enquiry to allow interpretation of data in answering specific questions and/or posing new questions for future research (AAI Tender Document 2017: p. 1).
- the definition was extended to include documentary analysis, that is, systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic (computer-based and internet-transmitted) material (Bowen, 2009) about the phenomenon one wishes to study (Bailey, 1994). Under this kind of analysis, the data is examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rapley, 2007). Documentary material used included literature reviews, existing data sets and critical commentary on the topic of Irish adoption.

Purpose of the Audit

It is intended that this report on the audit of adoption research will assist in informing the future research strategy of the Adoption Authority of Ireland.

Awarding of the Contract and Time Frames

It was indicated in the request for tender documentation that the project should be completed within three months of a contract being signed. The outcome of the tender was announced on 15 May 2017; a meeting was held between Dr Valerie O'Brien and the research sub-committee on 15 May 2017 to discuss the research parameters further. A contract was signed by Dr Valerie O'Brien on behalf of UCD and Ms Patricia Carey, CEO of AAI. It was agreed that the work would commence in late August. Following the signing of the contract and the commencement of the work, permission was requested to submit the draft report in December 2017 instead of November 2017. The reasons for this extension of the time frame are discussed in the methodology section (Part II) of this report.

Main Methodology Used

There were two ways that the research work for the audit was approached. The intended short time frame was a major factor in the audit design.

In the *first level*, the relevant data was screened, collected and organised through a ‘step-by-step method’. This helped us to organise the data into different categories as proposed in the tender, which included books, government publications, peer and non-peer reviewed journals, conference papers, and postgraduate research work. This approach is detailed in Part II of this report.

In the *second level*, following the identification and collection of the above data, a broad thematic analysis of the abstracts of the studies was carried out. This enabled us to synthesise the body of work and to identify gaps in research knowledge. A thematic analysis provided a well-structured approach to handle the data (King, 2004), report the themes found within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and to produce a summary report. The details of the thematic analysis are discussed in Part IV of this report.

Both these methods facilitated the identification, examination, analysis of research data and identification of research gaps in Irish adoption literature.

Report Structure

The report is presented in five parts as follows. The introduction, *Part I* outlines the background to the tender and includes the research objectives and parameters. *Part II* describes the methodology used in the work. The methodology outlines the search terms used, search strategy, databases utilised and the method of review and analysis undertaken. Our position as researchers and the limitations of the work is also discussed. *Part III* highlights the results generated through the step-by-step method utilised. The findings are depicted with the help of tabular and graphical representations. *Part IV* presents the results generated through thematic analysis. *Part V* concludes the report, identifies research gaps in the literature and suggests a number of recommendations for future research that may assist the Irish adoption system and community.

PART II

METHODOLOGY

This section of the report describes the research design used to achieve the research objectives established by the Adoption Authority of Ireland. The processes involved in the ‘step-by-step’ method in respect of data collection, categorisation and data extraction are outlined. The categorisation and analysis of the data through a thematic analysis is also detailed. The researchers’ positioning and experience of adoption as an influence on the research is considered. Finally, the limitations of the work are discussed.

2.1 Research Objectives

The research objectives were outlined by the Adoption Authority of Ireland in the Invitation to Tender document, as outlined in *Part I*. The aim of the tender was to identify and audit the research literature on the topic of Irish adoptions, as well as to identify and document the gaps which exist in this area of research.

2.2 Positioning and Experience of Authors as Influence

Reflexivity is central to the research process. The entire process of exploring and knowing our own biases, attitudes and knowledge base towards the research was discussed at various stages over the course of the work to arrive at a situation where the research objectives could be achieved. A position of curiosity, identification of our various viewpoints, a respect towards differences and similarities were important stances which guided our co-work and actions in this project. We placed strong emphasis on ‘insider–outsider positioning’. In recent years, the notions of insider and outsider have evolved where either of the researchers is ‘neither fully inside nor outside’ (Milligan, 2016: p. 239). The position of the researcher is always fluid as it depends both on the situational influence and the interaction with and among the people in the field, who either see the researcher as insider or outsider (Katyal & King, 2011; Thomson & Gunter, 2010). In relation to our study, the fluidity in our positioning was already influenced by having worked together on previous projects (O’Brien & Mitra, 2015) as well as on the Irish-Indian adoption study (Mitra & O’Brien, 2018a, b). This previous work had established a good working relationship between both researchers and also knowledge and familiarity with the field of adoption in Ireland made Dr Mitra less of an

outsider. The insider–outsider positioning was seen to provide a space where we could question the taken-for-granted assumptions about our culture, its structure and policies. This knowledge was enhanced further throughout the field work with immersion in the Irish literature. This all contributed to the researchers’ inter-cultural positioning and sensitivity towards the research topic and created opportunities for observation, curiosity and reflexivity across the various stages of the research process.

This stance helped us as researchers to check our observations and also to explore if there were levels of discrepancy between what the researchers thought they knew and what existed in the field of inquiry¹. These reflections were noted down in a diary so as to be aware of the ‘taken-for-granted’ assumptions while collecting, organising and reviewing the data. Therefore, both researchers made a list of actions that we were attentive to while reviewing and analysing the data. In the first instance we made explicit to one another our own position and relationship with adoption. We had worked previously together in the adoption field and therefore, we were able to build on that experience. On a technical level we put a number of actions in place. We double checked the search terms with the librarian of the university, then asked colleagues about the research which was available. This was followed by a process of continual questioning of each other and ensuring both researchers were consistent in their understanding of the processes involved.

In reviews of this kind, it is essential to be aware of the knowledge and understanding of the concepts at every stage of the review. For example, our understanding of the concept of ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ data sources, the definition of ‘research’, what constitutes ‘best practice’ and how to define ‘advocacy’ – were examples of processes and terms that demanded much reflexivity. The entire process of exploring and knowing our own biases and

¹ As the research was conducted in Ireland and based on Irish research, it was evident that Dr O’Brien was more of an insider in relation to the socio-cultural history of adoptions in Ireland, the contextual features of current adoption as well as being the conduit to multiple stakeholder views. Dr O’Brien was a member of the Irish Adoption Board from 1998 to 2010. She has supervised various postgraduate researches and conducted research in the field over many years and, moreover, had close connections to the academic and professional field. Her experience became the starting point to establish contacts with faculty members and to generate a list of relevant institutions and organizations that could contribute to the review. On the other hand, the Indian researcher, Dr Mitra who started her research in the field of Irish adoption system as an outsider, over a period of time, became more of an insider to the field of Irish adoption. This was an outcome achieved by Dr Mitra working on the Indian-Irish adoption study prior to this audit. Prior to working in Ireland, she was an accomplished practitioner and researcher in the Indian adoption context.

attitudes towards the research was discussed at various stages over the course of the work to arrive at a cohesive space where the research objectives could be achieved.

2.3 Methodology and the Method

Silverman (2000) defined methodology as ‘a general approach to studying research topics’ (p. 88) which governs ‘how research should proceed’ (Harding, 1987: p. 2) and how the participants are heard and the text is seen (Fidyk, 2009). The methodology for the audit was descriptive, which helped to describe systematically and accurately the facts about the given area of study; to discover the associations between or among selected observable facts; and to answer the questions based on the present context (Dulock, 1993). Under this methodology, the systematic review as a method to synthesise the data was proposed originally at the tender stage to audit the Irish adoption research. As researchers, we began from an assumption, based on our prior knowledge and experience as researchers and clinicians in the field, that the cohort of Irish adoption research was small but that it could be accessed relatively quickly. This, we believed would enable us to conduct a systematic review. This method of review was considered appropriate for the audit, based on the presumption of the small data set that would be under review. Hence, it was our view that this could be achieved within three months, which was the envisaged timescale in the AAI tender documentation.

In the initial stages of work, two significant issues related to the review and audit process emerged:

- First, there was very limited Irish research available in the electronic databases, and much of the information would have to be hand searched and consequently more time would be needed in order to do so;
- Second, hard copies could not be located for much of the research that we had identified. We had to rely therefore on the synopsis of the research presented in search engines, and to elicit information from professionals/academics in the field or depend on descriptions contained in other publications.

In light of these constraints, it was apparent that a systematic review method was no longer feasible. A review in that format would have taken 12 months to complete and was not in keeping with the time frame indicated in the original tender document and the remaining time available to us in which to complete the audit report. In view of these limitations, an alternative method was required. Therefore, ‘a step-by-step sequential approach

methodology' was designed to systematically collect, map and appraise the research across a range of timescales and data sources. This was the *first level of the analysis* and was seen as appropriate in achieving the study objectives set out by AAI. This methodology included:

- (a) clarifying the research aim with the commissioners of the research;
- (b) identifying a set of research questions;
- (c) data collection including designing a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria;
- (d) data analysis aimed at eliciting the themes contained in the body of the research;
- (e) an ethical stance and attention to the positioning of the researchers was central to all stages.

This method was considered appropriate for the purpose of screening, collecting, organising and analysing the data which took account of the stated time frame and the scope of the work. This analysis brought a focus to 'what has been researched', 'who has been researched' and 'how it has been researched'. Following the data collection and mapping stage, we moved towards the *second level of the analysis* where a broad thematic analysis of the audit research was carried out. Abstracts of the studies were used to carry out the thematic analysis reported in Part IV because of the absence of the full texts of many works. The main purpose of the analysis was to identify the gaps in the research. The step-by-step method and thematic analysis are described in detail in Sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 respectively.

2.3.1 The Step-by-Step Method – First Level Analysis

This section outlines the detailed steps involved in first-level mapping and analysis of the data that included searching, screening, organising and categorising the data.

1. Clarifying the Project Scope

This included clarification of the content area of interest for the review with the commissioners of research. The content area – 'adoption-related research in the Irish context' was set out by AAI in its 'Invitation to Tender' and is the basis for this audit report. The limited availability of Irish research data was acknowledged at this stage. It was also confirmed that the audit provided an opportunity to establish a baseline of work undertaken in the Irish context and that the inclusion of a wide range of research methodologies: quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, documentary analysis and commentary methods

would be used. The importance of being aware and sensitive to the complexity and contested nature of adoption, and the need to be as inclusive as possible of all stakeholders in the adoption community, were stressed by the researchers and accepted by the commissioners at this stage of the research process.

2. *The Development of Specific Research Questions*

As the content area was narrowed and further specified, the next step involved the development/clarification of more specific research questions. The objectives of the research were clearly stated by AAI as outlined in *Part One* of this report and are as follows:

- (a) Identify completed and ongoing research across a range of disciplines in relation to adoption.
- (b) Audit the literature with a view to producing a written report and an Excel sheet to assist with the development of a typology/database (e.g. type of study, author, year, title, type of publication, sources of information, topics covered, sources of funding, link to website etc.).
- (c) Identify gaps in the Irish research literature on adoption. (AAI Tender Document, 2017: p 1).

These objectives were the basis for the development of sub-questions which included:

- i. What research has been conducted in respect of Irish adoption?
- ii. Who has been researched in terms of participants in adoption e.g. birth parents, adopted children, adoptive mother, adoptive father, adult adoptee and adoption social workers/professionals/agencies?
- iii. If a broad definition of methodology is used, what work can be captured?
- iv. What is known about the methods used in the research, and what findings are known?
- v. What are the themes emerging in the work that has been undertaken?
- vi. Are there gaps in the body of Irish research and in what areas would it be useful to undertake research?
- vii. Will the building of an Excel spreadsheet and Endnote bibliography be realisable and if so, will it be of assistance in structuring a research typology and resource for AAI that can be updated into the future?

3. Development of Search Terms

The full set of search terms used is presented in Table 1. Based on our first scanning of the adoption research, an initial list of search terms was developed. These search terms were divided into 5 categories, namely, children, men/women, families, policies, and processes. With every search term used, the words 'Ireland' and 'adoption' were suffixed to make the search more specific and less time consuming. This list was discussed and reviewed between the researchers and the UCD college librarian. In this context, the robustness of the search terms, based on the relevance to the audit scope, purpose and the research questions was evaluated. As the search continued, the initial list was modified to add further search terms. This was aimed at seeking to be as inclusive as possible of studies pertaining to Irish adoption and to ensure that the maximum numbers of research studies were captured in the review.

Table 1

Search Terms used in the Audit

CHILDREN	WOMEN/MEN	FAMILIES	POLICIES	PROCESSES
–adopted children	–single mother	–adoptive family	–family policy	–placement
–child care	–relinquishment	–domestic adoption		–open adoption
–child welfare	–unmarried mother	– adoptive parent	–social policy	–decision-making
–child adoption Ireland	–removal	–step-family	–legal aspects	–parental rights termination
	–pregnancy	–parental attitudes	–family law	
–picture books	–birth mother	–transition to parenthood		–relocation
–court-mandated adoption	–first mother	–same-sex adoptions	–historical practices Ireland	–post-adoption counselling
	–mother and baby home	–child-rearing practices Irish families	–adoption legislation Ireland	–baby placement
	–natural father	–intercountry adoption		–voluntary placement
	–birth father	–single parent adoptions		–selection
	–pre-adoptive couples			–social work practice
	–childless couples			–search
	–infertility			–reunion
	–illegitimacy			–church

Source: Compiled by the authors.

4. Identification of Data Sources

A list of research references compiled by the Council of Irish Adoption Agencies (CIAA) was published in 2004 in Conway and O’Brien’s *‘Guide for Practitioners – A Standardised Framework for Domestic Adoption Preparation, Assessment and Decision-making Procedures.’* A more up-to-date list of known Irish research was subsequently shared by AAI. Lists from both these sources were used together with the authors’ own bibliographies,

to begin the review process in the initial research phase. These lists, our knowledge of the research area and the categories requested in the AAI tender were the starting point for categorising the data into different data sources. The data source list provided by AAI has been defined by the researchers for the purpose of the audit as follows:

- Peer reviewed work: involves an evaluation by two or more people who are qualified within the area of work to assess the quality, standard and credibility of the research. The identity of the author is not made known to the evaluators.
- Non-peer reviewed work: is a scholarly article which is not evaluated by the peer review process outlined above. The publication of the work is at the discretion of the editor. It can include articles, editorials, book reviews etc., in journals. In the Irish context many professional journals do not have formal peer review structures in place.
- Books: is defined as a body of work that has been published by a publishing house, a service provider, a stakeholder organisation or is self-published by the author.
- Government publications: is defined as publications made by government departments or government agencies.
- Conference and seminar presentations: are research papers which are presented to an audience through oral or visual mediums.
- Postgraduate research: includes theses undertaken either in full or partial fulfilment for a range of academic degrees at masters or doctoral degree level and include a range of degree designation e.g. MSc, MLitt, LLM or a PhD.

Having finalised and reviewed the search terms, the process of reviewing the various data sources mentioned above began, utilising the ‘OneSearch’ platform, ‘EJournals’ and ‘Online Databases’ provided by UCD library. These gave access to different databases as well as information pertaining to newspaper or magazine articles.

The databases included in Table 2 were searched for journal articles, books etc.:

TABLE 2
Social Science Databases Searched for Irish Adoption Research

– PsyINFO	– Google Scholar	– Sociological
	Abstracts	
– Social Science Citation Index		– Sociological Review
– Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)		– Social Work Abstracts

Source: Compiled by the authors.

The databases outlined in Table 3 were searched for legal documents and government reports or funded studies.

TABLE 3
**Databases Searched for Legal Documents, Research and Government Reports
in respect of Irish Adoption Research**

– UK/EIRE Reference Centre	– Westlaw IE
– Lenus	– Opac.oireachtas.ie
– www.aai.gov.ie	

Source: Compiled by the authors.

5. Examining the Initial Results

Combinations of search terms were used in different databases outlined in both Tables 2 and Table 3. The database search was limited to include English language works. A thorough ‘Google Scholar’ search was also undertaken to identify available research, including ‘grey’ areas of research. The initial search of the databases including ‘Google’ and ‘Google Scholar’ yielded extremely limited results. With the limited availability of Irish adoption research in electronic databases, it was decided to focus on Irish journals. A small number of Irish journals were available online, but the exploration showed that a limited number of these journals were linked to the UCD library and hence, a greater amount of time was needed to hand search Irish journals for adoption-related studies.

Table 4 presents the list of Irish journals which were searched either online or hand searched. In some cases, both online and hand searching was required, as it is only in more recent years that journals have been made available electronically. In many instances, earlier journals have not been uploaded. Hand searching involved an individual examination of journals by volume and year. The reference lists compiled at this stage emerged from an examination of databases, including Google scholar and Google, hand searching and by contacting the experts in the field.

TABLE 4
Irish Journals Searched for Irish Adoption Research

<u>Irish Journals</u>	<u>Hand searched</u>	<u>Online searched</u>
Irish Journal of Early Childhood Studies	√	X
The Irish Social Worker	√	√
Irish Journal of Family Law	X	√
Irish Psychologist	√	X
Irish Review	√	√
Irish Educational Studies	√	√
Dublin University Law Journal	√	X
Foster	X	√
Journal of Irish Studies	√	√
Journal of Irish Social Work Research (1997–2000)	X	√
Feedback: Journal of Family Therapy in Ireland	√	X
The Irish Journal of Psychology	X	√
Irish Journal of Applied Social Studies	X	√
The Irish Journal of Psychology	X	√
Irish Journal of Applied Social Science	X	√
Childlinks Journal of Barnardos	√	X

6. Selection of Material: The Pilot Study and Development of Inclusion-Exclusion Criteria

The Pilot Phase

The next step was to locate the material that was easily available/known to us. It was decided to select 25 pieces of literature to assist in the development of inter-rater schema and the final inclusion and exclusion criteria to be used. This process laid a base to maintain the ethical stance by objectively screening the various works in relation to the aim of the audit, as well

as developing the inter-rater reliability of the review process. While applying the eligibility criteria on the literature, the reviewers were not blind to the name of the authors, institutions, name of the journals and results. In this regard, adherence to the inclusion and exclusion criteria (discussed below) was important throughout the collection and organisation of the research literature.

The Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria were determined in the first instance by AAI who specified the following (AAI Tender Document, 2017: p. 1–2):

- a. Completed and ongoing research, across a range of disciplines in relation to adoption during 1952–2017.
- b. AAI had specified the kind and sources of literature to include – articles in professional journals (peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed), peer reviewed conference and symposia papers, commissioned research undertaken by consultants and researchers, systematic research undertaken by government departments, agencies or independent public bodies and relevant postgraduate research.
- c. Relevant Postgraduate Work: Completed PhD studies and masters by major thesis (MPhil etc.) in the adoption area were included and, overall, these studies were identified, found and were deemed to be important contributions to the field. In the data search stage of the audit, reference was found to a large number of masters studies (studies undertaken in part fulfilment for a Master’s degree.). Studies of this nature are generally limited in scope/depth and it is difficult to adjudicate the issue of quality. Furthermore, it was not possible to locate full texts, or in some instances even abstracts, for many masters’ dissertations. Nevertheless, it was considered important to collate as much of this information as possible, given that the objective of the wider research agenda in AAI is the ‘development of a typology/database’ (AAI Tender Document, 2017: p. 1). Similarly reference to a number of current PhD studies in the Irish adoption field was identified in the audit, but it was not always possible to obtain detailed information. Nonetheless, the masters’ theses and current PhD material has been included where possible, but the limitation associated with the inclusion of this work should be noted.

- d. The tender documentation had stipulated that methods used in the studies were to include ‘the process of systematic enquiry aimed at answering questions and/or exploring phenomena using scientific methods (employing quantitative, qualitative and/or mixed methods approaches); these methods may draw on the whole spectrum of systematic and critical enquiry to allow interpretation of data in answering specific questions and/or posing new questions for future research’ (AAI, 2017: p 1).
- e. The studies collected and organised through the above inclusion criteria were further distinguished using a ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ data schema. This was developed, as a significant body of work was located which could be included within a wide definition of secondary data. This, in turn, would extend the parameter of documentary analysis as a method. There is quite a variation across different disciplines in terms of use of secondary data and documentary analysis methodology. The researchers were conscious, however, that using a very wide definition of documentary analysis could be problematic in terms of undertaking comparative analysis and evaluating quality. While taking this limitation into account, it was considered important to include as wide a body of work as possible in the audit. This was in keeping with the audit objective, which was to capture all inter-disciplinary work in the field of adoption, and to provide a baseline of Irish adoption research. It also ensured that works, which were seen by people across the adoption community to be contributing to the knowledge base of Irish adoption, were included. This was clarified by the researchers with the commissioners after the tender was awarded, and prior to the work commencing.

The definitions of primary and secondary data used in this audit were developed to provide a schema where the small number of empirical works and the larger number of important secondary data works could be presented. It was not intended to address the issue of quality in-depth, notwithstanding the importance of evaluating quality as an intrinsic component in the audit. The definitions employed were as follows:

- 1) *Primary data* is defined as a work in which the data is collected by the researcher themselves (employing quantitative, qualitative and/or mixed method methods) and utilising a range of techniques, for example, observations, interviews, surveys. All legal and government publications (published by government departments or government agencies) are defined as primary data for the purpose of this audit.

- 2) *Secondary data* refer to a work where primary data previously collected and presented is then examined by another person/third party for the purpose of critical inquiry. In this audit, the majority of work found in legal/historical/policy/commentary and practice protocols were categorised as secondary using this data definition. The secondary data definition employed is used more as a descriptive category. This definition recognises that the methods in secondary data studies can range from systematic literature reviews, which are deemed to be on the higher end of the quality continuum, to the utilisation of a range of other documentary analysis techniques in which quality is harder to determine.

These definitions were generated at an early stage of the audit when it was recognised that a very limited number of primary studies had been conducted but, nevertheless, a wider range of important work had been carried out in the field. Keeping the focus on the objectives of the audit, and to reflect the important work that has been conducted in the field, it was decided to include the maximum range of data and hence, the definitions developed were useful for this purpose. To this end, definitions of primary and secondary data were used to enable the whole spectrum of systematic and critical enquiry to be captured and to include work that had utilised a range of different methods. This allowed the scope of the study to be widened in the first instance, but it impacted on the appraisal of quality of the research undertaken. The issue of quality is addressed in the limitations section and in the concluding section of the report.

Exclusion criteria:

The two exclusion criteria developed for the audit included:

- 1) Newspaper and magazine articles. During the review, a number of articles that discussed adoption-related issues were identified. In keeping with the objectives set by AAI, they were not included in the review.
- 2) Undergraduate research: Again, as the objectives specified postgraduate research, undergraduate research work related to adoption was excluded. (Only one piece of research, however, was found to fall within this category).

The development of the inclusion and exclusion criteria has been a dynamic process, connected with the iterative nature of the research, the challenges involved in identifying research studies and locating texts and the wish to ensure that the body of Irish adoption research in policy, political, practice and legal arenas was captured. Decisions about what to include were arrived at following the initial examination in the pilot phase of the 25 titles and

abstracts by each of the researchers. Joint conversations were then entered into, and the means through which decisions had been, and would be, reached were discussed. Differences and disagreements were resolved by discussion. This, in turn, led to the finalisation of the inclusion-exclusion criteria used in the audit. After setting the inclusion and exclusion criteria and having examined the material, 404 works were assessed as relevant to be listed for review. However, a number of steps were involved in locating the works and these require further comment.

7. Enhancing Quality: Utilisation of Search Terms, Locating Sources and Utilisation of a Typology.

As the lists of search terms were generated, each term was used in different databases to generate a maximum pool of information. The next step was to contact the people involved in academic settings, public institutes and non-government organisations to ask their assistance in identifying adoption-related work/documents (published and grey) and to also include conference and seminar presentations. This work was undertaken between August 2017 and November 2017. The main means of communication used to contact people was email. Participants were provided with a brief objective of the audit, the timeline for its submission and the data being sought. The participants were also told that the invite extended to published work, studies currently underway and literature in press. In a small number of cases, the email correspondence was followed up by phone calls to people who were known as experts in the area but had not replied and whose knowledge was considered to be important².

A list of relevant organisations was identified (presented in Table 5 below). Each institution was searched for individuals/faculty members that had involvement in and knowledge of adoption research and who had generated adoption-related research and/or publications. McManus et al (1998) reviewed the importance of contacting experts in literature searching, indicating that electronic searching might only locate one-half of relevant studies, and that 24% of relevant studies may be missed by not contacting experts. Contacting experts is

² Information can be made available to the research committee if required in respect of who was contacted, who replied with details, who did not reply and the people who replied, but who were no longer working in the adoption field. However, this data is not intended for publication in this report or elsewhere.

particularly important in fields such as adoption, which lacks its own well-defined specialist literature.

TABLE 5

List of Educational Institutions, Non- Governmental Organisations and Public Institutes Searched and Contacted.

Trinity College Dublin: Department of Psychology; Department of Sociology; Department of Political Science; Department of Social Work and Social Policy; Loyola Institute.

Dublin City University: School of Human Development; School of Policy and Practice; School of Law; School of Applied language and Intercultural Studies; School of Language, Literature and Early Education; School of Nursing, School of Psychology.

Dublin Institute of Technology: School of Language, Law and Social Sciences.

Institute of Technology, Sligo: School of Business and Social Sciences.

NUI – Maynooth: Department of Philosophy; Department of History; Department of Applied Social Studies; Department of Education; Department of Law; Department of International Development; Social Science Institute; Department of Psychology.

University College Cork: Department of Applied Social Studies; Department of Psychology; Department of Celtic Studies, Social Sciences, College of Arts; Centre for Policy Studies; School of History; School of Law; School of Philosophy; Centre for Policy Studies; School of Sociology and Philosophy.

University of Limerick: School of Education; School of Psychology; Department of History; School of Law; Sociology Department.

NUI – Galway: School of Political Science and Sociology; School of Psychology; School of Education; School of History; UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre; School of Adult Learning and Professional Development; School of Law.

University College Dublin: School of History; School of Language, Culture and Linguistic; School of Education; School of Law; School of Politics and International Relations; School of Psychology; School of Sociology; School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice

Organizations Contacted also included:

Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW); Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children (Treoir); Council for Social Welfare (CSW); Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI); Adoptive Parents Association of Ireland; Law Reform Commission; Tusla; Department of Health and Children; Equality Authority (EA); Health Service Executive (HSE); Council of Irish Adoption Agencies (CIAA); Barnados; Children’s Rights Alliance (CRA).

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Locating work in this way accelerated our search process. This helped to triangulate the data already collected, to reduce the probability of overlooking anyone from the field who has undertaken research that was not published or publicised and to identify researchers who are currently undertaking work in the area of adoption.

This step-by-step methodology was used to locate research in multiple domains including email communication, phone calls and distributing a flyer (Appendix B) to key people. It also facilitated the capture of non-published research. This process helped to augment the little information found in the database searches. While it did not lend itself to conducting a

systemic review of the Irish work, the methods employed enabled published and non-published work to be located, and thus contributed to the quality of the review.

In addition, a template was generated which was designed to capture the extracted studies across six categories including – ‘trends in literature sources’, ‘trends in time frames’, ‘primary and secondary data’, ‘best practice work’, ‘advocacy work’ and ‘postgraduate research’ (Table 6) for the first level analysis in the audit. The definitions of the literature sources, time frames and primary and secondary data have been presented in the inclusion/exclusion discussion above. The definitions of the remaining three categories are as follows:

- 1) Best Practice: The definition of ‘best practice’ used is influenced by the work of the Defence Science Board (2004). The Board suggests that in a classic ‘best practices’ scheme, regulated entities themselves devise practices to comply with relatively unspecific regulatory requirements. These practices are selected and publicised as ‘best,’ but not mandated by central administrators as they would be in regulation through a more traditional vertical command-and-control model. The idea is that these best practices will subsequently be adopted by other entities. The rule-making technique is a way of obtaining common practices, not ideal ones. In these contexts, ‘best practice’ is developed largely based on a combination of the practice knowledge/wisdom and literature available to the professional.
- 2) Advocacy is defined as literature/data that is aimed at highlighting and changing certain legal, policy and/or service issues. Work in this domain uses a mixture of literature review, anecdotal/case-based evidence and theoretical knowledge.
- 3) Postgraduate Research was developed as a category to capture research studies undertaken as part of postgraduate education at either masters or PhD level. This stand-alone category was based on the recognition that a great deal of the Irish adoption research emanated from this source. In the majority of the work, graduate students had not published their findings in peer review, non-peer review journals, or books. The potential overlap in the Excel spreadsheet between this category and other categories is recognised and efforts are made in Part III of the report to highlight when and where this occurs.

TABLE 6

Templates Schema Used for Data Extraction

Template	Different sections of Template
(1) Trends in literature	(i) Peer reviewed journals (ii) Non-peer reviewed journals (iii) Books (iv) Relevant newspaper/magazine articles (v) Government reports (vi) Conference/Seminar presentations (vii) Postgraduate research
(2) Trends in years	(a) 1952–1962 (d) 1985–1995 (b) 1963–1973 (e) 1996–2006 (c) 1974–1984 (f) 2007–2017
(3) Primary vs. secondary data	Peer reviewed journals Non-peer reviewed journals Books Government reports Conference/Seminar presentations Postgraduate research
(4) Best Practice	For all data
(5) Advocacy	For all data
(6) Postgraduate research	Adoption specific research undertaken as part of postgraduate work

For all 6 sections each study was identified as falling within either primary or secondary category.

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Data were extracted from the literature using the six categories presented in Table 6. The review team consider these templates helped to build a comprehensive framework that addressed the agreed focus and scope of the review.

8. The Construction of the Excel Spreadsheet and Individual Sheets

The Excel spreadsheet was constructed using the author’s name and brief description of 404 sources of data that fitted the inclusion criteria. The scaffolding used for mapping the studies in Excel is presented in Appendix D. The instructions for using the Excel sheet if searching for a specific topic or participant involved in adoption is provided in Sheet 1. A list of

keywords that can be used for searching is provided in Sheet 2 of the Excel sheet and also given in Appendix E.

The spreadsheet was constructed by categorising the period from 1952 up to 2017 into a series of time frames. The studies are categorised into six timelines, each depicted in different sheets in the database. This includes: studies for 1952–1962 are presented in Sheet 3, for 1963–73 in Sheet 4, for 1974–84 in Sheet 5, for 1985–95 in Sheet 6, for 1996–2006 in Sheet 7 and for 2007–2017 in Sheet 8. Where available, the abstract of individual studies was extracted and included in the spreadsheet³.

A system of ‘Individual sheets’ – holding all data relevant to each particular time period – was built into the spreadsheet. The individual sheet provides the main unit of analysis in the database. In each of the individual sheets/time periods, the studies are grouped under specific sources, that is, journals (peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed), books/book chapters, postgraduate research, government publications, and conference/seminar presentations.

9. Use of Endnote Software

The reference management software package ‘Endnote’, was used to manage the bibliographies and references for this audit report. The software is produced by Thomson Reuters and Endnote X7 version was used. A total of 404 sources of adoption research are listed in the bibliography. For some of the bibliographic material, the citation was directly exported from the databases while, for others, such as conference presentations and unpublished materials, the information was typed into Endnote by the researchers.

It is noted that the Endnote software does not take the name of the organisations as a whole. Hence, a number of sources are presented in a format that is not easily identified by general users, for example, when the organisation ‘The Adoption Board’ was typed in as a reference it was produced as ‘Board, T.A’. The same was observed for Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI), Adoption Rights Alliance (ARA), Children’s Rights Alliance (CRA), Department of Health and Children (DoH&C). Therefore, in the Excel sheet and in Endnote, abbreviations are used for these organisations instead of the full names of the organisations. The

³ This work of adding the description of each study to the Excel sheet was not proposed in the tender documentation, but was done to provide greater depth to the audit and to assist the work of future researchers. The task of organising the Excel spreadsheet, and adding and summarizing the research description of each study was an enormous task, involving a huge time commitment.

abbreviations used are listed on page 6 of this report. Lastly, all the references were formatted according to the latest APA 6th citation style. This software enhances the quality and robustness of the study.

Apart from the bibliography provided by Endnote, another list of references (p. 85) has been provided in this report. These references which are not part of Irish adoption research can be seen from Part I to V.

2.3.2 Method of Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

Having identified the broad research base through the step-by-step approach outlined above, a thematic analysis was used to answer the questions of ‘who has been researched’, ‘what has been researched’ and ‘what are the gaps in adoption research’. This stage is referred to in the audit report as the second level of analysis and is presented in Section IV. A thematic analysis aided in the classification of the themes that related to the data (Alhojailan, 2012). A number of constraints arose from the first level of analysis and decisions made at that stage shaped the thematic analysis undertaken. Firstly, arising from the decision to be as inclusive as possible of adoption literature and to use a wide definition of documentary analysis, there was a high degree of variation in the material identified. Secondly, due to the lack of access to the full texts of many studies, more detailed analysis could not be made of the individual studies or across studies. In our efforts to address the situational constraints and to meet the objective of the research, we further delineated inclusion and exclusion criteria for the thematic analysis. These criteria were developed to ensure the quality of the audit within the constraint of the limited time which was available to complete it and to focus our efforts on the pertinent themes, so the best outcomes possible could be realised.

The **inclusion criteria** were as follows:

- Studies that utilised empirical methods;
- PhDs, masters’ theses by major research e.g. MLitt /MPhil;
- Major policy documents;
- Seminal texts (recognised in the professional, policy or legal context) that have been influential in the development of policy and practice in Ireland.

The **exclusion criteria** for the thematic analysis were as follows:

- Minor dissertations undertaken as part of masters degrees: The decision to exclude minor theses was made on the basis that the detail was generally not available, we could not quality assure the work undertaken and the work, while important in many instances, invariably involved limited research⁴. Details of the minor theses are included, however, in the Excel spreadsheets;
- Conference papers: The conference papers were excluded mainly because, while we had the name of the conference paper, we did not have access to the content. In a number of instances however, where conference papers were subsequently published, this data is included in the overall analysis;
- Annual Reports: These included Annual Reports of the Adoption Authority of Ireland. While recognising that these reports are an invaluable source of data in respect of ‘who was adopted’, ‘who is adopting’ and ‘how many adoptions have taken place’ and also illustrate broad trends, there was not the space to conduct a secondary analysis of this work in this audit. Similarly, annual reports of agencies working in the adoption field were not used.

Six major themes/categories were extracted from the reading of the audit data, based on the inclusion-exclusion criteria used. These included: birth parents, adoptive parents, adopted people, law, policy and service provision. These themes enabled analysis of the available research, focusing on various people involved and the contextual parameters of legislation, policy and practice.

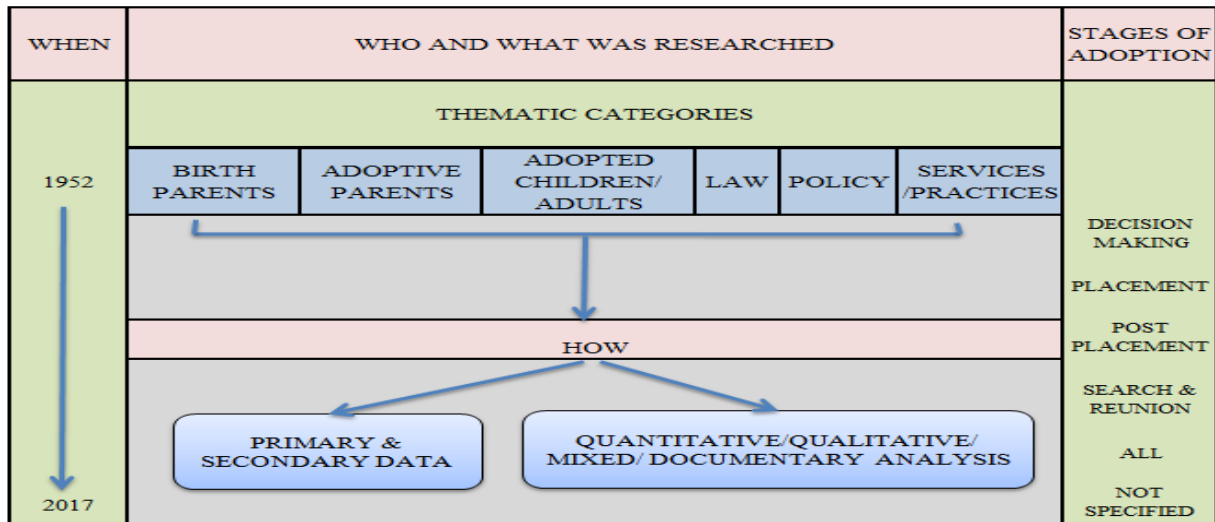
The Conceptual Framework for Thematic Analysis and Gaps in the Research

Thematic analysis facilitates an examination of similarities and differences (Miles & Huberman, 1994) across data and enables an examination of unique themes, where themes overlap and possible matches with other thematic categories. A conceptual framework (shown in Figure 1 below) was constructed to enable thematic analysis of the data. The framework examined individual studies based on who, what, when and how studies took place; which stage of the adoption process was examined (placement; post placement; search and reunion) and the nature of decision-making involved. Building on the six themes of birth parents, adoptive parents, adopted people, law, policy and service provisions, the studies were examined to determine how the study was undertaken (i.e. methodology utilised) and

⁴ However, references are made to these theses in some instances in the thematic analysis and the explanation for its inclusion is outlined.

the extent to which the study was based on primary or secondary data. This led to a comprehensive description of work undertaken on adoption and, in turn, enabled gaps in the field to be identified.

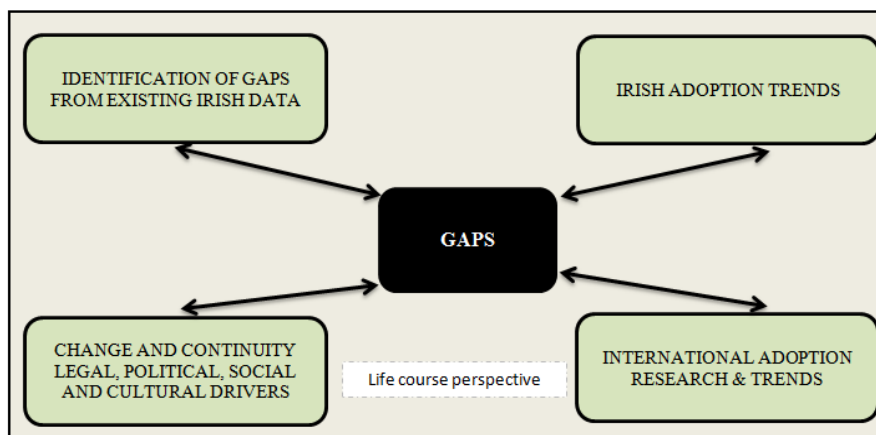
Figure 1
Conceptual Framework Developed to Guide the Thematic Analysis in the Audit.



Source: Compiled by the authors.

The above Figure 1 facilitated to draw a framework of themes that could be derived from the data collected. After reflecting over “who and what was researched” and “when it was researched” the thematic analysis showed the gaps in different areas of adoption research. Hence, a second conceptual was drawn that summarised the gaps that were identified into four main domains. These four domains are represented in Figure 2, below.

Figure 2
Conceptual Framework Used to Identify Research Gaps Arising from Thematic Analysis.



Source: Compiled by the authors.

While the extremely limited nature of the Irish research base was recognised early on in the audit, it was important nonetheless to be as systematic as possible in the identification of research gaps. Thus, a framework was developed that could:

- utilise the analysis of Irish research undertaken;
- take account of our knowledge of general adoption trends in the Irish and international contexts⁵;
- take account of contextual parameters i.e. political, social, legal and cultural drivers that shape and drive continuity and change; and
- life course and social psychological perspectives.

This framework enabled us to take account of the fact that adoption policies, practices and laws evolve at different rates across different contexts and for different reasons. Thus, consideration of research recommendations arising from this audit will need to take account of the dynamic and evolutionary nature of this key context marker.

⁵ It was beyond the scope of this project to undertake a systematic, robust and detailed examination of international research and practice trends against which to evaluate Irish research adoption gaps. However our professional and academic knowledge in the field for over 30 years in the case of Dr O'Brien and 15 years in the case of Dr Mitra was a significant resource.

The conceptual framework is not intended as undertaking a detailed analysis (for the reasons of time and resources constraints discussed throughout this report) but, rather it is used to offer an overview of the direction of adoption research in Ireland and where it might travel. It was designed to capture an appraisal of adoption research undertaken in relation to ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘when’ and ‘how’. Data was examined against current adoption trends in Ireland, with reference to past and present and anticipating the future directions (Palmer & O’Brien, 2018). It also recognises that future directions of Irish adoption research need to be developed as part of a wider research strategy and, in commissioning this research, AAI are well-positioned for developing such a strategy. This will be discussed further in Part V of the report.

2.4 Summary

The methodology developed to undertake this audit and described in this section should be seen as an iterative and a dynamic process that was co-constructed between the researchers themselves and between the researchers and commissioners. The aim of this review is to provide a comprehensive overview of adoption-research work in Ireland from 1952 to 2017. The audit utilised a step-by-step approach to identify, collect, organise and categorise adoption-related research works from different data sources across a 65-year period. A total of 404 works were collected, for which the summary data is presented in Part III of this report. The studies are also presented in the accompanying Excel spreadsheets developed as part of this audit.

A second tranche of work was then undertaken to appraise ‘what has been researched’, ‘who has been researched’ and the ‘gaps in the research’. A thematic analysis was used to undertake this aspect of the work. This was aided by the development of the two conceptual frameworks outlined in Figures 1 and 2 above. The findings in relation to this work are discussed in Part IV of the Report with follow-up in the Conclusions in Part V of the Report.

Several limitations of the research were noted. These include

- challenges of undertaking the work within a tight time frame;
- identifying the body of research work and difficulties in accessing full texts of identified research;
- the tensions between the desire of the researchers to be as inclusive as possible of work undertaken across a range of disciplines and contexts and located in different

sources, and how this had the potential to impact on the assessment of quality and the identification of future research gaps.

Nonetheless, and in spite of the identified limitations, the audit provides a strong baseline description of Irish research, albeit the scale of Irish research being considered as extremely limited. The analysis undertaken of research that has been done, presented in Part III and IV, and the conclusions offered in Part V, are an important resource. Likewise, the Excel spreadsheets that accompany this work are a significant and important resource. This offers the potential for building on and adding future research over the years and, thus it has the potential to provide valuable assistance to many in the adoption community in the years to come.

PART III

DATA ON ADOPTION RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1 Overview of Adoption Research Results

In this section, information is presented, using both tabular and graphical representation, on the categories of adoption research identified in the first-level analysis and the data collected therein. This analysis is drawn from the various data sources and is presented using the six categories discussed in Part II. The step-by-step methodology facilitated the identification of the scope of Irish adoption research, the nature of that research and the direction of the research. The results presented in this part are largely descriptive, and analytical only in relation to general trends.

Arising from the search of sources and databases listed in Part II (Tables 2, 3 & 4) a total of 437 adoption-related works were identified across a range of data categories – books, conference/seminar presentations, government documents, peer and non-peer reviewed journal articles, theses and newspaper/magazine articles. After checking for duplication of works and excluding newspaper or magazine articles (see exclusion criteria in Part II), a total data set of 404 works was identified. The categories of the work, the numbers involved and the variation across time periods are presented in Table 7 below. The results are also presented in detail in Appendix D (Excel Sheet of Adoption Research from 1952 to 2017).

Table 7
Categorisation of the Data into Different Sections
Across Decades (1952-2017) (N=404)

Different Categories	Publications in Different Decades						Total Publications	
	1952–62	1963–73	1974–84	1985–95	1996–2006	2007–2017	Sub-total	Total
Books	1	2	7	12	15	32	69	82
Book chapters	0	0	0	1	5	7	13	
Journal articles								100
Peer reviewed	0	0	1	3	13	24	41	
Non-peer reviewed	4	2	1	2	19	31	59	
Government publications	9	11	13	13	32	41	119	
Conference Presentations								42
National	0	0	1	1	0	10	12	
International (within Ireland)	0	0	0	0	0	11	11	
International (outside Ireland)	0	0	0	0	2	11	13	
Seminar (national)	0	0	0	0	0	6	6	
Theses	0	1	0	8	24	28	61	
Total	14	16	23	40	110	202	404	404

Source: Compiled by the authors.

The search process resulted in the identification of 82 books/book chapters, 100 articles in both peer and non-peer reviewed journals and 119 government publications. The data on conference and seminar presentations has not been published and remains in the grey literature. This material proved difficult to locate and information was mainly provided by academics and professionals through email contact. A total of 42 papers were identified that had been presented at national and international conferences/seminars.

Finally, data was located on 61 postgraduate theses (both major and minor) which were found relevant to the objectives of the review. It was considered important to include ongoing research work as part of the audit, as there are important PhD works taking place in the adoption arena. A distinction was made between ‘completed theses’ and ‘ongoing research

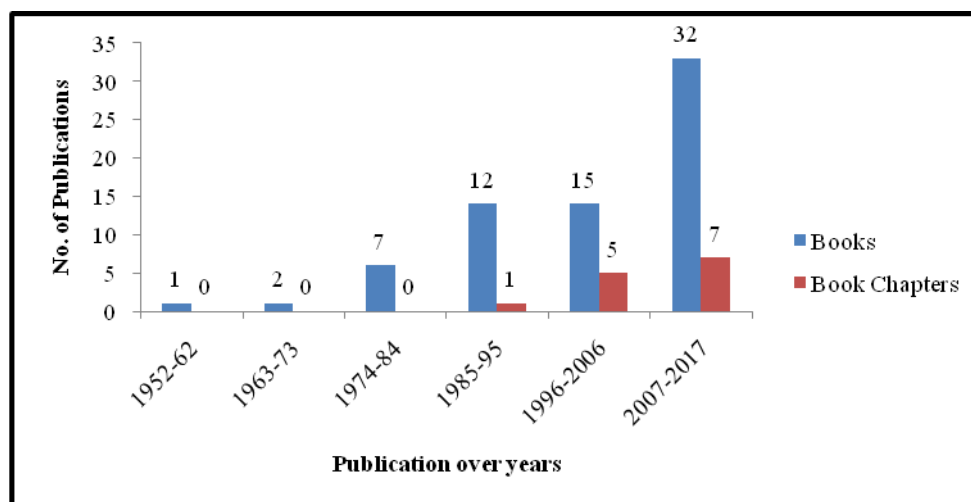
work’. This aspect of the audit involved an extensive search and effort. While the titles of many adoption research theses were found, many of these had been completed in ‘part fulfilment of Master’s degrees’. As a result, a large number of the theses were not available, and therefore information on the methodological details of the studies could not be obtained. The total data set of all theses was used in first level analysis (mapping of the data) as discussed in Part II, but was narrowed to PhD and masters by major thesis in the thematic analysis.

3.2 Findings Related to ‘Books’ Search

Books and book chapters form an important part of adoption research (N=82). While the definition of ‘book’ employed in this study aimed to capture books from a wide range of sources, it does not include government published documents and government publications which are presented as a separate category. The trends over time in respect of the ‘book’ category are presented in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3

Books/Book Chapters Published 1952–2017 (N=82)



Source: Compiled by the authors.

When the spread of books published over the decades was examined, ten books were written in the three decades between 1952 and 1984. These books covered an overview of the adoption process (Abramson, 1984; Barrett, 1952; Darling, 1974) unmarried mothers in Ireland (Kilkenny, 1972; O’Hare, 1983) and adoption services (Lefroy, 1981). The limited publication rate at this time applied not only in the case of books, but across the full range of

publication categories. While it is recognised that the rate of publications in the social sciences was lower at this time compared to now, the low rate of work perhaps also reflects the secretive nature of adoption and the societal stigmas attached to birth outside marriage and infertility during this era.

In the two decades that followed, 1985-1995 and 1996-2006, a total of 27 books (Figure 3) were published indicating a slowly increasing publication rate over the decades. From 2007 onwards, a sharp increase was observed in the publications rate, with 32 books and 7 chapters published in this time period (Figure 3). This includes books written on the themes of legislation (McPartland, 2010; O'Halloran, 2009; Shannon, 2008, 2011) and social care (Hamilton, 2012). A small selection of biographical books was written by adoptive parents (O'Flaherty & O'Flaherty, 2015) and by adopted people (Cúnamh, 2013; Curran, 2013; Palmer, 2016).

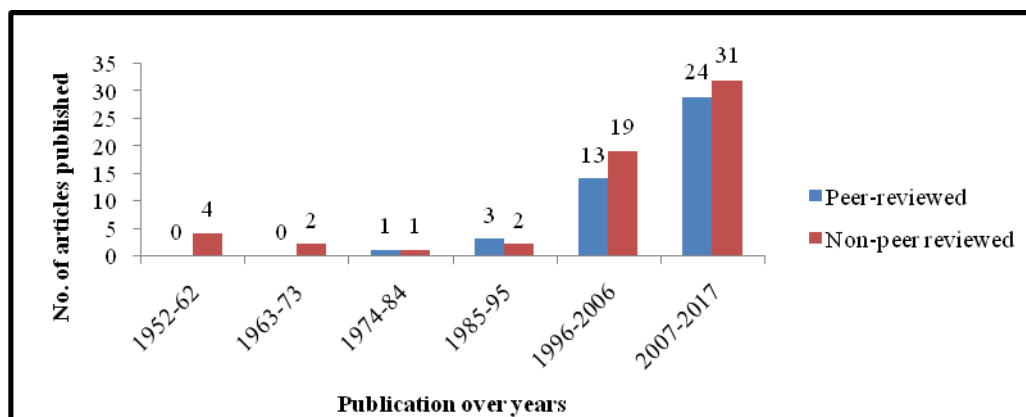
The publication of adoption research in book chapters has not seen an increase comparable to book publications. In other words, the publication of book chapters has been consistently low, that is, 13 book chapters between 1952 and 2017 compared with 69 books published during the same time span (Fig 3). Five chapters were published in the decade 1996-2006 and seven in the more recent decade of 2007-2017 (Fig 3). The book chapters cover topics such as the migration of orphans from Irish famines (O'Gallagher, 1997), involuntary adoption (Ward, 2004), social work in adoption (Darling, 2005), family support and child welfare in Ireland (Dolan et al, 2015) and the position of the illegitimate child (McCaughren & Powell, 2017). Many of the book chapters were included in international publications, while many of the books were domestic publications in Ireland. This differentiation has an impact on the dissemination of Irish research.

3.3 Findings Related to 'Journal Articles'

Data on journal articles presented in Figure 4 distinguishes between peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed articles. The majority of journal publications are concentrated in non-peer reviewed articles. Between 1952 and 1973, a total of six articles were published and all were in non-peer reviewed Irish journals. These articles covered areas such as the homeless child or orphans (Barrett, 1955; Brophy, 1952) and unmarried mothers (Sweeney, 1969). Three non-peer reviewed articles were published between 1974 and 1995. However, the publication rates of peer reviewed articles saw a gradual increase, from zero articles in the period 1952–

73, to a total of four articles over the years 1974–1995 (Figure 4). During this latter time period, the focus of the work was legislation (Binchy, 1976), unmarried fathers (Bainham, 1995) and child care policy (O'Connor, 1992).

FIGURE 4
Peer Reviewed and Non-Peer Reviewed
Journal Articles Published 1952–2017 (N=100)



Source: Compiled by the authors.

Similar to the trend with the publication of books, a greater number of both peer and non-peer reviewed articles were published from 1996 onwards. Between 2007 and 2017, Irish researchers have published more extensively in journals. This comprises of 31 articles in non-peer reviewed and 24 in peer reviewed journals. From the period of 1952-2017 publication in peer reviewed journals, however, has always been at a lower rate, that is, 41 articles in total compared to 59 articles published in non-peer reviewed journals (Figure 4).

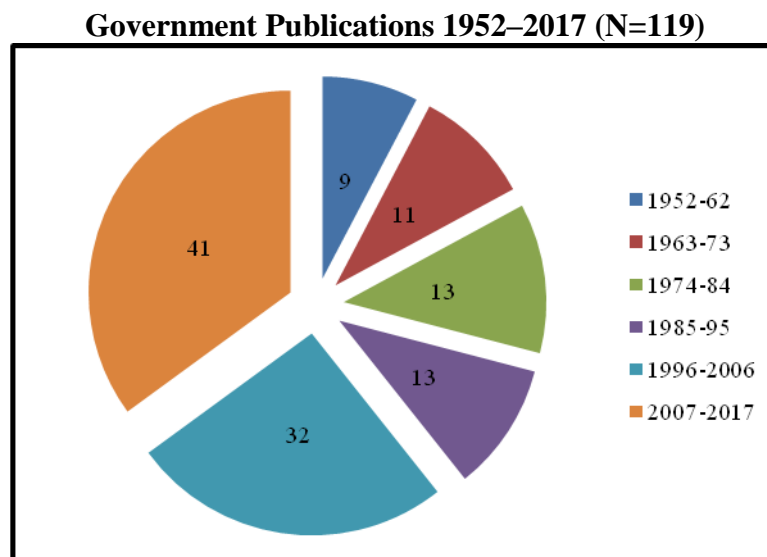
Peer and non-peer reviewed journal articles were considered, taking citation rates into account. The focus on citation rates has emerged in recent years as an indicator of the exposure and use of research work. In some instances, it can be used to indicate the quality and robustness of research. The majority of non-peer reviewed articles were published in local journals in Ireland (see Table 4). As a result of this practice, it was not possible to obtain citation numbers for these articles. On the other hand, the citation rates remain low even where articles were published in peer reviewed journals, for example, O'Mahony's (2012) article on Irish law on non-traditional families was cited six times (Google Scholar); Greene et al's (2007) article on intercountry adoptions was cited four times (Taylor & Francis

database) and McCaughren & Lovett’s (2014) article on domestic adoption was cited twice (Google Scholar). The citation rates recorded range from three to nine for most of the peer reviewed articles. The trends in respect of the reach of Irish adoption research are in part influenced by what is happening in this context.

3.4 Findings Related to Government Publications

Research work in relation to adoption contained in government publications is presented in Figure 5. The annual reports published by the Adoption Board (established by the 1952 legislation – and changed to Adoption Authority under the 2010 Act) form the majority of government publications over the years. These annual reports are an important source of data, presenting the annual activity levels in adoption and have been used also to influence policy and legislative change. Between 1952 and 1984, a total of 33 government documents were published. This includes the Adoption Board’s annual reports, the Law Reform Commission (1982) Report on ‘Illegitimacy’ and the Department of Health (1984) Review of Adoption Services. Between 1985 and 1995, there were 13 government publications, the majority again being the annual reports of the Adoption Board.

FIGURE 5



Source: Compiled by the authors.

There has been an increase, decade on decade, in the number of government documents being published between 1952 and 2017. In total, 119 documents have been published (Table 5). The number of publications begins to rise significantly after 1996, with 32 publications

between 1996 and 2006. These include the Law Reform Commission (1998); The ‘Report on Implementation of the Hague Convention with respect to Intercountry Adoptions, Towards a Standardised Framework for Intercountry Adoptions’ (1999); Equality Authority (2001) ‘Report on Adoption Leave Act 1995’, ‘Towards a Standardised Framework on Domestic Adoptions’ (Conway & O’Brien, 2004) and ‘Mixed Method Adoption Research in respect of Adoption Decision-making’ (Loughran & Richardson, 2005).

Since 2007, there have been a further 41 publications in this category. This is comprised of government-funded research and government agency reports (Figure 5). The studies are inclusive of Adoption Board and Adoption Authority of Ireland Annual Reports and cover several areas. Major studies include – ‘Barriers to the Realisation of Children’s Rights in Ireland’ (Kilkelly, 2007), ‘A Study of Intercountry Adoption Outcomes in Ireland’ (Greene et al, 2007), and ‘Motherhood for Women with Disabilities’ – A Study Funded by the National Disability Authority (Begley et al, 2009). These publications have provided useful inputs at legislative, policy and practice levels and signal the commitment of governments to address adoption-related issues that are gaining traction in the public and professional domains.

3.5 Findings Related to ‘Conference/Seminar Presentations’

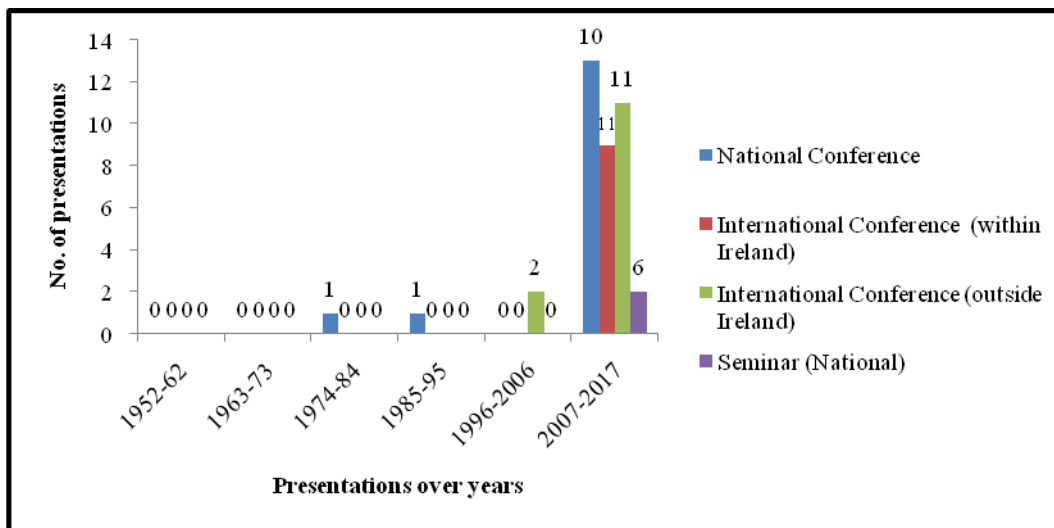
The data in respect of this category is limited, as there is scant information related to adoption. available in respect of conference or seminar presentations. It is not clear if conferences were not common in Ireland from 1952 till 1995, or if conferences were held and data has not been retained. Data was found for two national-level conferences held between 1974 and 1995 (Figure 6). This included an important conference organised by the Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children in 1978 and another one in 1990 to mark the first anniversary of the incorporation by the United Nations General Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Both of these conferences were held in Dublin.

Over the course of the decade from 1996 to 2006, no conference was recorded with the exception of two presentations made to the International Conference on Adoption Research in East Anglia, England by Nixon et al (2006) and Greene et al (2006) on intercountry adoption in Ireland. A number of conferences were held during that time period in respect of ‘Intercountry Adoption’ and the introduction of the ‘Standardised Framework for Assessment’, but this research is collated in the work of O’Brien et al (1999). It was only in the decade from 2007 to 2017 that greater numbers of national and international presentations

were made by researchers in Ireland. From 2007 to 2017, a total of 10 presentations were made at national-level conferences; 11 presentations at international conferences within Ireland and 11 presentations at international conferences outside Ireland.

FIGURE 6

**Research Papers Presented at Conferences & Seminars for the period 1952–2017
(N=42)**



Source: Compiled by the authors.

The topics covered in these conferences range across social-emotional development and adjustment among internationally adopted children in Ireland (Nixon et al, 2008; Parkes, 2012), children in care and permanency (O’Brien, 2013), adoption by civil partners (Bracken, 2014; Ryan, 2013), Irish-American adoptions (O’Brien, 2014) and adoption in a digital age (Parkes & McCaughren, 2014). Recurring themes were found across conference presentations and these relate to adoption legislation (Downer, 2014; Kelleher, 2014; Ryan, 2014), intercountry adoptions (Cantwell, 2014; Parkes, 2012), patterns of change in domestic adoptions (O’Brien, 2013), social work practice in adoption (Hall, 2014), and illegitimate children (McCaughren & Powell, 2015). The research presented at international seminars includes a comparison of Irish and American adoptions (O’Brien, 2012, 2016), step-family and foster-family adoptions in Ireland (Tobin, 2017), the social construction of adoption in Ireland (McGrath & Greene, 2013), same-sex adoptions (Bracken, 2013, 2014) and findings related to internationally adopted children in Ireland (Nixon et al, 2009a, b, c).

The search of different databases, universities and organisations (presented in Part II) did not reveal any significant information on seminars. Therefore, it was only through the direct contact with university faculty members that the information on conferences and seminars was compiled. As a result, six seminar presentations (Figure 6) were recorded for the period 2007–2017. The discussions at these seminars were conceptual in nature, and reported on research conducted outside the jurisdiction, such as Long-Term Care. This is a topic that is gaining traction in adoption research and it is likely that research studies currently underway will feature in conferences in the future (see postgraduate adoption work in Section 3.6). Recently, Irish-American adoptions and the connection between a past as a ‘sending country’ and the recent trend of inward intercountry adoption are topics pursued by O’Brien. This work has been mainly presented at international conferences (O’Brien, 2015, 2017).

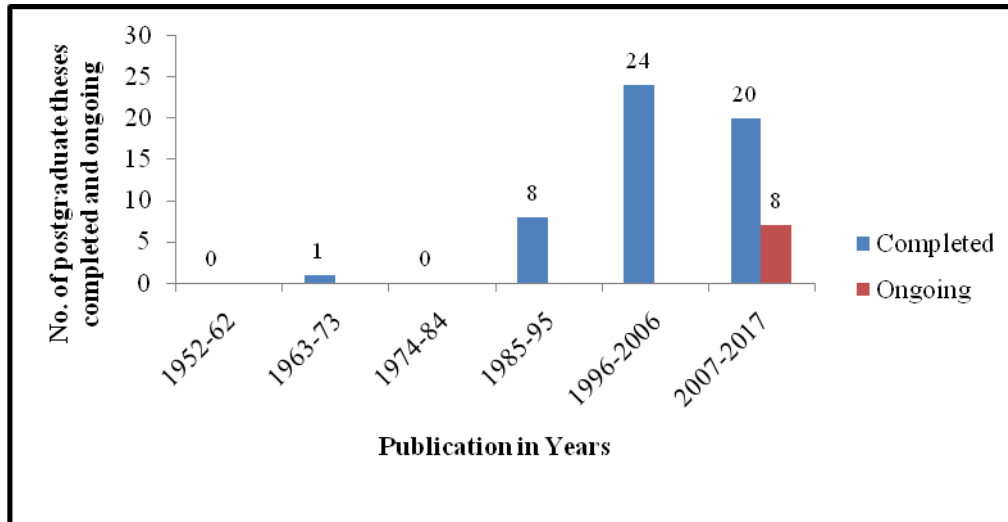
3.6 Findings Related to ‘Postgraduate’ Adoption Research

Data for postgraduate research was extracted in two ways – by contacting the faculty members who are active in the field of adoption and by searching individual Irish university databases. A list of research compiled by the Council for Irish Adoptions provided a useful starting point which aided this search. While it was possible to identify the research work, it remained a challenge to obtain abstract information and, in many instances, obtaining the full texts of the postgraduate thesis was impossible. Some of the libraries online search produced a list of theses, but no abstracts were available. In cases where the abstract was provided, there was often insufficient information on the methodology used, number of participants studied, method of analysis and findings. The summary of availability of abstracts and theses is presented in Table 8.

A total of 53 completed postgraduate theses (including PhD and various masters) were located between 1952 and 2017 (Figure 7) with eight PhD research projects currently underway. A number of theses were undertaken in part fulfilment of requirements for Master’s degrees, while others were the sole basis for the awarding of the degree. In the latter cases, the work involved is generally more substantial and in-depth and is referred to in academic circles as a Master’s degree by major research. The eight PhD studies currently ongoing in the field of adoption are included in the audit, as these studies will help address certain research gaps. It is also seen as important to include ongoing PhD studies so that academics, students and professionals as well as the commissioners of this audit are aware of their existence.

FIGURE 7

**Completed Postgraduate Theses and Ongoing Research Work for the period 1952–2017
(N=61)**



Source: Compiled by the authors.

During the period 1952–1996, a total of nine postgraduate theses were completed. These included research related to unmarried mothers (Creehan, 1967; Richardson, 1993; Wallace, 1994), adoption policy in Ireland (Downing, 1986), constitutional rights of parent and child in adoption and custody laws (O'Reilly, 1989), opening the 'telling' process in adoption (Kerins, 1993), experiences of adult adoptees (Bridgeman, 1993), adoptive motherhood (Lillis, 1995) and a comparison of adoption across Ireland and UK (O'Halloran, 1994).

A gradual change was observed during the 1996–2006 decade, when 24 postgraduate research studies were undertaken. This included MPhil theses on analysis of the representation of unmarried mothers in the press (Boyce, 1996), legitimate mothers and adoption in Ireland (Morris, 1996), and young people's experiences of being adopted by their foster parents (Danaher, 2002). It also included work in relation to assessment practices (Neville, 2000), and the perspective of the adoptive parents on search and reunion (Bowers, 2005). The LLM theses concentrated on adoption legislation (Horgan, 1998; McCarthy, 2002) whereas the PhD researches covered topics, varying across adoption policy and practice in Ireland in the 1980s (Conway, 2000), unmarried motherhood, infanticide and illegitimacy in the 20th century (Maguire, 2000), children adopted from Romania into Ireland (Switzer, 2001), Catholic rescue and repatriation of Irish unmarried mothers of St. Anne's

Adoption Society during the 1950s–1970s (Callanan, 2002), and the longitudinal study of children from long-term foster care (Cregan, 2004, forthcoming).

Each year added a new perspective to Irish adoption research and an increase in the number of postgraduate researches to 27 was evident in 2007–2017. During this time period, 20 research studies were completed and eight are currently ‘ongoing’ (Figure 7). There is evidence of greater diversion of research topics and these include same-sex adoptions (Geaney, 2010), constitutional and legislative provisions with regard to non-consensual adoption of marital children (Henry, 2008), open adoption in Ireland through the narratives of adoptive parents (McCaughren, 2010), Irish birth parents’ and foster carers’ views on post-adoption contact (Donovan, 2010) and Kearney’s comparative sociological analysis of adoption across Ireland, USA and UK. Information regarding access to postgraduate theses, including location, is shown in Table 8. A number of interesting trends are noted. Seventeen theses were identified that had been submitted at school level in third-level institutions only, but they were not available in the university library or through any other public data source.

Table 8

Access to Abstracts/Theses of Postgraduate Research Completed in the period 1952–2017 (N=53).

Categorisation of completed postgraduate theses	No. of abstract/theses available
Abstract & thesis available in library	12
Abstracts only available in library	15
Abstract accessed but thesis not available	1
Copy of abstract/thesis available through personal contact	8
Copy of thesis/abstract available at School level in 3rd level but not available to public or academics	17

Source: Compiled by the authors.

In the online library search 27 theses were identified. These included 12 theses where the full text was available and in 15 cases, the abstract only was available (Table 8). Eight full theses

were made available to the researchers after personal contact with the faculty members and their research students and hence, these theses were included in the review. In our view, theses available only at school level cannot be given weight in this audit, given the lack of access to the relevant data in the first place (including examination mark) and thus likelihood of variable academic standards.

Nevertheless, it is important to provide a description of the types of academic research that have been completed. The research community in Ireland is small and the number involved in adoption research is even smaller. Individual theses may be accessed by individual researchers at a later stage if similar areas of work are being examined. The descriptive data contained in the Excel sheet, and summarised in Table 8 is important for this purpose. As discussed in the methodology however, PhD studies and masters by major thesis only are included in the thematic analysis in Part IV.

3.7 Findings Related to 'Best Practice'

The definition of 'best practice' outlined in Part II is one where regulated entities themselves devise practices to comply with relatively unspecific regulatory requirements. The rule-making technique is a way of obtaining common practices, not ideal ones (Defense Science Board, 2004). Research work in respect of the development of best practices was evident across various data sources including books, journals, various government publications, including Adoption Board annual reports and agency, professional and advocacy group publications. The work focuses largely on service provision in the area of pre-adoption and post-adoption counselling services and psycho-educational training for the birth families, adoptive parents and those seeking background information of their birth families.

Significant work was contained in the seminal report, the 1984 'Review of Adoption 1980'. This is considered by many as highly significant in relation to the subsequent direction of domestic adoption practice. This review was set up by the then Minister of Health, as adoption was excluded from the review of Child Care Services 1980. The review brought together many experts in the field. Over time, as intercountry adoptions gained prominence, best practice development was also to the fore. Ireland was in uncharted territory in relation to intercountry adoption.

The Law Reform Commission (1998) filled a gap through the publication of a report on the 'Implementation of the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children in Intercountry

Adoptions'. The report discussed the Convention standards in terms of adoptability of the child, consultation with the child, counselling, immigration clearances, categories of adoption, Ireland as a receiving state, and simple adoptions in Irish law.

At the same time, a move towards a standardised framework for intercountry adoption assessment procedures was produced by O'Brien et al (1999), under the auspices of the Department of Health and Children. The development of this report included a survey of stakeholders involved in assessment processes and this data was used to develop a best practice framework. A standardised framework for domestic adoption preparation, assessment and decision-making procedures was later commissioned by the Adoption Board and undertaken/produced by Conway and O'Brien in 2004 as a further best practice initiative. This domestic standardised framework was not rolled out, however, in the same way as the previous intercountry adoption assessment model. The falling numbers involved in domestic adoption at this stage were perhaps a contributor to this. There were other examples of best practice services developments also – O'Brien and Dempsey (2004) were given a DoH commission to develop a report on intercountry adoption 'train the trainers' preparation courses. Similarly, the Equality Authority (2001) provided guidance in respect of the Adoptive Leave Act – 1995, thus adding clarity for service users and service providers.

With the adoption legislation being amended on eight occasions since 1952, several reports and discussion papers were also written (Shannon, 2003) which added further to best practice developments in the field of adoption. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Houses of the Oireachtas and the Law Reform Commission have regularly produced publications with information in respect of adoption legislation, services and provisions aimed at better preparing adoptive parents, adoption social workers, birth families, practitioners and academics when adoption-related queries and dilemmas arise.

3.8 Findings Related to Advocacy

In this report we have defined 'advocacy' as literature/data that is aimed at highlighting and changing certain legal, policy and/or service issues which use a mixture of literature, anecdotal evidence and theoretical knowledge. With respect to this definition, various books published by government-funded organisations like Barnardos (2011), Children's Rights Alliance (2012a, b), articles and papers by Adoption Rights Alliance (2014, 2015, 2017) and books by Adoptive Parents Association of Ireland (1991, 1995), Central Council of Irish

Adoption Agencies (1997) were included in the mapping of the data and are contained also in the Excel sheet.

From 1990 onwards, a trend of an increasing number of publications of these advocacy reports was observed. For example, Barnardos (1992) published trends and issues in adoption in Ireland for 15 years of adoption advice, information and counselling. The Adoptive Parents Association of Ireland (1995, 2006) published an adoption handbook and directory of adoption-related services. The Central Council of Irish Adoption Agencies (1997) published guidelines for policy and disclosure in relation to searches made under adoption and foster care placements. There were a large number of publications by the Adoption Rights Alliance, which has regularly represented the concerns of adopted people and birth parents. In addition to these advocacy reports, a few studies were undertaken which highlight the service issue concerns. For example, a research project was undertaken to assess the level of service provision in domestic adoption and crisis pregnancy counselling services in Ireland (Loughran & Richardson, 2005); and pregnancy, childbirth and early motherhood in women with disabilities where a small section dealt with non-consensual adoptions for mothers with disability (Begley, 2009).

Hence, with the objectives and the method of review in mind, the research categorised under the ‘advocacy’ section was listed in the Excel sheet by the organisation (e.g. ARA, CRA, Barnardos, CIAA etc.) through which these advocacy issues were being promoted. This helped to illustrate the kind of research work being undertaken by each organisation, as well as knowing the direction in which the Irish system of adoption is headed and to what extent it is open to change.

3.9 Summary

The analysis offered in this section provides a description of how the step-by-step approach enabled a detailed overview of the studies conducted in the adoption field in Ireland from 1952 to 2017 to be identified and appraised. The step-by-step approach outlined in Part II was based on meeting the objectives as outlined in the tender document. The approach used, including the inclusion and exclusion categories developed, resulted in the collection of a total of 404 studies/works across five data sources or categories. These include journals, books/book chapters, government documents, postgraduate theses and conference/seminar presentations.

This information set provides the basis for addressing a number of the research questions underpinning the audit. The initial findings then paved the way for a more in-depth examination using a thematic analysis in respect of ‘what has been researched’, ‘who has been researched’ and ‘how’ it has been researched. The findings of the thematic analysis are presented in Part IV below.

PART IV

THEMATIC ANALYSIS -

THE NATURE OF THE RESEARCH EVIDENCE IDENTIFIED

4.1 Introduction to Analysis

This section of the report provides further analysis of the data extracted and presented in Part III. Various themes identified in the work are outlined in Figure 1 of Part II and presented in tabular form in Appendix C. The themes which have been discussed in greater detail in this Part IV, aim to capture what has been researched, with whom, on what topics and across the different time periods. As previously highlighted, the research base in respect of adoption in Ireland is very limited. The methodology selected for the study was designed to include as much of the broad spectrum of work conducted in the field as possible, whilst at the same time, the audit was required to keep an appraisal of ‘quality of research’ to the fore. While the appraisal of quality continues to be a contested issue in research (Morse, 2015) as discussed in Part II, nonetheless, consideration of quality remains important in achieving the overall goal of identifying research gaps.

In keeping this context and the study aims in mind, the analysis focuses on who was adopted, who was adopting and what was researched in the adoption field. This includes research related to various parties involved in adoption; research related to legislative, policy and service provision contexts and finally research related to adoption stages and specific processes. Thus, the thematic analysis used in this study is more descriptive in nature than analytical (see Part II). This arises for a number of reasons, including the inability to obtain the full texts of all works found in the search; gaps in respect of research design in many of the studies found; the need to capture a wide picture of available research in the adoption field and a commitment to attending to the dynamic and complex nature of the adoption arena.

These factors and decisions had an undoubted impact on the ability and capacity to determine the robustness, generalisability and overall quality of the research. In order to mitigate these factors in so far as is possible, a thematic analysis that aims to identify the emergent themes

through a process of immersion in the work and by keeping a focus on the who, what, when and how was conducted. It was also decided to exclude certain works in order to strengthen the output for the study objectives, including the quality dimension.

The works excluded in the thematic analysis include the following: Information data/statistical reports (i.e. Adoption Board Reports); Information and practice/training protocols, conference presentations and minor dissertations. Nonetheless, where it is considered that a work played an important role in the evolution of the field or in the specific theme under consideration, the work is named but identified as falling within one of these categories. The analysis focuses on who was adopted, who was adopting and what was researched in the adoption field.

4.2 Thematic Analysis

In this section, the thematic analysis is presented. The themes discussed are:

- (1) birth parents
- (2) adopted people, which is comprised of adopted children and adopted adults
- (3) adoptive parents followed by
- (4) legislation
- (5) policy and
- (6) service provision.

A discussion is also provided in relation to the research on

- (7) stages of adoption
- (8) overview of domestic adoption and intercountry adoption.

Each theme is discussed with reference to a number of sub-themes, followed by a brief commentary on the findings and the identification of research gaps.

4.2.1 BIRTH PARENTS

Research on birth parents continues to be a dominant focus in the field, from the 1950s to the present day. It has been conducted in multiple domains, including historical analysis as well as practice and legislative writings. The birth parents' theme is divided into two categories: unmarried birth mother (those who give birth outside marriage) and the much less researched

unmarried birth father (those who have a child outside marriage). The birth parent theme has various sub-themes, including

- (a) Illegitimacy as impetus for adoption
- (b) Stigma and unmarried mothers
- (c) Unmarried mothers' rights
- (d) Dealing with secrecy (migration)
- (e) Mother & Baby homes
- (f) Unwed birth fathers
- (g) Birth sibling/s and
- (h) Search and reunion.

These sub-themes are discussed below:

(a) **Illegitimacy as Impetus for Adoption:** The classic work of Barrett (1952) on illegitimate children became the basis for other researchers' writings in this era including Brophy, 1952 and Tyrell, 1953. It was only during the 1960s that the first empirical work on unmarried birth mothers and illegitimacy was undertaken through the work of Creehan (1964). With each decade, the empirical work continued to develop, though at quite a slow rate. In 1983, O'Hare et al conducted a nationwide survey on women who gave birth outside marriage in Ireland during the twelve months of 1983. In 1988, O'Donohue studied unmarried mothers who had delivered in a major Dublin maternity hospital. Illegitimacy and unmarried motherhood have remained a central research focus across the decades. Salazar (1999) studied perceptions of illegitimacy in the West of Ireland and the doctoral work by American scholar, Maguire (2000) on 'The Myth of Catholic Ireland: Unmarried Motherhood, Infanticide and Illegitimacy in the Twentieth Century' concentrated on decision-making and placement. In 2003, Garrett examined illegitimacy as a factor in the supply of children for adoption. In more recent times, Luddy's (2011) postgraduate work examined unmarried mothers in Ireland from 1880 to 1993. Both Garrett and Luddy's works, with a difference of eight years in publication dates, examined illegitimacy through social, political and cultural discourses. The studies researched within this sub-theme utilised a combination of qualitative, quantitative and documentary analysis methodologies.

(b) **Stigma and Unmarried Mothers:** The association between disgrace (stigma) and unmarried motherhood was the focus of several research works in the early 1990s and five key publications are noted. In 1990, Doherty's work captured the changing trends in single parenthood. This work stressed the need for recognition among practitioners of reframing adoption as a child care option in a more creative way to meet the changing needs of modern Irish society. Richardson's (1991, 1993) seminal work focused on unmarried pregnant women and how (and what) decisions they were making. The work of Wallace (1994) and Boyce (1996) also followed this theme.

The association between abortion and adoption was examined for the first time by Mahon et al in 1998 and further augmented in a commentary paper written by O'Brien in 2001. The concealment of pregnancy and relinquishment of the child for adoption was further researched by Wilson et al (2004), who examined the response of the parents and their perception of adoption. Kelly (2009) built on this theme through her work on adoption from the birth mothers' perspective. With the exception of Rodríguez' (2014) work, which focused on sex in an Irish context, and its association with the dubious adoption practices through the short story of Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's 'Sex in the Context of Ireland', most of the other research work has discussed adoption in relation to stigma, illegitimacy and unwed motherhood, making it an all-pervasive theme within research over the years. The work of Goulding (1998), an auto biographical account of working as a midwife in a mother and baby home, and that of Sixsmith through the telling of Philomena's story (2009) have been heralded as major popular publications which give first-hand accounts of the impact and pain which stigma causes the unmarried mother.

(c) **Unmarried Mothers' Rights:** From 1996 to 2008, three commentary papers were published on the sub-theme of unmarried mothers' rights, based on documentary analysis. Noctor's (1996) article deals with the mother's right to custody of her non-marital child and the manner in which the adoption legislation provides for the transfer and extinguishment of this right. Horgan and Jermyn's (1999) paper argued for the necessity to put all family rights, including those of unmarried parents, and children born of unmarried parents, in Article 41 of the Constitution. Similarly, Sakauchi's (2008) article also highlighted this issue against a background of how women were treated. Graham's (2012) postgraduate thesis also focused on the social and legislative construct of unmarried birth mothers' rights. In recent years, the Adoption Rights Alliance (2017) has been actively advocating on behalf of women and in their advocacy work have highlighted the discrimination faced by many in Ireland.

(d) **Dealing with Secrecy (Migration):** While migration to a new country was a central strategy for the unwed mother to maintain the secrecy of pregnancy outside marriage, Sweeney's (1969) research was one of the only works that examined this issue during the period from 1970 to 1999. This work studied various aspects of the migration of unmarried mothers through an examination of 22 registered catholic adoption agencies. The study examined the approaches to maintaining confidentiality, making arrangements for the girl to travel to England, marriage to the father and support for the girl's parents. It was only from 2000 onwards that the work on migration and repatriation of unmarried women to and from England began to appear in Irish adoption research. There are two important works in this regard – Garrett's documentary analysis of 'The Hidden History of the PFIs (Pregnant from Ireland): The Repatriation of Unmarried Mothers and Their Children from England to Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s' (2000) and Callanan's PhD work (2002) which examined the practice of organised repatriation of pregnant women to Ireland from 1954 to the mid-1970s for the purpose of the adoption of their infants. This is an under-researched area that warrants further work.

(e) **Mother & Baby Homes:** With an exception of Creehan's empirical study (1967) conducted on unmarried birth mothers in an Irish mother and baby home there was a dearth of studies in this area. It was 30 years after Creehan's work that Milotte's investigative journalistic work in 1997 brought a focus to Ireland's mother and baby homes through his examination of the 'baby business in foreign adoption'. His work involved an examination of government files and interviews with key participants. Both Creehan's and Milotte's work focused on decision-making and the placement stage of adoption. The journalistic and investigative style used in Milotte's book has been commented upon by academics, most forcefully by Maguire (2005). Irrespective of the academic critique, Milotte's work has been of immense importance in the opening up of adoption stories in Ireland.

From 2000 to 2015, two studies were published, including Conway's (2000) research which surveyed 19 adoption agencies and their role, as well as O'Carroll's (2002) Master's thesis on 'Profile of Birthparents 2000.' In recent years, more focused work is being conducted on mother and baby homes. Garrett's 2016 commentary on policy and practice in relation to 'unmarried mothers' in the early years of the State leading to the establishment of quasi-penal mother and baby homes and, in 2017, his article on 'Excavating the Past: Mother and Baby Homes in the Republic of Ireland' have added to the understanding of this era. The experiences and treatment of unwed mothers and their babies in these homes are very much

the focus of current research. The Commission of Inquiry into Mother and Baby homes currently underway under the auspices of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the interim reports already published in 2015 and 2017 will help to fill many gaps in the knowledge base.

(f) **Unwed Birth Fathers:** In comparison to the dominant writings on unmarried birth mothers, the theme of unwed birth fathers has largely been ignored as a research topic. In 1995, Bainham wrote about the rights of the unwed father in the context of adoption in the *Keegan v Ireland* case. The unwed birth father remained largely absent from the literature from 1995 to 2007. In 2008, Martin, in his commentary on 'The European Convention on Adoption 2008: Progressing the Children's Rights Polemic' discussed the controversial position of the unmarried fathers, particularly in the child adoption context. He shed some light on fathers' expressed and implied rights under the Irish Constitution and under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. It was only in 2011 that an empirical study was undertaken which focused on men's (adolescent men) attitudes and decision-making in relation to an unplanned pregnancy (Lohan et al, 2011). The study was largely quantitative in nature. In the following year, Best (2012) published a documentary analysis which focused on the rights of unwed fathers. These publications provided a platform where the previously silent voice of an unmarried birth father could be heard. This work was augmented by two commentary papers – White's work in 2015 discussed the need for legislative reform in Ireland for unmarried fathers in the light of the difficulties and discriminations they face within the Irish legal system. Traynor's (2016) paper discussed the birth fathers' rights and position in accordance with the provision in the Adoption Act 2010. Traynor further extended her work through her postgraduate research (2017), which examines legislative changes with respect to the rights of unmarried birth fathers and the fairness of the current practices.

(g) **Birth Sibling/s:** O'Neill's doctoral work (2011) on birth sibling relationships following adoption reunion in adulthood is the only work in Irish adoption literature that focuses on birth siblings. While this research throws light on the development of the emotional relationships when birth siblings meet for the first time in adult life (O'Neill et al, 2016), it also points to the need for further research in this field and the need to fill the research vacuum that exists in relation to birth siblings in adoptive families.

(h) **Search and Reunion:** Research on birth mothers and their experience of search and reunion was the focus of Kelly's postgraduate work in 2001 and her subsequent publication

of a book in 2005. A further postgraduate thesis, undertaken by Donovan in 2008, built on this work through an exploration of foster carers and birth parents' views on the issue of post-adoption contact. Both of these studies collected primary data, were qualitative and focused on the stage of search and reunion in the adoption process.

4.2.2 ADOPTED PEOPLE

The theme of 'adopted people' is defined as persons who are legally adopted by parent/s and, on the basis of adoption, are conveyed the same rights as a biological child. The first level analysis showed that there is a degree of variation in the age range of those researched. This led us to categorise research and adopted people into two categories – children under the age of 18 years and adopted adults of 18 years and older. The sub-themes related to adopted children include:

- a) Children and the Authority
- b) Children and Public Care – The Option of Adoption
- c) Intercountry Adoption
- d) Step-Parent Adoptions (child's view)
- e) Sharing the Fact of Adoption
- f) Rights of the Child.

The sub-themes related to adopted adults include:

- (a) Adoption from Foster Care
- (b) Post-Adoption Experience
- (c) Search and Reunion.

Sub-themes related to Adopted Children:

(a) **Children and the Authority:** The adoption of children in the past was largely managed by the Catholic Church and, while the State held a legislative role, the Church's position in the process was dominant. This dominance was evident through the publication of the book

by a Catholic priest, Father Barrett, in 1952 titled *Adoption: The Parent, the Child, and the Home*. The book presented different aspects of adoption including – who gets adopted, who is adopting, the putative father, planning for mother and baby, rehabilitation, and telling the child about adoption. Barrett’s work covered all the stages in adoption, including decision-making, placement and post placement. He also wrote a commentary article in 1955 titled ‘The Dependent Child’ which presented a critique on long-term, follow-up studies on children kept by the mother, or under the care of the authority or in a voluntary children’s home, compared with those who had been adopted. This work could be seen as creating the climate for change in respect of adoption in Ireland, as the first adoption law had only been passed in 1952 and commenced in 1953. Interestingly, the book and the article discussed the role and responsibilities of social workers in the placement of the child. Professional social workers remained largely absent from this work in Ireland until the 1970s.

Another significant work in respect of adopted people was conducted by the investigative journalist, Milotte in the book titled *The Secret History of Ireland's Baby Export Business* (1997) and already discussed in the section on Birth parents. This work highlighted the processes surrounding the adoption of children from Ireland in the USA. Twelve years after, Gilligan’s commentary paper on ‘The “Public Child” and the Reluctant State’ (2009) highlighted the reluctance of the Irish State to regulate adoption practices of the past. At the same time, an important PhD study based on documentary analysis was undertaken by Maguire entitled ‘In Precarious Childhood in Post-independence Ireland’ (2010). This work pointed to the historical legacy issues regarding how children born outside marriage and their mothers were treated.

A gradual transformation occurred in the adoption literature over the decades from the initial work undertaken by Church authorities, to a situation where lay researchers began to more forcefully question the authority figures involved in the regulation of adoption in Ireland. This was achieved largely through dissemination of commentary papers and studies that used documentary analysis methods. This transition was also augmented by the focus on children’s welfare and protection that has occurred in the wider Irish context, leading to the subsequent emergence of the children’s rights agenda. Children’s rights have continued to hold a dominant position in law, policy, professional practice and public discourse in more recent times. The implications for research of this change are explored in Part V.

(b) Children and Public Care – Option of Adoption: There is an absence of studies in the area of children, public care and the option of adoption. Reference has been made to this topic, but it has not been studied exclusively up until recent times. Historically, a number of studies have referenced this area including the work carried out by O'Higgins in 1993 on behalf of the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). This study focused on the characteristics of children in substitute care, as well as those placed for adoption. It also considered the role of social workers. The study concentrated on the placement and post-placement stages of adoption. Richardson's work entitled *Whose Children: An Analysis of Some Aspects of Child Care Policy in Ireland* published in 1985 also discussed children living in residential care who had largely lost all contact with their birth families and for whom adoption might be an option.

(c) Intercountry Adoption: Despite the growing rates of intercountry adoptions in Ireland since 1991, few studies have been undertaken with children adopted from abroad. In 2001, Switzer's doctoral thesis focused on the experiences of Romanian children adopted into Ireland and who were in middle childhood at the time of the research. Another similar but smaller postgraduate research study was conducted by Smith in 2004 which examined the perspective of the child who was adopted from overseas. It was only in 2007 that a more detailed and robust study was undertaken by Greene and her team. This study focused on developmental outcomes (quantitative) and children's, adolescents' and young adults' experiences of being adopted into Ireland (qualitative). A part of the study which focused predominantly on children's recovery from adversity and the impact of their exposure to pervasive and permanent environmental change was published in 2008. Greene's work is of major importance, as it is by far the largest and most robust outcome study conducted to date in an Irish context. Two other pieces of work, which have a focus on adopted children, have been undertaken. Chou and Browne's (2008) work studied the relationship between institutional care and international adoption across Europe. Ireland was one of the countries from which data was collected. A survey was undertaken in 2016 by Irish General Practitioners which examined GP's experiences of treating children adopted from abroad into Ireland (O'Shea, Collins & Bourke, 2016).

(d) Step-Parent Adoptions (child's view): Despite its increasingly significant position in adoption in Ireland, there is a lack of literature in the area of step-parent adoptions. The exception is Loftus's (2002) study which is the only study in Irish adoption literature that examines the child's perspective of these adoptions. This points to the need for more work to

be conducted in this area, particularly as step-parent adoption has been a particular characteristic in Irish society, when compared to other jurisdictions (Palmer & O'Brien, 2018).

(e) **Sharing the Fact of Adoption:** From its legislative inception in 1952, Irish adoption was characterised by a clean break between birth parents, child and adoptive parents, although sharing the adoption story became an important aspect of the work for adoptive families and the children. This aspect of adoption is largely absent from the research. Three small-scale qualitative studies were conducted in postgraduate theses which provided some data. Kerins (1993) conducted a study on 'Telling, an Issue in Adoption'. Comiskey (2005) studied the experiences of talking/telling about adoption, based on the experiences of intercountry adoptive parents who had adopted children from Romania, and Loftus (2003) explored what children adopted in step-families knew about their birth circumstances.

(f) **Rights of the Child:** One commentary paper by Richardson (1985) provided an analysis of aspects of child care policy in Ireland. A postgraduate thesis by O'Reilly (1989) 'The Emergence of a Judicial Balancing Approach in Resolving the Constitutional Rights of Parent and Child in Adoption and Custody Laws', focused on the rights of the child in adoption. In addition to this work, the Children's Rights Alliance has advocated for greater attention to the issue of adopted children's rights. The reports they have published include 'Recognising Children's Rights in the Constitution: The Thirty-First Amendment to the Constitution' (2012a) and 'Guide to the Children's Referendum with a Focus on the Adoption Provisions' (2012b). This work is evidence of the greater focus on children's rights in policy and legal provisions, discussed previously in the report.

Sub-themes related to adopted adults:

(a) **Adoption from foster care:** This area is relatively new, and the research work only began to appear after 2000. Four research studies have been conducted between 2000 and 2017. The research in this area is all primary in nature and is concentrated in the postgraduate and doctoral theses sphere. Beginning in 2002, Danaher studied the experiences of young people who were adopted by their foster parents. Cregan's longitudinal study in 2004 focused on carers' perspective towards children in long-term foster care and the option of adoption. After a gap of more than 10 years, two forthcoming PhD theses are focusing on this area. Neligan's thesis focuses on a retrospective examination of adoptees' experiences of engagement in the decision-making, processes, when moving from foster care to adoption in Ireland and

Palmer's work focuses on young adults' experiences of adoption from foster care as well as the policymaking processes that have occurred as part of this change.

(b) **Post-adoption experience:** Only one research study has been conducted in this area. This is at doctoral level by McGrath in 2012 and is based on young adults' experiences of non-family domestic adoption in Ireland. This was a qualitative study and examined the experiences of young adults aged 17–30-years-old who were adopted domestically from birth/infancy. McGrath's study shows that there has been a shift in the previously closed adoption system and indicates there is perhaps now greater possibility of conducting more research in this area because of people's openness to participate in research.

(c) **Search and reunion:** This is a relatively new research area and is linked to the impetus for many people impacted by adoption to search for birth family links. It may also be reflective of Irish society's greater openness towards talking about origins, kinship, identities and search and reunion in adoption. While this is a relatively new area of research, the Adoptive Parents of Ireland Association published a commentary in 1991 on 'Who am I? The Adoptees Dilemma.' The publication showed an appreciation of the importance of this work for the adopted person and how adoptive parents needed to be willing and open to be the part of adoptees' search process. Nine years later, in 2000, Blair conducted a study entitled 'A Comparative Examination of Access by Adopted Persons and Their Families to Identifying and Non-Identifying Information.' Blair's work examined disclosure issues across various American states, and also conducted a survey with adopted people and their families in Ireland in respect of the collection and disclosure of medical and social history. In the following years, O'Neill's PhD study (2016) and her subsequent publication, (2017) on post-adoption reunion of birth siblings and their relationships is an important work. Additionally, a doctoral study is currently being conducted by Annie Marie Shier, in which the experiences of search and reunion with birth family members are explored among intercountry adoptees in Ireland. While search and reunion remains an important aspect of adoption practice, there is very limited research in this area involving adult adoptees and their family members and in particular research examining the impact of search across the two kinship groups of birth and adoptive families.

4.2.3 ADOPTIVE PARENTS

An adoptive parent is defined as a person who legally adopts a child born to another parent/s as his/her own child. The sub-themes related to the adopted parent include:

- (a) Infertility and Adoption
- (b) Process of Adoption (Information and Education)
- (c) Adoptive Motherhood
- (d) Adoptive Fatherhood
- (e) Changing Family Forms
- (f) Different Adoptive Parenthoods
- (g) Telling, Contact, Search & Reunion.

(a) **Infertility and adoption:** Infertility is one of the main motivators of adoption but research in this area is limited in the Irish context to two works which have covered this aspect. These are Conway's article on 'Grief and Loss in Infertility' (1995) and Allison's (2009) doctoral study on the experiences associated with infertility in Ireland in the early twenty-first century. Since 2009, no further work has examined the relationship between infertility, adoption and the psycho-social experiences of adoptive parents.

(b) **Process of adoption (Information and Education):** Barrett's book (1952) was the first literature that systematically covered different facets of the adoption process from pre-to-post placement. It included the aspects of religion, motivation, health, selection and placement, managing the period between placements and making the order and telling the child about adoption. More than 40 years later, the Adoptive Parents Association of Ireland launched the *Adoption Handbook and Directory of Adoption-Related Services* (1995). This handbook was a significant publication for adoptive parents at the time. It covered the contemporary process of adoption in Ireland from sharing the adoption story, challenges associated with the teenage years, reactive attachment disorder, reunion with birth mother, the national contact register as well as discussing tracing/search and reunion in Ireland compared with practices in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Both publications covered many of the stages in adoption, including decision-making, placement, post placement and search and reunion. In 2014, McCaughren and Lovett published a commentary on 'Domestic Adoption in Ireland: a

Shifting Paradigm?’ based on their respective doctoral work. This paper examined the experience of adoption, and its inherent challenges, from the perspective of adoptive families, adopted individuals and practitioners. It is a noteworthy article as it provides information on key aspects of domestic adoption.

(c) **Adoptive Motherhood:** While the unmarried birth mother has been a focus of Irish adoption research since the 1950s, it was not until the late 1990s that adoptive motherhood became the focus of research. The majority of adoptive motherhood research (4 studies) has been conducted at postgraduate and doctoral level and is qualitative in nature. The first study undertaken by Lillis in 1995 as a master’s thesis is entitled ‘Adoptive Motherhood – An Easy Option?’ This was followed by a second master’s thesis by Morris on ‘Legitimate Mothers, Women and Adoption in Ireland’ in 1996. More than 10 years later, a doctoral study was completed by Liddy on ‘The Experience of Motherhood through Intercountry Adoption.’ in 2017. This study included 16 mothers from various parts of Ireland, whose first child was adopted from overseas. Currently, another doctoral study is being carried out by McGreal which examines ‘Mothers’ Experiences of Parenting an Adolescent in the Context of Intercountry Adoption.’ In addition to the four specific adoptive motherhood studies, Green et al’s (2007) seminal study of intercountry adoption incorporated experiences of adoptive parents.

(d) **Adoptive Fatherhood:** The first focused research on adoptive fatherhood is being conducted by McDonough as part of current doctoral work and is entitled ‘Fatherhood in the Context of Intercountry Adoption’.

(e) **Changing Family Contexts:** The changing concept of family has been captured to some extent in Irish adoption studies. This has been conveyed in Darling’s (1974) commentary paper entitled ‘Adoption in Ireland’, which presents a good overview of changing trends and this is augmented by Abramson’s ‘Issues in Adoption in Ireland’ (1984); O’Carroll’s (2004) study of who is being adopted based on a case file analysis in the Adoption Board presents another picture at a further point in time. In 2008, O’Brien’s article highlighted adoptive families as plural families and compared Irish trends with what is occurring internationally.

Various other publications (though this is not exhaustive) in the wider family studies field add to the to changing conception of families in an Irish context and include – ‘Families in a Globalising Economy’ (Readdick, Farrell & Koepke, 2012); Canavan’s (2012) commentary on an overview of ‘Family and Family Change in Ireland’ and ‘The Evolution of the

Definition of Family and Marriage under the Irish Constitution' (Bergin-Cross, 2015). There is now a greater range of family types involved in adoption. Tobin's (2018) work titled, 'Social Families: Adoption, Step and Foster Families in Ireland' has also captured these gradual changes.

(f) **Step-Parent and Same-Sex Adoptive Parenthood:** This sub-theme incorporates studies that have been conducted in respect of adoptive families' structures and includes step-parent adoptions and same-sex adoptions. Loftus's work (2002, 2004), is the only step-parent study that has been undertaken. Up until 2017 in Ireland, step-parent adoption involved the birth mother giving up her sole legal rights in respect of the child and jointly adopting her child with her husband, who was not the birth father of the child. This has now changed with the enactment of the Adoption Act 2010. Step-parent adoption remains a significant feature of the Irish adoption system. Loftus's master's research traced the number of children adopted in this situation, and she explored the motivations for adoption and the processes involved. In light of the growing numbers of step-parent adoptions over the years, this is an area of work that warrants further research.

Adoption by same-sex couples has gained momentum in law through the Children and Family Relationship Act 2015 and in the research field in recent times and four studies have been written about same-sex adoptions in Ireland. This includes the work of Bracken (2013) who wrote a commentary paper on the topic discussing the implications of there being no legal recognition of same-sex couples as parents in Ireland, despite the enactment of civil partnerships. Two postgraduate studies have also been undertaken in this area – Geaney's (2010) study on 'Joint Adoption for Same-sex Couples: A Case for Reform' and Healy's PhD thesis (2015) entitled 'Interpretative Phenomenological Study on The Meaning of Civil Partnership for Same-Sex Couples in Ireland'. Ireland was also one of 28 countries surveyed in an examination of social attitudes toward adoption by same-sex couples in Europe. This work was conducted by Takacs, Szalma, and Bartus in 2016.

(g) **Telling, Contact, Search & Reunion:** A small number of works exist in respect of the opening up of adoption. This includes Comaskey's (2005) master's study on 'Intercountry Adoptive Parents of Children Adopted from Romania – Their Experience of Talking/Telling Their Children about Their Adoption and Their Birth Origins'. In the context of adoptive parents and search and reunion, Bowers' (2005) master's thesis examined the reactions of adoptive parents when their adult children re-connect with their birth mothers. McCaughren's

doctoral thesis (2010) was the first study in which adoptive parents speak of their experience of open adoption.

4.2.4 POLICY

The analysis now reports on studies conducted in the area of policy, law and service. Policy is defined as a position (i.e., what is believed in) and/or intent (what is intended to do about something) by a body related to a government, service, or business that aims to enhance adoption across different stages of the process for the various participants involved. Policy may be an expression of something already agreed; may be part of an ongoing debate or may represent a body's effort to advocate for change. Policy may act as a catalyst in exposing a gap that requires attention at a developmental or an implementation level. This definition takes account of a wider context which recognises the contested nature of adoption and how there are differences in position, values and expectations among the different stakeholders. It also recognises the inter-relationship between law, policy, procedure and practice.

The sub-themes related to policy include

- (a) Overview of Adoption Policy for Domestic Adoption
- (b) Overview of Adoption Policy for Intercountry Adoption
- (c) Policy Related to Adoption legislation
- (d) Policy Related to Adopted Children and Adults
- (e) Towards Search and Reunion.

(a) **Overview of Adoption Policy for Domestic Adoption:** Adoption policy is captured in a range of publications, principally based on commentary and documentary analysis. In 1992, O'Connor discussed policy and legal reforms in the paper titled 'Child Care Policy: A Provocative Analysis and Research Agenda'. The Law Reform Commission published 'Adoption Law: The Case for Reform' in 2000. This report dealt with issues such as access to birth information and post-adoption contact; issues impacting upon the fairness of adoption legislation and various anomalies. International adoption was also covered in this report. Richardson's (2003) work synthesised changes in adoption policy and practice since 1952. Her article captures a number of key issues, such as the introduction of the lone mothers' allowance, search and reunion, non-family adoptions and issues connected with the growth of

international adoptions. Shanahan's (2005) seminal work traces Irish adoption policy from 1949 to 1999. This article is significant as it examined adoption discourse through changing cultural conceptions of children, family and individual rights and the relationship between an individual rights imperative and culturally-specific, national ideals of family.

With an exception of post-graduate thesis work undertaken by Downing (1986) titled 'Adoption Policy in Ireland' adoption policy analysis in the post graduate field was quite limited until 2000. In 2000, Conway's completed her PhD thesis in the area of 'Adoption Policy and Practice in Ireland in the 1980's'; Kearney's thesis provided a comparative perspective through his work 'Adoption in Sociological Context: A Comparative Analysis of Britain, Ireland and the United States'. McGettrick's ongoing PhD work on the role of expert knowledge in Irish adoption policy from 1962 - 2016 and Palmer's PhD work on policy making process underpinning the adoption of children from the care system will make further contributions.

(b) Overview of Adoption Policy for Intercountry Adoption: With Ireland becoming a receiving state in the early 1990's, the 'Report on the Implementation of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, 1993' was an important document published by the Law Reform Commission (LRC) in 1998. In this report, the Law Reform Commission recommended that Ireland should ratify the Hague Convention, and outlined various options for its implementation. The report also discussed standards in terms of adoptability, consultation with the child, counselling, immigration clearances, categories of adoption, Ireland as a receiving state, and simple adoptions in Irish law. Pillay's work in 1999 built on this report through the publication of a commentary paper entitled 'Implementation of the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: The Law Reform Commission Report.'

Ireland's relationship with intercountry adoption started however much earlier than 1991. Ireland had been a sending country in respect of intercountry adoption from the late 1940's onwards. This development is captured through Maguire's (2002) work 'Foreign Adoptions and the Evolution of Irish Adoption Policy'. In this work, Maguire highlights Ireland's informal and unregulated adoption practices in sending babies overseas, and the evolution of adoption legislation in the context of Church-State relations towards sexuality, morality, and family life. Suzanne Shannon's 2005 work in respect of adoption policy augments Maguire's work. The challenges involved in international adoption are immense. McNamara's work

(2007) is an example that highlights a number of the challenges. This work focuses on and explores the status and citizenship rights of a child resident outside the State who is the subject of a foreign adoption order made in favour of an Irish citizen or citizens. Policy in respect of intercountry adoption is also interwoven in other research work that is discussed in other sub-themes in this section.

(c) Policy Related to Adoption legislation: The relationship between policy and legislation is central in the area of adoption, as adoption is essentially a legal process. There are a number of key policy documents related specifically to adoption legislation which have been published. In 1984, a major policy document was published by the Department of Health entitled 'Adoption: Report of Review Committee on Adoption Services'. This comprehensive report provided an overview of the adoption system, critically examined adoption legislation, policy and practices and made specific proposals for change. It also included a discussion regarding those who are eligible to adopt, the children available for adoption, consents in adoption, private adoption arrangements, and guardianship as an alternative to adoption arrangements. Abramson's (1984) work is another key document, titled 'Issues in Adoption in Ireland' was published in the same time period. Ten years later, O'Halloran's PhD study (1994) on 'Adoption in the Two Jurisdictions of Ireland: A Comparative Study' built substantially on the Department of Health report and Abramson's commentary paper. O'Halloran's work provided an overview of the historical background to the development of adoption, related legislation and social contexts in the two jurisdictions (Ireland and Northern Ireland) and presented critical analysis of differences in the adoption processes in both states. In 2005, the Department of Health and Children published another key policy document entitled 'Adoption Legislation: 2003 Consultation and Proposals for Change'. This report examined key legislative provisions against national and international law and administrative structures and is seen as a key document, outlining specific contextual issues and possible options.

(d) Policy Related to Adopted Children: A number of publications show that policy issues related to children's rights became an increasingly important issue from 1980's onwards. The concept of 'best interest of the child' is core to adoption, and a number of publications have been written that have served to progress this objective. One of the first key works published by the Law Reform Commission on illegitimacy (1982) gave an overview of what is legitimacy, illegitimacy, the child's and father's position in the constitution and drew a comparison with laws in Northern Ireland, Europe, England, USA, New Zealand and

Australia. It also summarised various pointers towards reforms. There are two studies from the late 1980's that focused on this area. Richardson's (1985) work appraised aspects of child care policy in Ireland, and the need for children's rights agenda is seen clearly in this early work. In 1989, O'Reilly wrote a post-graduate thesis entitled the 'Constitutional Rights of Parent and Child in Adoption and Custody Laws'.

The issue of illegitimacy has been central to adoption in Ireland. Garrett's (2000) work, undertaken through a documentary analysis, explored official reports and summarised how policies concerning the issues of illegitimacy, unmarried motherhood and adoption have evolved over years. Kilkelly's (2010) book chapter focused on 'Adoption, Discrimination and the Best Interests of the Child' and Shannon's work in 2013 has aided progress in this area.

Child-centred positioning is also evident in the work of McPartland. In 2013, McPartland published an updated edition of earlier work. Additionally, the Children Rights Alliance, an umbrella group set up to advocate for children's rights, were to the fore in promoting a more child-centred perspective. They published a 'Guide to the Children's Referendum with a Focus on the Adoption Provisions' as part of the referendum campaign (2012). In recent times, there is evidence of a number of commentary papers on this policy issue. The work of McCaughren and Powell (2017) on 'The Fate of the 'Illegitimate' Child: An Analysis of Irish Social Policy' and Berkery's (2017) publication on the definition, protection and regulation of the family from a child's rights perspective are examples of this direction.

(f) **Towards Search and Reunion:** A number of researchers have been instrumental in promoting change in the area of contact, search and reunion. Conway's work in 1993 was of seminal importance at the time and provided a framework for agencies interested and involved in providing search and reunion services for people involved in adoption. This paper was geared principally towards practice, although it contains a strong assertion of the need for policy and legislative change. This was followed by 'Guidelines for Policy and Disclosure in Relation to Search' published by Central Council of Irish Adoption Agencies (1997). These guidelines covered both adoption and foster care placements. In more recent times, Kilkelly's (2009) work entitled, 'Child Law and the ECHR: Issues of Family Life, Adoption and Contact' has provided an important analysis. The issue of contact, search and reunion is discussed in greater detail under the law theme in the next section.

4.2.5 LAW

For the purpose of this thematic analysis, Law is defined as a set of rules (legislation) that regulates action and is enforced by the judicial system. Law can also be an expression of policy that has been codified in the state's legislative framework, both primary (Acts of the Oireachtas) and secondary (Regulations made under the primary legislation). In legal research, we find a focus on existing laws, areas of law that need to be changed and it also includes both national and international contexts. The methods underpinning research in this sphere are largely characterised by the study of legal texts. Other research is also undertaken and uses a range of methods associated with empirical work.

The sub-themes in respect of legal research undertaken are:

- (a) Adoption and Family Law
- (b) Unmarried Birth Parents – including unmarried mothers and unmarried fathers
- (c) Child Rights and Law
- (d) Adoption Legislation
- (e) Law and Domestic Adoption
- (f) Law and Intercountry Adoptions
- (g) Advocacy through Law
- (h) Search and Reunion.

These sub-themes are discussed below:

(a) **Adoption and Family Law:** Much of the work published in family law deals with adoption as one of its areas of interest. A number of key texts published during the time frame covered in the Audit are listed. One of the earliest works was by Binchy (1976). This work entitled 'New vistas in Irish family law', covered social and legislative developments pertaining to adoption (compared with the system in England), and concerning illegitimacy and succession. It also covered family law in the areas of marriage, contraception and abortion. This analysis was augmented by Shatter's (1981, 1997) work, *Family Law in Ireland* which covered areas of Irish law, including adoption together with property issues, guardianship and custody, protection against spousal misconduct, as well as the major topics

of divorce, separation and nullity. In 2003, Ward (2003) wrote a commentary in relation to family law on the child and the State in Ireland. Nestor's (2007, 2011) work added further to this legislative analysis.

Adoption, as part of family law, was also covered comprehensively in the work of Shannon (2008, 2011). In more recent times, Blair et al's (2015) publication *Family Law in the World Community Cases, Materials, and Problems in Comparative and International Family Law* examines traditional family law topics and incorporates recent changes in the area of adoption. Similarly, Kennedy and Maguire (2016) cover adoption as part of family law in their book *Irish Family Law Handbook*, as do Howlin and Costello (2017) in their work *Law and the Family in Ireland, 1800–1950*.

(b) **Unmarried Birth Parents:** In 1996, *The Report of the Constitution Review Group* highlighted the necessity to put all family rights, including those of unmarried parents, and children born of unmarried parents, into Article 41 of the Constitution. Within the context of legal research, there has been a tendency to focus more on the position of unmarried mothers or unmarried fathers separately and less on unmarried parents jointly. There are a small number of exceptions to this assertion. Horgan and Jermyn (1999) published a commentary paper on the state of children in care and the degree of parental failure required if such children are to be eligible to be adopted under the terms of the Adoption Act 1988. Gleeson's (2010) LLM postgraduate thesis titled 'The Unconstitutional Family: The Role of Natural Law as the Basis for Developing Rights for the Unmarried Family under the Irish Constitution' was based on documentary analysis and the 'non-traditional' family in terms of its constitutional status.

Unmarried birth mothers: A small number of studies have been written in respect of unmarried mothers. In 1953, the classic work of Barrington on 'The Irish Constitution XI. The Family and Education', highlighted the constitutional provision for unmarried birth mothers, as well as women in marriage, divorce, education for the child, legal adoption and the issue of separate provisions for Protestants. Noctor's article in 1996 on 'Adoption, Consent and the Constitution' examined a mother's right to custody of her non-marital child and the manner in which adoption legislation provides for the transfer and extinguishment of this right. This work paved the way for more detailed discussion regarding what this parental right entails and whether it is of a legislative or constitutional nature.

Unmarried birth fathers: The limited research in respect of unmarried fathers has been discussed previously in section 4.2.1 of this report. The position of the unmarried fathers, particularly in the child adoption context, remains somewhat controversial. Within this framework, Martin presented a commentary in 2008 on ‘The European Convention on Adoption 2008: Progressing the Children’s Rights Polemic’. The article discussed both expressed and implied rights of unmarried birth fathers under the Irish Constitution and his rights under Article 8 of the ECHR, while focusing on the *Keegan v Ireland* 18 EHRR 342 1994 case in relation to consent to adopt.

(c) Child Rights and Law: With the exception of one postgraduate (LLM) thesis by O’Reilly (1989) on ‘The Emergence of a Judicial Balancing Approach in Resolving the Constitutional Rights of Parent and Child in Adoption and Custody Laws’, research in respect of this theme has been conducted principally between 1996 to 2016. It is generally published in commentary papers and articles are based on documentary analysis. This includes Kennedy’s (1996) commentary article on ‘Child Care in Ireland’ which reflected the major changes occurring in the Irish child care system. It also discussed the welfare of all children in residential and foster care, those in need of care and adoption and finally those living with their own families but at risk. Four years later, Martin (2000) published a paper on children’s rights as identified by the Constitution and in Irish law and examined the impact international conventions have on domestic law in this area. Over the years, Shannon has published extensively on children’s rights and legislation. This includes the 2001 work by Shannon et al on ‘Children and Law’ and ‘Child Custody Law of the Republic of Ireland’ in 2005. The article discussed custody rights, marital and non-marital rights, the voice and wishes of the child and adoption rights. In recent years, Shannon has published three additional books in respect of the *Adoption Act 2010* (2010), *Children and Family Relationships Law in Ireland: Practice and Procedure* (2016) and *Child Law* (2017). Other legal writers that contributed to the area of children’s rights include Nestor (2004) and Kilkelly (2007, 2008). The ‘Baby Ann’ case is recognised as a significant Supreme Court judgment that became one of the drivers for change for the children’s referendum. Kelly’s (2007) publication on ‘*Baby Ann’s Constitutional Rights*’ provided an analysis of the case and future implications related to it. In the context of the *Adoption Act 2010* and the aspects of this law that needed reform, Parkes and McCaughren’s (2013) commentary article examined children’s rights as it relates to same-sex couples, second parent adoption, the right to information and identity and open adoption. Lately, since the enactment of the *Children and Family Relationship Act 2015*,

researchers such as Cronin (2015, 2016) have published a commentary on the specifics of the act.

Two LLM theses have also been written on children's rights. This includes McCarthy's 2002 work entitled 'Right to Identity under Irish and International law of the Child with Reference to Adoption'. In 2008, Henry's work on 'A Comparative Analysis of the Constitutional and Legislative Provisions with Regard to Non-consensual Adoption of Marital Children in Irish Law' was written. Both these theses were based on a doctrinal methodology which utilises legal concepts and principles of all types – cases, statutes and rules.

(d) **Adoption Legislation:** Since 1952, several researchers have described, as part of mainstream legal texts, the various facets of adoption legislation as it has evolved. Limited work was undertaken between 1952 and the early 1990s. Barrett's (1952) work was the first detailed work in respect of adoption in Ireland, and this was followed by a review of the book written by Tyrrell in 1953. O'Halloran's work, published in 1992, covered Irish adoption law and procedure from 1952 to 1991. This was based on his PhD thesis. His later work in 2005 examined Irish adoption law in an international context. Rose's (2002) publication covered adoption legislation in Ireland in relation to European legislation.

Other key work that has been undertaken includes that of Keating in 2003 through a publication entitled 'The Legalisation of Adoption in Ireland.' In the same year, Shannon also published a discussion paper on adoption legislation. In 2004, Kilkelly published an article which highlighted areas for adoption reform in Ireland, based on an analysis of international developments. The work included a discussion of Ireland's ratification of the two international treaties — the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

At the time of the enactment of the Adoption Act 2010, two important publications focused on adoption law – one by the Law Reform Commission (2010) and the other by Shannon (2011). Another important body of work, published by Finnegan (2010), discussed the eligibility of prospective adoptive parents in Irish law in light of articles 7(1), 9(3) and 18 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This article examines Irish adoption law, its historical evolution and its current practice and the issue of hypothetical assisted human reproduction legislation. In recent times, Ryan (2017), has published an update on adoption law as a book chapter. In summary, the development and

enactment of adoption legislation has been well captured in the literature, with a rise in publication levels since the 1990s.

(e) **Law and Domestic Adoption:** Five papers were published in respect of law, domestic adoption and changing trends from 1999 to 2016. While a number of these papers have also been referenced as part of earlier thematic discussions, they are synthesised together here to present an overview of the dynamic trends in the domestic adoption field.

An important contribution was made through Darling's publication on 'The Changing Face of Adoption' in 1999. This work profiled changes in adoptions in Ireland from 1983 to 1998. In this work, Darling questioned the virtual non-availability of the option of adoption for marital children, the role of the Adoption Board and some of the drawbacks of the system of administration of the adoption service. O'Mahony's (2012) paper presented an analysis of 'Article 8 ECHR and Irish law on Non-traditional Families', and three additional papers have been published since 2012. This includes McCaughren and Lovett's work in 2014 which drew attention to domestic adoption and the inherent challenges, from the perspective of adoptive families, adopted individuals and practitioners. O'Brien and Palmer's (2015) commentary on 'Adoption and the Irish Care System: Context and Drivers for Change?' focuses on changes associated with The Adoption Bill 2012, which proposes to extend the possibility of adoption for children of marriage and for those living in the care system. The paper also considers the concept of 'permanency' and highlights the incentives and disincentives for the various parties involved in moving between long-term foster care and adoption. Building on this commentary, O'Brien and Palmer (2016) explored 'special guardianship', which was legislated for in Ireland in 2007, as another option alongside adoption for children in the care system. The paper also critically examined the proposals for advancing adoption as an additional permanency option for children in long-term foster care. Research work on the topic of step-parent adoptions and same-sex adoptions is also related to this sub-theme. Loftus's (2004) work on step-parent adoption 'Legal Changes in Step-Family Adoption' examined the impact of legal change (new provisions under Adoption Act 1998) on the practice of involving birth fathers in the step-family adoption decisions relating to their children. Three publications relevant to same-sex adoptions include Kavanagh's 2009 commentary work on 'Same-Sex Marriage or Partnership and Adoption: Debate for Ireland'; Bracken's (2013) discussion on how same-sex couples could and did raise children and yet, there was a lack of legal provision for a non-biological civil partner to attain a legal connection with his or her partner's child. Bracken's (2016) work added to this topic through

the discussion of the advancement of parenting rights for gay and lesbian persons established through case law of the European Court of Human Rights. Tobin's (2017) commentary paper on 'The European Court of Human Rights' Inconsistent and Incoherent Approach to Second-Parent Adoption' further augmented this work

(f) **Law and Intercountry Adoptions:** One of the first pieces of work in this area was undertaken by Horgan as an LLM thesis and was completed in 1998. The work was titled 'Regulating Intercountry Adoption: The Challenge for the Irish Adoption System.' It was only in the early 2000s that other publications appeared on intercountry adoption. This included commentary papers by the Law Reform Commission (2007, 2008) on aspects of intercountry adoption law; McCaughren and Sherlock's (2008) article on 'Intercountry Adoption in Ireland: Law, Children's Rights and Contemporary Social Work Practice'; O'Brien's paper (2009) which explored whether the Hague Convention legislation would assist social workers to resolve ethical dilemmas; and a paper by Suibhne (2010) that outlined some of the abuses associated with intercountry adoption and the efforts being made to regulate the system. These commentary papers highlighted vulnerabilities in intercountry adoptions when legislation implementing the Hague Convention was not yet enacted. After the implementation of the Hague legislation in 2010, researchers continued to write on this topic, including publications by McCaughren and Parkes (2012); Shannon's work (2014) on 'Intercountry Adoption, the Changed Landscape' and O'Halloran's (2015) analysis which compared Ireland's adoption regime with other countries including England and Wales, France, Sweden and Japan. Both Shannon and O'Halloran bring an important socio-legal perspective to the field of adoption and have been major legal researchers in the field.

(g) **Advocacy through Law:** The advocacy work of the Adoption Rights Alliance (ARA) has provided an important contribution to adoption discourse. Its publications have focused on the rights and views of adopted people (2003), its commentary on elimination of discrimination against women (2015) and its arguments that adopted people have a fundamental right to information (2017) are significant.

(h) **Search and Reunion:** The legal writings in respect of search and reunion and people's entitlement to birth information can be traced to early 2000, though advocacy work in this area was evident from an earlier time. McIntyre's (2001) work covers the reform in adoption law and identity. The article also highlighted the role of the contact register and post-adoptive counselling for those who want to search. This aspect of the right of an adopted person to

know information about their birth parents was also the subject of an LLM thesis by Connolly in 2011 in a work titled, ‘The Adoption Act 2010: The Need for a Legislative Provision for an Adoptee's Unqualified Right of Access to Identifying Information.’ In the same year, McNamara wrote a commentary paper entitled ‘Open Adoption: Should it be Legislated for in Ireland?’ The advocacy work published by the Adoption Rights Alliance (McGettrick, Lohan, & Steed, 2011) has provided an important contribution to an area of adoption law that is in need of urgent reform. The release of the film, *Philomena* (Watson, 2013) also opened debates in relation to information and tracing at a wider societal level (O’Brien & Mitra, 2015).

4.2.6 SERVICE PROVISION

Service provision is defined in this audit as an action or task carried out by a group of people, who have specialised knowledge and skills pertaining to the field of adoption, and where their actions are intended to serve members of the adoptive community. Whilst recognising that adoption may be connected with broader child welfare and child protection service provision, only studies which focus exclusively on adoption are included. The sub-themes in respect of service provision undertaken are:

- (a) Adoption Service
- (b) Domestic Adoption Service Provisions
- (c) Intercountry Adoption Service Provisions
- (d) Practice Frameworks and Training Material.

(a) **Adoption Service:** A number of publications are included that give an overview of adoption services. These publications are important in that they provide a snap-shot of service provision across a certain time period. It is, however, only a snap-shot as many aspects of service provision are never captured in publications. The publications cover two categories of adoption services – information and counselling services and search and reunion services and examples are provided of both categories.

The first category covers information in respect of advocacy, support and counselling services across the stages of adoption. Good’s publication ‘A Cork Society’s Adoption Survey’ in 1970 shows the attempts made at that time to determine the kind of services required by adoptive families. The report by Kilkenny Social Service (1972) on community

services required for the unmarried mother is another example. This report reflected a turning point in Irish society in that it captured a readiness to provide a wider level of supports to the unmarried mother, aimed at expanding her options. There are also many publications which reflected the interests of individual adoption agencies. Examples range from Children First (1978) who published an information report titled 'So You Are Thinking of Adopting?' to Lefroy's work which summarised 'The First Three Years, May 1977–May 1980 of The Adoption Advice Service'. In 1984, Mollan and Lefroy published a book that provided an overview of the different kinds of adoptive families, different kinds of children that were available for adoption and information for those who were thinking about adoption or were contemplating fostering. Barnardos (1992) summarised 15 years of adoption advice, information and counselling service provision in their publication on '*Trends and Issues in Adoption in Ireland*'.

The second category of service provision publications provides a snap-shot of search and reunion services. The Irish Government has attempted on a number of occasions to enact legislation which would enable people to know their birth identities and to search for one and other but, to date, this has not been successful. This lack of legislative progress has had major impacts for many people involved in adoption. The centrality of this issue has been reflected in this thematic analysis in that search and reunion has been a recurring issue across many of the themes and sub-themes presented.

One of the first pieces of literature on this topic focused on the service aspects and was published by Conway in 1993. The work provided a framework of search and reunion for agency services and was aimed at working with all parties. This publication reflected the emergence of greater openness and recognition of the wish for search and the desire to facilitate this. McIntyre's (2001) commentary paper called for a more robust provision of post-adoption services, including release of identifying information. Sharing identifying and non-identifying information was also discussed by Blair (2001) in the comparative analysis of adoption regulations across different nations. It contrasted the Irish Supreme Court's constitutional treatment of the disclosure of identifying information with that of U.S. courts. The changing scenario of 'search' in Irish society with the availability involvement of social media, was captured in articles published by O'Brien. Her article on 'Social Networking, Adoption and Search and Reunion' (2013) was based on both documentary analysis and interviews with a select group of adoption professionals. The release of the film *Philomena* had a significant impact on adoption discourses in Ireland. The ensuing debates regarding

openness in adoption were captured in a commentary by O'Brien and Mitra (2015) in their article on 'Search and Reunion in Adoption: The Aftermath of the Film *Philomena* and an Opportunity to Shape Change'. O'Brien and Pavao (2014) had previously published an article on the adoptions of Irish children by U.S. families, discussing the complicity of religious orders, governments and church hierarchy in these often-illegal registrations/adoptions and the barriers faced by many adoptees and birth families. Hence, adoption services with respect to search and reunion have gained greater visibility in Irish adoption literature in recent years.

(b) **Domestic adoption service provisions:** Much less has been written in the service provision area focused solely on domestic adoptions. One seminal piece of work previously referenced was undertaken by Conway (2000) in her doctoral thesis on 'Adoption Policy and Practice in Ireland in the 1980s' where she analysed data from 19 registered adoption agencies in Ireland. The work also highlighted differences in the quality of services provided to adoptive parents and birth mothers by social workers. Five years later, Darling in 2005 published a book chapter on 'Social Work in Adoption' which gave an overview of child welfare services including adoption. In the same year, a mixed method adoption study was conducted to assess the level of service provision in domestic adoption and crisis pregnancy counselling services in Ireland (Loughran & Richardson, 2005). Two publications discussed the role of professionals in working with families. These include the IASW publication written by social workers advocating for change in the service provision. Hamilton's work in (2012) provided a similar commentary on the functions performed by social care professionals. In more recent times, a good overview of domestic adoption has been provided by McCaughren and Ní Raghallaigh (2015) in a book chapter on 'Adoption in Ireland: Exploring the Changing Context.' Likewise, the work of Loftus and Kirwan 2017 provides an excellent signpost in respect of the adoption process.

(c) **Intercountry Adoption Service Provisions:** Publications in respect of intercountry adoption service provision capture an extended time period from the late 1940s, when Ireland sent children abroad for adoption, to a situation starting in the early 1990s where Ireland became a receiving country for children adopted from overseas.

The 1993 Hague Convention became one of the core documents through which service provisions were developed and ethical dilemmas in legal and practice were resolved. An article 'The Potential of Ireland's Hague Convention Legislation to Resolve Ethical Dilemmas in Intercountry Adoptions' presented by O'Brien (2009) discussed the centrality of

the Hague Convention. This article, based on documentary analysis and interviews with experts in the field, explored the extent to which the convention assisted social workers involved in intercountry adoption practice to resolve ethical dilemmas. The paper reflected the extent to which the long-awaited but significant development of the Hague legislation (Adoption Act 2010) would assist in the resolution of ethical dilemmas.

The Adoption Rights Alliance has also been very active in publishing commentary reports on the provision and deficits of service provision. ARA's report 'Submission to Ireland's Fourth Periodic Report to the United Nations Committee on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights' (ARA, 2012) is a detailed and analytical piece of work. Recently, O'Keeffe's (2016) report on 'Foreign Adoption in Ireland: A Case Study of the Irish-American Adoptions' discusses the historical adoptions in the context of Ireland and the minimal role of the Department of External Affairs in the issue of passports for children that had been adopted. Furthermore, the report highlights the change in practices that occurred after the implementation of the Adoption Act 1952 under which the conditions and standards of the Irish-American adoptions improved dramatically. Intercountry adoption practice frameworks discussed in the following sections have also strengthened service provision.

(d) Practice Frameworks and Trainers' Material: While a number of publications have provided detailed information on the adoption process, a number of specific practice frameworks have been developed for domestic as well as intercountry adoptions. From 1993 to 2009, seven practice frameworks which have underpinned service development were developed and published. These were commissioned by a range of bodies. Conway's report in 1993 provided a framework for agency services to those involved in search and reunion. This was followed by publication of a government commissioned work entitled 'Towards a Standardised Framework for Intercountry Adoption Assessment Procedures' written by O'Brien and Richardson in 1999. This report provided a national overview of procedures and practices for dealing with applications for intercountry adoption assessments and proposed a framework for enhancing intercountry adoption assessments/home studies of prospective adopters and provided recommendations for contextual and organisational service enhancement. A more detailed guide for practitioners, aimed at building on the standardised framework recommendations, was subsequently published by the Department of Health (Haworth & Simmonds, 2004). Training of prospective adopters was the key to the development of the standardised assessment framework. One such training programme was piloted and the evaluation was published in 2004 in O'Brien and Dempsey's report 'Summary

Report on the Intercountry Adoption Preparation "Train the Trainers" Courses. The main purpose of this report was to give an overview of the state of development of the 'train the trainers' courses, to identify implementation issues/learning points derived from the initial stages of the training programme and to identify steps needed to mainstream this development. The delay in bringing forth legislation between the signing of The Hague Convention in 1993 and the enactment of Hague Convention legislation in 2010 propelled the Adoption Board to address the difficulties surrounding the mediation of intercountry adoption placements. They commissioned *Draft Guidelines for Adoption Mediation* which were written by O'Brien in 2003. Similarly, with respect to enhancing domestic adoption service provision, a report was commissioned by the Adoption Board in 2004. Conway and O'Brien' report was entitled 'A Guide for Practitioners – A Standardised Framework for Domestic Adoption Preparation, Assessment and Decision-making Procedures.' The Adoption Board published an extensive and comprehensive guidance for domestic adoption in 2014. This currently provides the foundation for adoption service provision. In 2009, the Council of Adoption Agencies' publication 'An Ethical Framework for Adoption in Ireland' (O'Gallchoir et al, 2009) added significantly to the practice frameworks. All of these practice frameworks were prepared by social work professionals with the intention of shaping adoption service provision and amplifying the centrality of ethics in adoption practice.

4.3 Conclusion

The thematic analysis presented in Part IV of this audit focuses on who was adopted, who was adopting and what was researched in the adoption field. This includes research related to various parties involved; research related to legal, policy, and service provision contexts. The thematic analysis used in this study provides a description of the main themes and sub-themes in the body of adoption research work. The work provides an analytical framework which will help in identifying research gaps and making recommendations. This is the focus of the work in the concluding Part V of this report.

Part V

CONCLUSION ON ADOPTION RESEARCH GAPS

5.1 Introduction

This audit report is divided into five parts. *Part I* outlines the details of the project. *Part II* describes the research design, the two levels of analysis used (step-by-step method and thematic analysis) and our positioning as researchers. *Part III* presents the data from the step-by-step method used to identify 404 pieces of Irish adoption research. It involves the mapping of data across time frames and according to various data sources. *Part IV* discusses six major themes (i.e. birth parents, adoptive parents, adopted people, law, policy and service provisions) and sub-themes identified in the research base. This chapter, *Part V*, deals with the final part of the brief in this project, which is to identify gaps in adoption research and contains our response to this requirement.

Major social changes have occurred in Ireland since 1952 – when adoption was first legislated for – and the place of adoption has evolved as part of these changes (O’Brien & Palmer, 2016; Palmer & O’Brien, 2018). Socio-cultural processes of Irish society shape the way adoption is perceived and understood today and Ireland has witnessed a long journey in developing a system of regularised laws, policies and practices around the evolving place of adoption⁶.

It is a challenge to conduct research in this complex field, especially when the socio-cultural history of adoption in Ireland has been characterised as secretive and closed and there is a continuing lag between Ireland’s adoption laws and practices, compared to other jurisdictions (Kearney, 2012). It is in this context that the audit, which was commissioned by AAI in July 2017, has been undertaken.

The other important context marker into which this audit of adoption research was commissioned is the increasing emphasis on inter-sectionality of law, policy, values and practice in service delivery (O’Brien, 2014). Research plays an important role in each of these domains and activities. At the same time, the extent to which service provision should

⁶ Please see O’Brien, V., & Mitra, S. (2018). Overview of Adoption in Ireland 1952 -2017, Dublin: AAI which accompanies this publication.

and can be based on research evidence remains somewhat contested (Flanagan & Tumilty, 2015). Nonetheless, research has a very important role to play in adoption service delivery. This is especially true when one considers the complex, emotionally charged decisions, with life-long implications, which are made in adoption. At one end, we see the generations from the 1940s who have lived their lives with adoption as an ever-present factor. At the other end, we see children in adoption now, who will live with adoption for 80 years into the future. While we may see certain features of domestic and intercountry adoption as historical trends (albeit with very real issues for many people now), step-parent adoption and the trend towards adoption of children from the care system indicates that adoption research will be relevant for generations to come.

It is intended that this audit will assist the commissioner, the Adoption Authority of Ireland to undertake its functions, set out in Section 96 (1) (d) of the Adoption Act 2017, of undertaking or assisting in research projects and activities relating to adoption services through the twin tasks of identifying existing Irish research in the field of adoption, and by identifying the gaps in the research base.

In considering research gaps, the perspective of the person/organisation will have a major bearing on their view of what constitutes a gap. As well as discharging its own functions under the legislation, in commissioning this research, AAI can be of assistance to the wider audience of individuals and institutions involved and interested in adoption research. Indeed, it is hoped that the audit will be of assistance to people and institutions – the users and consumers – involved in adoption law, policy and practice across multiple domains and settings in enabling them to put forward a perspective on what the adoption research gaps are and what should be prioritised for future research.

5.2 Summary of Existing Adoption Research

The methodology used to undertake this study was described in Part II. Analysis was undertaken at two levels. In the *first level analysis*, a step-by-step method was used to map the data including screening, collecting and organising the data from various data sources, which were books, journals, postgraduate theses, government publications and conference presentations/publications.

In the *second level analysis*, a thematic analysis of available studies was carried out (abstracts used when available – see Excel sheet). This identified six major themes – unmarried birth

parents, adoptive parents, adopted people, policy, service provisions and law. Each theme was further divided into sub-themes. The thematic analysis enabled the identification of ‘who was researched’, ‘what was researched’ and ‘how it was researched’ (i.e. based on methodology – qualitative, quantitative, mixed method, documentary analysis and commentary and based on primary/secondary data). The thematic analysis was orientated towards providing a descriptive rather than a detailed analysis. This orientation was propelled by the first level analysis showing that there was a very limited Irish research base in existence. Secondly, as a primary aim of the audit was to identify adoption research, a decision was made to be as inclusive as possible of the wider adoption context and stakeholders with regard to the work that exists. There were major problems with the availability of full texts/abstracts and therefore key methodology features of studies were not available to the researchers. Finally, as frequently occurs in research such as this, the resource parameters – time, finance and labour availability shaped what was possible. The analysis undertaken, however, provides a good overview of what has been conducted and enables commentary on the broad research gaps in the field to be identified and the implications for future research to be considered.

In appraising the Irish adoption research base, the first conclusion is that it is small and the scope of the body of work is limited. The number of publications from 1952 up to the late 1980s was extremely low; thereafter the rate gradually increased. The research has been largely published and disseminated in Ireland and Ireland’s place in the international research arena has been very limited indeed. These comments are not intended to minimise the very good work that has been undertaken and the improvements that have been made across service delivery, practice and the legislative base in Ireland arising from the research undertaken.

The analysis undertaken for this audit has enabled the work completed in the field to be identified, mapped and collated (Part III), and a thematic analysis of six major themes and sub-themes – unmarried birth parents, adoptive parents, adopted people, policy, service provisions and law – to be provided (Part IV). In the next section, the nature of the research conducted across the five different time periods is summarised to orient the reader to look at research gaps.

1950s–1970s

In the early decades, Ireland retained highly conservative attitudes toward unmarried mothers. Shame was central to the discourse and great stigma was attached to an ‘illegitimate’ child. Religious dogma played a crucial role in shaping adoption practices and up until the 1970s, the Catholic Church in Ireland remained a dominant decision-making authority for adoptive families, birth mothers and their children. Under the direction of the church hierarchy (Milotte, 1997; Shannon 2005) and society at large (O’Brien & Pavao, 2013), secrecy was maintained in adoptions, while unmarried mothers and their babies were forcibly separated (Goulding, 1998). The introduction of legal adoption was much contested in the lead up to its commencement in January 1953 (Whyte, 1971).

In the decades from the 1950s to the 1970s, few researchers were engaged in the adoption field and the limited material that was published was largely from church authorities (Barrett, 1952; Tyrell, 1953). The trends in the literature base from 1952 till the 1980s have largely concentrated in the area of unmarried birth mothers, secrecy, stigma and the influence of church authorities. The birth parent theme continued to be a dominant focus in the research field from the 1950s to the present day, both in its historical analysis, practice and legislative writings. The writings on the theme of birth parents were divided into two categories: unmarried birth mother (those who give birth outside marriage) and the much less researched and invisible unmarried birth father (those who have a child outside marriage).

Societal change accelerated in Ireland from the late 1960s onwards, though the dominance of the Catholic Church’s role in adoption was to continue for some time. Creehan researched 100 women in a mother and baby home in 1967 and traced their pathways in and out of one mother and baby home. This work is of immense importance as the research sheds light on women and the institutional practices within a mother and baby home setting at time when secrecy prevailed. Gaining access to the data was particularly difficult, even for Creehan, a religious sister and social scientist. The dominance of the religious in the adoption arena is also illustrated through the work of Sweeney 1969. This work examined a number of adoption agencies and focused on the role of the priest in assisting the mother consider the options in respect of the unplanned pregnancy. Darling’s work in 1974 offered the first professional social worker and academic perspective in relation to adoption service provision and later in 1999, her work also summarised trends occurring in the adoption field from 1983 right through to 1998.

The 1980s

Adoption was talked about more in the public domain in the 1980s and this is reflected in the increase in the publications of popular material in the field (Lefroy, 1980; O'Hare et al, 1983). The period from the early 1980s onwards saw a gradual introduction of new themes in the research arena. Important work included descriptions of adoption agency services and the extent to which the services were structured adequately to meet needs (Lefroy, 1980, 1987; O'Hare, 1984). With respect to government reports/publications, the Review of Adoption Services in 1984 and Abramson's 1984 overview of Issues in Adoption in Ireland provided important data in respect of policy and legal developments. Between the 1980s and the early 1990s, a number of books on adoption law and practice (O'Halloran, 1992; Shatter, 1981) were published but the theme of unmarried motherhood continued to dominate writings in the small number of published books (O'Donohue et al, 1990) and journal articles (Richardson, 1991).

The annual reports of the Adoption Board during this time period revealed that growing numbers of adopted individuals were seeking information about their backgrounds and for the first time, there was an indication that counselling services were being provided by the adoption agencies. The position of birth mothers was shifting slightly and in the Adoption Board reports there is reference to an increase in the number of birth mothers meeting the adopting parents in the course of the adoption process. No empirical study was undertaken on this work for another decade. Conway's (1999) seminal PhD study of adoption policy and practice captures aspects of this change and it was not until 2010 that there was a more in-depth exploration of the actual experience of ongoing contact between the child, the birth mother and the adoption family (McCaughren, 2010).

The 1990s

In the 1990s, research in Ireland focused on law and issues relating to eligibility for adoption and on adoption stages and processes. The legal work included changes arising from the Adoption Act 1988. The focus also revolved around the legal case of Keegan v Ireland in respect of the role of fathers (Bainham, 1995). Research in relation to residential child care (Dolan, 1988), agency services for the adoption triad (Conway, 1993; 1999), adoption law and protection from 1952 to 1991 (O'Halloran, 1992), unmarried mothers and children (Richardson 1991, 1993) and children in care and their families (O'Higgins, 1993) were the focus in books published.

The publication of journal articles lagged behind in comparison to the publication of books and book chapters and remained very low. Towards the end of the 1990s, attention became focused on the growing practice of intercountry adoption and the challenges connected with assessment of ‘eligibility and suitability’ of prospective adopters. Prospective adoptive parents were vociferous in their condemnation of social work practice and this led the government to commission an examination of practices and the development of a new adoption assessment framework (Hawarth & Simmonds, 2004; O’Brien & Richardson, 1999).

The 2000s

The early years of the new century saw a continuation of the theme of the ‘unmarried mothers’ similar to what was present during the 1980s. Garrett (2000) wrote about the repatriation of unmarried mothers from England to Ireland and Salazar (1999) described blood relationships as being central to adoption. Gradually, there was a shift to research which examined policy aspects of both domestic and foreign adoptions (Maguire, 2002; Shannon, 2005). This was also a period when the role and position of birth family members was being acknowledged in both step-family adoptions and adoption from agencies. This included step-family adoptions (Loftus, 2003) and the involvement of birth fathers in such adoptions (Loftus, 2004). In this decade, the Adoption Board annual reports point toward an increasing number of queries coming from adoptees, birth mothers and siblings to access birth records. This activity eventually led to the establishment of the National Adoption Contact Register, put in place in 2005.

The declining number of children being relinquished for adoption continued and an increase in international adoption occurred. In this context, Parkes (2004) examined socio-historical aspects of Irish adoptions, while Selman (2006) compared Irish trends in international adoptions with those of other jurisdictions. The attention of research in journals focused largely on legislative aspects including the Hague Convention (Martin, 2001; Shannon, 2002; Ward, 2003). Service provision in adoption also remained a focus of research commissioned by government and the Adoption Board (Hawarth & Simmonds, 2004; O’Brien & Conway, 2004). During this time period, few national-level conferences or seminars were held in which research was presented. This low base continued until 2007.

From 2007 onwards

In recent years, with various socio-legal developments, publications related to international adoptions, adoptive parents, adopted children and adults as well as same-sex adoptions have been evident. Legislative and policy writings around adoptive and birth families have also been apparent lately with a major focus on children's rights and child welfare and protection (Smith, 2016). The management of inherent tensions, and the balancing of rights between children and their parents, continue to challenge stakeholders in adoption. Despite the increase in outputs in the last decade, the research base remains quite limited.

Research in the last decade has increased in comparison to work undertaken in earlier decades. The research should be seen against the enormous family change occurring in Ireland (Canavan, 2002; Readdick et al, 2012). Legal articles increased hugely especially through publications in the *Journal of Irish Family Law*.

The area of search and reunion also dominated, and this was propelled by changes at a societal and cultural level. The release of the film *Philomena* in 2013 was an important impetus for interest in historical practices and the place of search and reunion for those adopted and those that had parted with children. With several legislative provisions in respect of the release of birth certificates in the pipeline, more research was written about this area of work (Baer, 2014; O'Brien & Mitra, 2015; Watson, 2013).

There were a large number of publications by the Adoption Rights Alliance, which represent the concerns of adopted people and birth parents. In addition to their advocacy reports, a small number of studies were undertaken which highlighted the ethical framework to underpin adoption practice (O'Brien, 2009; O'Gallchoir et al, 2009) and continued focus on legal change (Bracken, 2013; Finegan, 2010; Suibhne, 2010).

A detailed numerical overview of who is being adopted and who is adopting in Ireland is also available through the work of Palmer and O'Brien (2018) in which a compilation of available administrative data in the Adoption Authority annual reports provides the basis for analysis of Irish adoption between 1999 and 2016 and an overview of key trends.

Notwithstanding the limited database and descriptive orientation used in thematic analysis, the mapping of the Irish research base and the analysis provided make an important

contribution to the field and enable us to begin to form a view on the sufficiency of the existing research base in meeting needs and shaping future research objectives.

In the following section we elaborate on the ideas introduced in the methodology section (Part II) in relation to identifying research gaps

5.3 Towards the Identification of Research Gaps

In Part II, a framework was developed and introduced that would enable us to elaborate on issues for consideration and possible recommendations on the future direction of adoption research in Ireland. This framework utilises the analysis of Irish research undertaken and takes account of our knowledge of general adoption trends in the Irish and international contexts⁷; it also highlights contextual parameters i.e. political, social, legal and cultural drivers that shape continuity and change and life course and social/psychological perspectives. This framework is illustrated in Figure 8 and it enables us to take account of the fact that adoption policies, practices and laws evolve at different rates across different contexts and for different reasons. Thus, decisions on recommendations arising from this audit for future adoption research would need to take account of the dynamic and evolutionary nature of this key context marker.

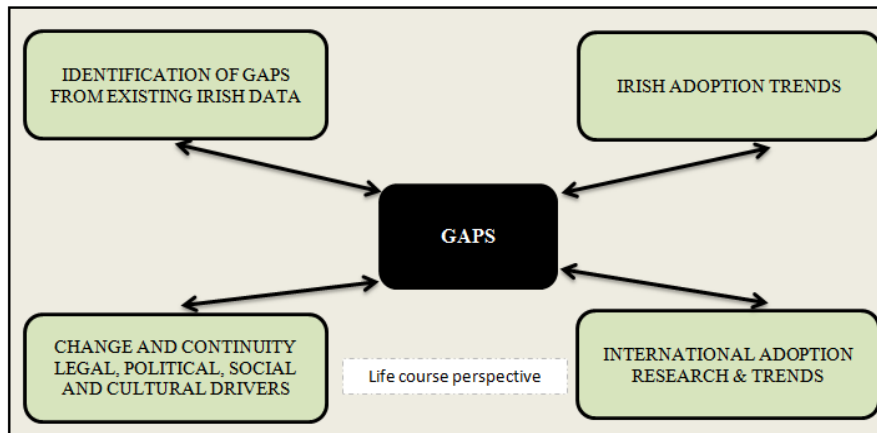
The conceptual framework is used to offer an overview of the direction of adoption research in Ireland and where it might travel. It is intended to build on the appraisal of what has been researched in relation to ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘when’ and ‘how’.

The direction of research needs to take account of current adoption trends in Ireland. An analysis of current adoption trends, with reference to past and present and the anticipation of the future directions, have been laid out in recent work (Palmer & O’Brien, 2018).

⁷ It is beyond the scope of this project to undertake a systematic, robust and detailed examination of international research and practice trends against which to evaluate Irish research adoption gaps. However, our professional and academic knowledge in the field for over 30 years in the case of Dr O’Brien and 15 years in the case of Dr Mitra is a significant resource that we utilised.

Figure 8

A Conceptual Framework to Identify Research Gaps Arising From Thematic Analysis.



Source: Compiled by the authors.

Like adoption itself, there are noticeable trends in relation to adoption research. The extensive use of documentary analysis is not surprising given the centrality of law in adoption. Furthermore, it reflects the real-life challenges faced by practitioners, policymakers, service providers and advocates, and their desire to deal with the day-to-day pressures, the ethical dilemmas encountered and their desire to enact change. There is evidence that the large body of work that has utilised these methods has contributed to change in the wider context. There is a body of work that has used other research methods that has also had influence.

The majority of this research work has been undertaken in the postgraduate research arena, with the exception of a small amount of commissioned work. The scope of postgraduate work, however, has been limited and the dissemination of the work has been sparse. There is evidence of change in the last decade. There is an increase in the numbers of postgraduate studies, particularly PhD work. There is evidence also of more readiness to put the findings of this postgraduate work and commissioned research into the international published domain.

Nevertheless, there is limited evidence of the connections between Irish adoption research and practice or that it has explicitly informed the development of a child-centred Irish adoption policy and practice. This occurs in part because of the limited connections between researchers, policymakers and practitioners to ensure information sharing. It may also be connected to the limited Irish research base that is a feature of other areas of Irish public

policy as well as the adoption area. While it is beyond the scope of this work to examine this aspect of the work, it is apparent that unless research is part of a bigger systemic view of service delivery, it may not impact on those who are affected most by adoption. In making our recommendations in relation to research gaps, we are assuming that the objective is to use the evidence which research develops as a means of enhancing services and ultimately the outcomes for those involved. It is also recognised that the future research direction of Irish research needs to be developed as part of a wider research strategy. AAI are in a key position, with a statutory basis, to develop such a strategy.

5.4 The International Context

It is beyond the scope of this work to undertake a systematic, robust and detailed examination of international research and practice trends against which to evaluate Irish research adoption gaps. Nonetheless, in the identification of research gaps in the following section, we have drawn on our significant professional and academic knowledge. We also reviewed key adoption journals and the International Conference for Adoption Research – ICAR 4, 5 and 6 (held in 2013, 2015 and 2018 respectively). The ICAR conferences were chosen as they attract researchers from all over the world and illustrate the notable variations in international law, policy, cultural values and practices across countries. These sources have provided us with a view of international policy, law and practice trends against which Irish research can be examined.

5.5 Specific Recommendations

Using the conceptual framework in Figure 8, some gaps in the Irish adoption research are discussed in this section. The gaps evidenced throughout the six themes in Part IV are discussed below.

In this process, however, we are mindful of the constraints involved in identifying research gaps associated with the research agenda setting. Thus, in this process we are taking account of :

- The direction adoption is following in Ireland;
- How the past shapes the present and how the present in turn shapes the future;
- Who holds the power in agenda setting in terms of resource allocation; competitive processes in relation to commissioning; legitimisation of research methodologies,

structuring and resolving ethical debates, opening up previously closed conversations whilst being mindful of the wider political context etc.

5.5.1 Trends in Adoption

Knowledge of the changing landscape of adoption practices is essential for policymakers, practitioners and researchers alike. It is anticipated that the analysis and the prediction/identification of future trends will enhance professional practice and service development and throw light on oppressive practices, and this is identified in our view as a basic step underpinning further research.

A recent paper by Palmer and O'Brien (2018) set out to present an overview of adoption trends in Ireland over a 15-year period, through an examination of administrative data and literature in the field. It placed the trends in an historical context and points to key future issues that will need attention to take account of the continued changes as follows:

- The possibility of adopting children out of the care system is highlighted as a major change from past adoption practices. The potential repositioning of adoption as an adjunct of the care system requires major research and service development if it is to be used in the interests of children.
- Likewise, the study highlights an expectation of a declining trend of family (step-parent) adoption, which had been significant for a number of years, with the expectation that the greater guardianship provisions now available through other legislative provision will continue this trend.
- There is a continued decline in intercountry adoption, a phenomenon that is occurring not only in Ireland but across the western world.
- The legacy of the past adoption practices continues to exert huge pressure on the system and there are major gaps in the system in relation to assisting people to resolve issues.

5.5.2 Outcome Studies

A second area where there is seen to be a major gap is in the very limited focus on outcome research in adoption. The Greene et al (2007) study commissioned by the Adoption Board

has shown what can be achieved when there is a commitment to this type of work. There were many findings in this research that impacted on adoption service delivery. The possibility of more work of this nature was impacted by a combination of the economic austerity that hit Ireland from 2007 and the declining numbers of intercountry adoptions that have taken place since 2010. It is our view, however, that longitudinal outcome research is a second area where there is a very significant research gap, where the nature and extent of adoption service services can only benefit from research among those impacted most by adoption.

5.5.3 Gaps in the Research on Birth Parents

A level of research has been undertaken on unmarried birth mothers and adoption especially in relation to the historical experiences of adoption, the stigma of unwed motherhood and illegitimacy, and how both were seen as immoral, shameful and stigmatising for women and children in the religious, social, cultural and political discourse of the time. The studies undertaken have utilised different methods ranging from quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, documentary analysis and commentary papers. The work also highlighted different stages of the adoption process including decision-making by birth mothers regarding relinquishing or keeping the child, placement of the child in adoptive families and life after adoption.

Bearing in mind that birth mothers have been the focus of inquiry since the 1960s, research needs to move towards birth mothers' support systems, counselling provisions and their role in open adoption. Birth mothers are not a homogenous group and this needs to be taken into account. A number of other gaps exist, principally in relation to the unmarried birth fathers, birth siblings and the involvement of members of the wider kinship network in decision-making and outcomes. Taking the reference from international studies being conducted in this field, Elissa Madden and her team (2018) studied the relationship between time and birth mother satisfaction with relinquishment; Elliotte Harrington (2018) has put forth the analysis of the post placement counselling experiences of women who have placed their child for adoption and Aguiniga et al's (2018) study on the role of counselling professionals for birth parents. An attempt could be made to explore similar research themes in the Irish context. Furthermore, research in Ireland also needs to take into account the psycho-social aspects of unmarried birth fathers that are invisible in Irish adoption literature. Men, who have lost their children to adoption and those involved in search and reunion, form a small yet meaningful

subset of the population. Therefore, the essential gap in literature is the lack of studies on the post placement and search and reunion stages of adoption including both unmarried birth mothers and fathers.

Furthermore, the field lacks comparative studies with other countries with the exception of O'Halloran (1994, 2010), Kearney (2012), O'Brien (2016) and O'Brien and Mitra's work (2018a, b). Comparative work with Asian and African countries which have a similar stigma around unmarried motherhood, as Ireland had in the past, could be interesting. This may also provide children adopted from these countries a perspective from which to understand their own adoption.

Researchers from different parts of the world are undertaking comparative work with both western and non-western countries as noted in the ICAR 5 report (Grant, 2016). Therefore, if comparative work were encouraged, it would be helpful to make the field of Irish adoptions more visible to researchers worldwide. With the work that has been published in Ireland over six decades (1952–2017), it is important to open channels of collaboration with other countries and enable new researchers and ideas to influence the context of the Irish adoption system, and vice-versa.

Another area of deficit is the lack of research on those individuals who voluntarily relinquish their child. In the past 20 years, there are people who have placed their children voluntarily, but limited research has examined this experience (O'Carroll, 2002). The question of why, and what the patterns suggest, needs to be understood in order to design an effective support system for these women.

Additionally, step-parent adoptions have been one of the largest cohorts of adoptions in recent times and there is a dearth of research on this topic. The particular Irish characteristic of step-parents adopting arising from the fact that only children born outside marriage could be adopted and therefore step-parent adoption in Ireland was and is different from what has been occurring internationally.

These are some of the areas that have come from the thematic analysis that need further research/exploration.

5.5.4 Gaps in the Research on Adopted People

The theme of adopted people in Part IV covered studies conducted with adopted children and adopted adults. There is very limited research in relation to children adopted and this is an area that warrants attention. The small number of studies conducted focused on the placement/post placement stages of children adopted from overseas and the main work has been conducted by Green et al (2007).

There is a need to conduct more research on adopted children and in particular the feasibility of longitudinal research should be examined. Furthermore, there should be a focus on both science and practice-orientated research. This would enable the needs and outcomes of children and their families adopted through different pathways to be evaluated. Unfortunately, the Irish longitudinal study, 'Growing Up in Ireland' does not have a large enough cohort of children that are adopted to enable this resource to be used. The establishment of a longitudinal study is resource intensive so perhaps, in the meantime, the Green et al study which called for a study of this type, could be reviewed and the feasibility of doing a follow-up study involving the study participants could be considered.

In the international literature there is a strong emphasis on the needs of children adopted from overseas and there is a strong focus on outcomes research. Research gaps have been identified among international adoptees in relation to post-placement issues including mental health, attachment and anxiety disorders (Golding, 2010; Neil, 2018a), family communication openness (Rotger & Aramburu, 2018), leadership development among college students who are adopted (Dolan, 2018); adoption sharing aspects (Farr, Ravvina & Grotevant, 2018) and adoption support interventions.

The adoption of children from the foster care system has been subject to research in those jurisdictions where this practice has a long tradition (UK and USA). There are a number of PhD studies currently been conducted in this area in Ireland. The focus is more on young people adopted from the care system, however.

As there are so few studies available that involve adult adoptees, this is an area of research that warrants more careful consideration. The experiences of adopted people including those adopted through different pathways including step-parent, related, non-related, domestic and intercountry adoptions could be considered, given the dearth of information in this area.

Research work with adopted adults focuses mainly on the search and reunion stages of adoption. In the last 10 years, the voice of adopted adults has become more evident at a socio-political level and they have been to fore in advocating for the right to birth information. The Adoption Rights Alliance has published excellent information packs and policy documents.

5.5.5 Gaps in the Research on Adoptive Parents

The adoptive parent research base is also very limited in Ireland. The available publications focus more on adoptive motherhood rather than adoptive fatherhood. The work in recent years has focused more on adoptive families rearing children from intercountry adoption, rather than domestic adoption. The work has concentrated predominantly on service delivery issues for intercountry adoptive families. There is an extremely limited research base in relation to step-parent adoptions, kinship and same-sex adoptions.

An appraisal of international studies identifies gaps in relation to three levels of adoptive parenthood, and overall there is a strong emphasis on post-adoption supports and therapeutic interventions. At the pre-adoption level, anxieties and dilemmas pertaining to adoption, the association between infertility and adoption (Bokaie et al, 2012; Joshi, Prasad & Kushwaha, 2015; Mitra, 2018), adoption seeking characteristics of the couples (Welsh et al, 2008), experiences with adoption social workers (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015), have been identified as areas that warrant further work.

In the transition to the adoptive parenthood stage (Goldberg, 2010; Tasker & Wood, 2016), the following gaps have been identified: attachment and adjustment issues, parenting special needs children and adoptive parents' experiences with support systems (Mitra, 2017; Weistra & Luke, 2017).

In the post-adoption stage, the challenges facing adoptive parents across the child-rearing life-cycle continue to be the subject of research. While there is a growing literature in this area, there are calls for more studies and many of these have relevance for Irish adoptive families. They include more studies on adoption disruption (Palacios, 2018), post-adoption counselling needs and support systems, mental health needs of adoptive families (Neil, 2018b), parents involved in step-family and same-sex adoptions (Meza & Lopez, 2016) and professionals' beliefs on placing children with same-sex parents (Scherman, Misca & Tan, 2018).

Baden's work (2016) on micro aggressions encountered by adoptive families may have a particular relevance for Irish families given the changing ethnic composition of Irish society, and the increase in intercountry adoption. The potential for children and their families to have negative experiences associated with race and ethnicity is an area that warrants attention. Longitudinal research work, with adoptive and birth families (Grant, 2016), is present in the international domain but this has not been a major feature of study with adoptive parents in Ireland. There are many examples of longitudinal studies that have been carried out elsewhere that Ireland could replicate.

In the meantime, there is a need to conduct a scoping study with adoptive parents involved in both domestic and international adoptions in Ireland to ascertain their lived experiences and to identify their views of research work that is needed.

5.5.6 Gaps in the Research Work on Policy

In the adoption policy area, a number of commentary papers and articles based on documentary analysis have been published in Ireland (see Part IV). In recent years, there has been less postgraduate research work on domestic adoption policy as compared to policy work on intercountry adoptions. The gap remains in policy analysis with respect to adoptions in different family forms, including single parenthood and same-sex adoption (Ayed, 2018). Adoptions by both these groups are relatively new developments in Ireland and this accounts for the limited publications in this domain.

There has been legislative and policy work in the area of contact, search and reunion. There is a need for more comparative policy work to be undertaken in this area. This may help to address the impediments to enacting necessary legislative change that have occurred in the Irish context. Family support is a complex policy area and the area of post-adoption support is a policy area that is in need of urgent attention. The need to examine the changes associated in the shift whereby adoption has occurred primarily in the private consensual domain to one where it now can be used more as an adjunct to the child protection and alternative care system arising from legislative change (i.e. Adoption Act 2017) is a policy and legislative area that warrants significant attention.

5.5.7 Gaps in the Research Work on Law

There are a number of trends in respect of legal research. Adoption has remained a central aspect of Irish family law publications. Specific work has also been undertaken in respect of adoption legislation and this has extended to comparative work with other European countries including comparative work between Ireland, the USA and the UK. Legal research work is also evident in legal provisions for birth families and adopted people in relation to debates and discussion on search and reunion, and open adoption.

Law is central to adoption and there is a need to continue to research legislative aspects of the process. There may be benefit to the field, however, in extending inter-disciplinary research work. The work of McCaughren and Parkes in UCC provides a good template from which this can develop. In the meantime, there is a need to conduct a scoping study with legal practitioners and academics to identify their views of research work that is needed.

5.5.8 Gaps in the Research Work on Service Provision

A good body of research on service provision has been undertaken in relation to assessment of adoptive parents, and information search and reunion services. These publications are important in that they provide a snap-shot of service provision at a certain time period, but they need to be updated to ensure relevance to changing contexts. The recent work of Featherstone, Gupta & Mills, (2018) in the UK draws particular attention to the views of stakeholders in adoption and there are particular findings in respect of professionals in the adoption field that warrant attention in the Irish context. In the short term, the potential of replicating this study in Ireland could be considered. This snap-shot view could provide a good baseline from which to set a research agenda.

The international research continues to highlight deficits in the service field in relation to adoptive competence services and practice. The life-long needs of many adopted children and their families (both birth and adoptive) and the importance of paying attention to developing services to meet the needs of different groups is a recurring theme in the international literature (Pavao, 2005; Crawford, 2017). There is a need to ensure that professionals are adequately trained to address the range of challenges encountered by children and families arising from earlier traumas and the demands of living. Therefore, the deficits in the service provision indicate the need to conduct rigorous research work and to design effective interventions that can be utilised by both family and the agency (Gurney-Smith et al, 2017).

The option of commissioning a literature review based on the ‘what works’ literature and aimed at building resources in this area could be explored. There is also a gap in relation to adoption disruption in Ireland, as this is an area where no Irish research has been undertaken.

In the interim, the potential for demonstration projects aimed at addressing service needs of children and families with a built-in evaluative component could provide a good baseline from which to start in Ireland. As part of this work, a review of training of professionals working in the adoption field could be informative.

5.6 Development of an Irish Research Strategy

The need for the development of an Irish Adoption Research Strategy was highlighted earlier. The potential role of AAI in leading this was noted. The commissioning of this overview on existing adoption research in Ireland could be considered a very strong starting point in this role. The key recommendation is that AAI can use this work as a baseline for shaping future adoption research in Ireland.

We suggest that the next steps, assuming that this work is disseminated, could be to draw together stakeholders, those involved in adoption, professionals and their organisations as well as the research community to begin to shape that research strategy. This could consider themes such as what outcomes are being examined; what should be prioritised; what frameworks ‘need to know’, who is pushing particular agendas, how can research be funded; what can the research community realistically deliver.

There is an imperative that the research remains child centred in its centrality of ethics, social justice and the far-reaching implications of adoption decisions for the individuals, families and future generation. The following recommendations are offered for consideration with AAI as part of the Audit of Research on Adoption in Ireland.

1. The Excel spreadsheet provided with this report, presents a summary of the research carried out between 1952 and 2017. This can be a national resource for all researchers, practitioners and policymakers. This Excel sheet could be placed on the AAI website and AAI should consider requesting Irish adoption researchers to submit their research outputs for adding to this. Research completed and currently underway could be included. This resource has the potential to increase the exposure to and use of Ireland’s research base.

2. It was a difficult task to gather information about ongoing and completed postgraduate work from the university libraries. A future consideration could be that AAI develops a system whereby postgraduate students are encouraged to submit their adoption-related research to the AAI library. This would create a central database which would be accessible to all interested parties.
3. There has been limited funding available for adoption research in Ireland. There are a number of government and non-government funding streams that could be mobilised to increase the outputs. AAI are in a pivotal position to provide leadership in this area.
4. Although the Irish research base is limited, there has been an increased emphasis on peer review publications in recent times as shown and discussed in Part II. This has arisen in part due to the changes in university culture and contexts. This will increase the visibility of Irish research and Irish researchers are engaged also in the international research community. These networks can be utilised to increase cross-cultural comparative research.
5. The project also points towards the need to hold more conferences, particularly international conferences in Ireland as opposed to only national conferences. The benefit of international conferences is that they provide greater visibility, provide insights into the Irish research process through the presentations of international researchers and highlight the deficits in the Irish adoption literature. This could facilitate and encourage a greater number of academic students to research in the field of adoption.
6. During the analysis, a number of newspaper and magazine articles were identified which were seen as significant to the field of adoption. However, they were omitted due to AAI research objectives not specifically requesting their inclusion in the final review. On the other hand, it was noted that there is a lack of analysis of media-related articles on adoption (both print and online). As media plays a crucial role in influencing the opinions of the Irish public on adoption and in turn, the media is also influenced by public opinion; an analysis of media coverage on adoption should also be noted as an area to be studied.
7. Other areas which were considered deficient in the Irish adoption literature were infertility and adoption, couple differences over adoption persuasion, transition to

adoptive parenthood, use of picture books to share the story of adoption, stress and challenge during the adoption process, as well as parental identity and adoptive parenthood. Adoption research, arguably, is still in its infancy and is predominantly descriptive especially with parents who are involved in non-family domestic adoptions. As a result, many of the comparisons and solutions are drawn from western adoption research.

8. A multi-disciplinary approach towards adoption research can be utilised where theoretical frameworks from psychology, sociology, social work and demographic fields can be combined. This would facilitate a better understanding of Irish adoption system and inform family policymakers, social workers and therapists about the specific needs of diverse adoptive family structures across the family life-cycle.

5.7 Conclusion

We have drawn some conclusions based on our immersion in this project which we offer for consideration:

This project provides a definitive account of adoption research in Ireland. We are confident that the product provided with this research is of a standard to enable policymakers, practitioners and others to be assured that they can readily identify the most appropriate and relevant research/reference work for whatever adoption-related task they are working on.

This audit has provided a valuable opportunity to link the research base which exists with those who may derive benefit from this research. Publication and making it widely available should be presented as a contribution to developing evidence-informed adoption legislation, policy and practice.

The task of shaping the future research agenda is one that needs to be undertaken in a collaborative manner. The information contained in this report, which includes what exists and a view on what the gaps are should provide a strong starting point for this task.

While this study refers to international research in highlighting research gaps, a more detailed study of international research could be a key step when research priorities are identified.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Audit of Irish Research - Tender Issued by the Adoption Authority of Ireland

THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

**Request for tenders for the development of an audit of Irish research and an
overview of policy and legislative change in relation to adoption for the
Adoption Authority of Ireland**

15th February 2017

Please submit proposals by noon on 13th March 2017

[PLEASE SEE ELECTRONIC FILE](#)

APPENDIX B

**Notification flyer sent to professionals
through professional associations
requesting details of research undertaken**



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND



Have you conducted research in the area of Adoption?

If so, we want to ensure your work is included in an

Audit of Irish Adoption Research

that is currently underway on behalf of the 'Adoption Authority of Ireland'. We are interested in obtaining the following brief information –

- your name and contact details,
- the name of the study,
- year of study,
- research focus,
- research methodology including who you interviewed /surveyed,
- type of research analysis quantitative, qualitative, mixed etc.

It would be much appreciated if you could send us the abstract if available, but if you are unable to do so, no problem.

We look forward to hearing from you by Friday Nov 17th.

Thank you

Researchers : Valerie.obrien@ucd.ie sahanamtr@gmail.com

APPENDIX C

**Tables outlining individual studies
contained in six main themes**

BIRTH PARENTS

SUB-THEMES	YEAR	STUDIES & FOCUS	METHOD	ADOPTION STAGE & PROCESS DM = decision-making P – Placement PP – Post Placement S&R – Search and Reunion	GENERIC & PARTICIPANT GENERIC refers to a study that does not involve human participants
Illegitimacy as impetus for adoption	1952	Barrett, Adoption: The Parent, the Child, the Home.	Commentary Secondary	DM, P	GENERIC
	1983	O Hare, A., Dromey, M., O Connor, A., Clarke, M., & Kirwan, G. Mothers Alone? A Study of Women Who Gave Birth Outside Marriage.	Quantitative Primary	DM, P	PARTICIPANT
	1990	O'Donohue, J. Unmarried Mothers Delivered in the National Maternity Hospital 1988.	Mixed Primary	DM, P	PARTICIPANT
	1999	Salazar, On Blood and Its Alternatives.	Commentary, Primary	DM, P	PARTICIPANT
	2000	Maguire, The Myth of Catholic Ireland: Unmarried Motherhood Infanticide and Illegitimacy in the Twentieth Century. (PhD History),	DA Primary	DM, P	GENERIC
	2003	Garrett, Remaking Social Work with Children and Families.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2011	Luddy, M. Unmarried mothers in Ireland, 1880 – 1973.	DA Secondary	P	GENERIC
Stigma and unmarried mothers	1990	Doherty, Trends in Single Parenthood and Adoption.	Qualitative Secondary	DM, P, PP	GENERIC
	1991, 1993	Richardson. Decision-Making by Unmarried Mothers.	Mixed Primary	DM	PARTICIPANTS
	1994	Wallace,	Qualitative	DM	GENERIC

		Unmarried Mothers in Ireland in the Middle Decades of the Twentieth Century. (MPhil Women and Gender Studies).	Secondary		
	1996	Boyce, An analysis of the Representation of Unmarried Mothers in the Press. (M.Phil Women Studies).	DA Secondary	Not Specified	GENERIC
	2001	O'Brien, Irish Abortions: Can We Reduce the Number?	Commentary Secondary	DM, P, PP	GENERIC
	2004	Wilson, M., Lordan, N., & Mullender, Family, Community, Church and State: Natural Parents Talking about Adoption in Ireland.	Qualitative Primary	DM, P	PARTICIPANT
	2009	Kelly, R Emerging Voices - Reflections on Adoption from the Birth Mother's Perspective. In G. M. Wrobel & E. Neil (Eds.), International Advances in Adoption Research for Practice	Qualitative Primary	DM, P	PARTICIPANTS
	2009	Sixsmith, M. The Lost Child of Philomena Lee: A Mother, Her Son and a Fifty-year search.	Qualitative Primary	DM, P, PP	PARTICIPANTS
	2014	Rodríguez, Unveiling the Past: Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's 'Sex in the Context of Ireland'.	DA, Qualitative Primary	DM	PARTICIPANTS
Unmarried Mother's rights	1996	Noctor Adoption, Consent and the Constitution.	Commentary Secondary	P, PP	GENERIC
	1999	Horgan, R., & Jermyn, R. D. Adoption law reform debate opens.	DA Secondary	DM	GENERIC
	2008	Sakauchi, F. "Not I" in an Irish Context.	Commentary Secondary	P, PP	GENERIC

		Treatment of women in Ireland.			
	2012	Graham, A. M. Unmarried mothers: The legislative context in Ireland, 1921. (MLitt).	DA Primary	Not specified	PARTICIPANTS
	2017	ARA. Follow-Up Submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in Respect of Ireland.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
Dealing with secrecy (migration)	1969	Sweeney: The Pastoral Care of Unmarried Mothers.	Mixed Primary	DM, P, PP (stability)	PARTICIPANTS
	2000	Garrett, The Hidden History of the PFIs (Pregnant from Ireland): The Repatriation of Unmarried Mothers and Their Children from England to Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s.	DA Secondary	DM	GENERIC
	2002	Callanan, C. Catholic Rescue and Repatriation and Analysis of St. Anne's Adoption Society (Cork) Repatriations of Children of Irish Unmarried Mothers 1950s - 1970s. (PhD. Applied Social Science).	DA Primary	DM, P	GENERIC
Mother & Baby homes	1967	Creegan: Unmarried Mothers: An Analysis and Discussion of Interviews Conducted in an Irish Mother and Baby Home. (100 mothers interviewed).	Qualitative Primary	DM, P, PP	PARTICIPANTS
	1997	Milotte, Banished Babies: The Secret History of Ireland's Baby Export Business. Dublin: New Island Books.	DA Primary	P	GENERIC
	2000	Conway, Adoption Policy and Practice in Ireland in the 1980s.	Mixed Primary	P (adoption agencies)	GENERIC
	2005	O'Carroll, E. Adoption in Contemporary Ireland.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2004	Ward, Involuntary Adoption.	Commentary Secondary	DM	GENERIC

	2015	Department of Children and Youth Affairs The Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and Certain Related Matters.	DA Primary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2016	Garrett, P. M. 'Unmarried Mothers' in the Republic of Ireland.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2017	Garrett, Excavating the past: Mother and Baby Homes in the Republic of Ireland.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2017	DCYA. The Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes: The Third Interim Report.	DA Primary	Not specified	GENERIC
Unwed Birth fathers	1995	Bainham, The Unwed Father and Human Rights: Adopting a Positive Approach?	DA Secondary	DM	GENERIC
	2008	Martin, The European Convention on Adoption 2008: Progressing the Children's Rights Polemic.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2011	Lohan et al Adolescent men's attitudes and decision-making in relation to an unplanned pregnancy.	Quantitative Primary	DM	PARTICIPANTS
	2012	Best, C. The Rights of Unmarried Fathers in Ireland.	DA Secondary	P, PP	GENERIC
	2015	White, J. (2015). Unmarried Fathers—The Need for Legislative Change in Ireland.	Commentary Secondary	P, PP	GENERIC
	2016	Traynor Birth Fathers' Rights: A New Era.	Commentary Secondary	P, PP	GENERIC
	2017	Traynor, O. M. (2017 (August). Birth father's rights: A new era. (Thesis).	DA Primary	P, PP	GENERIC

Birth Sibling Reunion	2011	O'Neill, D. (2011). Post-Adoption Sibling Reunion: Perspectives on Experiences of Reunion and Beyond. (PhD).	Qualitative Primary	Not specified	PARTICIPANTS
	2016	O'Neill, D., McAuley, C., & Loughran, H. Post-adoption Reunion Sibling Relationships: Factors Facilitating and Hindering the Development of Sensitive Relationships following Reunion in Adulthood.	Qualitative Primary	Not specified	PARTICIPANTS
Search and Reunion	2001	Kelly, Motherhood Silenced, Natural Mothers Reflections on Adoption Reunion. (MLitt).	Qualitative Primary	S&R	PARTICIPANTS
	2005	Kelly, R. Motherhood Silenced, The Reflections of Natural Mothers on Adoption Reunion.	Qualitative Primary	S&R	PARTICIPANTS
	2008	Donovan, B. (2008). What are the Views of Irish Birth Parents and Foster Carers on Post-Adoption Contact? (Masters of Science).	Qualitative Primary	S&R	PARTICIPANTS

ADOPTED PEOPLE

CHILDREN					
SUB-THEMES	YEAR	STUDIES	METHOD	ADOPTION STAGE & PROCESS	GENERIC & PARTICIPANT
				DM = decision-making P == Placement PP = Post Placement S&R = Search and Reunion	GENERIC refers to a study that does not involve human participants
Children and the Authority	1952	Barrett Adoption: The Parent, the Child, the Home.	Commentary Secondary	DM, P	GENERIC
	1955	Barrett: The Dependent Child.	Commentary	DM, P	GENERIC
	1997, 2012	Milotte, M. (1997). Banished Babies: The Secret History of Ireland's Baby Export Business. Dublin: New Island Books.	DA Primary	P, PP	GENERIC
	2009	Gilligan, R. The "Public Child" and the Reluctant State.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2010	Maguire, In Precarious Childhood in Post-independence Ireland.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
Children placed under domestic adoption	1993	O'Higgins, K. Family Problems - Substitute Care: Children in Care and Their Families. Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI).	Quantitative Primary	Not specified	PARTICIPANTS
Children placed under intercountry	2001	Switzer, A Study of Children Adopted from Romania	Abstract not available	Not specified	PARTICIPANTS

adoption		into Ireland, Currently in Middle Childhood. (PhD)			
	2004	Smith, Inter-country Adoption in Ireland: Seeking the Child's Perspective.	Abstract not available	Not specified	PARTICIPANTS
	2007	Greene et al A Study of Intercountry Adoption Outcomes in Ireland.	Mixed, DA Primary	Not specified	PARTICIPANT
	2008	Greene, S., Kelly, R., Nixon, E., Kelly, G., Borska, Z., Murphy, S., & Daly, A. Children's Recovery after Early Adversity: Lessons from Intercountry Adoption.	Mixed Primary	PP	PARTICIPANTS
	2008	Chou, S., & Browne, K. The relationship between institutional care and the international adoption of children in Europe.	Quantitative Primary	PP	PARTICIPANTS
	2016	O'Shea, M. T., Collins, C., & Bourke, J. Post Placement Intercountry Adoption: A survey of Irish General Practitioners.	Quantitative Primary	PP	PARTICIPANTS
Step-parent adoptions (child's view)	2002	Loftus, The Child's Knowledge of Origins in Step-family Adoption in Ireland. (Master of Social Science)	Qualitative Primary	P,PP	PARTICIPANTS
Sharing adoption fact	1993	Kerins, "Telling"- An Issue in Adoption. (MA Social Science), National University of Ireland	Qualitative Primary	PP	PARTICIPANTS

	2005	Comaskey, Inter-country Adoptive Parents of Children Adopted from Romania - Their Experience of Talking/Telling Their Children About Their Adoption and Their Birth Origins. (Master of Social Science)	Qualitative Primary	PP	PARTICIPANT
Rights of the child	1985	Richardson, Whose Children: An analysis of some aspects of child care policy in Ireland.	DA Secondary	Not Specified	GENERIC
	1989	O'Reilly, The Emergence of a Judicial Balancing Approach in Resolving the Constitutional Rights of Parent and Child in Adoption and Custody Laws. (LLM), University College Dublin.	DA Primary	P, PP	GENERIC
	2012	CRA. Recognising Children's Rights in the Constitution: The Thirty-First Amendment to the Constitution (Children) (pp. 25). Dublin: Children's Rights Alliance.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2012	CRA. Guide to the Children's Referendum with a focus on the Adoption Provisions Dublin: Children Rights Alliance	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
ADOPTED ADULTS					
Adoption from foster care	2002	Danaher, A Sense of Permanence: A Study of Young Peoples Experiences of	Qualitative Primary	P, PP	PARTICIPANTS

		Being Adopted by Their Foster Parents. (M.Phil. in Social Work)			
	2004	Cregan, Children of the Twilight Zone: Longitudinal Study of Children from Long-Term Foster Care – The Carers’ Perspectives.	Qualitative Primary	P, PP	PARTICIPANTS
	Forthcoming	Neligan, M. (Forthcoming). (Working Title). A Retrospective Examination of Adoptees’ Experiences of Engagement in the Processes of Decision-making, When Moving from Foster Care to Adoption in Ireland (2005–2015). (PhD),	Qualitative Primary	PP	PARTICIPANTS
	Forthcoming	Palmer, A. (forthcoming). (Working Title). New Approaches to Adoption from Irish Foster Care: A Qualitative Study of Young Adults’ Experiences and the Policymaking Response. (PhD)	Qualitative Primary	PP	PARTICIPANTS
Post-adoption experience	2012	McGrath, J. Young Adults' Experiences of Non-Family Domestic Adoption in Ireland. (PhD)	Qualitative Primary	PP, S&R	PARTICIPANTS
Search and reunion	1991	Adoptive Parents of Ireland: Who am I? The Adoptees Dilemma. Adoptive Parents of Ireland.	Commentary Secondary	PP, S&R	GENERIC
	2000	Blair, D. M. Unveiling Our Heritage: A Comparative Examination of Access by Adopted Persons and Their Families to Identifying and Non-identifying Information.	DA, Quantitative Primary & Secondary	P, PP, S&R	PARTICIPANTS
	2001	Curtis, A. Open Adoption – Implications for the Members of the Adoption Triangle. (M.A Social Science),	DA	P, PP	GENERIC
	2014	Byers, S.	Qualitative	PP, S&R	PARTICIPANTS

		Being Contacted by, or on Behalf of a Birth Relative: The Adopted Person's Perspective. (M.Sc. in Systemic Psychotherapy), The Clanwilliam Institute, Dublin.	Primary		
	2016	O'Neill, D., McAuley, C., & Loughran, H. Post-adoption Reunion Sibling Relationships: Factors Facilitating and Hindering the Development of Sensitive Relationships following Reunion in Adulthood.	Qualitative Primary	S&R	PARTICIPANTS
	2017	O'Neill, D., Loughran, H., & McAuley, C. Diversity, Ambiguity and Fragility: The Experiences of Post-Adoption Sibling Relationships	Qualitative Primary	S&R	PARTICIPANTS
	Forthcoming	Shier, A. An exploration of the experiences of Irish intercountry adoptees of search and reunion with birth family members.	Qualitative Primary	S&R	PARTICIPANTS

ADOPTIVE PARENTS

SUB-THEMES	YEAR	STUDIES	METHOD	ADOPTION STAGE & PROCESS	GENERIC & PARTICIPANT
				DM – decision-making P – Placement PP – Post Placement S&R – Search and Reunion	GENERIC refers to a study that does not involve human participants
Infertility	1995	Conway Grief and Loss in Infertility	Qualitative Secondary	DM	GENERIC
	2009	Allison, J. Affirmations, contestations, and contradictions: Experiences of infertility in Ireland.	Qualitative Primary	DM	PARTICIPANTS

		(Ph.D.)			
Process of adoption (Information and Education)	1952	Barrett: Adoption: The Parent, the Child, the Home	Qualitative Secondary	DM, P, PP	GENERIC
	1995	Adoptive Parents Association of Ireland. Adoption Handbook and Directory of Adoption-Related Services	DA Secondary	ALL	GENERIC
	2014	McCaughren, S., & Lovett, J. Domestic Adoption in Ireland: a Shifting Paradigm?	Commentary Secondary	ALL	GENERIC
	Forthcoming	Cregan, M. Children of the twilight zone: longitudinal study of children from long-term foster care – the carers’ perspectives. (PhD)	Qualitative Primary	Not specified	PARTICIPANTS
Adoptive motherhood	1995	Lillis, M. Adoptive Motherhood – An Easy Option?(M.A Women’s Studies),	Abstract not available	DM	PARTICIPANTS
	1996	Morris, Legitimate Mothers, Women and Adoption in Ireland. (MPhil Gender and Women Studies),	Qualitative Secondary	P, PP	GENERIC
	2017	Liddy, B. The Experience of Motherhood through Inter-country Adoption	Qualitative Primary	P, PP	PARTICIPANTS
	2017	McGreal, L. Mothers’ Experiences	Qualitative	P, PP	PARTICIPANTS

		of Parenting an Adolescent in the Context of Inter-country Adoption. (Doctorate in Counselling Psychology studies)	Primary		
Adoptive fatherhood	Forthcoming	McDonough, C. (Working Title) Fatherhood in the Context of Inter-country Adoption. (Doctorate in Counselling Psychology studies)	Qualitative Primary	PP	PARTICIPANTS
Different adoptive parenthood					
<i>Kinship adoptions</i> <i>(Comparative)</i>	2004, 2006	Parkes, Fosterage, Kinship, and Legend: When Milk Was Thicker than Blood?	Quantitative Primary	P, PP	PARTICIPANTS
<i>Step-family adoptions</i>	2002	Loftus What Children Know About Their Birth Circumstances in Step-family Adoption in the Republic of Ireland (master's thesis)	Quantitative Primary	P, PP, Openness	PARTICIPANTS
	2003	Loftus, C. (2003). What Children Know About Their Birth Circumstances in Step-family Adoption in the Republic of Ireland	DA Secondary	PP	GENERIC

	2004	Loftus, C. (2004). Changes in Birth Father Involvement in Step-family Adoption in the Republic of Ireland	DA Secondary	PP	GENERIC
Domestic adoptions	2010	McCaughren A Study of Open Adoption in Ireland Through the Narratives of Adoptive Parents (PhD.)	Qualitative Primary	PP, S&R	PARTICIPANTS
Intercountry adoptions	2005	Comaskey, Intercountry Adoptive Parents of Children Adopted from Romania - Their Experience of Talking/Telling Their Children About Their Adoption and Their Birth Origins. (Master of Social Science)	Qualitative Primary	P, PP	PARTICIPANTS
	2007	Greene's study on international adoptions	Mixed Primary	P,PP	PARTICIPANTS
Same-sex adoptions	2016	Takacs, J., Szalma, I., & Bartus, T. Social Attitudes Toward	Quantitative Primary	P, PP	PARTICIPANTS

		Adoption by Same-Sex Couples in Europe			
	2013	Bracken, L. (2013). Is There a Case for Same-sex Adoption in Ireland?	Commentary Secondary	DM, P	FOCUS
	2010	Geaney, E. Joint Adoption for Same-sex Couples: A Case for Reform. (LL.M),	DA Primary	P, PP	FOCUS
	2015	Healy, G. G. C. The Meaning of Civil Partnership for Same-Sex Couples in Ireland: An Interpretative Phenomenological Study	Qualitative Primary	DM	PARTICIPANTS
Response to search & Reunion	2005	Bowers, Adoption Search and Reunion: The Reactions of Adoptive Parents. (Master of Social Science)	Qualitative Primary	PP, S&R	PARTICIPANTS
In context of changing family forms	1974	Darling (1974) 'Adoption in Ireland'	DA Secondary	ALL	GENERIC
	1984	Abramson 'Issues in adoption in	Commentary Secondary	ALL	GENERIC

		Ireland'			
	2005	O'Carroll Adoption in Contemporary Ireland.	Commentary Secondary	ALL	GENERIC
	2008	O'Brien Modern Families.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2012	Readdick, Farrell, & Koepke Irish Voices: Families in a Globalising Economy	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2012	Canavan's (2012) 'Family and Family Change in Ireland'	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2015	Bergin-Cross The Evolution of the Definition of Family and Marriage under the Irish Constitution'	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2018	Tobin 'Social Families: Adoption, Step and Foster Families in Ireland.'	Commentary Secondary	ALL	GENERIC

POLICY

SUB-THEMES	YEAR	STUDIES	METHOD	ADOPTION STAGE & PROCESS	GENERIC & PARTICIPANT
Overview of adoption policy for domestic adoption	1986	Downing, Adoption Policy in Ireland. (MSocSc.), University College Cork.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	1992	O'Connor, P. (1992). Child Care Policy: A Provocative Analysis and Research Agenda.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2000	Law Reform Commission. Adoption Law: The Case for Reform. A Report by the Law Society's Law Reform Committee.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2003	Richardson, V. Current Issues In Adoption Policy And Practice.	DA Secondary	All	GENERIC
	2005	Shanahan, The Changing Meaning of Family: Individual Rights and Irish Adoption Policy, 1949–99.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
Overview of adoption policy for intercountry adoption	1998	LRC Report on the Implementation of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, 1993	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	1999	Pillay, Implementation of the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: The Law Reform	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC

		Commission Report.			
	2000	AAI & DoH&C. Standardised Framework for Inter-country Adoption Assessment: Report of the Implementation Group. Assessment Procedures.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2002	Maguire Foreign Adoptions and the Evolution of Irish Adoption Policy.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2007	McNamara, R. The Law Reform Commission's Consultation paper on Aspects of Inter-country Adoption Law.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
Policy documents related to adoption legislation	1984	Department of Health. Adoption: Report of Review Committee on Adoption Services.	DA Secondary	DM, P	GENERIC
	1984	Abramson Issues in adoption in Ireland. Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute.	Qualitative Secondary	P, PP	GENERIC
	1994	O'Halloran, K. Adoption in the Two Jurisdictions of Ireland: A Comparative Study.	DA Secondary	ALL	GENERIC
	2005	Department of Health and Children. Adoption legislation: 2003 Consultation and Proposals for Change.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2000	Conway, E. (2000). Adoption Policy and Practice in Ireland in the 1980's. (Ph.D.), University College Dublin, Ireland.	DA, Qualitative Primary	P, PP	PARTICIPANTS

	2012	Kearney, B. (2012). Adoption in Sociological Context: A Comparative Analysis of Britain, Ireland and the United States. (Ph.D.)	DA Primary	Not specified	GENERIC
	Forthcoming	McGettrick, C. Illegitimate Knowledge? The Role of Expert Knowledge in Irish Adoption Policy, 1862–2016. (PhD).	Qualitative Primary	Not specified	GENERIC
Policy documents related to adopted children and adults	1985	Richardson Whose Children: An analysis of some aspects of child care policy in Ireland.	Commentary Secondary	Not Specified	GENERIC
	1989	O'Reilly The Emergence of a Judicial Balancing Approach in Resolving the Constitutional Rights of Parent and Child in Adoption and Custody Laws. (LLM).	DA Secondary	P	GENERIC
	2010	DCYA. The State of the Nations Children (by Department for Children and Youth Affairs).	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2010	Kilkelly, U. 'In Re B: Adoption, Discrimination and the Best Interests of the Child.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2011	DCYA. Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children by Department of Children and Youth Affairs.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2012	Children's Rights Alliance Recognising Children's	Commentary	Not specified	GENERIC

		Rights in the Constitution: The Thirty-First Amendment to the Constitution (Children).	Secondary		
	2013	Shannon, G., Horgan, R., Keehan, G., & Daly, C. Adoption: Law and Practice.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2013	McPartland, E. (2013). The Best Interests of the Child.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2017	McCaughren, S., & Powell, F. (2017). The Fate of the 'Illegitimate' Child: An Analysis of Irish Social Policy, 1750–1952. In N. Howlin & K. Costello (Eds.), Law and The Family in Ireland 1800–1950.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2017	Berkery, S. (2017). Through the Looking Glass: the Definition, Protection and Regulation of the Family from a Child's Rights Perspective.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
Policy document related to birth parents	1982	Law Reform Commission Report of the Law Reform Commission on Illegitimacy (LCC4). Dublin.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2000	Garrett, P. M. The Abnormal Flight: The Migration and Repatriation of Irish Unmarried Mothers.	DA, Qualitative Secondary	DM, P	GENERIC
Towards Search and Reunion	1993	Conway, Search and Reunion in the Adoption Triangle: Towards a Framework for Agency Service to the Adoption Triad.	DA Secondary	PP, S&R	GENERIC
	1997	Central Council of Irish Adoption Agencies	Secondary	PP, S&R	GENERIC

		Guidelines for Policy and Disclosure in Relation to Search: Adoption and Foster Care Placements.			
	2009	Kilkelly, U. Child Law and the ECHR: Issues of Family Life, Adoption and Contact. In Kilkelly (Ed.), Children's rights, Eastern Enlargement and the EU Human Rights Regime.	DA Secondary	S&R	GENERIC

LAW

LAW

SUB-THEMES	YEAR	STUDIES	METHOD	ADOPTION PROCESS	GENERIC ⁸ & PARTICIPANT
(1) Unmarried birth parents	1999	Horgan & Jermyn Adoption law reform debate opens.	Commentary Secondary	DM, PP	GENERIC
	2010	Glessen The Unconstitutional Family: The role of natural law as the basis for developing rights for the unmarried family under the Irish constitution. (LL.M)	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
(a) Unmarried mothers	1953	Barrington, The Irish Constitution XI. The Family and Education.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	1996	Noctor Adoption, Consent and the Constitution.	Commentary Secondary	DM	GENERIC
(b) Unmarried fathers	2008	Martin, The European Convention on Adoption 2008: Progressing the Children's Rights Polemic.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
(2) Child's rights and Law	1989	O'Reilly, The Emergence of a Judicial Balancing Approach in Resolving the Constitutional Rights of Parent and Child in Adoption and Custody	DA Primary	P,PP	GENERIC

⁸ GENERIC refers to a study that does not involve human participants

		Laws. (LLM)			
	1996	Kennedy, Child Care in Ireland.	Commentary Secondary	P, PP	GENERIC
	2000	Martin, The Politics of Children's Rights (Undercurrents).	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2001	Shannon, Horgan, Ryan, & Farrell. Children and the Law.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2002	McCarthy, Adoption. (LL.M)	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2004	Nestor, Law of Child Care.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2005	Shannon, Child Custody Law of the Republic of Ireland.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2007	Kelly, Baby Ann's Constitutional Rights.	DA Secondary	DM, P, PP	GENERIC
	2007	Kilkelly, Barriers To The Realisation Of Children's Rights in Ireland.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2008	Henry, J. A. A Comparative Analysis of the Constitutional and Legislative Provisions with Regard to Non-consensual Adoption of Marital Children in Irish Law. (LL.M)	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2008	Kilkelly, U. Children's Rights in Ireland:	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC

		Law, Policy and Practice.			
	2010	Mc Partland, The Best Interests of the Child: Interpreting Irish Child Legislation	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2013	Parkes, & McCaughren Viewing Adoption through a Children's Rights Lens: Looking to the Future of Adoption Law and Practice in Ireland.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2010, 2017	Shannon, G. Child Law Examines in detail for the Adoption Act 2010.	DA Secondary	All	GENERIC
	2015	Cronin, B. (2015). Children and Family Relationship Act 2015: Review of Certain Commenced Provisions.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2016	Cronin, B. The Children and Family Relationships Act 2015.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2016	Shannon, G. Children and Family Relationships Law in Ireland: Practice and Procedure.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
(3) Adoption legislation	1953	Tyrrell Adoption: The Parent, the Child, the Home. (A review)	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	1992	O'Halloran. Adoption Law and Practice.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2002	Rose, D. The Final Decision: On Adoption Recognition in	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC

		Europe.			
	2003	Keating. The Legalisation of Adoption in Ireland.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2003	Shannon, G. Adoption Legislation Consultation Discussion Paper	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2004	Kilkelly, The Reform of Adoption Law in Ireland: Ensuring Compliance with International Obligations.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2005	O'Halloran, The Politics of Adoption: International Perspectives on Law, Policy & Practice.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2007	Kilkelly, Barriers To the Realization Of Children's Rights in Ireland.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2010	Law Reform Commission Adoption Act 2010	DA Secondary	ALL	GENERIC
	2011	Shannon, G. Adoption law. Examining in detail the impact of the Adoption Act 2010.	DA Secondary	ALL	GENERIC
	2017	Ryan, F. Update on Adoption Law, part of Division I. In G. Shannon (Ed.), Family Law Practitioner Looseleaf Round Hall Dublin. (in press)	DA Secondary	ALL	GENERIC
(4)	1999	Darling,	Commentary	ALL	GENERIC

Law and Domestic Adoption		The Changing Face of Adoption.	Secondary		
	2012	O'Mahony, C. Irreconcilable differences? Article 8 ECHR and Irish law on Non-traditional Families.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2014	McCaughren & Lovett Domestic Adoption in Ireland: a Shifting Paradigm?	Commentary Secondary	ALL	GENERIC
	2015	O'Brien, V., & Palmer, A. (2015). Adoption and the Irish Care System: Context and Drivers for Change?	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2016	O'Brien & Palmer Permanence and Long Term Foster Care: What are the Options?	Commentary Secondary	ALL	GENERIC
(a) Step parent adoptions	2004	Loftus, Changes in Birth Father Involvement in Stepfamily Adoption in the Republic of Ireland.	DA Secondary	PP	GENERIC
(b) Same sex adoptions	2009	Kavanagh, E. Same-Sex Marriage or Partnership and Adoption: Debate for Ireland.	Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2013	Bracken, Is There a Case for Same-sex Adoption in Ireland?	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2016	Bracken, Strasbourg's Response to Gay and Lesbian Parenting: Progress, then Plateau?	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC

	2017	Tobin, B. The European Court of Human Rights' Inconsistent and Incoherent Approach to Second-Parent Adoption.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
(5) Law and inter-country adoptions	1998	Horgan, Regulating Intercountry Adoption: The Challenge for the Irish Adoption System. (LL.M)	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2008	McCaughren & Sherlock, Inter-country Adoption in Ireland: Law, Children's Rights and Contemporary Social Work Practice.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2007, 2008	LRC Consultation Paper: Aspects of Intercountry Adoption Law.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2009	O'Brien, The potential of Ireland's Hague Convention Legislation to Resolve Ethical Dilemmas in Inter-country Adoptions	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2010	Suibhne, Intercountry Adoption: Intersecting Forces of Globalisation and International Law.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2012	McCaughren, S., & Parkes, A. (2012). Ireland and the Global Landscape of Adoption: The Adoption Act 2010—A Missed Opportunity?	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2014	Shannon, G. Inter-country Adoption, the	Commentary	Not specified	GENERIC

		Changed Landscape, AAI overview,	Secondary		
(6) Advocacy through Law	2003	ARA. Submission to the Adoption Legislation Consultation July 2003.	DA Secondary	PP	GENERIC
	2010	Finegan, The Normative Relevance of Articles 7(1), 9(3) and 18 of the UNCRC for Irish Adoption Law.	DA Secondary	DM	GENERIC
	2015	ARA UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in respect of Ireland	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2017	ARA. A Fundamental Right to Information: Adoption Information.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
(7) Search & Reunion	2001	McIntyre, Adoption Law: The Case for Reform, Part I.	DA Secondary	S&R	GENERIC
	2011	McNamara, C. (2011). Open Adoption: Should it be legislated for in Ireland	Commentary Secondary	PP, S&R	GENERIC
	2011	Connolly, The Adoption Act 2010: The need for a legislative provision for an adoptee's unqualified right of access to identifying information. (LL.M)	DA Secondary	S&R	GENERIC
	2011	McGettrick, Lohan, & Steed. Adoption Rights Alliance: Adoption Legislation	DA Secondary	S&R	GENERIC

		Proposals Submitted to Minister for Children.			
(8) Adoption and Family Law	1976	Binchy New Vistas in Irish Family Law.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	1981	Shatter, Family Law in Ireland.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	1997	Shatter, A. Family Law in Ireland	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2000	Power, Family Legislation Service.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2003	Ward, Republic of Ireland - The Child and the State. In A. Bainham (Ed.), International Survey of Family Law (pp. 217-239).	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2007, 2011	Nestor, An Introduction to Irish Family Law	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2008, 2011	Shannon, Family Law	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2016	Deirdre Kennedy, & Maguire, Irish Family Law Handbook	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2017	Howlin & Costello, Law and the Family in Ireland, 1800–1950	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC

SERVICE PROVISION

SUB-THEMES	YEAR	STUDIES	METHOD	ADOPTION STAGE & PROCESS	GENERIC & PARTICIPANT
(1) Surveys	1970	Good: A Cork Society's Adoption Survey, Child Adoption.	Quantitative Primary	DM, P	PARTICIPANT
	1981	Lefroy, L. (1981). The Adoption Advice Service - Dublin. The First Three Years, May 1977–May 1980.	DA Secondary	DM, P, PP	GENERIC
(1a) Community support Counselling and Information giving service	1972	Kilkenny: A Report on the National Conference on Community Services for the Unmarried Mother by Kilkenny Social Service.	DA Secondary	PP	GENERIC
	1978	Children First So, You Are Thinking of Adopting?	Commentary Secondary	DM	GENERIC
	1992	Barnardos. Trends and Issues in Adoption in Ireland in 1992: 15 Years of Adoption Advice, Information and Counselling	Quantitative Secondary	All	GENERIC
	1984	Mollan, R. C., & Lefroy, L. New Families: Your Questions on Fostering and Adoption Answered.	Qualitative Secondary	DM	GENERIC
(1b) Search & Reunion service	1993	Conway, Search and Reunion in the Adoption Triangle: Towards a Framework for Agency Service to the Adoption Triad.	Qualitative Secondary	PP, S&R	GENERIC
	2011	Lohan, M., Cruise, S., O'Halloran, P., Alderdice, F.,	Quantitative	DM	PARTICIPANTS

		& Hyde, A. (2011). Adolescent Men's Attitudes and Decision-making in Relation to an Unplanned Pregnancy.	Primary		
	2001	McIntyre, O. (2001). Adoption Law: The Case for Reform- Part Two.	Commentary Secondary	S&R	GENERIC
	2001	Blair, The Impact of Family Paradigms, Domestic Constitutions, and International Conventions on Disclosure of an Adopted Person's Identities and Heritage: A Comparative Examination.	DA Secondary	S&R	GENERIC
	2013	O'Brien, V. (2013). Social Networking, Adoption and Search and Reunion.	DA, Qualitative Primary & Secondary	S&R	GENERIC & PARTICIPANTS
	2015	O'Brien, V., & Mitra, S. Search and Reunion in Adoption: The Aftermath of the Film 'Philomena' and an Opportunity to Shape Change.	Commentary Secondary	S&R	GENERIC
(2) Domestic Adoption Service Provisions	2000	Conway, E. (2000). Adoption Policy and Practice in Ireland in the 1980's. (Ph.D.), University College Dublin, Ireland.	DA, Qualitative Primary & Secondary	P, PP	PARTICIPANTS
	2005	Darling, Social Work in Adoption: Vignette. In Noreen Kearney & C. Skehill (Eds.), Social Work in Ireland: Historical Perspectives.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2005	Loughran, H., & Richardson, V. Mixed Method Adoption Research. Dublin: Crisis Pregnancy Agency, The Adoption Board.	Mixed method	P, PP	PARTICIPANTS & GENERIC
	2011	IASW.	Commentary	ALL	GENERIC

		A Call for Change Discussion Document on Children and Families: Social Workers Make Their Voices Heard.	Secondary		
	2012	Hamilton, Irish social work and social care law.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2015	McCaughren, S & NíRaghallaigh, M 'Adoption in Ireland: Exploring the Changing Context'. In A. Christie, B. Featherstone, S. Quin & T. Walsh (eds). Social Work in Ireland: Changes and Continuities.	Commentary Secondary	ALL	GENERIC
(3) Inter-country Adoption Service Provisions	2009	O'Brien, V. (2009). The Potential of Ireland's Hague Convention Legislation to Resolve Ethical Dilemmas in Inter-country Adoptions.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2011	ARA. Submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review Twelfth Session of the Working Group on the UPR Human Rights Council.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2012	ARA. Submission to Ireland's Fourth Periodic Report to the United Nations Committee on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	2016	O'Keeffe, B. Foreign Adoption in Ireland: A Case Study of the Irish-American Adoptions.	DA PRIMARY	Not specified	GENERIC
(4) Standardised	1993	Conway, E. Search and Reunion in the Adoption Triangle: Towards	Mixed Secondary	S&R	GENERIC

Framework and Trainers' material		a Framework for Agency Service to the Adoption Triad.			
	1999	O'Brien, V., Richardson, V., Sanyal, A., & Murphy, K. Towards a Standardised Framework for Inter-country Adoption Assessment Procedures: A Study of Assessment Procedures in Inter-country Adoption Department of Health and Children.	Mixed, DA Secondary	P, PP	GENERIC
	2004	Haworth, G & Simmonds, J. Towards a Standardised Framework for Inter-country Adoption Assessment Procedures: Guide for Practitioners.	DA Secondary	P, PP	GENERIC
	2004	O'Brien, V., & Dempsey, P Summary Report on the Inter-country Adoption Preparation "Train the Trainers" courses. Dublin: Irish Adoption Board and HSE.	Secondary	ALL	GENERIC
	2004	Conway, E. & O'Brien, V., Guide for Practitioners - A Standardised Framework for Domestic Adoption Preparation, Assessment and Decision-making Procedures.	DA Secondary	DM, P, PP	GENERIC
	2009	O'Gallchoir, S., O'Carroll, E., Loane, A., Saunders, A., Craig, E., & Bennett, M. An Ethical Framework for Adoption in Ireland. Drogheda, Co Louth, Ireland: Council of Irish Adoption Agencies.	DA Secondary	ALL	GENERIC
(5) Psycho-education	1952	Brophy, L. (1952). The Homeless Child and The Childless Home.	Commentary Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC

material					
	1995	Conway, The Chosen Baby Story and Other Fairy Tales: a Review of the Adoption and Fostering Literature.	DA Secondary	Not specified	GENERIC
	1999	Darling, V. The Changing Face of Adoption.	Commentary Secondary	All	Generic
	2014	O'Brien, V., & Maguire Pavao, J. The Last Word: Irish-American Adoptions.	Commentary Secondary	All	GENERIC

APPENDIX D

**Excel Sheet of Adoption Research from 1952 to
2017.**

**Please see electronic file and accompanying
document**

APPENDIX E

Table showing the list of keywords to search the studies in the Excel sheet

Illegitimate/ Illegitimacy	Unmarried/ Unwed	Girls	Priest	Mother and baby	Adolescent	Northern Ireland	Kinship
Social workers/ Social work	Mothers/ Fathers	Boys	England	Church	Statistics	Amendments	Migration
Child welfare/ Child care	Parents	Adoption orders	Catholic	Family	Motherhood/ Fatherhood	Repatriation	Child/ Children
Keegan	Infertility	Act/Acts	Adopter	Europe/ European	Information	Search	Practitioners
Reunion	Foster	Natural	International/ Inter-country	Rights	Service	Contact	
Family Adoptions	Foreign	Adoptees	Marriage	Private Adoptions	America/ American	Consent	
Women	Adopted	ECHR	Legal/ Legalisation	Catholic	Same sex	Counselling	
Domestic	Sibling	Law	State	England	Adoption	Britain	
Board	Policy/ Policies	UN	Bill	Care	Children	Step-family	

