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Booklet of Selected Theses from the MA in Criminology, MA in Law, MA in Child, Family and Community Studies, and the International Masters in Early Childhood Education, 2010-2012

Matt Bowden  
*Technological University Dublin*, Matt.Bowden@TUDublin.ie

Carmel Gallagher  
*Technological University Dublin*, carmel.gallagher@tudublin.ie

Kevin Lalor  
*Technological University Dublin*, kevin.lalor@tudublin.ie

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This booklet highlights and celebrates the research work of graduates from taught Masters programmes in the School of Social Sciences and Law:

- the MA in Criminology
- the MA in Law
- the MA in Child, Family and Community Studies
- the International Masters in Early Childhood Education, co-delivered with Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (Norway), and the University of Malta (Malta).

The MA in Criminology and the MA in Law commenced in 2006 and the MA in Child, Family and Community Studies commenced in 2007. Each has quickly become established in its field as a popular, exciting and challenging course of study. The International Masters in Early Childhood Education (funded by the European Union’s Erasmus Mundus Programme) has attracted student cohorts from all over the world and has provided a rich learning environment for students, who spend a semester each in Oslo, Dublin and Malta.

Contained herein are the abstracts of selected theses from the four programmes, some details on the researchers and information on where to find the full text of each thesis, many of which are available online at our Institute Repository, Arrow@DIT (http://arrow.dit.ie/). This is the second edition of our Booklet of Selected Theses series, and it celebrates graduates from 2010-2013. Having online access to full thesis text will be of considerable value to other researchers, to our current cohort of students and to prospective students on these MA programmes.

Each of these theses has been judged to be at a very high academic standard. Many shine a spotlight on little researched aspects of Irish society and provide empirical recommendations for policy makers and future researchers. We are hopeful that highlighting graduates’ research in this way may encourage them to further develop their work for publication in peer review journals.

We wish to congratulate our graduates on their achievements – the abstracts presented here are a small representation of the many long hours of work and study which produced the final theses. We wish them well in their future research and professional careers.

We would like to thank colleagues for help in producing this booklet. Joanne Boyle for typing, formatting and chasing up all the parts that make up this document; and Ralph Murphy for uploading the theses to Arrow.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the commitment and dedication to academic rigour of the thesis supervisors and all our colleagues who lecture on these programmes.

Dr Matt Bowden, Programme Chair, MA in Criminology
Dr Carmel Gallagher, Programme Chair, MA in Child, Family and Community Studies
Dr Kevin Lalor, Head of School of Social Sciences and Law
April 2013
New Irish research in Criminology, Law, Childhood, Family and the Community

Name: Tracey Carroll  
Programme & Year: MA in Criminology, 2010  
Thesis Title: Adolescents Who Sexually Abuse: Exploring the Impact on The Family  
Supervisor: Dr Mairéad Seymour  
Current Position: Tracey is currently studying for a Masters in Social Work in Trinity College Dublin and is employed by Focus Ireland as a relief project worker.

ABSTRACT

This research project considers a frequently ignored dimension of adolescent sexual abuse, the parents and families of the adolescent perpetrator. This study focuses on eliciting professionals’ views of the impact on the family when an adolescent member has sexually abused. The context for the study is outlined with an account of the prevalence of and explanations for adolescent sexual abuse. The study proceeds to look at legislation and the impact on labelling. Areas relating to the family on the impact of disclosure, parental reactions and the process of engagement are explored. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five professionals working within the child welfare and criminal justice system who worked with young people who had sexually abused and their families. The purpose of the study was to explore with professionals their perceived perception of the impact having an adolescent sexual abusing member has on families, from their contact with family members. The findings and analysis suggest, from the professionals’ perspective, that families are faced with many issues when confronted with the discovery that their child has sexually abused. These include emotional upheaval, risk management and issues regarding engaging with services. If the aim of therapeutic intervention with sexually abusing youth is to reduce the risk of further abuse and to help the young person develop a healthy lifestyle, this study contends, from the professionals’ perspective, that family involvement is essential. The researcher concludes this study by making recommendations.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/34/
ABSTRACT

The death of a prisoner raises significant questions in relation to the conditions of confinement and the conduct of the prison authorities. Robust investigations into these deaths can enhance accountability by shedding light on deficits in both institutional and systemic practices, as well as providing families of the deceased with a sense of closure. In Ireland, the investigative responses to prison deaths are neither robust, nor do they allow for significant scrutiny of the circumstances surrounding the death. The causes of deaths in custody and the compatibility of the ensuing investigations with international standards have not been subjected to empirical analysis in this jurisdiction. The current study attempts to address this. Using data collected from coronial inquest files in the Dublin City Coroner’s district, the causes of prisoners’ deaths were subjected to a rigorous thematic analysis. The efficacy of the inquest process and its compliance with Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights were also examined. This study exposes a myriad of issues relating to both the causes of deaths and the resulting investigations. The findings highlight issues such as appropriate drug treatment strategies, deficits in medical practice, and the poor provision for family participation at the inquest proceedings. Most importantly, the research findings show that prisoners’ deaths are caused by a variety of factors, and as such there can be no ‘one size fits all’ approach to the problems.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/33/
New Irish research in Criminology, Law, Childhood, Family and the Community

Name: Graham Tolan
Programme & Year: MA in Criminology, 2011
Thesis Title: The police caution as a diversionary mechanism. An analysis of the Garda Síochána Adult Caution Scheme
Supervisor: Dr Mairéad Seymour
Current Position: Graham is currently employed as a Garda Sergeant attached to Kells Garda Station, having previously served at Ballyfermot, Blanchardstown, Kilmainham and with the United Nations Peace Keeping Force in Cyprus. He is the holder of Diplomas in Policing, Psychology of Criminal Behaviour and Sports Management.

ABSTRACT

The Garda Síochána Adult Caution Scheme was established in 2006. It is among a range of alternate methods which have been introduced in recent years that are designed to divert adults away from the criminal justice system. The scheme provides a mechanism by which individuals receive a formal police caution in lieu of prosecution before the courts. It is only available to certain persons against whom there is evidence of the commission of a scheduled criminal offence and where the prosecution of such an offence is not in the public interest. This thesis examines the scheme over a five year period. A quantitative research approach was selected for this study. Data from over 670,246 incidents was obtained from the Central Statistics Office. An analysis of the data provided a profile of the recipients of the scheme and the type of offences that are most commonly disposed of by way of an adult caution. The research also explored the post caution offending behaviour of the participants and the consistency of application of the scheme across the various Garda geographical regions. Recommendations arising from this research include additional qualitative research by way of interview of the recipients of a caution and the expansion of the scheme to cover additional offences.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/27/
ABSTRACT

There is an increasing need to understand the processes in which key decisions are made within the criminal justice system. While women in the Irish prison system are still very much in the minority, they are the fastest growing population in prison and are currently experiencing overcrowding unknown in living memory in Irish prisons. It is too soon to comprehensively examine the origins of the recent policy decision to retrofit bunk beds and dormitories in Ireland's largest women's prison (Dóchas Centre) and what other possible solutions were explored, for example, why a proposed new facility was cancelled. However, it is possible to examine the origins of the Dóchas Centre, which was responding to a crisis of its era. A review of the relevant literature on the policy process highlights that the criminal justice policy does not follow a linear trajectory; an identified problem does not necessarily attract the most appropriate solution. While studies have identified the effects of policy decisions, very little is understood of their origin. The literature also identifies the residual place that women occupy within the prison system. This emphasises the need for a greater understanding of the policy process as it affects this minority group. A qualitative study, using both documentary analysis (parliamentary reports) and semi-structured interviews with key individuals was undertaken to explore the process behind the genesis of the Dóchas Centre. The findings indicate the importance of individuals within the processes and the existence of a clear objective amongst those individuals to improve conditions for women; and the adaptation of their conditions to their particular needs. Highlighted is the importance of serendipity in the process and that pragmatic rather than thoroughly optimal decisions were made during the process. With the benefit of Kingdon's multiple stream model, a lens is focused on the policy process behind the decision to build the Dóchas Centre. What emerges is evidence that the success of the process relied upon multiple opportunities 'windows' presenting themselves until, finally, the policy decision crystallised in the construction of the Centre.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschsslis/32/
ABSTRACT

Over the last twenty years, there has been a significant increase in the use of closed circuit television (CCTV) systems. Most people are familiar with the use of such systems in locations such as shops, financial institutions, hotels, schools, hospitals, sports stadia and so forth. However, there are also a significant number of public CCTV systems that have been erected and operate in public space areas such as town centres, residential housing estates etc. Some of these CCTV systems are police only or local authority only systems but a growing number are what is termed community-based systems. The principal aim of this study is to explore the development and use of these community-based CCTV systems: with the key objectives of investigating societal attitudes and perceptions of CCTV in the community; exploring implications for civil liberties and privacy issues; and an examination of the evaluation processes to assess the impact of the systems. The researcher adopted a mixed methods approach of both qualitative and quantitative research for this project. For the qualitative aspect, the method of sampling was purposive with eight persons selected for interview on the basis of their knowledge and experience of community-based CCTV systems. For the quantitative aspect, probability sampling was used with members of the general public randomly selected for face-to-face surveys utilising questionnaires. Recorded crime figures were also examined at each location. The results show that, despite a lack of empirical evidence as to their value in preventing or reducing crime, there is strong public support for these systems and that the foundation for much of this support lies in greater feelings of safety generated in areas with CCTV coverage. The results further show that there is a deficit of ongoing evaluation. The researcher recommends that all systems currently in operation should be evaluated on a continuing basis and that these evaluations should include comprehensive crime figure analysis including crime displacement, opinions and attitudes of the local community, technical specifications and operational requirements of the CCTV system. The researcher also recommends that the community become more knowledgeable of the systems and that the presence of CCTV cameras in the area be frequently highlighted and publicised to inform the public and act as a deterrent.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/51
ABSTRACT

The regeneration of Turristown was a programme for the economic, social and physical renewal of a suburban town in Dublin, which began in 1997 and which remains on-going to this date. The area of Turristown is one which has been blighted by socioeconomic and physical deprivation since its establishment in the late 1960s, and the regeneration programme was therefore formulated to provide much needed housing, social services and economic investment to the area. This study sought to assess the impact of this urban regeneration on security and safety as perceived by the suppliers and consumers of security and safety in Turristown. The research was of a qualitative nature; semi-structured interviews were conducted with those involved in the planning and implementation of the redevelopment, with the suppliers of security and safety in the town, namely An Garda Síochána and Dublin City Council, and with the consumers of public safety made up of business owners, the local authority and local agencies. Furthermore, the study sought to examine the nature of partnership in respect of urban regeneration programmes to establish whether the inter-agency approach to crime prevention and social development was a worthwhile endeavour. The research established that there were definite safety and security benefits to regenerating a deprived urban area, and this was confirmed from the perspective of both the suppliers and consumers of public safety. An Garda Síochána and Dublin City Council are better able to provide clean, safe and secure environments for those working and living in Turristown as a result of specific physical and social changes made to the area. Furthermore, consumers of public safety also feel more secure and are less affected by crime. However, the study shows that harder situational crime prevention measures such as CCTV proliferation and newer, more secure buildings are not the only explanations for this phenomenon; increased footfall, natural surveillance, and improved community spirit all contribute to a feeling of safety and have an effect on the level of criminal opportunity in an area. The regeneration project did cause some unforeseen issues, particularly in respect of empty tower blocks which became crime attractors, and from the increased availability of alcohol which occurred as a result of the establishment of a number of premises with off-sales facilities. Design issues also led to problems in maintaining the new housing developments and public areas from the perspective of Dublin City Council. The partnership approach to urban regeneration appears to have been a success and has enriched inter-agency relations in the town, thus improving the ability of agencies to provide safety and security to local residents and to those working in the town. However, a number of concerns were raised in respect of the partnership process, particularly around the representation afforded to local residents and on some of the non-housing decisions made by the Turristown Regeneration Company which affected local residents acutely. It is anticipated that this study will add depth to both situational crime prevention and community safety research already carried out in this jurisdiction. Furthermore, the research may inform policy relating to subsequent proposed regeneration programmes to be undertaken in this country and to the nature of inter-agency partnership schemes.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssl/dis/55
ABSTRACT

It has been argued that the majority of representations of mentally ill offenders fall into one of two models: the moral/punitive model, and the medical/therapeutic model. The moral/punitive model views mental illness as a personal failure rather than a medical condition, and any representations of offenders in this model will be unsympathetic. The medical/therapeutic model views mental illness as a medical condition, and views mentally ill offenders in a sympathetic manner.

The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether the representation of mentally ill offenders in the Irish print media conforms to one of these two models. In order to do this, a combination of content and discourse analysis was carried out on four newspapers over a two month period. It was found that the Irish print media's portrayal of mentally ill offenders overall did not fit into one of the two models suggested. The portrayal of mentally ill offenders was heavily mediated by gender, age and type of crime committed. Whether the portrayal of offenders fit into the moral/punitive model or the medical/therapeutic model was thus dependent on these factors and varied hugely. Thus, it was observed that mental illness is a secondary factor in the eyes of the Irish print media, and is used to support the primary factors of gender, age and type of crime committed.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/31/
ABSTRACT

Recent developments in policing in Ireland have seen a shift towards local crime prevention initiatives through local partnerships. The principal aim of this study is to explore the effects of the partnership model of policing with the recent introduction of Joint Policing Committees (JPCs). This dissertation seeks to examine the opinions of members of JPCs towards this model. The research employed a qualitative methodology: data were obtained through semi-structured interviews of JPC members and observational studies. In addition, this thesis reports on literature regarding partnership, security and governance in modern society. While this research project found that informal partnerships between An Garda Síochána and Local Authorities existed prior to the formation of JPC, since their establishment, partnerships have become more formal and accountable. There is strong evidence to suggest that elected representatives were slow to fully engage in the partnership model of policing and were against community representatives’ involvement on JPCs as they were ‘not elected’. The councillors felt that local authorities and Gardaí attended JPC meetings to answer councillors’ questions and report to them. They did not view their role as part of policing partnerships, working together with other agencies to find solutions. The research found that the main strength in the JPC model was Local Policing Fora which were based in local communities. These fora were less formal in structure and involved real community participation, which dealt with local policing issues. It is important for JPCs to establish a system of communication to inform residents of developments in relation to the policing of their local area. The principal conclusion has revealed that all participants agreed that the JPC model of partnership is the way forward for policing. This model is capable of developing and involving other agencies, as well as the community in the policing of their local areas. There is a constant need for ongoing monitoring to facilitate the evaluation of Joint Policing Committee processes. In summary it is hoped that this research into the partnership model may be the catalyst for more extensive research to be carried out in the future.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschsl/30/
ABSTRACT

The study examines the Irish Drug Treatment Court (IDTC) programme and specifically its practitioners’ role in promoting offender compliance, which is essential to the success of community supervision and community punishment programmes. Existing literature and research was studied extensively, paying particular attention to compliance and legitimacy theory as well as the challenges of addiction and offending in the overall equation of compliance. Qualitative research methods were utilised with non-participatory observation of IDTC team meetings and court sittings, and semi-structured interviews with practitioners. Five IDTC professionals were interviewed and their experience, skills, education and opinion contributed extensively to the study’s aims and objectives. The study found that practitioners promote compliance when they establish a respectful relationship, display consistent fairness, encourage and motivate offenders, provide opportunities for change and recognise all successes while appreciating the fluid nature of compliance. This study will assist victims, offenders, the exchequer, and society at large by providing analysis and conclusions, which can be applied to further research and will serve as a reference to community supervision programme policy makers.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschsslidis/57
ABSTRACT

The criminal justice system has drawn the victim of crime from the background to become a major factor in the criminal justice process. Over the last two decades, a considerable number of Irish policies have been drafted to meet the needs of the victim of crime. Whilst Ireland has followed the same path as a number of other jurisdictions such as the UK, it is interesting to consider why particular policies have been enacted. Is the victim of crime being used as a pawn in political game play? Or, are politicians genuinely addressing the needs of Irish victims of crime? This qualitative, non-reactive research examines three policies to uncover the influences on the development of victim policies in Ireland. These are the Criminal Law (Rape) (Amendment) Act 1990, the Criminal Justice Act 1993 and the Justice for Victims Initiative 2008. Whilst any number of policies could have been examined, the enactment of each of these policies was extremely noteworthy. The Criminal Law (Rape) (Amendment) Act 1990 amended the Criminal Law (Rape) Act 1981 following a campaign spear-headed by the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre. The Criminal Justice Act 1993, which may be seen as watershed legislation for victims of crime in Ireland, was enacted following a period of mass public outcry, invoked by the case of Lavinia Kerwick. Fianna Fáil’s Justice for Victims Initiative 2008 was introduced at a time when rival Fine Gael’s Victims’ Rights Bill 2008 was about to be voted on in the Oireachtas. This research used documentary and content analysis to determine three themes of influence common to each of the policies examined. First, the power of the media was evident in each of the policies. Media coverage of particular cases and campaigns by advocacy groups pushed the victim of crime to the forefront of public attention. Second, advocacy and support groups were pivotal, either by directly driving a campaign forward, or by expressing their views regarding prospective policy changes. Finally, it was found that Government actions can influence the development of victim policies by, for example, the refusal to pass substantial legislation drafted by opposition parties.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/54
Name: Judy McAvoy
Programme & Year: MA in Criminology, 2012
Thesis Title: Birds of a Feather? Irish Public Attitudes towards Sex Crime and Sex Offender Reintegration. Is there a Publicly Perceived Scale of Sexual Deviance?
Supervisor: Dr Sinéad Freeman
Current Position: Judy is currently employed as a social care worker within a Dublin-based homeless service.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation draws from a research project on public attitudes towards sex crime and sex offender reintegration with the objective of outlining a publically perceived scale of sexual deviance and exploring how this impacted on reintegrative measures. In addition, it investigated public knowledge of existing legislation and prevalence of sex crime. A web-based approach and electronic data collection method were used, whereby 84 participants were sampled from an Irish discussion forum-based website. An online survey in the form of a self-completion questionnaire explored their attitudes in relation to various scenarios of sex crime and various types of sex offenders. Willingness to apply the label of “sex offender”, levels of punitiveness and responses to reintegrative measures and policies were each explored. Findings suggested that the public indeed perceive sexual deviance to be on a scale of severity and the least reintegrative responses were shown towards those seen as most deviant. Support for the rehabilitative ideal was also found to be strong. As such, this study has been found to have significant implications for policy, practice and future research.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/56
ABSTRACT

Crime is a timeless phenomenon. Its inherent ability to both fascinate and appal has made reporting of crime an intrinsic part of newspapers since the dawn of the printing press. The interest surrounding crime validates the need for accurate and consistent reporting. This renders it a regular feature of the daily news cycle and thus a fixture in our everyday lives. Reading or hearing about it through the news media is the only contact that many people will have with crime throughout their lives. Therefore, the manner in which crime news is both presented and portrayed to the general public is of crucial importance. Academic research has described how the media have a propensity to over-report news of violent crime, which can lead to a negative external perception of crime. In order to re-assess the matter in a contemporary Irish context, this research study set out to examine crime reporting in modern-day Ireland. Through the use of newspaper analysis and in-depth interviews, the study finds that although crime is a daily feature of the news coverage, its position within the newspaper is not as prominent as one may expect. Moreover, a lack of in-depth crime reporting and a need for more detailed analysis of the crime issue also emerged. Distinct differences between the styles of reportage given to crime news in tabloid and in broadsheet newspapers have been examined and noted. Moreover, external factors, such as public demand and the news cycle, were found to have impacted upon whether or not the crime news in question dominated.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/53/
Name: Helena Kiely
Programme & Year: MA in Criminology, 2012
Thesis Title: Defining terrorism: A Risky Business?
Supervisor: Dr Mary Rogan
Current Position: Helena is a Solicitor and Head of the Judicial Review Section in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

ABSTRACT

The Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act 2005 introduced definitions of terrorist activity, a terrorist group and terrorist offences for the first time. These definitions, enacted subsequent to the Good Friday Agreement (1998), were examined to ascertain whether perspectives of crime control or risk influenced their formulation. Evidence of control perspectives were elicited within the definitions but themes of risk or actuarial justice were not found. The policy analysis established that the definitions emerged through a process of coerced policy convergence emanating from the Council of the European Union with Irish legislators having limited influence.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/67/
ABSTRACT

Deference refers to a certain respect or esteem which is due to a superior or an elder or a tendency of inferiors to acknowledge the legitimacy of superiors’ powers. It is a concept which is becoming increasingly popular in the works of legal commentators as of late. This is a direct result of the growing perception that it is a trait which is becoming synonymous with the Irish Judiciary.

The object of this research is to examine whether this accusation is true i.e. have our Superior Courts changed their mindset and adopted a more deferential stance than they used to exhibit? More importantly, it is my objective to determine whether this alleged deference on behalf of the Judiciary is an acceptable trait based on the impact it will have on those seeking justice from our courts and the wider implications for society as a whole. This will be achieved by completing an in-depth analysis of the relevant case law, first of all to determine the base line which is important, as it will establish whether the judiciary has deviated from this recently, and secondly, I will examine specific areas; namely deference in general, delegated legislation, distributive justice, and mandatory orders to assess the impact this deference will have on certain aspects of our society.

This research paper ultimately concludes that the Irish Judiciary have moved away from a position of strength and power to undoubtedly become more deferential in the last decade and a half, but as a result of the broad scope of the concept of deference it is impossible to draw an all-encompassing conclusion as to its merits, or lack thereof. Rather I will base my conclusions on the more specific areas of examination undertaken with the aim of highlighting that deference has both advantages and disadvantages which depend on the circumstances in which it is exhibited.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/42/
**ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the issue of legal capacity in the context of existing and proposed mental health legislation in Ireland from a human rights perspective. Its primary focus is to assess whether certain recent proposed reforms to Ireland’s existing mental health legislation will meet the relevant prevailing international human rights standards, namely the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the “CRPD”).

In particular, it includes a critical review of the proposed legislative reforms in the area of legal capacity in a mental health context. In summary, the main reforms are contained within the Scheme of Mental Capacity Bill which was published in 2008 (hereinafter referred to as the “2008 Scheme”) and the recently published Advanced Healthcare Decisions Bill 2010 (hereinafter referred to as the “2010 Bill”) which specifically focuses on the contentious area of advanced decisions (also known as advance directives or advance care directives). Following on from this review, the thesis highlights comments on some of the potential human rights violations that could arise if the aforementioned 2008 Scheme and 2010 Bill were implemented into Irish law without making consequential amendments to the main existing legislation in Ireland governing capacity in a mental health context, namely the Mental Health Act, 2001.

Finally, this thesis seeks to identify and consolidate the implications these issues will have for the Irish Government with respect to its obligations under the CRPD. It also considers the implications the enactment of the aforementioned proposed legislation may have on the most vulnerable people in our society.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/65/
ABSTRACT

The Succession Act 1965 introduced a curb on a person’s freedom of testation and gave protection to spouses and children on the death of a husband or wife, mother or father. As a result, certain relationships took precedence over others in the distribution of an estate, e.g. a surviving spouse’s entitlement to a minimum legal right share of his or her deceased spouse’s estate is absolute and cannot be diminished. Since that legislation was enacted Irish society has changed greatly with a new variety and complexity of family structures. The provisions introduced by the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010 are an attempt to keep pace with the changes which have taken place in modern society. As a result of the succession law provisions in the Act of 2010 certain relationships take priority over other competing interests in an estate. Thus, a new hierarchy of claimants to an estate is created. For example, a biological child can make an application which can have the effect of eroding the legal right share of a surviving civil partner but not that of a surviving spouse, their step-parent. This thesis reviews the succession law provisions contained in the Act of 1965 and the amendments made to the 1965 Act by the Act of 2010 and analyses and examines which competing interests in an estate will take precedence, the varying degrees of protection afforded to individuals in the newly recognised family structures, the rationale behind these variations and the possible ramifications in the future.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/39/
**Name:** Rory W McGimpsey  
**Programme & Year:** MA in Law, 2010  
**Thesis Title:** Northern Ireland and the Irish Constitution: Pragmatism or Principle? The McGimpsey Case  
**Supervisor:** Dr Fergus Ryan  
**Current Position:** Rory is currently employed as an Insolvency Administrator with Grant Thornton UK LLP.

**ABSTRACT**

The central theme of my thesis concerns the case of McGimpsey v. Ireland [1990] I.R. 110 and its wider significance. All discussion in the thesis can be traced back to this seminal case. On a wider level, the thesis discusses Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution, tracing their history from their ideologically irredentist origins through to their amendment following the Good Friday Agreement, with its pluralist, inclusive re-definition of nationality. In essence, the thesis attempts to analyse the relationship between the two jurisdictions in Ireland, and how it evolved over time. I have endeavoured to explain how the 1937 Constitution re-defined these relationships, creating problems for the 26 county State and its courts.

The thesis discusses how the State reconciled the existence of a legal claim over Northern Ireland with the reality provided by a partitioned island. I argue that the State has adopted an essentially pragmatic position in its attempts to reconcile Articles 2 and 3 with the de facto political reality on the ground. I discuss how this fundamentally pragmatic position has co-existed alongside rigid Republican dogma and ideology. In charting the political journey of Articles 2 and 3, I discuss how pragmatic considerations have tended to weigh more heavily than idealistic rhetoric. While acknowledging the radical re-definition of Irish nationality prescribed by the Good Friday Agreement, I argue that conciliation and accommodation has always characterised the Irish State’s relationship with Northern Ireland. It was through such pragmatism that the State was able to reconcile the existence of the legal claim with the reality of partition. The McGimpsey case forms the foundation of my argument, serving to illustrate the plethora of problems created by the former Articles 2 and 3. My interview with Chris McGimpsey (a plaintiff in McGimpsey v. Ireland) permits a deeper analysis of the subject, revealing his personal perspective on the wider constitutional issue. The case demonstrates how, (on a political level), the main traditions on this island were able to find a way to compromise, enabling the realisation of a workable accommodation. I explain my belief that the amendment of Articles 2 and 3 contributed in a small, but significant way to the delivery of this new dispensation. The essential theme of my thesis, however, is that such spirit of accommodation has always been inherent in Irish political thought.

Full thesis text is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/26
ABSTRACT

The social objectivity of financial stability results in every State aid application being granted. The granting of two recapitalisations, one nationalisation and a further transfer of bad assets from Anglo Irish Bank is evidence of the inappropriateness of the social objective standard. By granting State aid to several ailing firms, this calls into question whether proportionality can be achieved. This limits Ireland’s ability to recoup funds invested into the beneficiary banks. This could jeopardise Ireland financial position. State aid has grown to a point where the amounts of aid are so massive, the ability of member state to recoup the aid is vital to their viability. From the 1950s to 1990 the European Commission used State aid as an economic tool to streamline and modernise the manufacturing and agricultural sectors of a member state’s economy. State aid increased the competitiveness of a member state’s primary sector. Primary sectors were and continue to be highly responsive to State aid through computerisation, mechanisation or training. During the Financial Crisis the Commission applied the same State aid Principles to rescue ailing financial institutions. Despite multiple State aid injections financial institutions have continued to weaken or fail. Anglo Irish Bank is an example of this. Further to this State aid has unintentionally combined private company debt to sovereign debt leading to an overall deterioration of the Irish economy. Financial institutions are unsuitable to State aid in its current form. Previously where State aid had been used to computerise, mechanise or train, State aid to financial institutions can only provide liquidity which in itself does not increase overall efficiency or resolve ineffective practices. The purpose of State aid has become diluted. This thesis explores the development of State aid from 1950 to 1990 and analyses the European Commission’s response to the current Financial Crisis.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/25/
ABSTRACT

This study is of an exploratory nature, investigating early school leaving in Ireland today. Despite a range of interventions to address school non-completion, approximately 14% of students (as of 2007) continue to leave school without completing their education every year. A disproportionate amount of these young people come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Education is a powerful predictor of life chances and opportunities. Those who leave school with little or no formal education have less opportunities in later life, are more likely to be unemployed, have lower levels of general health and are at a greater risk of becoming involved in crime.

This study investigates the reasons why young people are opting out of school, the contributing factors to their leaving school and the barriers that prevent them from achieving their educational potential. Using a mixed methods approach, data was collected from early school leavers, teachers and stakeholders within the school system. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted to provide for a thorough examination of this educational problem. Findings highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of early school leaving. Disengagement from education is essentially a process which does not have one sole cause and, for many, starts as far back as primary school. A variety of factors and influences impact on a young person’s educational career, with a greater incidence of early school leaving occurring where a number of risk factors co-exist. This study offers a number of recommendations for increasing student retention, with a particular emphasis on improving school relationships and revising the curriculum and modes of assessment.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/38
ABSTRACT

Although much has been written in recent times about women’s drug use, there has been a scarcity of research into motherhood and drug use in Ireland as it remains both a complex and sensitive issue. Since the 1980s Ireland has seen a dramatic and unprecedented increase in the availability of illicit drugs. This increased availability reflects rising consumption of illicit drugs amongst women. The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions that a sample of professional workers hold of mothers who use illicit drugs in Ireland. The study reviews the literature applicable to the area of drug use and motherhood, looking at both Irish and international research. The study examines the issues that mothers are faced with and examines factors such as parenting and childcare. It also examines in thorough detail the stigmatisation which is prevalent in Irish society and amongst professionals who come into contact with mothers who use drugs. A qualitative approach was adopted in order to gain insights into professionals’ views towards this marginal group. The qualitative techniques used were semi structured interviews with a variety of disciplines and participant observations in a family support organisation that worked with many service users, some of whom were mothers who used drugs. The data was obtained and analysed using five dominant themes throughout the findings. Both primary and secondary data was analysed and reviewed accordingly. The findings from the research highlight many important factors in relation to the care that mothers who use drugs access. Many professionals held ambivalent attitudes towards mothers and there was a general consensus that drug use and motherhood is mutually exclusive. It emerged that varying groups of professions perceive mothers in very different ways and many appear to approach it from a deficits perspective.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/36/
ABSTRACT

It is widely recognised in Ireland and internationally that the engagement of young people in the youth work process brings with it a range of positive benefits and outcomes, both for the young people involved and society in general. However, it has also been found that young people aged 15-19 participate less in youth services and therefore do not gain the associated benefits. This dissertation explores the perspectives of young people aged 15-19 who are engaged in youth services in Dublin City, in relation to their decisions to become and remain involved in youth services. The aim of this research was to point to ways of attracting and sustaining the engagement of more young people within this age group. A case study design was employed, using multiple data collection strategies in two youth work sites in Dublin City. The findings suggest that in order to attract and maintain the engagement of young people aged 15-19, youth services, together with young people, must endeavour to actively co-produce a youth public sphere. Relationships, both existing and those arising from the youth work process, have an important influence on young people’s decisions to become and remain involved in youth services, as do the activities and programmes offered by youth services. It emerged from the research that, in comparison to other forms of engagement, youth services offer young people a place to go where they can be with friends, get involved in activities of interest to them, form relationships with youth workers and have an input into decisions that affect them. The study concludes by recommending a number of areas in need of further research within the Irish context, particularly the youth work relationship, the co-production of a youth public sphere and the youth café model. It also recommends that research relating to youth work must consider the views of those at the centre of the process – the young people.

The results of this thesis have been published as:

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschsslitdis/43/
**ABSTRACT**

By their very being, significant adults both impact upon and shape the young child’s development. This research explores what is known, understood, respected and reflected upon in the practises of early childhood professionals, with an emphasis on the interactive style of the adult, emotional development and the potential impact of adult child interactions on the child’s holistic development. This is a neglected area of focus in early childhood education. Through drawing on interdisciplinary, including emerging, theories of brain and emotional development, the work of past and current theorists and an examination of contemporary and best practise, the importance of the emphatic adult who engages in positive interactions with the young child will be explored. A sample consisting of ten senior childcare practitioners participated in the present study. A qualitative research design was employed and semi-structured interviews were conducted; the data was then thematically analysed. Analysis of these themes highlighted the importance of adult – child interactions on the developing child. Findings from this study provided insights into practitioners’ perceptions and views of the importance of positive adult child interactions and the interactive style of the adult. The findings highlighted a wealth of experience and expertise among the practitioners who took part and a real desire that knowledge in this area be disseminated to both qualified and in-training early years’ practitioners. The study found that implications for training and practice are enormous. The study concluded that further research is needed to encourage all those working in the early years sector to network and engage in highlighting the needs of young children regarding warm, empathic relationships grounded in positive interactions. Most heartening, as this study concludes, is the news that further associations of childcare professionals are about to be set up in Ireland.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/66/
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-eight in Ireland to establish the prevalence of what has become known in popular culture as the quarter-life crisis. This transitional period in a young person’s life is academically referred to as emerging adulthood and is a time of great change and personal growth. The study utilised a qualitative approach; individual interviews and focus groups were carried out with the identified research group. The findings of the study indicated that indeed, emerging adulthood is a challenging time, and for some, it is a time in crisis. A variety of stressors commonly arise in the lives of emerging adults, relating mainly to personal relationships, living arrangements, financial issues and identity development. Emotional responses to these were varied, including both positive and negative emotions as participants reflected on their current life and future. In many instances, it became apparent that the crisis experienced during emerging adulthood served as a stimulus for change and development. The significance of this study rested in its attempt to expand literature on this life period within an Irish context and to determine ways in which emerging adults might be supported during this challenging period of developmental transition.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssl/35/
ABSTRACT

This research study provides a phenomenological approach to investigate individuals’ experiences of their journey through homelessness, examining it within the concept of homeless identity. The study was concerned with exploring and acquiring a rich description of the perceptions of homeless offenders of their transition from custody to the community and the pathways they endure. The study examined pathways into, through and out of homelessness through available literature and by conducting five interviews with individuals who are currently or have a history of homelessness and offending. The researcher sought to highlight and develop issues that drew individuals back into homelessness and reoffending, or in contrast pathways that draw people away from homelessness and reoffending. Homeless people are one of the most marginalized groups in society and the study examined the barriers and difficulties they encountered when integrating back into mainstream society. The researcher’s aim was to establish as closely as possible the schemas or cognitions held by participants and carefully analyze the narratives provided, where further thematic analysis led to explication of main themes, each with a number of sub themes.

The researcher identified common barriers experienced by homeless offenders in personal and social construct. Identity emerged as a common issue for the long-term homeless. Coping mechanisms employed by participants involved adapting to extraordinary situations and often used as a source of survival. Drug use was common and led to offending behaviour. These high risk solutions consequently resulted in more damaging behaviour and subsequently incarceration.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschsslidis/60/
ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to explore the nature and extent of violence experienced by secondary school teachers. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in order to gain the greatest insight into teachers’ experiences of violence and intimidation in schools. The research instrument used in order to gather data was a questionnaire. One hundred and ten questionnaires were gathered from teachers in a number of different schools. The study investigates teachers’ own experiences of violence and intimidation, the reporting of violence, the effects of violence on teachers’ health, moral and personal and professional lives. Adequate levels of teacher training and in-service training on dealing with violence are also investigated. Finally, support services available for teachers who are experiencing difficulties and an awareness of such support services amongst teachers are also investigated. The findings highlighted that teachers experience violence in a number of different forms ranging from verbal abuse, physical abuse, threats and intimidation. A number of different perpetrators were found to abuse teachers including students, parents and other staff members. Stress, anxiety, taking leave from working, visiting a GP and low morale are a number of the key issues found to have affected teachers. A lack of awareness amongst teachers of support services available to them was also found in this study. The importance of teacher training is presented and the demand for an increase in such training has been supported by this study. School policies on violence have been found to be very important for schools in dealing with incidences of violence and the incorporation of teachers within this is vital. In accordance with the findings the present research recommends that all schools have a clear policy on violence in place that incorporates teachers. Also compulsory and increased training on preventing and dealing with incidences of violence should be given to teachers. Finally a greater awareness amongst teachers of support networks in place for them should be created.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/37/
ABSTRACT

This research focused on the experiences and views of lesbian parents and adult children of lesbian parents. The experiences of the members of lesbian-parented families determined the main areas that were explored. The lack of international and Irish research on the lived experiences of lesbian parents and their children prompted this investigation. The study was conducted using qualitative, semi-structured interviews. The sample consisted of three lesbian parents and two adult children of lesbian parents from two parent lesbian families. The findings highlighted the experiences of the parents and adult children from lesbian-parented families in reference to: the Irish legal context; dealing with disclosure of their family type to others for lesbian parents and their children; sources of support for lesbian parents and their children; lesbian parents and their children in the education system; homophobic bullying of children with lesbian parents and the division of labour and the difference in parenting roles between the biological and non-biological mother. Recommendations made in this study included addressing the rights of same-sex families in Irish law, additional support groups for same-sex parents and their children and that further research be undertaken with a wider sample including an exploration of the experiences of male gay parents and their children.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/40/
ABSTRACT

Alcohol and drug problems affect not only those using these substances but also family members of the individual substance user. There has been a historic neglect within the addiction sphere of both research and practice pertaining to the effect of drug use on the family. Each family member is uniquely affected with negative outcomes ranging from economic hardship to violence being perpetrated against them (Csiernik, 2002). Thus, treating only the individual with the substance problem is limiting and serves an overly narrow orientation for the enhancement of both family and community health. This study addressed an important gap in literature with regard to the experiences of families affected by drug use. The research involved qualitative in-depth interviews and focus group interviews undertaken with a broad range of participants. In total 51 individuals took part in the study. The sample comprised two subgroups: family members (47) and professionals (4). The family members’ subgroup comprised mothers, fathers, siblings and extended family relatives of the drug user. The professional subgroup consisted of family support workers working within drug treatment and rehabilitation services as well as the Co-ordinator of the National Family Support Network.

The findings reveal substance misuse has a profound effect on the family system that results in lifelong changes within the family. The negative effects of drug use permeate each member and every aspect of family life. The application of a family systems theory meant significant patterns of conflict, cut-off, and triangulation were found. Both groups prioritised the need for policy makers and services to focus on the needs of family members affected by a member’s substance misuse.

Recommendations made in this study include: (1) that a large scale study be undertaken to include a greater diversity of family members; (2) future research should include variation in family structures reflecting emerging cultural trends in Ireland; (3) an increased focus on the family within drug treatment service provision.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/52
ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study conducted semi-structured interviews to explore the stepfamily experiences of ten individuals, aged eighteen to twenty four years. The findings indicated that the stepfamily brought challenges and a range of benefits to the participants’ life experiences. The key difficulties pertained to issues regarding conflict, lack of communication and complex challenges. The cited benefits of stepfamily experiences included improved financial resources, an additional parental figure, a sense of stability, opportunities for personal growth and the gaining of additional siblings. One significant finding of the study was the positive enduring bonds that some individuals made with stepparents and stepsiblings. The findings also highlighted that participants identified a lack of institutional support and acknowledgement of the stepfamily in Ireland. This study examined two stepfamily theoretical models, in terms of their respective application to the findings of this research study. Although there were useful aspects to both models, neither one was considered comprehensive enough to assist in the analysis of the findings of this study. It was concluded that stepfamily research needs to be further developed, both theoretically and empirically. It was also recommended that policies and practices be put in place, in order to support stepfamily members to manage the complexities and challenges of the stepfamily system.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/46
ABSTRACT

This study explores the effectiveness of the School Completion Programme (SCP) in helping to achieve the three goals of the National Children's Strategy (2000-2010) which are that children:

- Will have a voice in matters which affect them
- Their lives will be better understood
- They will receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development

The research involved interviewing children who attend the schools involved in the Programme and have participated in the supports at some stage in their educational lives. The findings provided a valuable insight into how these children experience their lives and how they perceive the SCP supports on offer to them. It was found that the children’s experience of the SCP supports was a positive one which helps them overcome the difficulties they encounter during their educational lives and supports them to ensure their lives do not fall into crises. In conclusion, it is argued such a support should be developed rather than curtailed particularly in the current context of globalisation and growing diversity.

The researcher argues that the SCP is a postmodern service and for that reason, the research draws on a postmodernist and social constructionist framework using an ethnographic methodology. The conclusions are; (a) that the SCP is a unique, school based service which helps children achieve the goals of the National Children's Strategy (2000-2010), (b) a real commitment to the development of such supports is needed by Government, and (c) the SCP is an effective service which helps reduce inequality, enhances retention and achievement and provides new ideas about how to achieve a positive climate in schools today.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/44
ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to examine the sibling relationship from the perspective of both siblings in order to add to the understanding of potentially one of the most important relationships of an individual’s life. In particular, questions were asked about how the relationship is affected in terms of warmth, conflict and rivalry by a number of variables; gender, level of contact and number of siblings in the family. This study also sought to determine if there is a gender divide in the type of support provided between siblings.

A quantitative, self-completion questionnaire was used in order to conduct a survey which was returned by 133 respondents, of which 41 sibling pairs were identified, the responses of whom were compared. Data was analysed using SPSS. Findings were, to a large extent, consistent with previous research. Gender, contact and number of siblings were found to be correlated with the warmth of the relationship and the level of rivalry and conflict, although a negative correlation was found between number of siblings and rivalry. Gender was also found to play a role in the amount of support provided between siblings, with sisters being most likely to provide both emotional and practical support. Sisters too appeared to have the most similar perception of their relationship when their answers were compared. This study recommended that in order to gain a greater insight into the sibling relationship, further research might be undertaken to investigate if siblings who believe their parents treat them equally have an egalitarian relationship with each other, compared with those who feel one or both parents favour one sibling over the other. Additional research might also include more siblings in late adulthood in order to gain a greater understanding of how the relationship is experienced across the lifespan and, separately, a mixed method approach to the issue of perception of the relationship may provide useful in-depth data.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/45
Name: Eoin O’Brien
Programme & Year: MA in Child, Family and Community Studies, 2012
Thesis Title: From Breadwinner to Breadmaker: The experiences of stay-at-home fathers in Ireland today
Supervisor: Dr Mairéad Seymour
Current Position: Eoin currently works as a Social Care Worker in a Residential Unit run by a Voluntary Organisation in the South County Dublin and North Wicklow areas.

ABSTRACT

The experience and views of men who have become stay-at-home fathers is an area of research that has, only in recent decades, become popular to study. This study highlights that there is a dearth of literature from an Irish perspective and that little is known about the topic. Internationally, research has shown that there appears to be a strong link between masculine identity and the realm of paid employment. It also shows that fathers struggle in their attempts to balance being involved fathers while maintaining a foothold in paid employment. The literature highlights that stay-at-home fathers begin to break down traditional notions that the domestic sphere is solely the domain of women. Findings from semi-structured interviews are presented and discussed showing that the experiences of stay-at-home fathers have a dramatic impact on fathers’ emotions. It also highlighted that, although the fathers felt them being at home was extremely beneficial to the father/child relationship, they had a strong desire to return to paid employment. Stay-at-home fathers appear to struggle with a renegotiation of their role within their family with many having had little experience of ‘caring’ tasks prior to this time. Recommendations are presented in view of the current research and the findings of this study.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/61/
This study explores the views that women hold on the introduction of proposed political gender quota legislation in Ireland. The study centres around the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Bill 2011 which, if passed, will require all political parties to have at least a 30% candidate gender balance from the next general election onwards. While examining how women feel about the introduction of this Bill, this study also attempts to assess what women see as the core challenges for women in Irish politics and to discover what women believe the impact/s (if any) of gendered imbalanced government are. This is a qualitative study, where data was gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with eleven women in political and community roles in the Waterford area. The findings from this primary research are compared and contrasted with existing literature which has been gathered on the research topic from a wide variety of theoretical sources. This study shows there is general, but not unanimous, support for the introduction of political gender quotas. It also outlines perceived positive and negative aspects of the proposed legislation and assesses what impact women believe it might have on the Irish political system. Challenges for female politicians, such as the struggle to balance the roles of mother and politician, and impacts of a gender imbalanced parliament, such as the effect it has on the political socialisation of women and girls, are also identified by respondents within the study.
Name: Lorraine Perkins
Programme & Year: MA in Child, Family and Community Studies, 2012
Thesis Title: Stepping Stone: Community Education - A stepping stone to third level education
Supervisor: Phil Keogh
Current Position: Social Care Manager, Daffodil Care Services.

ABSTRACT

The focus of this research is to explore supports that facilitated participation and retention of learners on a community education course and additional supports needed to progress to third level education. This research was conducted in partnership with the Irish National Association of Adult Education (AONTAS) and supported by Community Links, Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT).

This research is qualitative in nature. A focus group of community learners and semi-structured interviews with community education professionals was conducted. The research provides insight into learners’ experiences of what supports facilitated participation in community education and additional supports needed to progress to third level education.

The study found that learners who participated in this study are motivated to engage for a variety of reasons ranging from meeting new people and being a positive role model for their children. Learners identified a range of challenges they overcame to participate and remain on their course of study and identified supports in community education that they found most helpful to overcome these challenges. These included the teaching style of the tutor, learning in groups and the provision of a safe learning environment. The gains from participating on this community education course included increased personal confidence and an increased appreciation of academic work. However, findings suggest learners experience barriers to participation and progression including economic, social, cultural, situational and dispositional barriers. Additional supports highlighted to overcome these barriers in order to progress to third level education were confidence boosting, an increase in academic knowledge, information supports, financial supports, childcare and flexible third level options.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/47
ABSTRACT
This research study examines individuals’ experiences of unemployment from a psychological perspective. It presents the different psychological and financial effects of unemployment and presents the different theories developed on the effects of job loss on the individual. It also examines the central role which work contributes to an individual’s life. Finally, it investigates how a person deals with unemployment and copes with the transition. A qualitative approach was selected as the research method for this study, through the use of six semi-structured interviews.

The research findings indicate that unemployment can affect an individual’s psychological well-being. Unemployment can leave some individuals with feelings of worthlessness, a lack of identity, lack of motivation, feelings of embarrassment and increased stress levels. However, the unemployed do not all share similar experiences of unemployment and, as noted in the findings, not all are unhappy with their unemployment situation.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/50
ABSTRACT

Irish society, through its laws, institutions and civic organizations, promotes the primacy of the family, as the environment for the development of the loving, secure, supported child. Ireland, similar to most western societies, has witnessed a steady increase in family breakup since the 1960s. The impact of parental separation and family breakup on the child has been found to be generally very negative, with the exception of children in highly conflictual parental homes, who tend to benefit from family breakup and a reduction in parental tensions. Too often the end of their parents’ relationship leads to the child losing contact with the non-resident parent. Little attention has been paid to date to the factors leading to loss of contact and to the views and experiences, of absent parents, those who leave the family home and their children.

This study set out to explore the views of six absent parents, with particular reference to the key factors that lead to the loss of contact with their child, their understanding as to why this happened, and from their personal perspective what they thought may help other parents in similar circumstances, stay involved in their child’s lives.

This paper set out to explore through qualitative, semi-structured interviews, the factors that influenced a small sample of non-resident parents’ loss of contact with their children post family breakup (separation or divorce). Six participants were interviewed about their experiences of the loss of contact with their child. Across the six case studies, common themes were identified, and conclusions drawn from these very personal stories. The study has some key learning points for separated couples that can assist in non-resident parents not losing contact with their child, thus aiding the child to grow and develop with the knowledge and experience of being wanted and loved by both parents.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/59/
ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between family structure and risk factors for children’s emotional and behavioural outcomes at 9 years of age. Family structure in this study is defined as; married, separated, divorced, widowed and never married families. Three risk factors were identified from the literature; economic deprivation, maternal depression and life events. This study is a cross sectional quantitative analysis of the ‘Growing Up in Ireland’s’ child cohort (9 year olds) dataset. This is a nationally representative sample of 9 year old children living in Ireland; the sample was collected through a two-stage, stratified random sampling approach. Of the 8,568 respondents in the sample, 8,209 meet the criterion of this study, which required that the respondents were female and had identified their marital status. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was used to measure emotional and behavioural outcomes. Annual income, the Basic Deprivation Scale, Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CESD-8) and a life events question were used to measure risk factors. The data was analysed using frequencies, chi-square tests and configurational analysis, which were performed through PASW (Predictive Analytics Software). Findings indicated that children from married families are more likely to have better developmental outcomes, compared to children from alternative family structures. Findings also showed that the risk factors identified in this study were associated with poorer developmental outcomes and may have some moderating effect on the relationship between family structure and developmental outcomes at 9 years of age. Furthermore, the findings provided some support for the cumulative effect of risk factors on developmental outcomes, as the findings indicated that as the number of risk factors increased, optimal developmental outcomes tended to decline. As a cross sectional study, causal mechanisms cannot be determined, however the findings suggest that risk factors may be more important than family structure in influencing developmental outcomes at 9 years of age. Further analysis of this data and a longitudinal analysis (once the data set for the second wave of the child cohort interviews have been released) would be beneficial in further determining the importance of family structure and risk factors for children’s developmental outcomes.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschsslis/48
Paying attention to children's participation rights has gained momentum during the late 20th century. Ten years on from the National Strategy, this study explored the views and experiences of children between 10 and 12 years in relation to ‘children having a voice in matters that affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity’ (NCS, 2000). Focus groups were employed to carry out the research, using an innovative mix of open questions with pictorial aids, vignettes and a drawing activity. Thematic analysis was carried out on the data collected from the six focus groups. Children in the study demonstrated limited understanding of the concept of rights. Two of the themes which emerged from analysis were the fragility of children's right to have a voice and adults’ power in deciding whether children could exercise their right to have a voice. Children in the study gave a clear message that they wish to have a voice in a range of matters that affect them. Children in the study felt they often were not listened to. Children’s views on the reasons why adults do not listen to them are interesting and unforeseen such as adult mood and content of children's views. The findings are discussed with reference to theories on childhood and children's rights, past research on children's rights, adults' status as decision makers and unequal parent children interactions may all interact to constrain children's experiences of exercising their right to a voice consistently.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssl/dis/49/
Name: Martina Ozonyia
Programme & Year: International Masters in Early Childhood Education, 2012
Thesis Title: The Free Preschool Year in Ireland: The Perspectives of Early Childhood Educators and Policymakers
Supervisor: Professor Nóirín Hayes
Current Position: Martina Ozonyia is now a PhD candidate with the Department of Education University College Dublin.

ABSTRACT
In 2010, Ireland introduced the Free Preschool Year (FPY) policy under which all children between 3 years 2 months and 4 years 7 months are offered one year of free preschool prior to entry into primary school. This thesis aims to explore the perspectives of key policymakers and educators regarding the FPY introduction/implementation in Ireland. Particularly, it examines the rationale behind FPY and its subsequent impacts on qualification requirements, professionalism and quality within the Irish Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). Given that FPY was introduced during economic crisis/recession, Hay’s (2006) theory of ‘constructivist institutionalism’ was adopted as more useful to understanding and analysing the policymaking processes that underpin the implementation of FPY in Ireland. Findings suggest that FPY influenced equality of access, qualification standardisation and professionalisation of ECEC workforce. Data also indicated that the policy ideas behind the FPY were driven by economic crises and concomitant recessionary cuts; suggesting that other politicised objectives (saving childcare infrastructure, preventing ECEC collapse and keeping people in employment) could only be argued for due to austerity measures. Importantly, findings also suggest that ‘early-childhood-education’ ideology now trumps ‘child-care’ in policy thinking; and that the ECEC sector has become more institutionalised, professionalised and standardised.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/64/
ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines the potential of museum visits in achieving the learning goals of Early Childhood Education and Care as listed in the Irish ECEC Curriculum Framework Aistear. Data obtained by interviewing professionals of both the ECEC and museum education sector has been compared with the extant literature.

The study attempts to link the learning goals listed in Aistear with the potential outcomes of children's museum visits. The results show that a multitude of the Aistear learning goals can be obtained within a single trip to a museum.

Moreover, opportunities and challenges of children's museum visits in Ireland are being examined. The participants of the study shared their experience, both positive and discouraging. They also attempted to objectively analyse the current state of relations between the two sectors.

Finally, the study suggests ways of increasing the quantity and improving the quality of ECEC museum visits. Both structural and policy changes as well as an improvement in communication channels have been recommended for a better understanding across the two sectors.

The result of this study are intended to serve as a foundation for further research in the area of ECEC museum education in Ireland.

Full text of this thesis is at: http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/63/