

**Godparenthood in Ireland:
An Empirical Study of the
Educational Intentions Influencing
Parental Selection of Godparents**

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EdD

2016

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B.Ed, MREd (Prim)**

Thesis Submitted for the Award of Doctor of Education

**School of Education Studies
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September 2016

DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Education is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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19th August 2016

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to sincerely thank the Irish Centre for Religious Education and the Mater Dei Institute Education and Research Trust for granting me the opportunity to pursue this research.

Thank you to the Advisory Board of the Irish Centre for Religious Education and the staff at Mater Dei Institute of Education for their ongoing support and encouragement.

I am very grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Andrew McGrady, for guiding me into and through the wonderful world of quantitative research and statistical analysis. Thank you for placing your trust in me to produce this work.

The wisdom, guidance and, most of all, patience, of my friend and colleague, Dr. Gareth Byrne has been invaluable. I am indebted to you.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of the ICRE RE Lecturers' Forum and my fellow EdD students of both my cohort and those who joined the programme in 2014. Your insights and encouragement are greatly appreciated.

Thank you to the school community of St. Brendan's National School, Loughshinny who participated in my pilot study.

My appreciation also goes to my fellow researchers in the PATRINUS network. I hope my research will be of benefit.

Heartfelt thanks to my Uncle Billy for always being there.

For all endeavours, especially this one, I have been so lucky to have the full support of my family. Thank you all!

To Mom and Da, for all your help, your hugs, your encouragement, your reading, your advice, your patience and your never-ending love, I am forever grateful. I always hope to make you proud.

Thank you Dave, my husband. You stuck with me on this leap of faith. I couldn't have done it without you.

Last but by no means least, thank you Annie for being you. When you started primary school, I started this Doctorate. You've been so inspirational and understanding.

Thank you x

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Appendix A: Research Instrument and works that preceded and informed it

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ABSTRACT

Bernadette Sweetman

Godparenthood in Ireland: An Empirical Study of the Educational Intentions Influencing Parental Selection of Godparents

Education occurs in formal and non-formal contexts. This doctoral study is located in the non-school-based transmission of family religious heritage through the parental educational intentions for baptism and the consequent selection of godparents. While the godparent features prominently in the Baptismal rite, still widely celebrated in Ireland, no empirical research existed on why godparents are chosen and what their educational, social and cultural role entails beyond ceremonial duties.

A review of Roman Catholic canonical literature identified the origins and obligations of godparents. However contemporary anecdotal evidence questions the need for godparents in an increasingly secular society. The researcher identified a growing corpus of research on godparenthood in other countries and research disciplines.

The core research question of this study was to investigate the extent to which parental intentions for baptism and the consequent selection of godparents included an educational dimension. To investigate this an original research instrument was designed.

Using a self-selecting snowball sampling strategy, this online survey was aimed at parents who chose to have their child baptised. Through 45 questions (and sub-questions), 75 variables (mainly using Likert items) were presented to respondents. The survey received 695 responses between February to May 2015.

Statistical analysis identified seven factors related to parental intentions for baptism itself and parental selection of godparents. These were parental religious belief and practice at the time of baptism, faith-based and family celebration-based intentions for baptism, and faith-based and deputy-parent-based selection criteria for both godfathers and godmothers. Analysis identified significant differences in parental intentions for baptism and in godparent selection according to gender, age group and religious belief and practice. It also indicated differences in how parents perceived godfathers and godmothers as having played a significant role in the child's education and faith formation. This foundational study makes recommendations for future studies in this emergent field of research.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

1.1 Introduction

This research study explored the educational intentions of parents in present day Ireland in choosing to have their child baptised and the selection criteria employed when assigning godparents at the time of the child's baptism. The first chapter outlines the rationale of the research study and indicates the genesis of the study and context of the researcher. It also explains the scope of this study and how this research contributes to the wider research community. The researcher's understanding of key terminology is explained and the conceptual framework underpinning this study is outlined. The chapter ends with an overview of the six chapters of the thesis.

1.2 Context of the emergence of the Area of Research

At the beginning of this doctoral programme, the researcher- a qualified primary school teacher, published author of family liturgy resources and other catechetical texts, and parent, was most interested in non-school based religious education, especially that which occurs in the context of the family. Initial research was conducted as part of an early module of the doctorate. This early research focused on the evaluation of a Pilot Baptismal Preparation Programme for the Dublin Diocese. A case study was carried out of a group of parents, baptismal team and parishioners from one participating parish. Evaluating and reflecting upon this case study highlighted the absence of the godparents in the research process. The godparents featured in the discourse of the interviews but references to them were oblique and suggested that their role was unclear amongst the interviewees, with apparent varying degrees of importance being placed upon them by the different parties interviewed.

Additionally, godparenthood arose occasionally in the media when a child was born to a famous couple or royal couple and the selection of godparent became a topic of conversation in the public sphere.

Overall, the broad area of godparenthood developed as the locus of this research project because of the lack of empirical research on it despite its widespread practice. As such, the researcher moved towards planning a descriptive and exploratory study to provide baseline empirical data on the expectations of parents of the role of godparents (especially in terms of their informal educational role) in present day Ireland.

1.3 Identification of the Research Topic

This researcher understood that godparenthood is a prevalent religious, social, and cultural practice in Ireland. However, despite its widespread practice, no empirical research existed on the phenomenon in the modern Irish context. The question ‘Who are selected as godparents and why?’ soon developed as a fundamental aspect of the proposed research. To ensure an educational focus, a refinement of the area of research was to ask ‘How do the educational intentions of the parents influence their selection of godparents?’ From an initial understanding that the role of the godparent had emerged from an educational need to accompany a newly baptised person into a life of faith, the researcher aimed to explore if such an educational dimension still existed. Furthermore, the research sought to investigate if this educational dimension has evolved in any way since early Christian times.

1.4 Rationale for this Study

The selection of godparents is a consequence of the parental decision to have a child baptised. Presently in Ireland, rates of baptism remain high. O'Brien (2015) noted that in 2003 the number of baptisms in Ireland was 64,429 and this rose in 2013 to 67,937. In the same article, O'Brien cited a related Irish Times family values poll, which found that up to 93% of parents said that they had their children baptised. It can be assumed that godparenthood is a prevalent and widespread practice. As godparenthood is related to such diverse aspects of society (e.g. family relationships, education, faith development...), it is appropriate that empirical studies be undertaken to provide in-depth and reliable data on a phenomenon that intersects across so many aspect of Irish society.

Initial research into godparenthood has already been conducted in other regions around the world and it is necessary that an Irish perspective be added to this growing corpus.

Public discourse on issues at the intersections of education and religion continues to feature in Irish society. Curriculum development, divestment of school patronage and the changing context of education in an increasingly pluralist Ireland are some examples of current activity that both flows from and impacts upon the relationship between religion, culture and education. With its assumed bi-dimensional nature (faith and education), godparenthood is well placed as a topic both in need of research, and one in which research findings could uniquely contribute to contemporary public discourse.

1.5 The Scope of this Study

As foundational research in an area not yet explored in the Irish context, this study is limited to investigating the phenomenon of godparenthood from one perspective only i.e. that of the

parents who selected the godparents at the time of their child's baptism. This study focuses on infant, not adult baptism as envisaged by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Furthermore, it concentrates solely on parents who have chosen to have their child baptised in a religious ceremony. It does not include parents who have chosen alternative initiation-style options, such as secular naming ceremonies. Possibilities to research these other aspects will be addressed in the Conclusions and Recommendations chapter of this thesis.

1.6 Contribution of this Study

As foundational research on godparenthood, which relates to several fields and disciplines such as education, sociology, theology and the study of religions, makes a pioneering Irish contribution to a growing global corpus of literature.

The findings of this research study will provide educators and faith leaders, both in school and non-school contexts, with empirical evidence on the current motivations for parents to choose to have their child baptised and the selection criteria employed in the consequent assignation of godparents. Such evidence may be used to inform public debate, best practice and programme development as well as uncover further areas for future research.

In terms of the public discourse surrounding school enrolment policies in an education system that remains substantially denominational, this study will provide empirical evidence as to the educational intentions of parents who choose to have their child baptised.

1.7 Terminology

This research study deals with key concepts that informed the perspectives used to review the literature as well as guiding the data analysis. For the benefit of the reader, the understanding of the researcher of these key concepts in relation to a study of godparenthood is hereunder outlined.

Education:

This study is based on an appreciation of education as lifelong learning. It is recognised that education takes place in both formal and non-formal contexts. There is a substantial corpus of educational research in the formal domain of schooling. This study focuses on the non-school based context of education. In particular it looks at non-formal and informal learning. Colardyn and Bjornavold (2004) synthesise both concepts well, describing non-formal learning as ‘planned activities that are not explicitly designated as learning, but which contain an important learning element’; and informal learning as ‘learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family, or leisure...often referred to as experiential learning’ (p. 71). As the parents are the primary educators of their children, providing for their formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities, this study sees their selection of godparents as part of their educational remit. The selection process creates relationships that can result in learning, contributing to the educational readiness of the child.

Faith:

The researcher recognises that the term ‘faith’ is used in different ways in different contexts. For the purposes of this study, it is defined as the religious affiliation of the respondent or godparent and how that religious affiliation is manifested in terms of belief in God, sense of belonging to their religious denomination’s community and level of practice according to that

religious tradition. In relation to the faith of the child, this study looks at how parents and godparents can create opportunities for the future manifestation of the faith of the child.

Godparent:

The godparent is understood as the person chosen by the parents to act as baptismal sponsor to the child. Beyond their duties at the baptismal ceremony, their role is complex. This role can include character-building, moral formation, transmission of knowledge, transmission of religious heritage and a commitment to the child. These can be seen as educational characteristics and attributes.

Intersectionality:

The researcher understands this to be an epistemology, or way of thinking, that recognises the complexity of reality. It asserts that a phenomenon is most comprehensively understood when examined from multiple perspectives. In this study, godparenthood is recognised as having educational, social, cultural and faith dimensions, necessitating a review of the literature from multiple perspectives and subsequent analysis of the data as contributing to these multiple perspectives.

Social capital:

A godparent can carry out his / her role in such a way that it can influence the religiosity of the child as well as impacting upon how the child sees him / herself in relation to society. As such, the parental selection of godparents is an act that can provide for this educational opportunity. As the godparent carries out his / role (or not), the religiosity and social self-perception of the child (and, indeed, the other parties in this relationship) can be impacted

upon. This is the basis on why the researcher sees godparenthood as a phenomenon pertinent to social capital theory.

1.8. Conceptual Framework for this Study

It is assumed by this researcher that the selection of godparents is a necessary parental undertaking that follows from their decision to have their child baptised. This research is based on a proposed model (conceptual framework) that there is a connection between why parents select godparents and the intentions for parents choosing to have their child baptised and that these intentions in turn are influenced by the parental level of religious belief and practice. The hypothesis is that parental intentions for the selection of godfathers and godmothers was associated to some degree with the parental intentions in having their child baptised, which were in turn associated in some way with parental religious belief and practice. This hypothesis is illustrated in Figure 1.1.



Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework at outset of this research study

1.9 Overview of chapters

1.9.1 Chapter 1

This chapter provides an introduction and background information to the research study. The genesis of the thesis is explained and the scope and contribution of the research is outlined.

1.9.2 Chapter 2

This chapter provides an overview of existing literature pertinent to godparenthood in Ireland. It outlines the methodology employed in locating literature appropriate to the research area. The literature is reviewed from five perspectives. These are:

- Godparenthood as an etymological lens through which to study the intersectionality of faith, education and society
- Godparenthood as a faith tradition and practice
- The godparent as an agent in education
- Godparenthood and social capital theory
- Religiosity inheritance: Gender and the context of family

There is a commentary on how the literature informs methodologies and the emergence of a thematic framework.

1.9.3 Chapter 3

This chapter outlines the research design used by the researcher in order to empirically study the educational intentions influencing parental selection of godparents in Ireland. It provides the theoretical framework for the study. This chapter discusses the full cycle of the research from the preparation of the research instrument (an online survey), its piloting, the sample

accessed for the research, the entry and coding of the data and the statistical procedures adopted.

1.9.4 Chapter 4

This chapter overviews the characteristics of the sample and presents a high level summary of major trends evident in the data. The findings reported in this chapter are presented in a manner that broadly relates to the sequencing of questions in the online survey.

- Profile of the parental respondents
- Profile of the baptised children for whom the parental respondents provided data
- Profile of the godparents again based on the data provided by the parental respondents

1.9.5 Chapter 5

This chapter provides a further level of statistical analysis with the aim of identifying major significant patterns and trends related to the core research question. By constructing seven scales and conducting statistical tests upon them, a number of significant differences were identified in the educational intentions influencing the parental selection of godparents.

1.9.6 Chapter 6

This final chapter contains a discussion of the key results of the research. Implications of the findings are expounded and recommendations for future research given.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This review of existing research situates godparenthood within the context of current literature, providing an empirical underpinning and justifying this research as contributing to the discipline of education in general, and religious education in particular. In addition, this literature review informs the research design by refining the key research question and related research questions and identifying the most suitable methodologies for data collection and analysis.

2.2 Literature review methodology

The first step in conducting this review was to identify the specific terms to be used in searches of databases, catalogues and academic depositories. The term ‘godparent’ is the most widely used label in Ireland for the person selected as sponsor to the baptismal candidate. Depending on gender, this is further specified as ‘godfather’ and ‘godmother’. The umbrella term ‘godparenthood’ is used because of its proximity to the term ‘parenthood’. ‘Parenthood’ is understood by this researcher as the generic term with multiple meanings including:

- the state of being a parent, thus distinguishing parent from non-parent
- the connection between parent and child. The term ‘connection’ is preferable in this regard to ‘relationship’, as the latter encompasses far more complexities
- the role and duties of the parent that are expected to be carried out according to social and moral norms

Using the same constitutive elements of ‘state’, ‘connection’ and ‘role’, literature was selected on the basis of how it contributed to providing an understanding of ‘godparenthood’ in the current Irish context. Initial internet-based searches using the term ‘godparent’ resulted in a small number of commercial works, written for the practical benefit of the general public. These were largely concerned with the rudimentary elements of the Rite of Baptism, namely what the godparents were required to say and do throughout the celebration of the sacrament. Subsequent searches of journal databases and academic repositories included the broader term of ‘baptismal sponsor’. Approximately twenty journal articles were located across a range of disciplines, geographic locations and timeframes. The concept of proximity was employed to select those articles deemed most pertinent to the specific term ‘godparenthood’ and applicable to present day Ireland. Through the literature identification process, the existence of an active network of researchers came to light. The PATRINUS network, which this researcher joined in December 2013, groups together scholars from such diverse disciplines as history,

sociology, anthropology and demography sharing an interest for godparenthood, baptism, systems of social alliance, and the history of the family. Founded in March 2006 and composed of researchers working on areas diversified from the national and religious point of view and on periods going from the end of the Middle Ages to the present day, the PATRINUS network intends to explore collectively all the research paths open by the aforementioned approaches and to shed new light on the social, cultural, family religious history of those societies sharing Christian roots. In doing so, it also aims to analyse from new perspectives the history of kinship systems and of the family in general. For more information on the PATRINUS network, see <http://www.dondena.unibocconi/patrinus>.

Through the network, this researcher was enabled to access material, both published and unpublished, as well as acquire useful contacts for other researchers, in the area of godparenthood.

Newspaper articles were also identified and these are included in this review because they provide some illustrations as to perceived contemporary, though anecdotal, understanding of godparenthood in the Irish context.

In addition to contributing to an emergent thematic framework, some of the works included in this review were also chosen to inform methods of data collection and analysis.

2.3 Examining the literature from multiple perspectives

This review examines the literature from five perspectives. Firstly, it is reviewed from the perspective of godparenthood as an etymological lens through which to study the intersectionality of faith, education and society. Secondly, literature is reviewed through the lens of godparenthood as a faith tradition and practice. The third perspective examines the literature viewing the godparent as an agent in education. Next, literature related to social capital theory is explored. Finally, literature pertaining to the inheritance of religiosity and the related role of gender and family context is examined.

As godparenthood is researched across a growing number of disciplines it is necessary to clarify the contexts of the selected literature. One reason for this is the sometimes interchangeable use of terminology in the literature when the researchers in question are in fact referring to quite different issues. Furthermore, by highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of the topic of godparenthood, as it is studied in various fields of research, the relevance of the concept of intersectionality strongly emerges. Von Brömssen (2016) asserts that by analysing particular groups of people (in this case, those connected to godparenthood) from multiple perspectives, deeper and richer insight can be gained. Subsequently, this review of literature relating to godparenthood, drawing from the spheres of faith, education and society, also contributes to the application of intersectionality in religious, educational and social research.

2.3.1 Godparenthood as an etymological lens through which to study the intersectionality of faith, education and society

Alfani and Gourdon (2012), called for the need for ‘lexical clarification’ (p.2) before delving into the research conducted in this area. Working mainly within the European context, they encountered a diversity of terms across Latinate, neo-Latinate language and both Old, Middle and Modern English. Some of the terms are no longer in common usage which makes accurate translation to other contexts such as present day Ireland all the more challenging.

The main terms used in the literature include:

- *co-parenthood* (Mintz and Wolf, 1950)
- *compadrazgo* (Mintz and Wolf, 1950; Deshon, 1963; Gudeman, 1971)
- *godparenthood* (Ingham, 1970; Alfani, Gourdon and Vitali, 2012)
- *godparents* (Foster, 1969)
- *spiritual kinship* (Carvalho and Ribeiro, 2006)
- *godkinship* (Vasile, 2012)
- *gossiprid* (Tait, 2005)
- *kumovstvo* (Muravyeva, 2012)
- *vospriemnitchestvo* (Muravyeva, 2012)

Of particular interest is the use of the concept *kin*. Kinship has been a prominent field of study in social anthropology for at least two hundred years. In the broadest sense, there are three types of kinship: *consanguinity* – related by blood, *affinity* –related by marriage, and *spiritual affinity / spiritual kinship* – related by ritual means (Mintz and Wolf, 1950; Carvalho and Ribeiro, 2006). The particular area of study that has resulted in findings about godparenthood has been the analysis by social anthropologists of how spiritual affinity and spiritual kinship

influenced the growth of social networks within and beyond blood relations and families. This was largely achieved through participation in rituals, predominantly baptism and marriage. It is interesting to note the parallels between the three types of kinship and the three types of social capital, ‘bonding’, ‘bridging’, and ‘linking’, as discussed later in this chapter.

The Old English term, *god-sib*, an ancestor of the modern word *gossip* is named as a probable parent-noun by Mintz and Wolf (1950). *God-sib*, as a root-term, is further visible in Tait’s (2005) signalling to the sixteenth-century Gaelic institution of *gossiprid*. The *–sib / –sip* element is likely related to the word *sibling*, generally understood in the present day as a brother or sister. However, historically the term *sibling* could be extenuated to mean what we now understand more broadly as *kinship*, thus connecting the elements *sib / kin* in the terminology used.

The most common suffixes found in the English language literature are *–ship* and *–hood*. The Gaelic suffix *–rid* is likely a derivation of *–hood*. Both *–ship* and *–hood* suggest an understanding that the godparent is part of a network of relationships. However, examining the prefixes of the common terms used in the literature, *co-* and *com-*, reveal different emphases on the exact nature of these relationships, particularly highlighting the superiority of one relationship over another.

The English language term *co-parent* is comparable to the Latin word *compater*. Similarly, *compadre* was the name historically used in Spanish-speaking Latin America by the parents and godparents of the same child when they addressed each other. The use of this word points to the specific importance of the relationship between the parents and godparents, as opposed to the godparents and godchild. Indeed, the phenomenon known as *compadrazgo*, literally translated by Mintz and Wolf (1950) as *co-parenthood*, and its transferability to contexts beyond Latin America was central to the research conducted by most of the authors cited in

this review. The social anthropologists Mintz and Wolf (1950), Deshon (1963) and Foster (1969) brought the study of the *compadrazgo* to the forefront of American social anthropological research in the 1950s and 1960s. Findings about godparenthood emerged as a bi-product of this research and were taken up by researchers in different fields such as economics, demography and social history.

-*God* as a prefix in the terminology may be in some instances resultant from its phonetic similarity to *-co*. Where a theological meaning was considered important, and not just the social kinship meaning, it is likely that the prefix *God-* became more established in use. The continued relevance of its theological base does not necessarily follow. For example, in the centuries following the Reformation, the term *godparent* remained in use in Europe, despite Martin Luther's assertion that spiritual kinship had no foundation in Sacred Scripture, and that it along with all its implied impediments (marital impediments) should be entirely cancelled. Whilst Luther wished to retain the presence of godparents at a baptism in their role of witness and later as tutor, Calvin radically called for an entire elimination of godparents. The reality that the practice of godparenthood survived this charge attests to the embeddedness of the social customs and long-held traditions in European society at the time. (see Alfani and Gourdon, 2012, pp. 10-11) This raises questions however on the extent to which any designated name actually reflects the dominant practice, or how this state of being is in fact actualised.

Interestingly, the Russian *vospriemnitchestvo* comes from the verb *vosprinimat* which means to receive a child from the baptismal font (Muravyeva, 2012, p. 248). This clearly indicates the role of the godparent as commencing after baptism. This understanding aligns with the distinction in Church Canon Law referred to earlier between 'sponsor' (during the catechumenate) and 'godparent' (after baptism). Whereas the Latin derivative of 'sponsor' means to support, *vospriemnitchestvo* has no etymological reference to parenthood or the

relationship between the parents and godparents. The Slavic term *kumovsto* or *kumstvo*, sometimes also used in Russia, is closer to the Latin *compater* / *commater* which translates to co-parenthood.

The variety of terminology used in the selected literature reflects the diverse fields of study from which they originated and the researchers' ideology (or lack thereof) specific to godparenthood. The language used in the selected literature was also influenced by both the context in which the research was based and the time period in question.

2.3.2 Godparenthood as a faith tradition and practice

Featuring the word ‘god’ the term ‘godparenthood’ automatically suggests a faith dimension to its interpretation. The practice of godparenthood has its origins in the Early Christian period.

‘It is a very ancient custom of the Church that adults are not admitted to baptism without godparents...In the baptism of children, as well, godparents are to be present in order to represent both the expanded spiritual family of the one to be baptised and the role of the Church as a mother.’

(Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults 2004, p. xiii)

In those early centuries, Christianity was neither recognised nor condoned by the governing civil bodies, notably the Roman Emperor. Christians were forced to worship in secret and faced persecution on an ongoing basis. For security, someone who sought to join the Christian community needed to be vouched for by an existing member of that community. This person acted as sponsor, ‘standing for’ and ‘vouching for’ their character. If accepted, the person seeking baptism, entered into a time of learning and prayer known as the catechumenate, and he / she became the catechumen. The sponsor continued to accompany the catechumen in introducing him / her to the Christian way of life, and educating them in the tenets of belief, acts of worship, prayer and so on. When the catechumen was baptised, the sponsor’s role ended. The catechumen now required a person who would support him / her to fully practise the faith in all aspects of their lives. This was the role of the godparent. Since it was often the case that the same person who acted as sponsor continued in this new role of godparent, the two terms ‘godparent’ and ‘sponsor’, although distinct in meaning, became interchangeable. In future research, it would be of interest to ascertain the understanding of ‘sponsor’ and ‘godparent’ by Irish people in the present context.

The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults clearly states that ‘godparents...must, in the judgement of the parish priest (pastor), be qualified to carry out the proper liturgical functions’ (p. xiii). These functions are cited in no. 9 as ‘the part of godparents is to testify to the faith of adult candidates or, together with the parents, to profess the Church’s faith, in which children are baptised.’ (RCIA, p. xiii). It states:

1. Godparents are persons, other than the parents of candidates...
2. Those designated must have the capability and intention of carrying out the responsibility of a godparent and be mature enough to do so. A person sixteen years of age is presumed to have the requisite maturity...
3. Those designated as godparents must have received the three sacraments of initiation...and be living a life consistent with faith and with the responsibility of a godparent.
4. Those designated as godparents must also be members of the Catholic Church and be canonically free to carry out this office.

(RCIA, pp. xiii – xiv)

How the practice of godparenthood has been understood, used or even misused has varied over the centuries. Whilst the sociological and anthropological literature focuses on the impact of godparenthood on social cohesion, cultural identity and economics, there is a paucity of empirical literature on the theological, religious and educational aspects of the phenomenon. Anthropologists, Mintz and Wolf (1950) acknowledged three components to the *compadrazgo* / godparenthood, namely ‘sponsorship’, ‘spiritual rebirth’ and ‘ritual kinship’. Subsequent anthropological researchers followed the lead of Mintz and Wolf in focusing on the third component.

Gudeman (1971; 1975) reacted to the preceding works, notably Mintz and Wolf (1950) and Pitt-Rivers (1958), cautioning that the ethnographies and analytical writings on the compadrazgo to date were in danger of reducing an essential element of the institution, namely its spiritual dimension. Though the earlier researchers were not incorrect in their studies, it must be acknowledged that godparenthood was, and is, more than merely a mechanism through which social ties were either 'extended' or 'intensified' (Mintz and Wolf, p. 355) . Gudeman, and later Alfani and Gourdon (2012) and Alfani, Gourdon and Vitali (2012) in the European context and in the field of historical democracy, stressed the importance of tracing the development of theological understanding of godparenthood.

The examination of the literature to ascertain the faith tradition and practice of godparenthood was guided by the three components as identified by Mintz and Wolf (1950). However, emphasis was given to the 'sponsorship' and 'spiritual rebirth' aspects as it was deemed that literature in these areas may complement the existing substantial sociological and anthropological studies on kinship. In so doing, investigating 'sponsorship' and 'spiritual rebirth' may illuminate the religious practice, and underlying principles thereof, which would in turn more effectively inform the design of the research instrument.

The perspective of godparenthood as a faith tradition and practice presents a framework of relationships.



Figure 2.1. The birth, baptismal and compadrazgo sets (based on Gudeman, 1971, p 48)

The basis of these relationships is the transformation that takes place by virtue of baptism. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) states that ‘Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word.’ (CCC, 1213) The ceremony which echoes the death and resurrection of Jesus transforms the baptismal candidate into a neophyte or ‘new creature’. By the grace of God, the neophyte is understood to have been cleansed from sin and reborn into new life in Christ, becoming a child of God, ‘partaker of divine nature’, member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit (CCC, 1265).

This ‘spiritual rebirth’ forms a new identity for the newly-baptised person. Consequently, the nature of their relationship to others is altered. There now exists a godparent and godchild. In some cases, where the godparent was already a family member, for example an aunt, while still being an aunt, this person is now a godmother. There are now two relationships: the aunt-niece/nephew; and because of the ‘spiritual rebirth’ of baptism, the godmother / godchild. Gudeman also illustrates how baptism creates a spiritual relationship between the minister and the godchild, and, of particular interest to this research, there is also now a new relationship formed between the parent and godparent.

It was this last relationship (parent/godparent) that drove many of the sociological and anthropological studies on the *compadrazgo*. Looking at this relationship in Canon Law is quite enlightening as it can reveal not only the criteria for selection of godparents to help bring up the child in the faith tradition, but it also informs the boundaries within which the selection of godparents is made.

Given that the key studies on the *compadrazgo* date from pre-1983, they were examining a phenomenon that was to differing degrees governed by a Code of Canon Law dating from 1917. A number of revisions were made to this Code in 1983, revisions that, in fact, have direct implication on the choice of godparents available to parents.

One crucial revision was that there was now no longer ‘a direct canonical consequence arising from sponsorship - unlike the previous law (cc. 768, 1079) where it induced a spiritual relationship which gave rise to matrimonial impediment’ (Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1995, p. 481). Another revision was the lifting of a ban on assigning spouses, clergy or religious as godparents (Huels, 1994, p. 48). The impact of Canon Law, if applied and adhered to, is that it limits the choice of godparent candidates, firstly in anticipation of marital impediments that may arise, and secondly by eligibility. An example of the latter is that up until 1983 ordained religious could not act as godparents. If the faith formation of the child is highly valued by the parents, then, given the particular expertise of ordained and lay religious, might these be ideal candidates as godparents? How important is the official and visible religiosity of the godparent, or his / her linkage with the institutional Church? A related finding of Mintz and Wolf (1950) was that in some Central American communities, *compadrazgo* was linked to ‘blood brotherhood’ in that godparents were chosen to prevent future intermarriage, or even to end long-term feuds. These aspects highlight how even elements arising from the faith dimension of godparenthood can be usurped for social reasons.

The most recent European study by Alfani, Gourdon and Vitali (2012), which showed that godparents are more often chosen for social-relational reasons than religious, nonetheless brings to light the importance of a sense of ritual. Their findings suggest that even ‘those who do not define themselves as true believers are generally reluctant to totally abandon these ritual forms [and it would be] a mistake to think that secularization implies the end of ritual needs’ (p. 482).

Literature suggests that while parents, and indeed godparents, recognise a spiritual dimension to the role, not all are comfortable with attaching organised religious labels and aspects to the phenomenon. Instead, some prefer a general moral and value-based association, perhaps better described as ‘spiritual’ over ‘religious’.

2.3.3 The godparent as an agent in education

Parents are the primary educators of their children. This is the principle upheld in the Irish Constitution (Article 42) and upon which Irish school curricula are founded. Education is not confined to the classroom however, nor is it restricted to just parents and teachers. One of the earliest recognised forms of educational relationship across many cultures and generations has been that of modelling. For example, the elders of a tribal community offer guidance and wisdom to younger members. The tradesman teaches the apprentice by example. The sage guides the person seeking enlightenment.

All of us learn from the world around us and the people in it, in a variety of ways. This researcher recognises that education takes place in both formal and non-formal contexts and this study focuses on the non-school based context of education. In particular it looks at non-formal and informal learning in the context of the relationship between parent, godparent and child.

Deriving from the Latin ‘educare’, meaning ‘to draw forth’ or ‘to lead out’, education takes place in the context of relationships. Hederman (2012) drawing on the philosophy of Martin Buber states that:

there is a space which surrounds each one of us, and the most important goal of education is to allow each child to inhabit that space so that he or she may cease to be an individual wrapped up in their own cocoon but may develop into a full person, open to and expanding into that space between us and other people. We are born individuals but we become persons by appropriating and inhabiting this space. (Hederman, p. 58)

There are parties to this relationship and there is a space between them. Understanding the godparent as one of the parties to such a relationship, and the space as being the relationships

themselves, there is a congruence of this study's understanding of the godparent as an agent of education with Hederman and Buber's theory of education as relational and dialogical.

Cullen (2016) reminds us of the particular emphasis on the relational nature of the person when education is reflected upon from a Catholic perspective, and furthermore inspires an interesting parallel between Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" and Hederman's "potential space". The "fusion of horizons" image brings to mind the connections between the parties to the relationship (i.e. parent/godparent/child) and adds a challenge to Hederman's image by emphasising the multi-directional nature of learning ("fusion of horizons") within and beyond this "potential space".

Affirming the parent's primary role in the life of the child, the godparent is seen as auxiliary. Article 872 of The Code of Canon Law (for the Catholic Church) states that:

'In the case of infant baptism, the role is together with the parents to present the child for baptism, and to help it to live a Christian life befitting the baptised and faithfully to fulfil the duties inherent in baptism.

The role of the godparent in assisting the parent in educating the child and in forming the child's character may entail differing emphases: spiritual development, faith formation, or ethical and moral education.

The godparent is to be a co-parent to the child, with specific duties according to the Christian faith. These duties could be classed as knowledge-based, value-based and behaviour-based. In other words, in order to fulfil their obligations, godparents, in accordance with the wishes of the parents, may be called upon to teach knowledge about the faith in a traditional transmission model of education. They may be asked by the parents to embody the values of a Christian way of life for the godchild. Such education may be verbal or non-verbal and is best understood in the form of being a 'good role-model'. Thirdly, the godparent may be

needed to assist the parents in the formation of the child's character, as befitting the Christian understanding of same. This is the influence on the child's behaviour so as to encourage that behaviour to adequately reflect the values of the faith. In this regard, Buber's treatise on 'The Education of Character' (1939, p. 124 - 125) is especially insightful. Buber explained that while his pupils were receptive to learning, when it came to his attempts to educate their character, he encountered resistance. They did not want someone to educate their character. If we can compare Buber's example of the teacher encountering resistance from the pupil in this endeavour to the case of a parent and child, we can see the need for support from other people with whom the pupil or child could engage more willingly. The nature of the relationship of the godparent, if carried out accordingly to the obligations set out in Canon Law, is distinctive from both the parental child relationship and the relationships the child may have with others. It is secondary to that of the parent-child, but of greater depth than other relationships. It could be possible for the godparent, in assisting the parents, to impact upon the child's character from that slightly greater distance, or less-emotionally-bound connection that the child has with the parent.

Some anecdotal evidence of this special bond, and educational and formative role can be seen in comments in newspapers by Irish godparents. 'I don't really see my role as spiritual - my godson is Protestant; I was brought up as a Catholic -but I do think I am there to instil moral ethics and develop the child as he becomes an adult', said one godmother (Ingle, 2005). Brian Whiteside of the Humanist Association of Ireland, commenting on the increasing frequency of secular baby naming ceremonies, explained that 'We see their [godparents] purpose as guiding the child in times of doubt or challenge. They are someone special the child can turn to.' (Ryan, 2007).

Much of the literature focuses on the time of the baptism and the immediate period thereafter. No literature could be located that explored the role of the godparent of the adult or the

relationship as the parties aged. It might be of benefit to explore whether the educational / formative role of the godparent is more relevant during the childhood years of the baptised. If so, what is the role of the godparent when the godchild has reached adulthood?

2.3.4 Godparenthood and Social Capital Theory

The intersection between religion and society is evident in godparenthood. An essential element of a sacred ritual is also a social occasion. The assignation of godparents creates relationships and as such contributes to socialisation. The anthropological studies of Mintz and Wolf (1950) and Gudeman (1971, 1975), as already discussed, looked at how the assignation of godparents either extends or intensifies existing social relations. These are comparable to the theoretical concepts of ‘bonding social capital’, ‘bridging social capital’ (Putnam, 2000) and ‘linking social capital’ (Woolcock, 2001). Godparenthood is well-placed as a topic to investigate through the lens of social capital theory. Baker and Miles-Watson (2010) provide a comprehensive overview of trends in this field that point to ways of describing and evaluating the contribution of faiths to civil society, healthcare and culture. Attempts to apply social capital theory to faith contexts in recent years by Walker (2011), Williams (2008), Muskett (2014) and Francis and Lankshear (2015) all attest to the currency of religious capital and spiritual capital in debates surrounding social capital theory. As no empirical evidence yet exists on godparenthood and these religious dimensions of social capital, this is a lacuna worth addressing by this research and research into the future. Literature on the socio-cultural aspect of godparenthood is currently limited to anecdotal works from the media.

Three articles from the last decade were selected from the national print media archives. Despite the small number, the message conveyed in all three articles is singular and strong: namely that the case of godparenthood in present day Ireland is in dire need of review. Ryan (2007) proposes the question ‘even in a more traditionally religious culture like Ireland, (are) godparents anything more than gift-providers and whether there is really a need for them today.’ Ingle poses the questions ‘But what does being a good godparent involve? And do we take it as seriously as we should?’

The three journalists offered examples that showcased the variety of understanding and practice in terms of why particular godparents are chosen and how parents and godparents view the godparent role. In addition, the range of motivations for parents choosing to have their child baptised, and the subsequent selection of godparents also feature as potential research areas.

It is strongly implied throughout these articles that whilst the origin of godparenthood lies in religion, the present and practical reality is more deeply influenced by non-religious factors. All three articles refer to present day Ireland as either 'secular', 'increasingly secular' or comment that 'the influence of the Catholic Church wanes'. Moreover, the religious elements of godparenthood are seen as increasingly irrelevant and there is a sense in the articles that the journalists are attempting to reveal this fact amidst the discomfort of their interviewees to admit it. Ingle (2005) said 'These days, the role seems to have less to do with religion and more to do with sticking an extra few notes in an envelope when the godchild's birthday comes around. But, technically being a godparent is "to lead a Christian life in harmony with baptism and to fulfil faithfully the obligations connected with it."' Intimating the complexity surrounding godparenthood, Hunt (2010) introduces her interviewees with the preface 'Whether it's an earnest desire to have them welcomed into a faith, a concession to grandma or a box-ticking exercise to get little Jack or Sophie into the right school, these parents and godparents talk about what baptism and godparenting means to them'.

If the prime motivation for parents having their child baptised is not religious, one could question the logic or need for godparents and the appropriateness of their assignation. Both Ingle (2005) and Ryan (2007) point out that parents who opt for naming ceremonies rather than baptisms nonetheless usually appoint an adult in a sponsor or mentor role. One of the godparents said "I am not a very religious person myself, but I know being a godparent is a special thing and I do think there is a bond there." According to these three articles, some of

the reasons why certain people are chosen as godparents is being ‘brilliant with kids’, a ‘role model’, and a ‘family member’. Indeed, it is a source of pride to be asked to act as godparent. ‘With baptisms now competing with Communion and Confirmations as important days of celebration, being chosen as a godfather or godmother is a real honour’ (Hunt, 2010).

The sense of public prestige arising from being asked to be a godparent at the social event of the baptism ceremony comes across strongly in the testimonies in the articles. Similarly, the godparents interviewed value the affirmation they experienced by being the family member or friend who was chosen above all the rest.

Rather than devaluing the religious dimension and religious origin of godparenthood, these journalists point to the multi-layered reality that is godparenthood in Ireland and raise some important tensions that need to be seriously addressed. Ryan (2007) reminds her readers that the ‘Catholic Church has strict rules under Canon Law about the do’s and don’ts [of godparenthood]’. However, the diversity of practice described in the articles show that these rules are not enforced. Should they be, and if so, how? An empirical research study could help in initiating a review of practice for communities in Ireland who wish to improve their practice to align more fully with Canon Law. On another note, there are social issues with theological ramifications that have not been uniformly addressed. Ireland has seen a decrease in numbers of people professing to be of a faith community. In the weeks leading to the 2016 Census, there was a concerted media campaign encouraging those who are not religious to tick ‘no religion’ in the appropriate section of the form (O’Leary 2016). The tension between religion and social norms raises real issues that increasingly populate Irish media, political debate and public discourse. The tension also leads to real dilemmas for parents when selecting godparents. For example, if someone has become distanced from the Church but had previously agreed to act as a godparent, what is the correct course of action, and for whose

benefit? Or if a parent wishes to select a godparent with a life stance at odds with official church teaching, which takes precedence - social norms or religious affiliation?

There appear to be various reasons, including religious and social, why parents choose to have godparents (or sponsors). An empirical research study could unearth and specify these reasons. Such a study could clarify whether formation in a faith is the prime reason for parents opting to have their child baptised and subsequent selection of godparents. If faith is not a prime factor, it may be of benefit to explore the alternative options to baptism that still enable parents to appoint a significant adult(s) in a quasi-godparent role. The term godparent may need to be altered in such instances.

These issues led this researcher to wonder if the tension between religious and social factors in godparenthood was only a feature of present day Ireland. Did Irish people in the past view godparenthood solely from a religious perspective or did the social dimension also feature, or even dominate?

Irish historian Tait (2005) examined parish registers, family documents, wills and diaries from 1530 - 1690 in an endeavour to explore the dynamics of community life in Ireland during that period. Much of the article is concerned with describing the baptismal ceremonies of the time, comparing and contrasting between denominations, socio-economic class and geographical locations. The purpose of her research was to examine how the social connections were created and/or reinforced as a consequence of baptismal practices and godparent selection. She proposed that the ceremonies 'might also reveal social and religious tensions, and the positive connotations of baptism and godparenthood might be tempered by their potential to highlight difference and promote ideas of denominational exclusivity and superiority' (Tait, 2005, p. 301) This suggests that the religious ceremony of baptism and the subsequent selection of godparents, may have held a particular social role in this historical period in

contributing to the changing society at the time. This era witnessed growing political and religious upheaval centering on the native Irish and ruling British, Catholics and Protestants, landowners and tenants. Tait (2005) highlights that ‘baptism was understood as a religious ceremony that also had implications for society at large...it signified the incorporation of each individual into a broad spiritual family, an element symbolised by the provisions of a set of godparents, commonly termed ‘gossips’ (from ‘god-sibling’ - relative under God).’ (Tait, 2005, p. 302) Alluding to contemporary research conducted outside of Ireland, Tait (2005) points out that researchers have ‘drawn on anthropological and sociological characterizations of godparents as ‘co-parents’ whose role was ‘complementary to family relations’ by linking households in friendship, thereby ‘ensuring social stability and minimizing conflict’. Baptism could therefore also serve to create lasting links between godparents and their godchildren, between parents and gossips, and between the wider families of all those concerned (Tait, 2005, p. 302).

In a later work, Tait (2006) explored naming practices in early modern Ireland, 1540 – 1700 and raised the issue that the selection of baptismal name as a tribute to another (often the godparent) can forge important links in this relationship (p. 314). Tait also highlighted how in this period there was a relationship between naming and ethnicity and, naming and religion. There is a possibility that baptismal names in Ireland may have been chosen to express (or refute) affiliation to a particular religious denomination or ethnic group. Though tangential to a study in godparenthood, the reasons for selecting names at baptism may be related to the motivations for selection of godparents and could be a distinctive feature in Irish culture to be explored in future research.

Next, it was deemed important to explore the literature to investigate if the social perspective of godparenthood, and its possible tensions with the religious perspective, was particular to the Irish cultural context. Investigation soon showed this was not the case.

In the mid 20th century, social anthropologists produced a number of articles in the field of kinship studies. Some of these articles were taken up by researchers in other disciplines, notably history, demography and economics because of their insights into a cultural phenomenon in Latin American known as ‘compadrazgo’. Mintz and Wolf (1950) explain ‘compadrazgo’ as ‘the particular complex of relationships set up between individuals primarily, though not always, through participation in the ritual of Catholic baptism (p. 341), Social anthropologists view studies on the compadrazgo in a different light than those interested in the theological development of the institution, or the catechetical opportunities available. However, they may highlight important elements that can be overlooked by theologians. This provides a good rationale for research to be undertaken on godparenthood in the growing field of empirical theology. The researcher understands empirical theology as the empirical social scientific study of religion, religiosity and the religious dimension of phenomena. Francis and Village (2015) provide an explanation of this area in their work which builds on the earlier discussion of its perspectives in Francis, Robbins, and Astley (2009).

The purpose of the research conducted by the earlier social anthropologists was to ascertain how kinship played a role in the social mobility, economic ties and networking of the communities under investigation. The literature spans a number of different cultures. In her work in present day Romania, Vasile (2008; 2012) whilst subsequently developing a typology of godkinship practices, had, in fact, set out to explore how people in post-socialist Romania negotiated power-relations following the political and economic changes in that society. Alfani and Gourdon (2012) examined how business relationships in 14th–20th century Europe benefitted from the trust-building outcome of ties such as marriage and godparenthood. There is evidence that such a mechanism was knowingly employed for economic good, more so than faith purposes. Overall, the literature finds that godparenthood served a purpose in the

development and intensification of various social, economic and political bonds across cultures. In the anthropological literature, strong emphasis is placed on godparenthood as a mechanism that furthered social solidarity however, as Gudeman (1971) stresses, Foster (1969) and Mintz and Wolf (1950) by forwarding the *compadrazgo* as a ‘dyadic bond’ risk ‘misperceiving its dogmatic and essential nature’ (p. 46). The research to be undertaken in the modern Irish context ought to be cognisant of the contemporary influence of, and intersections with, other spheres: social, economic, political, educational and theological.

2.3.5 Religiosity inheritance: Gender and the context of family

One aspect of a study on godparenthood that could be informed by existing literature is that element involving the transmission of religious heritage in the family. The question asked of the literature is whether or not there are certain conditions in the family context that would assist godparents in fulfilling their role. Myers (1996) examined an intergenerational data set from parents in 1980 and their adult offspring in 1992. One of his research questions was ‘What factors condition the ability of parents to transmit their religiosity?’ Iannaccone (1990) found that ‘the accumulation of religious capital during childhood, through household participation and beliefs and parent-child relations. It would be worthwhile exploring how godparent-child relations impact upon religiosity inheritance. It is further interesting to note the use of the term ‘religious capital’ in this regard, echoing the material in the earlier section on Social Capital Theory. Myers (1996) also concluded that ‘adult religiosity was largely determined by parental religiosity’ (p. 864).

Empirical research on gender differences in religion are also pertinent to this study. Providing a review of the research in this area, Francis (1997) summarises two main theories. Firstly, research suggests social and contextual influences as contributing to gender differences in religion. Secondly, personal and individual psychological differences have also been found to contribute to gender differences in religion. A baseline research study on godparenthood in the Irish context would benefit from analysis of data based on parental gender and the gender of the godparent. The findings may provide insight on gender difference in godparenthood that would contribute to the existing literature on general religious differences according to gender.

2.4 Informing methodologies to study godparenthood

An examination of the literature has brought to light a pattern of sites for data collection. Parish registers showing baptismal records (date of baptism, baptisand name, parents' names and godparents' names) are key sources of data for a number of the historical studies reviewed (Carvalho and Ribeiro, 2006; Foster, 1969; Tait, 2005; Deshon, 1963). On one hand, these records can provide basic yet important details. Any historical exploration of parish registers in Ireland however is challenging following the loss of many such records in the Dublin Public Records Office fire in 1922. Records prior to this data are therefore scattered and incomplete, with a particular deficit in Catholic records. Tait (2005) addresses such difficulties in acquiring records in her examination of spiritual bonds and social bonds during Ireland in the period 1530 - 1690. Family papers, diary entries and letters were used by Tait to corroborate her statistical data. This may be too narrow a focus for the proposed study which hopes to generate a broader understanding of godparenthood in contemporary Ireland. However, future research in the area, such as detailed case studies of certain parishes or families might attempt to use such sources. Baptismal records, when located, can indicate some aspects of kinship. To some extent, one can ascertain if the godparents are kin (by surname, therefore confirming consanguine and affinity links at least; or by comparing them with the marriage records of the parents for kinship records). Beyond this however, the reliance on parish registers is short-sighted without the supplementary assistance of confirmed complementary data.

Foster (1969) corroborated his records with the oral histories of elder members of the community focusing on seven main questions. Foster (1969) used seven major questions: 1. What are the relative social statuses of parents and godparents? 2. What are the geographical relationships of parents and godparents? 3. What is the proportion of relatives to friends

selected as compadres? 4. When godparents are relatives, what are their relationships to parents? 5. What are the relationships between pairs of godparents? 6. What is the relationship between birth order of child and its parents' choice of godparents? 7. What is the relationship between residence patterns and choice of godparents? (p. 265) Since the Tzintzuntzan community under observation was indigenous and closed, with citizens quite confined in terms of social class and mobility, this source of data may have sufficed. The modern Irish context however is vastly different economically and politically, necessitating more rigorous data to complement parish records. Alfani, Gourdon and Vitali (2012) employed a combination of data sources in their analysis of social norms regulating the selection of godparents. These included population statistics, Vatican baptismal records and the French and Italian versions of the European Values Study conducted in 2010.

Another challenge to correctly combining and cross-referencing records is referred to by Carvalho and Ribeiro (2006) as 'record-linking' (p. 183). In summary, tracing the persons identified in one data source through other sources is both highly data intensive and processing intensive as well as being prone to error and expensive. One option used by Fertig (2009) in her study on the role of godparenting in social mobility in 19th century Westphalia (Prussia) was the generation of a 'relational database' using Microsoft Access. This avenue of microanalysis could be employed in the Irish context in due course but is considered beyond the scope of an initial research study.

The target group of respondents used by Alfani, Gourdon and Vitali (2012), were university students who were being surveyed about their own godparents. The authors pointed to two drawbacks to such an approach, which this researcher aims to integrate into the production of an alternative Irish – based research instrument. These two drawbacks are the immediate exclusion of data from those social classes not likely to be attending university; and secondly

that baptisands are not always well-informed on the identity and background of their godparents, or indeed, the reasons why they were chosen. The authors recommended that a future survey would be better aimed at parents on the subject of their choices of godparents for their children.

As such, it is most likely that a study of contemporary parents' understanding of godparenthood would be easier in terms of data collection. It would avoid the difficulties of incomplete records or lost registers that an historic study would encounter. In accessing a large number of present day parents, a pen and paper method would prove highly labour intensive. An online survey is preferable however it will be important to consider ease of access of respondents to internet and computer facilities, length of survey and timeframe for data collection. Additionally, in order to acquire a sizeable sample, consideration must be given as to the most suitable sample strategy.

2.5 Thematic framework emergent from the literature

The construction of a thematic framework based on the literature serves a number of purposes. Firstly, it creates a channel through which the existing and future literature, can be navigated. Secondly, the thematic framework will inform the research design by identifying the core information to be examined by the study. Thirdly, the thematic framework will provide a structure on which the findings of this study can be reported.

The literature suggests that a study of godparenthood cannot be solely focused on the field of education. It is interdisciplinary and therefore this researcher must address aspects of the phenomenon outside the spheres of education and religious education. In examining aspects of godparenthood that would traditionally be seen as belonging to other disciplines, it is intended that this approach will provide a richer and more detailed picture of the landscape of godparenthood in Ireland today. Nevertheless, the disciplines of education and religious education must remain central to this study as this is a doctorate in education. The research questions have been asked by researchers in these other disciplines have largely not been asked from an educational or a religious educational perspective. Some will transfer easily, others may not.

Disciplines already engaged in the study of godparenthood are sociology, anthropology, history, demography, linguistics and Canon Law. It is intended that this research project will contribute to the corpus from an educational perspective.

The following themes emerge from this literature review and will shape the design of the research instrument as well as impacting upon the sampling strategy:

- The identities of the parties involved in the godparenthood relationship
- The nature of the role of godparent

- The importance given by parents to the qualities and character of godparents at the time of selection
- The influences on parents that impact upon godparent selection
- The influence of parental gender upon godparent selection
- The influence of godparent gender upon parental selection of godparents
- The prevalent understanding of godparenthood in the Irish context in comparison and in contrast to other contexts
- The understanding of godparenthood in the present day, to be compared and contrasted to other time periods since Early Christian times.
- The congruence or disparity between the ‘ideal’ of godparenthood and the ‘reality’ in present day Ireland.

2.6 Conclusions

This review has shown that there is no empirical evidence on godparenthood in the Irish context, whereas other countries have already begun to engage with this area of study. Furthermore, the small amount of Irish research pertinent to the topic of godparenthood is historical and only concerned with pre -17th Century Ireland. This lacuna of empirical research on godparenthood in Ireland today makes it a topic worthy of research.

As well as being a research-worthy undertaking, this review has shown that godparenthood in Ireland today is a research-able issue. A variety of methodologies were employed by researchers in the selected literature. The most informative example, and that which best addresses the present day Irish context, is the survey method (Alfani, Gourdon, Vitali 2012). In contrast to their pen and paper data-gathering approach, the present researcher expects that an online survey method will produce a larger dataset. Other common approaches in the literature were qualitative interviews, and historical examination of parish registers and related documentation. In assessing the suitability of such methodologies for a proposed Irish research study, a key factor is that any Irish study will be initial and baseline. The approach to this study and its findings will need to be broad and accessible enough to be relevant across many academic disciplines, and to allow for additional studies to follow. On the other hand, it must be focused enough to produce a quality piece of research. Given the expected large dataset, a qualitative interview approach seems unfeasible. Also, the examination of documentation such as parish registers appears to ill-fitting with an online large-scale survey. It is nonetheless a positive finding that for a topic so under-researched in present day Ireland, there are a number of options of methodologies and approaches available to choose from.

A weakness in the selected literature is the absence of studies carried out from a distinctly educational perspective. The bulk of the studies were driven by research aims from within the

historical, sociological and anthropological disciplines. It is necessary to be critically reflective when reading these studies so as to effectively extrapolate those details most relevant to education, whilst not hastily discarding that which seems irrelevant to education. The latter is particularly challenging but worthwhile because this researcher has found the methodological components of non-education-based studies in the existing corpus to be very helpful in formulating an optimal approach for the proposed Irish study.

The absence of education-driven literature may prove to be a great strength for the upcoming research project and its subsequent findings. Given that it has been possible to see where educational and faith formation perspective can be implied within the corpus, despite the literature coming from other disciplines, it is anticipated that an education-driven study will contribute greatly to the body of literature. It is hoped that historians, sociologists and anthropologists will gain insights from such an educationally focussed quantitative study in the same way that the present researcher has been enlightened by works from these other disciplines.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design used by the researcher in order to empirically study the educational intentions influencing parental selection of godparents in Ireland. This chapter discusses the full cycle of the research from the preparation of the research instrument, its piloting, the sample accessed for the research, the entry and coding of the data and the statistical procedures adopted.

3.1.2 Theoretical underpinnings

Understanding godparenthood as the construct to be investigated in the current Irish context, the variables that were used to operationalise the research questions related to two main areas of theory: education and sociology. The theory of education deemed most suitable to this phenomenon is that of Buber's theory of education as dialogical and relational (1939), which was further developed by Hederman (2012) to theorise education as personal relationship.

From a sociological perspective, Coleman's (1990) definition of social capital is particularly resonant with this research study. He describes it as "[the norms], the social networks and relationships between adults and children that are of value for the child's growing up..." (p.334). Coleman continues to say that "Religious organisations are among the few remaining organisations in society beyond the family that cross generations. Thus they are among the few in which the social capital of an adult community is available to children and youth." (p.336)

Social Capital Theory has developed over the past number of years to include areas associated with congregational studies (e.g. Williams 2008, Muskett 2015). Though rooted in sociology, this theory lends itself very well as a framework for this research study which, though more grounded in education, also speaks to, and can learn from, sociology.

It is also necessary to ground this research study on the educational intentions of parents along the research paradigm. As a foundational study, the collection of data on a large scale to provide a broad overview of the phenomenon would appear to naturally align with a quantitative approach. However, this is at odds with the complexity of the phenomenon as it involves numerous parties (parent, child, godparent), in different socio-cultural contexts. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (1995) point this out when they highlight a weakness of positivism:

“Where positivism is less successful, however, is in its application to the study of human behaviour where the immense complexity of human nature and the elusive and intangible quality of social phenomena contrast strikingly with the order and regularity of the natural world.” (p. 7)

This results in an appraisal of a more interpretive approach as a possible suitable paradigm of research. However, a foundational study on godparenthood in the Irish context can neither position itself comfortably solely in a qualitative, naturalistic paradigm. Though this would cater for the nuances in the complex web of relationships that constitutes godparenthood, a qualitative approach would not be appropriate for a large scale baseline study.

The emergent paradigm of complexity theory was considered to be one of two suitable paradigms for this research study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (1995) provide an overview of its genesis. Connectedness is a key feature of this theory and this is congruent with the educational and sociological theories already underpinning this work. Although in agreement with this ontological perspective (relational and connected nature of reality), this researcher does not fully agree with their anti-positivist epistemology. This leads to the second research paradigm in which this study may also be located – pragmatism.

“Pragmatism adopts a methodologically eclectic, pluralist approach to research, drawing on positivism and interpretive epistemologies based on the criteria of fitness for purpose and applicability, and regarding ‘reality’ as both objective and socially constructed”

(Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, p. 23,
drawing upon Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004)

The researcher sees complexity theory, social capital theory and the theory of education as personal relationship as informative to this study. However, recognising the shortfalls of these three theories to solely host this study, the paradigm of pragmatism underpins this particular research study. As this is a pioneering research study gathering baseline information, the strongest theoretical underpinning is that of pragmatism.

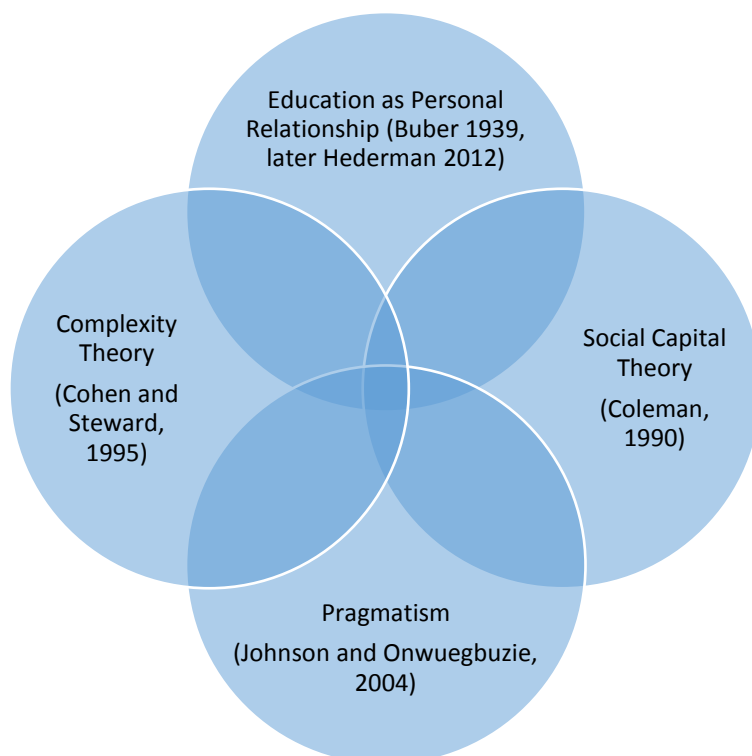


Figure 3.1 Theoretical Underpinnings

3.2 The Research Instrument

The research instrument used in the study was an on-line survey. The design of this survey began with the identification of an existing instrument, its adaptation to meet the precise demands of the research question investigated in this research project, its further modification through a pilot study and the final development of an original instrument.

3.2.1 Locating an existing instrument

Alfani, Gourdon and Vitali (2012) employed a combination of data sources in their analysis of social norms regulating the selection of godparents. These included population statistics, Vatican baptismal records and the French and Italian versions of the European Values Study conducted in 2010. Their survey, a one-page questionnaire, given to French and Italian university students, was the only empirical instrument located on the topic of godparenthood during the literature review process. It is included in Appendix A. The target group of respondents used by Alfani, Gourdon and Vitali (2012), were university students who were being surveyed about their own godparents. The authors pointed to two drawbacks to such an approach: firstly the immediate exclusion of data from those social classes not likely to be attending university, and secondly that baptisands are not always well-informed on the identity and background of their godparents, or indeed, the reasons why they were chosen. The authors recommended that a future survey would be better aimed at parents on the subject of their choices of godparents for their children. It was with this in mind that this researcher designed an instrument to pilot.

3.2.2 The Pilot study

In spring 2014 a small pilot study was conducted with two overarching aims: (i) to test whether godparenthood was a research-worthy topic in the Irish context, as it has never been researched before and (ii) to inform the structure and composition of the main instrument for the future study, which has become the focus of this doctoral dissertation.

A sample of parents known to the researcher was chosen for convenience and in the hope that the participants could critically contribute to the refinement of the instrument. It was hoped that by receiving the research instrument (a questionnaire) into their hands from the researcher, the participants might be more likely to fill it in, than if they had blindly received it in the post, or were invited to pick it up from a drop-off point, such as a box at the school notice-board. Convenience to the respondent was regarded by the researcher to be an important factor in optimising participation.

The pilot research instrument was a 16-item pen-and-paper questionnaire. The questions were based on the earlier instrument of Alfani, Gourdon and Vitali (2012). Fifty copies were distributed to parents in a local national school. They were given to parents, in packs of two, to enable both parents to fill out a survey, or for one parent to fill out two surveys about two different children. Accompanying the questionnaire was a plain language statement and the researcher's contact details.

The items in the questionnaire looked for demographic information on the parent and child, specifically age, birth order, number of godfathers and godmothers and relationship of the parent to the godparent. Additionally, parents were asked to comment on the perceived faith and religious practice of themselves and the godparents at the time of baptism. Participants were also invited to comment on the present level of contact between the child and godparents

and their understanding of the role / main duties of the godparents. The questions were either multiple choice (where more than one answer was permitted) or open-ended text.

The response rate was 58%. The main findings indicated the importance of kinship; faith was less important than other factors in parental selection of godparents; godmothers were described in greater detail; and there was a difference in how godmothers were perceived by parental respondents in relation to godfathers. Overall, the findings of the pilot study suggested that godparenthood was indeed a research-worthy topic. The practice of phrasing questions, interpreting responses and learning how to identify variables and levels of measurement was of huge benefit. The process of drafting and redrafting questions, and rearranging the order and / or focus of the questions contributed to the construction of the main research instrument. The experience of acquiring participants and the experience of seeking an optimal response rate was also worthwhile. Thematic analysis of the data from the pilot assisted in forming a structure for the final research instrument.

3.3 Research Question (and sub-questions)

The core research question driving this study is to explore in terms of strength and scope the presence of an educational dimension in the parental selection of godparents in contemporary Ireland. This general research question can be operationalised as four main sub-questions:

- Why do parents choose godparents (distinguished as):
 - Why do parents choose godfathers?
 - Why do parents choose godmothers?
- Why do parents choose to have their child baptised? (from the perspective of the child)
- Why do parents choose to have their child baptised? (from the perspective of the parent)

In keeping with Dublin City University protocol, application for ethical clearance was made to the DCU Research Ethics Committee on the basis of a low-risk project. A letter of approval was issued by the REC on 30th June 2014.

3.4 Sample

3.4.1 Selecting the unit of analysis

In order to explore the reasons for selecting particular people as godparents, and to examine the educational dimension of the selection process, it was necessary to target the most appropriate respondents. The obvious question is ‘who is likeliest to have the most accurate information’? Learning from the previous research of Alfani, Gourdon and Vitali (2012), whose survey was aimed at the children themselves, it was decided not to target the children because, as these researchers discovered, some children did not know the identity of their godparents and recently baptised children who would probably be very young would be unable to provide reliable data. Furthermore, of those children who did, some reported as young adults that they had no knowledge of why particular people were selected to be their godparents. In a similar vein, it cannot be discounted that godparents themselves may be unaware of the core reasons why they were offered the role. Therefore, it was decided that the instrument for this research study would be best targeted at the parents of children who have been baptised. Accordingly information related to the child who was baptised, the godparents and the parents themselves was gathered through the parents who responded to the survey.

3.4.2 Sampling Design

Once the unit of analysis was selected, it remained necessary to adopt a sampling strategy that would acquire a sufficient number of respondents to permit crosstabulation and to ensure an unbiased sample that did not reflect the values of the researcher (as may have been the case in the sample used for the pilot study). Accordingly it was decided to use an online survey in which the sample was effectively self-selecting (although the researcher would draw attention to the availability of the on-line survey and encourage parents to participate in the research). An on-line survey facilitates the accurate transition from data entry to data analysis. Dependent on size of survey and prospective number of respondents, an automated data entry from an online survey was considered to be preferable to pen-and-paper instrument with manual data entry. However, it was recognised that its accessibility and method of administration could perhaps deter some prospective respondents because of the requirement of the respondent to have internet access and be able to fill out an online survey.

The self-selecting sampling strategy, referred to as a snowball sampling design by Cresswell (2012), comprised of three elements: (i) locating participants, (ii) engaging participants, and (iii) encouraging to participants to recruit others.

(i) Locating participants

A limitation of the pilot project was that the sample came from a small pool of prospective participants. Those respondents were all parents of children in two classes of a local school. A challenge for the main study was to locate parents on a national scale and bring awareness of the study in as many ways as possible. It was also considered important to locate parents who were part of a network in order to maximise the opportunities for participants to recruit others within this snowball sample. It was understood that different groups had protocols in place regarding dissemination of third party information. By staggering the location

techniques over the three month period, different cohorts could be addressed in a variety of ways.

(ii) *Engaging participants*

There were three broad categories of respondents targeted. These were:

- People involved in education who were either parents themselves or could bring the research study to the attention of parents
- Parents of different age groups
- Parents involved in faith communities

People involved in education who were either parents themselves or could bring the research study to the attention of parents

The database of primary schools in the Republic of Ireland, available publicly on the Department of Education and Skills website was accessed and a series of group emails was sent to those schools that provided an email address. This information was last accessed on 21st September 2015 on <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Data-on-Individual-Schools/Data-on-Individual-Schools.html>. Some schools did not provide an email address and some email addresses were obsolete. It is estimated that approximately 3000 primary schools were successfully contacted by email by the researcher. This email identified the researcher and emphasised the researcher's background in primary education. A link to the website on which the research instrument was hosted was provided with the request to consider sharing the information with the school communities in whatever way the schools saw as most appropriate. Teacher networks-namely the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), Religion Teachers' Association of Ireland (RTAI), and the Retired Teachers' Association of Ireland (RTAI) were approached with a request that the study would be drawn to the attention

of their members via their own communication channels, such newsletter, in-house publication or web-based forums. It was understood that some associations needed the permission of their governing board to disseminate material from third parties (i.e. the researcher).

Fellow staff and students of Dublin City University were engaged in conversations, contacted by email or via social media again with a view to promoting the survey. The research offices of all 14 Institutes of Technology in the Republic of Ireland were emailed and / or tweeted. The Teacher Training Colleges were contacted via the Irish Centre for Religious Education's RE Lecturers' Forum. Senior staff in other national Universities were contacted, with the interrelationship of the study with Religion, Irish Studies, Sociology and History being highlighted. The possible international profile of such a unique Irish study was also mentioned.

Parents of different age groups

With the aim of targeting parents in general, the researcher engaged with mainstream broadcast media. Telephone interviews with the researcher were broadcast live on three regional radio stations-Shannonside FM, KFM, and East Coast FM. The John Murray Show, on RTE's Radio One also featured a live studio interview. Well-known personalities and journalists were tweeted and asked to retweet to their followers. Various hashtags were used in tweets to broaden the appeal. These included #family, #godparents, #Irish, #Irishabroad, #research, #survey, #edchat and #phdchat.

Active online parenting forums were identified and joined where possible. The main site in this area that allowed the researcher to add the specific thread 'godparenthood in Ireland' was www.rollercoaster.ie. Within this site, designated forum sub-pages are available to join and members can post individual threads to the sub-pages to spark off conversations on their

chosen topic. Three separate threads were added to the Education, Family Life: Family Relationships and Family Life: Communion and Confirmation sub-pages respectively.

Faith Communities

Faith communities were seen as possible avenues to access target groups in that they were likely to feature parents and have some form of communication network in place, (notably a parish website or newsletter). Baptism and godparenthood are an ongoing feature of the work carried out by members of faith communities, such as baptismal preparation teams. Through a mixture of emails and social media connections, the researcher attempted to connect with the following:

- Catholic Communication Office, Irish Episcopal Conference
- Church of Ireland Diocesan Communications Office
- Diocesan Secretaries
- National Director for Catechetics
- Dublin Diocesan Officer for Evangelisation and Ecumenism
- Chaplains in the Dublin Diocese for:
 - The Latvian Community
 - The Romanian Community
 - The Coptic Orthodox Community
 - The Ukrainian Community
 - The Polish Community
 - The Filipino Community
 - The Lithuanian Community
 - The Slovakian Community

- The Brazilian Community
- National Chaplaincy for the Deaf
- Chaplain for The Irish Defence Forces
- Catholic Grandparents' Association

The communicate provided an outline of the study and the link to the website which hosted the on-line survey. In most cases, a person in authority within the organisation particularly in the area of marketing, was identified either by word-of-mouth recommendation or staff directory, and approached in an invitational manner. It was made clear that the researcher was bound to comply with the internal communication protocols of the organisation in question. Communications from the researcher emphasised from the outset that that the participants had ready access to the plain language statement which featured on the custom-built website hosting the survey. Contact details for the researcher were also provided and queries to the researcher encouraged.

In some cases, where the contact was made in person, specially-created cards similar to business cards were given. Extra cards were offered if the person felt that they could recruit other participants. This card also contained a QR code for ready access to the study's website.

(iii) *Encouraging participants to recruit others*

It was hoped that by successfully engaging target participants, they would recognise the value of the study and be more inclined to recruit more participants. This was of particular note when prospective participants with good networking connections were targeted. A characteristic of the snowball sampling method, is that power is transferred from the researcher to the participant in recruiting other participants. This means that the researcher does not always have control over the selection process but it does allow for the sample to include respondents beyond the normal reach of the researcher and outside any unintended bias in his

or her identification criterion (i.e. possibly giving a greater chance of creating a random sample).

3.4.3 Number of participants

Over a period of three months, a total of 701 respondents completed the online survey. Two entries that were early attempts by the researcher to complete the survey and identify any obstacles that potential respondents might encounter were deleted from the final analysis. When cleaning the data, it was further noted that four respondents appeared to have filled in the survey twice with the exact same information. In all four cases, the timestamp of the entries also matched. While keeping all responses intact, four cases (one of each double set) were discounted from analysis. This resulted in 695 being the final total number of participants whose responses were brought forward for analysis.

3.5 The Instrument

3.5.1 Type of instrument

The research instrument was an original, on-line, self-reporting survey. It comprised of 45 items (and sub-items) covering 75 variables. The items were based on those of the questionnaire by Alfani, Gourdon and Vitali (2012) and on those from the pilot study previously conducted by the researcher. All questions were compulsory. Respondents were required to be either an Irish national *or* Irish resident *and* a parent of a baptised child. This was to ensure an Irish dimension to the study. There were five sections to the survey, each informed by the pilot study and with a view to contributing to the literature featured in Chapter 2:

- Section 1: You (the parental respondent). This contained fourteen questions gathering data on the demographic profile of the parental respondent. The associated variables were:
 - Gender of respondent (male, female)
 - Was respondent baptised? (Yes, No, I do not know / I do not recall)
 - Current age of respondent (Open answer)
 - Country of birth of respondent (Open answer)
 - Current country of residence of respondent (Open answer)
 - Number of brothers of respondent (Open answer)
 - Number of sisters of respondent (Open answer)
 - Age of respondent when child was baptised (Under 25, Between 26 and 35, Between 36 and 45, Between 46 and 55, Over 55)
 - Relationship status of respondent at time of child's baptism (Co-habiting, Married, Single, Other)
 - Respondent's religious affiliation at time of child's baptism (Church of Ireland (Anglican), Orthodox Christian, Roman Catholic, Other Christian, Other Non-Christian Religion, No religious faith)
 - Was respondent's spouse of the same religious affiliation (Yes, No, I do not know / I do not recall)
 - Respondent believed in God at time of child's baptism (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree, Not relevant) **
 - Respondent felt a sense of belonging to religious denomination's community at time of child's baptism (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree, Not relevant) **

- Respondent practised according to religious tradition at time of child's baptism

(Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree, Not relevant) **

***These variables were each later recoded into two new variables. One indicated relevance and the other was attitudinal.*

The three questions pertaining to parental religiosity and practice were included to explore the assertion of Myers (1996) about the influence of parental religiosity on the religiosity of their offspring.

- Section 2: Your Child (The baptised child of the parental respondent). This section comprised of twenty questions which gathered data on the demographic profile of the baptised child and the reasons that the parental respondent had for that child's baptism.

The associated variables were;

- Gender of baptised child of respondent (male, female)
- Current age of child who was baptised (Open answer)
- Number of older brothers of baptised child of the respondent (Open answer)
- Number of older sisters of baptised child of the respondent (Open answer)
- Number of younger brothers of baptised child of the respondent (Open answer)
- Number of younger sisters of baptised child of the respondent (Open answer)
- Birth order of the baptised child of the respondent (This is my first child, This is my second child, This is my third child, This is my fourth child, This is my fifth child, Other)
- Age of child when baptised (Less than 3 months, Between 3 months and 6 months, Between 6 months and one year, One year or older, I do not know / I do not recall)

- Respondent really wanted to have his / her child baptised (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Not relevant) **
- Respondent's family really wanted to have his / her child baptised (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Not relevant) **
- Respondent's spouse really wanted to have his / her child baptised (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Not relevant) **
- Respondent wanted to celebrate the birth of his / her child (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Not relevant) **
- Respondent wanted to cleanse the child from original sin (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Not relevant) **
- Respondent sought to secure a school place for the child (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Not relevant) **
- Respondent sought to enter the child into his / her faith tradition (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Not relevant) **
- Respondent sought to enter the child into his / her spouse's faith tradition (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Not relevant) **
- Respondent wanted to fulfil his / her duty as a parent (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Not relevant) **
- Respondent sought to give the child the opportunity of a faith-filled life (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Not relevant) **
- Respondent sought to thank God for his / her child (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Not relevant) **
- Religious affiliation into which child was baptised (Church of Ireland (Anglican), Orthodox Christian, Other Christian, Other Non-Christian Faith, Roman Catholic, No religious faith)

***These variables were each later recoded into two new variables. One indicated relevance and the other was attitudinal.*

- Section 3: Your child's godfather (The godfather of the baptised child). This section contained eighteen questions. It explored the relationship between the parental respondent and godfather and the criteria used by the respondent parent for the selection of for the godfather. The associated variables were:
 - How many godfathers has the baptised child? (open answer)
 - Who chose this person to be your child's godfather? (I chose the godfather, My spouse chose the godfather, I and my spouse jointly chose the godfather, My child chose the godfather, The person in question asked to be my child's godfather, I do not know / I do not recall, Other)
 - How important was it to choose this particular person as your child's godfather? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) ***
 - Respondent understood that the child's godfather believed in God at the time of child's baptism (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree) **
 - Religious affiliation of the child's godfather at the time of child's baptism (Church of Ireland (Anglican), Orthodox Christian, Roman Catholic, Other Christian, Other Non-Christian Faith, No religious faith, I do not know / I do not recall, Other)
 - How important was it that the godfather could look after the child in an emergency? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **

- How important was it that the godfather could talk about faith with confidence?
(Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
- How important was it that the godfather had deep religious faith? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
- How important was it that the godfather had similar values to the respondent?
(Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
- How important was it that the godfather lived nearby? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
- How important was it that the godfather was a family member? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
- How important was it that the godfather was a work colleague? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
- How important was it that the godfather was committed to forming the child in the respondent's faith tradition? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
- How important was it that the godfather was committed to the child's overall education and moral development? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **

- How important was it that the godfather was of the same socio-economic status as the respondent? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
- How important was it that the godfather was of greater socio-economic status than the respondent? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
- What was the relationship of the child's godfather to the respondent? (He was my brother, He was my spouse's brother, He was my son, He was my spouse's son from another relationship, He was my father, He was my spouse's father, He was another male relation (e.g. cousin, uncle, nephew...), He was my spouse's male relation (e.g. cousin, uncle, nephew...), He was my friend, He was my spouse's friend, Other)

***These variables were each later recoded into two new variables. One indicated relevance and the other was attitudinal.*

- Section 4: Your child's godmother (The godmother of the baptised child). This section also consisted of eighteen questions. It explored the relationship between the parental respondent and godmother and the criteria used by the respondent parent for the selection of the godmother. The associated variables were:
 - How many godmothers has the baptised child? (open answer)
 - Who chose this person to be your child's godmother? (I chose the godmother, My spouse chose the godmother, I and my spouse jointly chose the godmother, My child chose the godmother, The person in question asked to be my child's godmother, I do not know / I do not recall, Other)

- How important was it to choose this particular person as your child's godmother? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) ***
 - Respondent understood that the child's godmother believed in God at the time of child's baptism (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree) **
 - Religious affiliation of the child's godmother at the time of child's baptism (Church of Ireland (Anglican), Orthodox Christian, Roman Catholic, Other Christian, Other Non-Christian Faith, No religious faith, I do not know / I do not recall, Other)
 - How important was it that the godmother could look after the child in an emergency? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
 - How important was it that the godmother could talk about faith with confidence? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
 - How important was it that the godmother had deep religious faith? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
 - How important was it that the godmother had similar values to the respondent? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
 - How important was it that the godmother lived nearby? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant)
- ***

- How important was it that the godmother was a family member? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
- How important was it that the godmother was a work colleague? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
- How important was it that the godmother was committed to forming the child in the respondent's faith tradition? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
- How important was it that the godmother was committed to the child's overall education and moral development? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
- How important was it that the godmother was of the same socio-economic status as the respondent? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
- How important was it that the godmother was of greater socio-economic status than the respondent? (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance, Not relevant) **
- What was the relationship of the child's godmother to the respondent? (She was my sister, She was my spouse's sister, She was my daughter, She was my spouse's daughter from another relationship, She was my mother, She was my spouse's mother, She was another female relation (e.g. cousin, aunt, niece...), She was my spouse's female relation (e.g. cousin, aunt, niece...), She was my friend, She was my spouse's friend, Other)

***These variables were each later recoded into two new variables. One indicated relevance and the other was attitudinal.*

- Section 5: The role of godparents. This section consisted of four questions. It explored the respondent's perception of the level of contact between godparent and godchild and the role played by the godparent. These were included to explore the importance of godparent-child relations, emerging from the findings of Iannaccone (1990) about the importance of parent-child relations in religiosity inheritance. The associated variables were:
 - Respondent perceived that the child's godfather played a significant role in the child's education and faith formation (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree) **
 - What level of contact has the child's godfather with the baptised child now? (I do not know, He has died, He has lost contact, He is contact for special occasions only, He is in regular contact, Other)
 - Respondent perceived that the child's godmother played a significant role in the child's education and faith formation (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree) **
 - What level of contact has the child's godmother with the baptised child now? (I do not know, She has died, She has lost contact, She is contact for special occasions only, She is in regular contact, Other)

One final question invited the respondent to comment on how he / she became aware of the survey. The associated variable was:

- How did the respondent find out about the survey? (By email, Facebook, Newspaper, Radio, TV, QR Code, Word of mouth, Other)

The instrument was constructed online as a Google Form. As completed online each respondent's data was automatically stored as a case in an Excel file on Google Drive.

3.5.2 *Creation of a purpose-built website*

Aware of the widespread use of surveys in the public sphere, the researcher made every effort to make this survey as accessible as possible whilst also informing prospective participants of the importance of the study to the research community and academia in general. It was decided that a purpose-built website was the best option. This hosted the survey and provided viewers with a background to the topic and the researcher as well as the plain language statement.

The website was created using Google sites with preset templates. Simplicity was key. Only two images were added: one of the researcher and a landscape photo taken by the researcher. The text was assertive yet invitational, with the focus being on informing the prospective participant as to the value of the study. There were initially five sub-pages:-

- Survey on godparenthood in Ireland
- Godparenthood in Ireland
- Complete the survey
- About the researcher
- For your information

After the survey was launched, some queries were received from potential respondents. The most common query was if the parent had more than one child, how was the survey to be completed. Additionally, there was some early confusion about whether the survey was to be filled in by the parent or godparent. To address these queries a sixth sub-page entitled

Frequently Asked Questions was included. The website address was shortened using the online URL shortener at <http://www.bitly.com>. The website address was <http://www.bitly.com/godparenthoodinireland>. This was done after an early radio interview with the researcher where it became clear that a shorter, more easily-remembered website address was preferable to the default Google site address.

3.6 Procedure

3.6.1 Ethical considerations

A plain language statement was made available to prospective participants on the For Your Information sub-page. A link to this sub-page also featured at the start of the Complete the Survey sub-page. It was made clear that participation was voluntary. No names, addresses or dates of birth were required making responses as anonymous as possible. The collected data was retained under password protection.

3.6.2 Collecting the data

By creating the survey using Google Forms hosted on the Google Drive platform, responses were automatically stored in a linked Excel file which became the data file. As with the survey form itself, the only person able to access the data file was the researcher. When the survey was closed, a notification appeared on the research website stating that no further responses were being collected. Work then proceeded on cleaning the data and preparing it for import to SPSS. At a later stage, the researcher migrated the SPSS file to PSPP, the free online statistical analysis package. This was done to benefit from the easier interface and production of neater tables.

3.7 Data analysis

3.7.1 *Preparing the data for analysis*

The first step in cleaning the data was to ascertain if there were any instances of invalid or missing entries. In constructing the survey, each question had been designated as obligatory to answer. Therefore there was no case in which data was missing. However, twenty-three variables required attention. These were the variables whose corresponding questions / sub-questions allowed for open text responses. In most cases, the extent of the data cleaning related to spelling errors. Additionally, where variations with the same meaning were given, (for example, when asked for country of birth, answers for Ireland included Ireland, ireland, eire, ire, Republic of Ireland), answers were amended to a uniform term i.e. Ireland. In a small number of cases where open-text answers were required, some responses were unclear. For example, when asked about the number of sisters / brothers, some responses were of multiple digits or negative integers. Where the response was unclear, data was treated as a missing value. In this regard however, by checking on the live responses at regular intervals during the period which the on-line survey was ‘open’, it was possible to embed a data validation procedure that required respondents to supply a numeric answer greater than or equal to zero. This intervention prevented the further collection of invalid data.

3.7.2 *Recoding*

Variables relating to age

Current age of the respondent. There were five age categories in the original variable. ‘Under 25’ and ‘Between 26 and 35’ were later collapsed into the first age category ‘Under 35’. ‘Between 36 and 45’ was the second age category. ‘Between 46 and 55’ and ‘Over 55’ were later collapsed into the final age category ‘Over 45’. This was done because there were only two respondents in the ‘Under 25’ age group. In addition, the three time periods correspond

with a particular socio-cultural context. Those under 35 were born post-1980. This generation is known in Ireland as the ‘Pope’s children’ following the visit of Pope John Paul II to Ireland in 1979. (For further reading on this phenomenon, see McWilliams, D., *The Pope’s Children: Ireland’s New Elite*, Gill & MacMillan, Dublin 2005). Those aged between 36 and 45 grew up in post-Vatican II Ireland and would have experienced the religious education system informed by Vatican II. The over 45s are a generation whose upbringing was informed by a religious education system largely drawing on pre-Vatican II principles.

Current age of the child who baptised. The data provided for the current age of the child was grouped into three categories; ‘Under 15’; ‘Between 16 and 35’ and ‘Over 35’. Consequently, given that the survey was completed in 2015, this corresponds to the time periods of ‘2000-2015’; ‘1980 – 1999’ and ‘pre- 1980’. As was the case with the parental age-groupings, these three groups of children also grew up in different socio-cultural Irish contexts.

Variables relating to numbers of siblings of respondent and baptised child

All the original associated variables where the respondent was invited to state the number of siblings, were recoded into categorical variables simply indicating whether the respondent / child had siblings or not.

Variables relating to numbers of godparents

The two original variables where the respondent was invited to state the number of godfathers and godmothers were recoded into new variables with the clearer levels of measurement ‘None’, ‘One’, ‘Two or more’.

Variables containing Likert scales

As noted in the earlier section of this chapter, a number of variables contained a 4 point Likert Scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree - Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance) and a fifth option of 'Not relevant'. Each of these variables was recoded into two new variables. One pertained to relevance and the other measured the attitudinal response on a four point scale.

Variables relating to countries

Country of birth of respondent and *Current country of residence of respondent*. Both original variables invited respondents to indicate by open text answer their country of birth / residence. Each variable was recoded into a new variable with the following groups 'Ireland', 'UK (incl. NI)', 'Other Europe', 'Other'.

3.7.3 Methods of data analysis

The first round of data analysis focused on descriptive statistics and is detailed in Chapter 4 of this study. Since most of the data was collected using nominal or ordinal measures frequencies were used as the main measure of description. Such frequencies were used to describe the general profiles of the parental respondents, the baptised children and the godparents (godfathers / godmothers) for whom the respondents had provided the data. These profiles were crosstabulated using Pearson's Chi-Square test to ascertain if there was statistically significant differences in the data provided by respondents of different gender and age group.

Chapter 5 of this study outlines the second round of data analysis which specifically addressed the research sub-questions:

- Why do parents choose godparents (distinguished as):
 - Why do parents choose godfathers?
 - Why do parents choose godmothers?
- Why do parents choose to have their child baptised? (from the perspective of the child)
- Why do parents choose to have their child baptised? (from the perspective of the parent)

Each of these four research sub-questions were presented to respondents in the research instrument in the form of four sets of Likert items. Each item consisted of a 4-point Likert Scale (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree) and a fifth option of 'Not relevant'. Subsequently each item was recoded into new variables, one being an attitudinal variable and the other being a relevance variable.

To investigate commonalities within each of these four sets of attitudinal items corresponding to the four research sub-questions, factor analysis was used to group variables and form scales. In each case, principal component analysis using covariance method and varimax rotation was conducted. The minimum Eigenvalue was set to 1 and the maximum iterations set to 25. The Rotated Component Matrix indicated the factor loadings of the data. Variables that corresponded to each factor were tested for internal consistency reliability using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The items were then computed into new scales and treated as interval data for subsequent analysis.

The analysis of data was directed by a theoretical model which emerged during the research. In broad terms this hypothesised that parental intentions for the selection of godfathers and godmothers was associated to some degree with the parental intentions in having their child baptised, which were in turn associated in some way with parental religious belief and practice.



Figure 3.2 Conceptual Framework for this study

In analysing the scales created as part of this research the data was treated as parametric and use made of means and standard deviations. Differences between levels were analysed using Independent Sample t-tests and one-way between subjects ANOVA as relevant were conducted to compare the effect of parental age group across the seven scales. Finally, the strength of association between the seven scales that facilitated the data analysis was explored by the creation of a Pearson correlation coefficient matrix.

Results of these statistical tests are provided in Chapters 5 and 6.

**CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS 1: DESCRIBING THE SAMPLE
AND ANALYSIS OF INDIVIDUAL ITEMS**

Introduction

As foundational research this study aimed to gather baseline empirical data in the area of godparenthood in the Irish context. The core research question was to investigate the extent to which parental intentions for baptism and the consequent selection of godparents included an educational dimension. The research instrument (an original online survey) used in this study gathered data relating to 75 variables using 45 questions, some of which included sub-questions.

This chapter will overview the characteristics of the sample and present a high level summary of major trends evident in the data. A deeper analysis of the most important trends will follow in the next chapter.

The findings reported in this chapter are presented in a manner that broadly relates to the sequencing of questions in the online survey.

4.1 Profile of the parental respondents

4.2 Profile of the baptised children for whom the parental respondents provided data

4.3 Profile of the godparents again based on the data provided by the parental respondents

4.1 Profile of the parental respondents

The research survey was completed by parents who chose to have their child baptised. They provided data about themselves, their child who was baptised and the godfather(s) and / or godmother(s) they selected. There were 695 parental respondents. Only one respondent indicated that they did not know / did not recall if they were baptised themselves. This respondent nonetheless self-identified as being Roman Catholic.

Of the total sample, 578 were female (83%) and 117 were male (17%).

The researcher made every effort to encourage both male and female participation. As a self-selecting snowball sampling strategy was used, the researcher depended on the respondent to share with his / her peers the availability of the survey and to encourage their peers' participation. Thus the networking mechanisms of the respondents were not controllable by the researcher. Therefore, if the respondents happened to successfully recruit further female respondents than males, as occurred here, this was likely a consequence of there being a greater number of females in the friendship networks of previous respondents. The largest number of respondents indicated that they found out about the survey via online means, especially social media and internet forums. The internet forum was www.rollercoaster.ie, a parenting website which is largely used by mothers.

In order to maximise upon the generalisability of the results of the study, analysis will differentiate between male and female respondents throughout.

4.1.2 Age of the parental respondent at time of completing the research survey (Q.3)

Parental respondents were asked to indicate their age at the time of completing the research survey. There were five age categories from which respondents could choose. These were combined for analysis. 'Under 25' and 'Between 26 and 35' were collapsed into the first age category labelled 'Under 35'. 'Between 36 and 45' was the second age category. 'Between 46 and 55' and 'Over 55' were collapsed into the final age category labelled 'Over 45'. This was done because there were only two respondents in the 'Under 25' age group. In addition, the three time periods correspond with a particular socio-cultural context.

Table 4.1.2

Current age of respondent / Gender of respondent

Age Group	<i>N</i>	Total %	Male %	Female %
Under 35	140	20	10	22
Between 36 - 45	319	46	46	46
Over 45	236	34	44	32

The largest age group was the Between 36 and 45s (46%). 34% of the respondents were Over 45 and 20% were Under 35 at the time of completing the survey.

As indicated in Table 4.1.2, the largest proportion of all respondents were in the 'Between 36 and 45' age group. 46% of all female respondents were in this age group and 46% of all male respondents were in this age group. A higher proportion (22%) of female respondents were in the 'Under 35' age group than their male counterparts (10%). A difference is seen in the proportion of male respondents aged 'Over 45' in comparison to the number of female respondents in the same age category. While 32% of female respondents indicated they were

‘Over 45’, 44% of male respondents indicated that they were ‘Over 45’. This shows that male respondents were generally older at the time of completing the survey than the female respondents. This result reached statistical significance, $\chi^2 (2, N = 695) = 10.67, p = .005$.

4.1.3 Finding out about the survey (Q. 75)

Parental respondents were asked to indicate how they found out about the survey. The majority of all respondents (84%) found out about the survey via online means. This figure comprises of email (31%), social media (36%) and internet forum (17%). Similar proportions of male respondents (38%) found out about the survey via social media as did female respondents (36%). This pattern is repeated for email with 36% of male respondents and 30% of female respondents indicating this option. A difference can be seen between how males and females found out about the survey via internet forum. Just 4% of male respondents indicated this while 19% of female respondents did. This may have been a contributing factor to the gender imbalance in the overall response rate. These results were highly statistically significant, $\chi^2 (5, N = 695) = 21.36, p = .001$.

Table 4.1.3

How did the respondent find out about the survey? / Gender of respondent

Source	<i>N</i>	Total %	Male %	Female %
Email	216	31	36	30
Social media	252	36	38	36
Radio	14	2	3	2
Internet forum	115	17	4	19
Print media	1	<1	<1	0
Other	97	14	17	13

4.1.4 Birthplace of parental respondents (Q.4)

Parental respondents were asked to name their country of birth. The majority of all respondents were born in Ireland: 84% of males and 90% of females. A similar pattern was evident for the 'UK including Northern Ireland', and 'Other Europe' as indicated birthplaces. However while 4% of male respondents said they were born outside of these locations, less than 1% of female respondents did so. These differences reached significance, $\chi^2 (3, N = 695) = 9.05, p = .029$.

4.1.5 Current place of residence of parental respondents (Q.5)

Parental respondents were asked to state their current country of residence. The majority of respondents indicated Ireland (98%). The small difference between males and females did not reach significance, $\chi^2 (3, N = 695) = 3.97, p = .265$.

4.1.6 Siblings of parental respondents (Q. 6, Q.7)

Parental respondents were asked to indicate if they had any brothers and / or sisters. This was to discover whether parents chose godparents who were not their siblings. 81% of respondents had brothers. There was no significant difference in how male and female respondents had brothers.

78% of respondents had sisters. There was no significant difference in how male and female respondents had sisters.

The survey then invited parental respondents to recall information from the time of their child's baptism and to provide data about their age, relationship status and religious affiliation at the time of their child's baptism.

4.1.7 Age of parental respondent at the time of their child's baptism (Q.8)

Parents were asked to indicate their age at the time of their child's baptism.

Table 4.1.7

Age of respondent at time of child's baptism / Gender of respondent

Age Group	<i>N</i>	Total %	Male %	Female %
Under 35	554	80	68	82
Between 36 - 45	0	0	0	0
Over 45	141	20	32	18

The data showed that parental respondents were either under 35 or over 45 at the time of the child's baptism. No parent was aged between 36 and 45 at the time of their child's baptism. 68% of male respondents were aged under 35 at the time of their child's baptism. A higher proportion of females (82%) were aged under 35 at the time of their child's baptism. 32% of male respondents were aged over 45 at the time of their child's baptism while 18% of female respondents were over 45 when their child was baptised. This indicates that a greater percentage of male parental respondents were older at the time of their child's baptism. This difference between males and females was highly significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 695) = 11.18, p = .001$.

4.1.8 Relationship status of the parental respondent at the time of their child's baptism (Q.9)

Parental respondents were asked to indicate their relationship status at the time of their child's baptism.

Table 4.1.8

Relationship status of respondent at time of child's baptism / Gender of respondent

Status	<i>N</i>	Total %	Male %	Female %
Co-habiting	81	12	9	12
Married	589	85	90	84
Single	17	2	0	3
Other	8	1	<1	1

The majority of all respondents were married at the time of their child's baptism. There was no significant difference between the male and female respondents for this variable.

Patterns of Religious Belief and Practice of the Parental Respondents

Next the on-line survey gathered data concerning the parental respondents' religious affiliation, belief and practice at the time of their child's baptism.

4.1.9 Religious affiliation of parental respondent and spouse at the time of their child's baptism (Q.2, Q.10, Q.11)

Parents were asked to indicate their religious affiliation at the time of their child's baptism. The options offered were 'Church of Ireland (Anglican)'; 'Orthodox Christian'; 'Roman Catholic', 'Other Christian'; 'Other Non-Christian Religion'; and 'No religious faith'.

Table 4.1.9

Respondent's religious affiliation at the time of the child's baptism / Gender of respondent

Religious affiliation	<i>N</i>	Total %	Male %	Female %
Roman Catholic	607	87	76	90
Other Christian faith	50	7	10	7
No religious faith	38	5	14	4

Roman Catholic was the self-declared denomination of the majority of both male and female respondents. 76% of male respondents self-defined as Roman Catholic while 90% of female respondent indicated so. Combining the other religious categories, 10% of male respondents indicated they were of 'Other Christian faith' while the corresponding figure for female respondents was 7%. A difference is seen the proportion of males who presented as being of 'No religious faith'. 14% of male respondents were in this category while just 4% of female respondents said they were of 'No religious faith'. These findings were highly significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 695) = 21.21, p = .000$.

83% of the male respondents indicated that their spouse of was the same religious affiliation while 87% of female respondents indicated this. The small difference was not of statistical significance.

4.1.10 Parental respondents' religious belief, belonging and practice at the time of their child's baptism (Q. 12, Q. 13, Q. 14)

As the selection of godparents is a consequence of the decision to have their child baptised, the extent to which educational factors impacted upon the parents' decision for baptism may in turn be influenced by the parents' levels of religious belief and practice at the time of the child's baptism.

Parental respondents were asked to respond to three statements according to a 4 point attitudinal Likert Scale (Strongly Disagree / Disagree / Agree / Strongly Agree) with a fifth option of 'Not Relevant'. Each variable was recoded into two new variables. One referred to the attitude of the parent (Strongly Disagree / Disagree / Agree / Strongly Agree). The second referred to the perceived relevance of that statement to the parent.

In describing the sample in this chapter, analysis of the data relating to these variables will be restricted to reporting the frequencies of those who deemed it relevant and of those who indicated 'Strongly Agree' and 'Strongly Disagree'. A deeper level of statistical analysis will be conducted on these variables which are at the core of the research question and will subsequently be reported on in the next chapter.

4.1.11 Respondent believed in God at the time of child's baptism (Relevance)

97% of male respondents and 97% of female respondents indicated that their belief in God was of relevance at the time of their child's baptism. There was no statistical difference according to gender.

4.1.12 Respondent believed in God at the time of child's baptism (Attitude)

38% of all respondents strongly agreed with the statement 'At the time of my child's baptism, I believed in God'. A slightly higher proportion was female (38% in comparison to 36% for male respondents).

8% of all respondents strongly disagreed with this statement. This figure comprised of a higher percentage of male respondents (17%) than female respondents (6%) There was a highly significant statistical difference according to gender, $\chi^2(3, N = 674) = 14.43, p = .002$.

Table 4.1.12

Attitude of respondent to the statement 'At the time of my child's baptism, I believed in God' / Gender of respondent

Attitude	<i>N</i>	Total %	Male %	Female %
Strongly disagree	54	8	17	6
Disagree	59	9	9	9
Agree	308	46	39	47
Strongly agree	253	38	36	38

4.1.13 Respondent felt a sense of belonging to religious denomination's community at time of child's baptism (Relevance)

94% of male respondents and 98% of female respondents deemed this to be of relevance.

This difference was of statistical significance, $\chi^2 (1, N = 695) = 4.21, p = .040$.

Table 4.1.13

Deemed relevance of the statement 'At the time of my child's baptism, I felt I belonged to my religious denomination's community' / Gender of respondent

Relevance	<i>N</i>	Total %	Male %	Female %
Deemed relevant	674	97	94	98
Stated as irrelevant	21	3	6	2

4.1.14 Respondent felt a sense of belonging to their religious denomination's community at the time of child's baptism (Attitude)

24% of all respondents strongly agreed with the statement 'At the time of my child's baptism, I felt I belonged to my religious denomination's community'. 31% of male respondents indicated 'Strongly Agree' in comparison to a lower percentage of female respondents (23%) who did the same.

9% of all respondents strongly disagreed with this statement. 14% of male respondents indicated 'Strongly Disagree' in comparison to a lower percentage of female respondents (9%). The difference in attitudinal responses to this statement according to gender reached statistical significance, $\chi^2 (3, N = 674) = 10.41, p = .015$.

Table 4.1.14

Attitude of respondent to the statement 'At the time of my child's baptism, I felt I belonged to my religious denomination's community' / Gender of respondent

Attitude	N	Total %	Male %	Female %
Strongly disagree	63	9	14	9
Disagree	118	18	20	17
Agree	330	49	35	52
Strongly agree	163	24	31	23

4.1.15 Respondent practised according to religious tradition at time of child's baptism

(Relevance)

98% of all respondents deemed this to be relevant. There was no statistically significant difference according to the gender of the respondent.

4.1.16 Respondent practised according to religious tradition at time of child's baptism

(Attitude)

19% of all respondents strongly agreed with this statement. 21% of male respondents indicated 'Strongly Agree' in comparison to the slightly lower percentage of female respondents (19%).

12% of all respondents strongly disagreed with this statement. 18% of male respondents indicated 'Strongly Disagree' in comparison to the lower percentage of female respondents (11%).

These differences did not reach statistical significance.

4.1.17 Parental respondents' motivations to have their child baptised (Q. 23 – 33)

As the selection of godparents is a consequence of the decision to have their child baptised, the extent to which educational factors impacted upon the parents' decision for baptism is pertinent to this study. Parental respondents were asked to think back to the time their child was baptised and to respond to eleven statements that suggested reasons why they chose to have their child baptised. The statements related to the influence of faith tradition, family pressure, spousal pressure and school placement opportunity on the decision to have the child baptised. For each of the 11 statements, two new variables were created. One showed whether the respondent deemed this statement to be relevant. The other measured their attitudinal response according to a 4 point Likert Scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree).

In describing the sample in this chapter, analysis of the data relating to these variables will be restricted to reporting the frequencies of all respondents. A deeper level of statistical analysis will be conducted on these variables which are at the core of the research question and will subsequently be reported in the next chapter. This will also include analysis according to the gender and the age group of the respondent.

4.1.18 Variables deemed relevant by the parental respondents

To provide an overview, Table 4.1.18 indicates the ranking of the deemed relevance of the statement to all of the parental respondents. (A statement was deemed relevant if (i) the respondent did not state it was irrelevant and (ii) selected one of the four Likert responses made available for the survey item).

Table 4.1.18

Ranked statements as to why the parental respondents chose to have their child baptised according to deemed relevance / Gender of respondent

Rank	Statement	N	Total %	Male %	Female %
1	Respondent really wanted the child to be baptised	689	99	98	99
2	Respondent wanted to enter the child into his / her faith tradition	674	97	96	97
3	Respondent's spouse really wanted the child baptised	666	96	97	96
4	Respondent wanted to celebrate the birth of the child <i>*p=.41</i>	658	95	91	96
5	Respondent wanted to give the child the opportunity of a faith-filled life	651	94	96	94
6	Respondent wanted to thank God for the child	637	92	91	92
7	Respondent wanted to fulfil duty as parent	634	91	88	92
8	Respondent's family really wanted their child baptised	632	91	91	91
9	Respondent wanted to cleanse the child from original sin	615	88	91	88
10	Respondent wanted to enter the child into their spouse's faith tradition	598	86	87	86
11	Respondent sought to secure a school place for the child	554	80	79	80

The differences between the percentages of male and female parental respondents who deemed the statements ‘I wanted to celebrate the birth of the child’ and ‘I wanted to fulfil my duty as parent’ are worthy of note.

4.1.19 Variables to which respondents indicated 'Strongly Agree'

Of those parental respondents who deemed the variables to be relevant, each responded with either 'Strongly Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree'. Seeking to discover the reasons why the parental respondents in this sample sought baptism for their child, Table 4.1.19 shows the ranking of the statements to which parental respondents only indicated 'Strongly Agree'.

Table 4.1.19

Ranked statements as to why the parental respondents chose to have their child baptised according to 'Strongly agree' / Gender of respondent

Rank	Statement	N	Total %	Male %	Female %
1	Respondent's family really wanted their child baptised	342	54	60	53
2	Respondent really wanted the child to be baptised * $p=.015$	346	50	49	51
3	Respondent wanted to celebrate the birth of the child* $p=.002$	307	47	59	44
4	Respondent's spouse really wanted the child baptised* $p=.026$	283	42	55	40
5	Respondent wanted to enter the child into his / her faith tradition * $p=.009$	230	34	34	34
6	Respondent wanted to give the child the opportunity of a faith-filled life * $p=.000$	207	32	32	32
7	Respondent wanted to thank God for the child * $p=.001$	186	29	29	29
8	Respondent wanted to fulfil duty as parent	171	27	27	27
9	Respondent wanted to enter the child into their spouse's faith tradition	155	26	29	25
10	Respondent sought to secure a school place for the child* $p=.034$	65	12	21	10
11	Respondent wanted to cleanse the child from original sin* $p=.024$	39	6	8	6

The selection of godparents

The next group of questions in the online survey gathered data about who and why the respondent selected to be either the godfather or the godmother.

4.1.20 Parental respondents' indication as to who chose the godfather (Q. 37)

The majority of all parental respondents stated that the choice of godfather was a joint decision made with their spouse (63%). There was no statistically significant difference according to gender of respondent.

Table 4.1.20

Who chose the child's godfather? / Gender of respondent

Who chose?	<i>N</i>	Total %	Male %	Female %
I chose the godfather	111	16	21	16
My spouse chose the godfather	132	19	11	21
I and my spouse jointly chose the godfather	430	63	66	62
Other	8	1	2	1
I do not know / I do not recall	3	<1	1	<1

4.1.21 Parental respondents' indication as to who chose the godmother (Q. 55)

Again the majority of all respondents stated that the choice of godmother was a joint decision made with their spouses (59%).

Table 4.1.21

Who chose the child's godmother? / Gender of respondent

Who chose?	<i>N</i>	Total %	Male %	Female %
I chose the godmother	201	29	8	33
My spouse chose the godmother	73	11	27	7
I and my spouse jointly chose the godmother	407	59	64	58
Other	9	1	0	2
I do not know / I do not recall	2	<1	<1	<1

Unlike the pattern that was evident for the selection of godfathers, differences in how male and female respondents indicated who chose the godmother reached a high level of statistical significance, $\chi^2(4, N = 695) = 63.84, p = .000$. 64% of male respondents and 58% of female respondents said the choice of godmother was a joint decision. Only 8% of male respondents said they solely chose the godmother, the corresponding figure for female respondents was much higher (33%). 27% of male respondents said that the decision was their spouse's. Only 7% of female respondents indicated that the choice of godmother was their spouse's. The majority of respondents were married at the time of the survey. Since this predated the passing of the Marriage Equality referendum on 22nd May 2015, it is assumed that 'spouse' referred to the opposite gender. Consequently, the data shows that when making the choice alone, godmothers were more often chosen by the child's mother.

4.2 Profiles of the baptised children for whom the parental respondents provided data

4.2.1 Gender of child (Q. 15)

Of the children for whom parental respondents of the survey provided data, 334 children were male (48%) and 361 children were female (52%).

4.2.2 Age of child when baptised (Q. 22)

Parental respondents were asked to indicate the age of their child when he / she was baptised. Respondents were required to select from five options. 'Less than 3 months', 'Between 3 months and 6 months', 'Between six months and one year', 'One year and older' and 'I do not know / I do not recall'.

The majority of children were under 3 months when baptised ($N = 352$, 51%). 263 children (38%) were aged between 3 and 6 months when baptised. 54 children (8%) were aged between 6 months and one year when baptised. 25 children (4%) were aged one year or older when baptised. One respondent indicated 'I do not know / I do not recall'.

Table 4.2.2

Age of child when baptised

Age	<i>N</i>	Total %
Younger than 3 months	352	51
Between 3 – 6 months	263	38
Between 6 months – 1 year	54	8
1 year or older	25	4
I do not know / I do not recall	1	<1

4.2.3 *Current age of child at the time parental respondent completed the survey (Q. 16)*

Parental respondents were asked to indicate the age of their child at the time the survey was completed. This was included to facilitate analysis of the faith – related / educational dimension of godparent selection during specific time periods. The data provided for the current age of the child was grouped into three categories; ‘Under 15’; ‘Between 16 and 35’ and ‘Over 35’. Consequently, given that the survey was completed in 2015, this corresponds to the time periods of ‘2000- 2015’; ‘1980 – 1999’ and ‘pre- 1980’. As was the case with the parental age-groupings, these three groups of children also grew up in different socio-cultural Irish contexts.

Table 4.2.3

Current age of child who was baptised

Age	<i>N</i>	Total %
Under 15	485	71
Between 16 - 35	174	25
Over 35	27	4

Table 4.2.3 shows that 71% of children were ‘Under 15’ at the time their parents completed the survey. 25% of children were ‘Between 16 and 35’ at the time their parents completed the survey. Just 4% of children were aged ‘Over 35’ at the time their parents completed the survey.

4.2.4 Birth order and siblings of baptised child (Q. 17 - 21)

To facilitate analysis of trends in godparent selection amongst firstborn and subsequent children, parental respondents were asked to indicate the birth order of the child to whom their survey responses related. By asking the respondent to indicate if the child had younger / older siblings, the birth order could be confirmed. There were five options (first – fifth child) and an ‘Other’ response option. For the purposes of this particular analysis, the data was collapsed into ‘First child’, ‘Second child’, ‘Subsequent’ and ‘Other’. An interesting feature for future research was that instead of just confirming the birth order of the child, the additional data from the ‘Other’ response option and the question about siblings included indications of blended families, step-children and twins. This distinction could yield rich data and warrants further research.

Table 4.2.4

Birth order of baptised child

Birth order	<i>N</i>	Total %
First child	542	78
Second child	98	14
Subsequent child	47	7
Other	8	1

542 of the children for whom parental respondents provided data were the ‘First Child’ (78%). 98 children were identified as ‘Second Child’ (14%). 47 children were identified as ‘Subsequent Child’ (7%). 8 children were categorised as ‘Other’ (1%).

14% of the baptised children had older brothers. 13% of the baptised children had older sisters. 43% of the baptised children had younger brothers. 41% of the baptised children had younger sisters.

4.2.5 *Religious affiliation into which the child was baptised* (Q. 34)

94% of children ($N = 650$) in this sample were baptised into the Roman Catholic faith. 6% of children ($N = 43$) were baptised into 'Other Christian Faith'.

Interestingly, two children (<1%) were identified by their parental respondents as being baptised into 'no religious faith'. One of these parental respondents declared herself as being of no religious affiliation at the time of her child's baptism. The other parental respondent identified as Roman Catholic.

Table 4.2.5

Religious affiliation into which child was baptised

Religious affiliation	<i>N</i>	Total %
Roman Catholic	650	94
Other Christian faith	43	6
No religious faith	2	<1

4.3. Profiles of the godparents based on the data provided by the parental respondents

Parental respondents were asked to provide data on the godparents they selected for their child. An analysis of the characteristics and attributes of godparents will be used later to provide insight to the core research question of the extent to which educational intentions influence the parental selection of godparent.

Questions were asked separately about godfathers and godmothers to allow for deeper analysis of similarities, differences and trends amongst and between godfathers and godmothers, rather than godparents in general.

4.3.1 Number of godfathers of child of parental respondent (Q. 35)

The majority of children (91%) for whom data was provided in this sample was assigned one godfather. As Table 4.3.1 shows, 13 children had no godfather at all. Interestingly, all 13 parental respondents in this case were female.

Table 4.3.1

Number of godfathers of the baptised child

Number of godfathers	<i>N</i>	Total %
None	13	2
One	632	91
Two or more	50	7

4.3.2 *Number of godmothers of child of parental respondent (Q. 53)*

The majority of children (92%) for whom data was provided in this sample had one godmother. Fewer children had no godmothers than had no godfathers. 5 children had no godmothers, whereas 13 children had no godfathers. The parental respondents of all 5 children in this case were also female.

Table 4.3.2

Number of godmothers of the baptised child

Number of godmothers	<i>N</i>	Total %
None	5	<1
One	640	92
Two or more	50	7

4.3.3 *Is the godfather of this child also godfather to another child of the parental respondent (Q. 36)*

Parental respondents indicated that the majority of godfathers (93%) about whom they provided data in this sample was godfather to only this child and not to any of the other children of the parental respondent. This is not to say that the godfather does not have other godchildren outside of this particular family grouping. 4% of respondents stated that the godfather is also godfather to another of their children. 4% of respondents stated that they did not know or could not recall if their child's godfather was also godfather to another of their children.

Table 4.3.3*Is the baptised child's godfather also godfather to another sibling?*

Response	<i>N</i>	Total %
Yes	25	4
No	645	93
I do not know / I do not recall	25	4

4.3.4 *Is the godmother of this child also godmother to another child of the parental respondent (Q. 54)*

The majority of godmothers (92%) about whom parental respondents provided data in this sample was godmother to only this child and not to any of the other children of the parental respondent. This is not to say that the godmother does not have other godchildren outside of this family grouping. In comparison to the corresponding figure for godfathers (as above), only 1% of parental respondents indicated that they did not know or could not recall if this child's godmother was also godmother to another of their children. 7% of respondents said that this child's godmother was also godmother to another of their children.

Table 4.3.4*Is the baptised child's godmother also godmother to another sibling?*

Response	<i>N</i>	Total %
Yes	48	7
No	637	92
I do not know / I do not recall	10	1

4.3.5 Parental respondents' relationship to the godfather (Q. 52)

Parental respondents were asked to choose from a list of options, or describe in the 'other' option, the godfather's relationship to him / herself. These options were 'He was my brother', 'He was my spouse's brother', 'He was my son', 'He was my spouse's son from another relationship', 'He was my father', 'He was my spouse's father', 'He was another male relation (e.g. cousin, uncle, nephew...)', 'He was my spouse's male relation (e.g. cousin, uncle, nephew...)', 'He was my friend', 'He was my spouse's friend', 'Other'.

The rationale for this question was to analyse the impact of kinship on the parental selection of godfather.

34% of all parental respondents indicated 'He was my spouse's brother'. 26% said 'He was my brother'. 10% stated 'He was my spouse's friend'. Therefore, 60% of all parental respondents indicated that the godfather was either their brother or their spouse's brother.

4.3.6 Parental respondents' relationship to the godmother (Q. 70)

Parental respondents were asked to choose from a list of options, or describe in the 'other' option, the godmother's relationship to him / herself. These options were 'She was my sister', 'She was my spouse's sister', 'She was my sister', 'She was my spouse's daughter from another relationship', 'She was my mother', 'She was my spouse's mother', 'She was another female relation (e.g. cousin, aunt, niece...)', 'She was my spouse's female relation (e.g. cousin, aunt, niece...)', 'She was my friend', 'She was my spouse's friend', 'Other'.

The rationale for this question was to analyse the impact of kinship on the parental selection of godmothers.

44% of all parental respondents said ‘She was my sister’. 19% stated ‘She was my spouse’s sister’. 12% indicated ‘She was my friend’. Therefore 63% of all parental respondents indicated that the godmother was either their sister or their spouse’s sister.

4.3.7 How important was it to the parental respondent to choose this particular person as godfather (Q. 37)

Respondents were asked to indicate on a 4 point Likert scale (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance) how important it was to choose this particular person as godfather. A fifth option of ‘Not Relevant’ was also offered. Responses were recoded into two new variables. One related to the perceived relevance of the statement and the other measured the attitudinal response.

97% of all parental respondents deemed this survey question to be relevant. Of those parental respondents. 56% considered this choice to be ‘Of great importance’. The difference between male and female respondents did not reach statistical significance.

4.3.8 How important was it to the parental respondent to choose this particular person as godmother (Q. 55)

Respondents were asked to indicate on a 4 point Likert scale (Of no importance, Of little importance, Of medium importance, Of great importance) how important it was to choose this particular person as godmother. A fifth option of ‘Not Relevant’ was also offered. Responses were recoded into two new variables. One related to the perceived relevance of the statement and the other measured the attitudinal response.

99% of all parental respondents deemed this survey question to be relevant.

63% of all parental respondents who deemed this to be relevant considered this choice to be ‘Of great importance’. 67% of female respondents indicated this in comparison to 48% of male respondents. The difference between male and female parental respondents reached a high level of statistical significance, $\chi^2(3, N = 689) = 26.31, p = .000$.

Table 4.3.8

How important was it to choose this person as godmother? / Gender of respondent

Attitude	<i>N</i>	Total %	Male %	Female %
Of no importance	18	3	7	2
Of little importance	32	5	9	4
Of medium importance	204	29	37	28
Of great importance	441	63	48	67

4.3.9 Religious affiliation of the godfather of child of parental respondent (Q. 40)

Respondents were asked to indicate their chosen godfather’s religious affiliation at the time of their child’s baptism. The options offered were ‘Church of Ireland (Anglican); ‘Orthodox Christian’; ‘Roman Catholic’; ‘Other Christian’; ‘Other Non-Christian Religion’; and ‘No religious faith’.

The majority of godfathers (83%) were perceived by the parental respondent to be Roman Catholic at the time of the child’s baptism. 6% were deemed to be of ‘No religious faith’.

Table 4.3.9*Religious affiliation of the child's godfather at the time of child's baptism*

Religious affiliation	<i>N</i>	Total %
Roman Catholic	571	83
Other Christian	41	6
Other	2	<1
No religious faith (incl. non-practising)	41	6
I do not know / I do not recall	31	5

4.3.10 Religious affiliation of godmother of child of parental respondent (Q. 58)

Respondents were asked to indicate their chosen godmother's religious affiliation at the time of their child's baptism. The options offered were 'Church of Ireland (Anglican); 'Orthodox Christian'; 'Roman Catholic'; 'Other Christian'; 'Other Non-Christian Religion'; and 'No religious faith'.

The majority of godmothers (87%) were perceived by the parental respondent to be Roman Catholic at the time of the child's baptism. Only 3% were perceived to be 'Of no religious faith'.

Table 4.3.10*Religious affiliation of the child's godmother at the time of child's baptism*

Religious affiliation	<i>N</i>	Total %
Roman Catholic	607	87
Other Christian	40	6
Other	3	<1
No religious faith (incl. non-practising)	23	3
I do not know / I do not recall	13	2

4.3.11 Parental respondents' perception of godfather's level of belief in God at time of the child's baptism (Q. 39)

Parental respondents were invited to respond to the statement 'At the time of the baptism, I understood that my child's godfather believed in God'. A 4 point Likert Scale was used (Strongly disagree; Disagree; Agree; Strongly Agree) and there was an option of 'Not relevant'. This variable was recoded into two new variables. The first new variable referred to its deemed relevance and the second new variable indicated the level to which the respondent agreed with the statement.

91% of all parental respondents deemed this to be relevant.

Of those who deemed this to be relevant, 22% of respondents strongly agreed that they perceived their child's godfather to believe in God at the time of the baptism. 8% of respondents strongly disagreed.

There was a notable difference in the percentage of respondents who strongly disagreed with this depending on their gender. 13% of male respondents strongly disagreed. This was almost double the percentage of female respondents who strongly disagreed (7%). There was also a difference in the 'Agree' category: 40% of male respondents agreed in comparison to the higher percentage of 55% of female respondents. These differences reached statistical significance, $\chi^2(3, N = 633) = 10.52, p = .015$.

Table 4.3.11

Attitude of respondent to the statement ‘At the time of my child’s baptism, I understood that my child’s godfather believed in God’ / Gender of respondent

Attitude	N	Total %	Male %	Female %
Strongly disagree	50	8	13	7
Disagree	112	18	23	17
Agree	332	52	40	55
Strongly agree	139	22	24	22

4.3.12 Parental respondents’ perception of godmother’s level of belief in God at time of the child’s baptism (Q. 57)

Parental respondents were invited to respond to the statement ‘At the time of the baptism, I understood that my child’s godmother believed in God’. A 4 point Likert Scale was used (Strongly disagree; Disagree; Agree; Strongly Agree) and there was an option of ‘Not relevant’. This variable was recoded into two new variables. The first new variable referred to its deemed relevance and the second new variable indicated the level to which the respondent agreed with the statement.

94% of all parental respondents deemed this to be of relevance.

Of those who deemed this to be of relevance, 29% strongly agreed that they understood the godmother believed in God at the time of the child’s baptism. There was a notable difference in the percentages of male and female respondents who disagreed with this statement. 18% of male respondents indicated ‘Disagree’. This was double the percentage of female respondents who did so (9%). A higher proportion of male respondents also indicated ‘Strongly disagree’ (12%) in comparison to female respondents (8%). These differences reached statistical significance, $\chi^2(3, N = 651) = 11.06, p = .011$.

Table 4.3.12

Attitude of respondent to the statement ‘At the time of my child’s baptism, I understood that my child’s godmother believed in God’ / Gender of respondent

Attitude	N	Total %	Male %	Female %
Strongly disagree	55	8	12	8
Disagree	71	11	18	9
Agree	333	51	41	53
Strongly agree	192	29	28	30

4.3.13 Characteristics and attributes of the godparents (Q. 41 – 51, 59 – 69)

Parental respondents provided data relating to 11 statements exploring the characteristics and attributes of the godfather and the godmother. They were invited to rate each characteristic and attribute in terms of importance to them at the time of selecting the godfather and godmother for their child. A 4 point Likert Scale was used (‘Of no importance’; ‘Of little importance’; ‘Of medium importance’; ‘Of great importance’) and there was an option of ‘Not relevant’. Each variable was recoded into two new variables. The first new variable indicated the level of importance given to the statement and the second new variable referred to its perceived relevance.

Keeping focused on the research question, this researcher aims to identify the characteristics and attributes deemed to be relevant and ‘of great importance’ in the parental selection of godparents. Analysing the data on godfathers and godmothers separately will indicate if the parental respondents in this sample perceive the godfathers and godmothers differently.

In describing the sample in this chapter, analysis of the data relating to these variables will be restricted to reporting the frequencies of all respondents. A deeper level of statistical analysis will be conducted on these variables which are at the core of the research question and will

subsequently be reported on in the next chapter. This will also include analysis according to gender and age group of the respondent.

4.3.14 Variables pertaining to godfathers deemed relevant by the parental respondents

To provide an overview, Table 4.3.14 indicates the ranking of relevance of the characteristics and attributes of the godfathers according to the parental respondents.

Table 4.3.14

Ranked characteristics and attributes of godfathers as perceived by parental respondents according to deemed relevance / Gender of respondent

Rank	Characteristic / Attribute	N	Total %	Male %	Female %
1	That the godfather had similar values to the respondent	657	94	98	94
2	That the godfather could look after the child in an emergency	628	90	91	90
3	That the godfather had deep religious faith	621	89	94	88
4	That the godfather was committed to the overall moral and educational development of the child	621	89	93	89
5	That the godfather could talk about faith with confidence	616	87	91	88
6	That the godfather was a family member	615	88	85	89
7	That the godfather lived nearby	606	87	91	86
8	That the godfather was committed to forming the child in the faith tradition	583	83	87	83
9	That the godfather was of the same socio-economic status as the respondent	547	79	79	79
10	That the godfather was of greater socio-economic status	478	69	70	69
11	That the godfather was a work colleague * $p=.005$	274	39	51	37

4.3.15 Variables pertaining to godfathers rated as 'Of great importance' by parental respondents

Of those parental respondents who deemed the variables to be relevant, each responded with either 'Of no importance', 'Of little importance', 'Of medium importance' or 'Of great importance'. To provide an overview, Table 4.3.15 shows the ranking of the characteristics and attributes of godfathers to which parental respondents indicated to be 'Of great importance'.

Table 4.3.15

Ranked characteristics and attributes of godfathers as perceived by parental respondents according to 'Of great importance' / Gender of respondent

Rank	Characteristic / Attribute	N	Total %	Male %	Female %
1	That the godfather had similar values to the respondent	319	49	42	50
2	That the godfather was a family member	285	46	36	48
3	That the godfather could look after the child in an emergency	188	30	35	29
4	That the godfather was committed to the overall moral and educational development of the child	187	30	29	33
5	That the godfather was committed to forming the child in the faith tradition * $p=.031$	75	13	15	12
6	That the godfather could talk about faith with confidence	68	11	12	11
7	That the godfather had deep religious faith	63	10	15	9
8	That the godfather lived nearby	42	7	10	6
9	That the godfather was of the same socio-economic status as the respondent	20	4	3	4
10	That the godfather was a work colleague	4	1	0	2
11	That the godfather was of greater socio-economic status	2	<1	0	1

4.3.16 Variables pertaining to godmothers deemed relevant by the parental respondents

To provide an overview, Table 4.3.16 indicates the ranking of relevance of the characteristics and attributes of the godmothers according to the parental respondents.

Table 4.3.16

Ranked characteristics and attributes of godmothers as perceived by parental respondents according to deemed relevance / Gender of respondent

Rank	Characteristic / Attribute	N	Total %	Male %	Female %
1	That the godmother had similar values to the respondent	661	95	94	95
2	That the godmother could look after the child in an emergency	650	94	92	94
3	That the godmother was committed to the overall moral and educational development of the child	637	92	92	92
4	That the godmother could talk about faith with confidence	633	91	90	91
5	That the godmother was a family member	623	90	91	89
6	That the godmother had deep religious faith	615	88	89	88
7	That the godmother was committed to forming the child in the faith tradition	611	88	85	88
8	That the godmother lived nearby	601	86	85	87
9	That the godmother was of the same socio-economic status as the respondent	557	80	82	80
10	That the godmother was of greater socio-economic status	485	70	72	69
11	That the godmother was a work colleague	256	37	51	34

* $p=.001$

4.3.17 Variables pertaining to godmothers rated as 'Of great importance' by parental respondents

Of those parental respondents who deemed the variables to be relevant, each responded with either 'Of no importance', 'Of little importance', 'Of medium importance' or 'Of great importance'. Seeking to discover the most important characteristics and attributes of godmothers according to parents who have chosen to have their child baptised, Table 4.3.17 shows the ranking of the characteristics and attributes of godmothers which parental respondents indicated to be 'Of great importance'.

Parental respondents ranked the characteristics and attributes of godfathers considered 'of great importance' almost identically to those of godmothers. The same characteristics were ranked as first through to ninth in terms of being 'of great importance'. There was a difference in the two lowest ranked characteristics and attributes. For godfathers, the fact that the godfather was a work colleague was ranked tenth followed by that the godfather was of greater socio-economic status. This was reversed in relation to godmothers. However, in both cases no more than 1% of parental respondents considered either of these characteristics as being 'of great importance'.

Table 4.3.17

Ranked characteristics and attributes of godmothers as perceived by parental respondents according to 'Of great importance' / Gender of respondent

Rank	Characteristic / Attribute	N	Total %	Male %	Female %
1	That the godmother had similar values to the respondent * $p=.001$	352	53	37	56
2	That the godmother was a family member * $p=.004$	314	50	35	54
3	That the godmother could look after the child in an emergency	274	42	38	43
4	That the godmother was committed to the overall moral and educational development of the child	241	38	32	39
5	That the godmother was committed to forming the child in the faith tradition	112	18	15	19
6	That the godmother could talk about faith with confidence * $p=.005$	103	16	14	17
7	That the godmother had deep religious faith * $p=.014$	93	15	13	15
8	That the godmother lived nearby	73	12	9	13
9	That the godmother was of the same socio-economic status as the respondent	25	4	3	5
10	That the godmother was of greater socio-economic status	3	<1	0	1
11	That the godmother was a work colleague	2	1	2	1

It is notable that a higher percentage of parental respondents ranked all of these characteristics and attributes as 'Of great importance' when selecting godmothers in comparison to when selecting godfathers.

The top four characteristics and attributes considered as being 'Of great importance' when selecting both godfathers and godmothers were notably higher ranked than the remaining

characteristics and attributes. In the case of godfathers, 30% of parental respondents considered the fourth ranked characteristic as being 'of great importance', but there followed a sharp drop to 13% for the fifth ranked characteristic. Similarly, in relation to godmothers, 38% of parental respondents considered fourth ranked characteristic as being 'Of great importance', and the percentage for the fifth ranked characteristic dropped to 18%.

It is further interesting to note that this drop in percentages of parental respondents considering characteristics and attributes of both godfathers and godmothers as being 'Of great importance' coincides with those characteristics referring explicitly to faith. For both godfathers and godmothers, parental respondents considered that the godparent had similar values, was a family member, could look after the child in an emergency and was committed to the overall moral and educational development of the child, to be of substantially greater importance than those characteristics and attributes that explicitly refer to faith.

4.3.18 Level of contact between godfather and child according to parental respondent at time of completing the survey (Q. 72)

Respondents were asked to indicate the level of contact between godfather and child at the time of completing the survey. The options were 'I do not know', 'He has died', 'He has lost contact', 'He is in contact for special occasions only', 'He is in regular contact', 'Other'.

52% of all respondents indicated that their child's godfather was in regular contact. This comprised of 50% of male parental respondents and 53% of female parental respondents.

32% of respondents said that this contact was for special occasions only. This comprised of 40% of male parental respondents and 30% of female parental respondents.

There was no statistically significant difference in how male and female parents responded to this survey statement.

4.3.19 Level of contact between godmother and child according to parental respondent at time of completing the survey (Q. 73)

Respondents were asked to indicate the level of contact between godmother and child at the time of completing the survey. The options were 'I do not know', 'She has died', 'She has lost contact', 'She is in contact for special occasions only', 'She is in regular contact', 'Other'.

70% of all respondents said that their child's godmother was in regular contact with their child at the time of the completion of the survey. This comprised of 68% of male parental respondents and 71% of female parental respondents.

19% of all respondents indicated that the contact was for special occasions only. This comprised of 26% of male parental respondents and 17% of female parental respondents.

There was no statistically significant difference in how male and female respondents reacted to this statement.

This shows that there was a greater level of regular contact between godmothers and godchildren (70%) than between godfathers and godchildren (52%). It also shows that a greater percentage of godfathers (32%) were in contact with the godchildren for special occasions only than was the case for godmothers (19%).

4.3.20 Parental respondent's perception of the role played by the godfather in the education and faith formation of the child (Q. 71)

Parental respondents were invited to respond to the statement 'My child's godfather has played a significant role in the education and faith formation of my child'. A 4 point Likert Scale was used (Strongly disagree; Disagree; Agree; Strongly agree) and there was an option of 'Not relevant'. This variable was recoded into two new variables. The first new variable referred to its perceived relevance and the second new variable indicated the level to which the respondent agreed with the statement.

88% of all respondents considered this statement to be relevant.

Table 4.3.20

Attitude of respondent to the statement 'My child's godfather has played a significant role in the education and faith formation of my child' / Gender of respondent

Attitude	N	Total %	Male %	Female %
Strongly disagree	201	33	42	31
Disagree	254	41	32	43
Agree	126	21	21	20
Strongly agree	32	5	5	5

Of those who considered the statement to be relevant, just 5% strongly agreed with the statement, and a further 21% agreed with it. This results with only 26% of parental respondents agreed that their child's godfather played a significant role in the child's education and faith formation. There was no statistically significant difference according to parental gender.

4.3.21 Parental respondents' perception of the role played by the godmother in the education and faith formation of the child (Q. 74)

Parental respondents were invited to respond to the statement 'My child's godmother has played a significant role in the education and faith formation of my child'. A 4 point Likert Scale was used (Strongly disagree; Disagree; Agree; Strongly agree) and there was an option of 'Not relevant'. This variable was recoded into two new variables. The first new variable referred to its perceived relevance and the second new variable indicated the level to which the respondent agreed with the statement.

90% of all respondents considered this statement to be relevant.

Table 4.3.21

Attitude of respondent to the statement 'My child's godmother has played a significant role in the education and faith formation of my child' / Gender of respondent

Attitude	N	Total %	Male %	Female %
Strongly disagree	144	23	34	21
Disagree	207	33	28	34
Agree	196	31	30	32
Strongly agree	77	12	8	13

Of those who considered it relevant, 12% strongly agreed, and a further 31% agreed with it. This results in 43% of parental respondents perceived that their child's godmother played a significant role in the child's education and faith formation. 38% of males either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. The corresponding percentage for female parental respondents was 45%. This reached a high level of statistical significance, $\chi^2(3, N = 624) = 8.99, p = .029$.

The data shows that less than half of parental respondents in this research study perceived that their child's godparents played a significant role in the education and faith formation of their child. While 43% of parental respondents perceived the godmother has having played a significant role, only 26% of parental respondents felt the same way about godfathers.

As this study explores the educational dimension of godparenthood in Ireland, such low figures are a cause for concern and further investigation. On one hand, further research could be undertaken to ascertain specifically on what criteria parents judge if a godparent has played a significant role. On the other hand, given the large proportion of young children upon whom the respondents provided information (71% of the children commented upon in the survey were under 15 at the time), it may be that the parental respondents see the godparents' role as ongoing or even perhaps at an early stage, with further input by the godparent yet to come.

Nonetheless, it is an important issue for this doctoral dissertation and consequently will be discussed further in the final chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS 2:

ANALYSIS USING LIKERT SCALES

Introduction

The descriptive analysis as reported in Chapter 4 identified a number of variables that warranted deeper investigation. In this chapter, a deeper level of statistical analysis is conducted on these variables as groups of variables with the aim of identifying major significant patterns and trends related to the core research question. By constructing seven scales and conducting statistical tests upon them, a number of significant differences were identified in the educational intentions influencing the parental selection of godparents. Discussion on these findings follows in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

As the selection of godparents is a consequence of the decision to have the child baptised, the motivations of parents to have their child baptised may influence their choice of godparents. In turn, the motivations of parents to have their child baptised may be influenced by their own levels of religious belief and practice at the time of their child's baptism. This was the conceptual framework at the outset of this study. (See Figure 5.1)

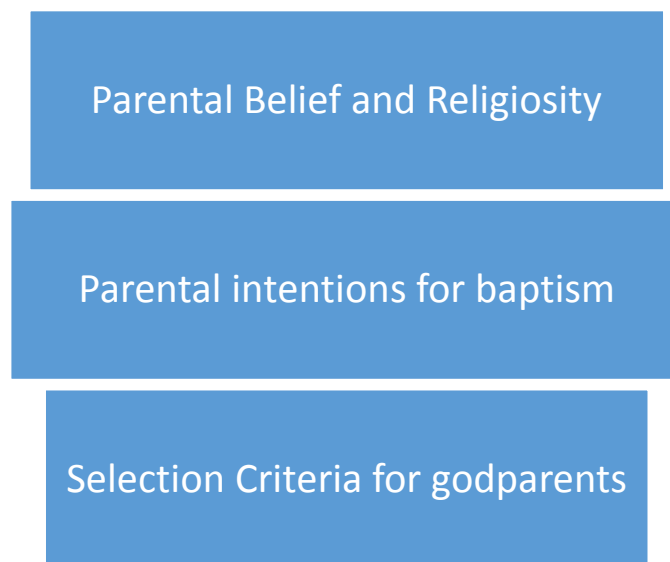


Figure 5.1 Conceptual Framework at outset of this research study

From this conceptual framework, four core research questions formed the high level hypothesis (as illustrated in Figure 5.2) to be tested in this chapter. The four research questions were:

- Why do parents choose godparents (distinguished as):
 - Why do parents choose godfathers?
 - Why do parents choose godmothers?
- Why do parents choose to have their child baptised? (from the perspective of the child)
- Why do parents choose to have their child baptised? (from the perspective of the parent)

The model emerging from the research which demonstrates these relationships is presented in Figure 5.2.

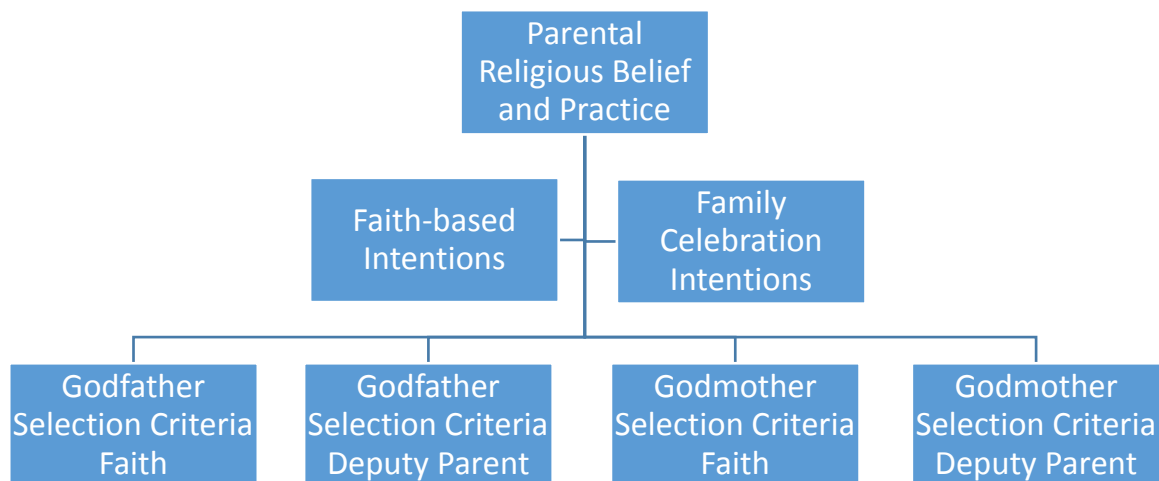


Figure 5.2 Potential factors influencing parental selection of godparents

5.1 The construction of seven Likert scales

The emergent model is comprised of the potential factors which it is hypothesized will be reflected in seven distinct Likert scales which were created using factor analysis and reliability analysis to group individual variables.

Their construction stemmed from the four research sub-questions.

Each of these four research sub-questions was presented to respondents in the research instrument in the form of four sets of Likert items. As previously stated, each item consisted of a 4-point Likert Scale (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree) and a fifth option of 'Not relevant'. Subsequently each item was recoded into new items, one being an attitudinal item and the other being a relevance item.

To investigate commonalities within each of these four sets of attitudinal items corresponding to the four research sub-questions, the PSPP software package was used to conduct factor analysis and reliability analysis (based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient).

In each case, principal component analysis using covariance method and varimax rotation was conducted. The minimum Eigenvalue was set to 1 and the maximum iterations set to 25.

5.1.1 Why do parents choose godfathers? : Construction of Godfather Selection Criteria Faith Scale and Godfather Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale

The research instrument provided eleven Likert items (questions 41 – 51) examining the selection criteria for godfathers. With a view to constructing a single or several Likert scales based on these items, further analysis was undertaken if these items load on to a single factor or multiple factors and to determine the reliability of such a scale or scales using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Factor Analysis indicated three factors that collectively accounted for 70.5% of the variance. Given that factor two only had one variable relating to it, this variable was treated as a stand-alone item:

How important was it that the godfather was a family member?

The first factor correlated with the following four variables:

- How important was it that the godfather could talk about faith with confidence?
- How important was it that the godfather had deep religious faith?
- How important was it that the godfather was committed to forming the child in the respondent's faith tradition?
- How important was it that the godfather had similar values to the respondent?

There was only a slightly stronger loading in this latter variable 'How important was it that the godfather had similar values to the respondent?' (.55 in comparison to .51) For the purposes of cross-comparison with the data relating to godmothers, (reported later in this chapter) it was decided not to include this variable with this factor.

Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the three separate items for internal reliability. The obtained alpha ($\alpha = .92$) indicated a high level of internal consistency and reliability between the three

items. (A higher alpha coefficient was not obtained if any item was deleted, see Table 5.1.1). The researcher identified the underlying communality as relating to the importance of the perceived faith of the godfather as a criteria for godfather selection. The three items were then computed into a new scale labelled *Godfather Selection Criteria Faith Scale*.

Table 5.1.1

Item – Total Statistics Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient on first set of items relating to godfather selection criteria

Variable	Scale Mean if item deleted	Scale Variance if item deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach’s Alpha if item deleted
How important was it that the godfather could talk about faith confidence? (attitude)	4.40	3.66	.88	.86
How important was it that the godfather had deep religious faith? (attitude)	4.39	3.82	.83	.89
How important was it that the godfather was committed to forming the child in the respondent’s faith tradition? (attitude)	4.44	3.66	.82	.91

Factor three identified the following four potential constituent scale items:

- How important was it that the godfather could look after the child in an emergency?
- How important was it that the godfather lived nearby?
- How important was it that the godfather was committed to the child's overall education and moral development?
- How important was it that the godfather was of the same socio-economic status as the respondent?

The researcher was also concerned to ensure that any scales constructed from godfather selection criteria variables could only be compared with scales that were constructed for godmother selection criteria if they contained the same component variables. Therefore, for the purposes of cross-comparison with the data relating to godmothers, the variable 'How important was it that the godfather had similar values to the respondent?' was included in this factor grouping and subjected to reliability analysis.

Cronbach's Alpha was again used to examine the potential group of five items for internal reliability. The obtained Alpha ($\alpha = .71$) indicated a high level of internal consistency and reliability between the five items. (A higher alpha coefficient was not obtained if any item was deleted, see Table 5.1.2). . The researcher identified the factor underlying the five items as relating to the wish of the parental respondent to function as a 'deputy parent'. The five items were then computed into a new scale labelled *Godfather Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale*.

Table 5.1.2

Item – Total Statistics Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient on second set of items relating to godfather selection criteria

Variable	Scale Mean if item deleted	Scale Variance if item deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach’s Alpha if item deleted
How important was it that the godfather could look after the child in an emergency? (attitude)	9.62	7.40	.45	.66
How important was it that the godfather had similar values to the respondent? (attitude)	9.11	7.54	.52	.63
How important was it that the godfather lived nearby? (attitude)	10.29	8.26	.40	.68
How important was it that the godfather was committed to the child’s overall education and moral development? (attitude)	9.59	6.64	.59	.60
How important was it that the godfather was of the same socio-economic status as the respondent? (attitude)	10.58	8.60	.35	.70

5.1.2 Why do parents choose godmothers? : Construction of Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale and Godmother Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale

The research instrument provided eleven Likert items (questions 59 – 69) examining the selection criteria for godmothers. With a view to constructing a single or several Likert scales based on these items, further analysis was undertaken if these items load on to a single factor or multiple factors and to determine the reliability of such a scale or scales using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Factor analysis indicated three factors that collectively accounted for 72.33% of the variance between the eleven items.

Four variables did not exceed the standard .40 factor loading deemed significant in social science research:

- How important was it that the godmother lived nearby?
- How important was it that the godmother was a work colleague?
- How important was it that the godmother was of the same socio-economic status as the respondent?
- How important was it that the godmother was of greater socio-economic status than the respondent?

However, for the purpose of cross-comparison between godfathers and godmothers selection criteria in this study, only 'How important was it that the godmother was a work colleague?' and 'How important was it that the godmother was of greater socio-economic status than the respondent?' were treated as stand-alone variables.

Three variables related to factor one:

- How important was it that the godmother could talk about faith with confidence?

- How important was it that the godmother had deep religious faith?
- How important was it that the godmother was committed to forming the child in the respondent's faith tradition?

Cronbach's alpha was used to examine the internal reliability of these three items. The obtained alpha ($\alpha = .93$) indicated a high level of internal consistency and reliability between the three items. (A higher coefficient was not obtained if any item was deleted, see Table 5.1.3). The researcher identified the communality underlying the three variables as relating to the perceived faith of the godmother as a factor in godmother selection. The three items were then computed into a new scale labelled *Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale*.

Table 5.1.3

Item – Total Statistics Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient on first set of items relating to godmother selection criteria

Variable	Scale Mean if item deleted	Scale Variance if item deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted
How important was it that the godmother could talk about faith confidence? (attitude)	4.79	4.01	.88	.89
How important was it that the godmother had deep religious faith? (attitude)	4.85	4.07	.88	.89
How important was it that the godmother was committed to forming the child in the respondent's faith tradition? (attitude)	4.81	4.04	.83	.93

Factor two only had one variable relating to it 'How important was it that the godmother was a family member?' and therefore it was decided to treat it as a stand-alone variable.

Three variables related to factor three:

- How important was it that the godmother could look after the child in an emergency?
- How important was it that the godmother had similar values to the respondent?
- How important was it that the godmother was committed to the child's overall education and moral development?

For the purposes of cross-comparison with the *Godfather Selection Criteria Faith Scale* and *Godfather Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale*, it was decided to include the two variables 'How important was it that the godmother lived nearby?' and 'How important was it that the godmother was of the same socio-economic status as the respondent?' in this group to test for internal consistency reliability.

Cronbach's alpha was again used to examine the internal reliability of the five items. The obtained alpha ($\alpha = .75$) indicated a high level of internal consistency and reliability between the five items. As shown in Table 5.1.4, if the variable 'How important was it that the godmother was of the same socio-economic status as the respondent?' was deleted, a slightly higher alpha ($\alpha = .76$) could have been achieved. However its inclusion in the construction of a scale enabled direct comparison with the corresponding scale relating to godfathers as they would then both contain the same component variables. Therefore, it was decided to remain with the obtained alpha ($\alpha = .75$) which indicated a sufficient level of internal consistency and reliability. The researcher identified the underlying communality as relating to the parental respondent's wish for the godmother to function as a 'deputy parent'. Accordingly, the five

items were computed into a new scale labelled *Godmother Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale*.

Table 5.1.4

Item – Total Statistics Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient on second set of items relating to godmother selection criteria

Variable	Scale Mean if item deleted	Scale Variance if item deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach’s Alpha if item deleted
How important was it that the godmother could look after the child in an emergency? (attitude)	9.94	8.01	.56	.70
How important was it that the godmother had similar values to the respondent? (attitude)	9.67	8.25	.59	.69
How important was it that the godmother lived nearby? (attitude)	10.83	8.46	.51	.72
How important was it that the godmother was committed to the child’s overall education and moral development? (attitude)	10.03	7.86	.58	.69
How important was it that the godmother was of the same socio-economic status as the respondent? (attitude)	11.27	9.48	.37	.76

5.1.3 Why do parents choose to have their child baptised (from the perspective of the child)?:

Construction of Faith-based Intentions Scale and Family Celebration Intentions Scale

The research instrument provided eleven Likert items (questions 23 – 33) examining the intentions of the parental respondent for having her or his child baptised. With a view to constructing a single or several Likert scales based on these items, further analysis was undertaken if these items load on to a single factor or multiple factors and to determine the reliability of such a scale or scales using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Factor analysis indicated two factors that collectively accounted for 62.36% of the variance.

This also showed that two variables should be treated as stand-alone items because they did not have significant loading with either factor. These were

- Respondent wanted to cleanse his / her child from original sin
- Respondent sought to secure a school place for his / her child

The first factor identified the following five potential constituent scale items:

- Respondent wanted to enter the child into his / her faith tradition
- Respondent wanted to enter the child into his / her spouse's faith tradition
- Respondent wanted to fulfil his / her duty as parent
- Respondent wanted to give his / her child the opportunity of faith-filled life
- Respondent sought to thank God for his / her child

Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the five separate items for internal reliability. The obtained Alpha coefficient was $\alpha = .92$. The obtained alpha indicated a high level of internal consistency and reliability between the five items. (A higher alpha coefficient was not

obtained if any item was deleted, see Table 5.1.5). The researcher identified the underlying communality as relating to the parental respondent's faith-based intention in having his or her child baptised. The five items were accordingly computed into a new scale labelled Parental Respondent's *Faith-based Intentions Scale*.

Table 5.1.5

Item – Total Statistics Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient on first set of items relating to why parents choose to have their child baptised

Variable	Scale Mean if item deleted	Scale Variance if item deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach’s Alpha if item deleted
Respondent wanted to enter the child into his / her faith tradition (attitude)	11.75	10.39	.83	.89
Respondent wanted to enter the child into his / spouse’s faith tradition (attitude)	11.91	10.52	.79	.90
Respondent wanted to fulfil his / her duty as parent (attitude)	11.89	10.85	.74	.91
Respondent wanted to give his / her child the opportunity of a faith-filled life (attitude)	11.76	10.54	.84	.89
Respondent sought to thank God for his / her child (attitude)	11.97	10.17	.77	.91

The second factor identified the following four potential constituent scale items:

- Respondent really wanted his / her child to be baptised
- Respondent’s family really wanted his / her child baptised
- Respondent’s spouse really wanted child baptised
- Respondent wanted to celebrate the birth of his / her child

Cronbach’s Alpha was again used to examine the internal consistency of the four separate items. The obtained alpha ($\alpha = .78$) indicated a high level of internal consistency and reliability

between the four items. (A higher alpha coefficient was not achieved if any item was deleted, see Table 5.1.6). The researcher identified the underlying communality as relating to a parental intention for baptism related to the importance of a family celebration. The four items were accordingly computed into a new scale labelled Parental Respondent's *Family Celebration Intentions Scale*.

Table 5.1.6

Item – Total Statistics Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient on second set of items relating to why parents choose to have their child baptised

Variable	Scale Mean if item deleted	Scale Variance if item deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted
Respondent really wanted his / her child to be baptised (attitude)	9.94	3.58	.65	.69
Respondent's family really wanted his / her child baptised (attitude)	9.86	4.10	.54	.75
Respondent's spouse really wanted child baptised (attitude)	10.06	3.73	.59	.72
Respondent wanted to celebrate the birth of his / her child (attitude)	9.92	4.18	.56	.74

5.1.4 Why do parents choose to have their child baptised (from the perspective of the parents)?: Construction of the Parental Religious Belief and Practice Scale.

The research instrument provided three Likert items (questions 12 – 14) examining the parental respondent's religious belief and practice. With a view to constructing a single or several Likert scales based on these items, further analysis was undertaken if these items load on to a single factor or multiple factors and to determine the reliability of such a scale or scales using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Factor analysis indicated one factor that accounted for 80.88% of the variance between the three items.

Cronbach's Alpha was again used to examine the internal consistency of the four separate items. The obtained alpha ($\alpha = .88$) indicated a high level of internal consistency and reliability between the four items. (A higher alpha coefficient was not achieved if any item was deleted, see Table 5.1.7). The communality underlying this factor was identified by the researcher as relating to the Parental Respondent's Religious Belief and Practice. The three items were then computed into a new scale labelled the *Parental Religious Belief and Practice Scale*.

Table 5.1.7

Item – Total Statistics Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient on items relating to parental religious belief and practice

Variable	Scale Mean if item deleted	Scale Variance if item deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach’s Alpha if item deleted
Respondent believed in God at the time of child’s baptism (attitude)	5.60	2.84	.72	.87
Respondent felt a sense of belonging to their religious denomination’s community at the time of child’s baptism (attitude)	5.86	2.63	.80	.80
Respondent practised according to religious tradition at the of child’s baptism (attitude)	6.04	2.57	.79	.81

In addition to the above scale the researcher undertook further analysis to identify three levels of Parental Religious Belief and Practice by which parental respondents could be further grouped. Although the individual items constituting the scale were ordinal items, the convention when analysing a scale with a high level of reliability (with a Cronbach’s Alpha of $\alpha = .70$ or higher) is to treat that scale as a ratio measure and accordingly it is possible to identify a mean and standard deviation as opposed to the frequencies to which the constituent ordinal variables are limited. The mean score of parental respondents on the Parental Religious Belief and Practice Scale was 2.92 ($SD = .79$). Using the mean and the criteria of scores in the range of plus or minus one standard deviation around that mean, three levels (low, medium and high) of Parental Religious Belief and Practice were identified.

Table 5.1.8

*Distribution of parental respondents
according to levels of Parental Religious Belief and Practice*

Level of Parental Religious Belief and Practice	<i>N</i>	Total %
Low	102	16
Medium	449	68
High	107	16

The medium level exhibits a frequency of 68% which is the expected frequency for a normally distributed scale.

5.2 Results of examination of the data using the seven Likert scales

The construction of these seven scales enable the following questions to be asked of the data:

1. Is there a difference between male and female parental respondents for each scale?
2. Is there a difference between parental respondents of different age groups presenting for each scale?
3. What are the levels of association between the different scales in the factor model influencing the parental selection of godparents that is emerging from this research study?

A series of statistical tests were conducted on the seven scales to explore the above four meta-questions. The scales were treated as parametric data and not as ordinal non-parametric data. Only results that were statistically significant are detailed in what follows.

Finally, given the prevalence in public discourse related to school enrolment policies in contemporary Ireland and the contentious issue of some parents claiming they opt to have their child baptised to secure a school place, one final statistical test is conducted using the data in this study. A one-way ANOVA is conducted comparing the levels of parental religious belief and practice with the variable ‘The respondent sought to secure a school place for his / her child’ with the intention of informing this public discourse.

5.2.1 Is there a difference between male and female parental respondents for each scale?

Parental Religious Belief and Practice Scale – Gender of respondent

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare how male and female parental respondents presented on the Parental Religious Belief and Practice Scale. There was a slight difference between the mean scores for male parental respondents ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 0.94$) and female parental respondents ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 0.76$). Based upon Levene's test for homogeneity of variances, $F(135.83) = 11.83$, $p = .001$, a t-test not assuming homogeneous variances was calculated. This indicated that there was no significant difference on levels of Parental Religious Belief and Practice based on gender, $t(135.83) = 1.29$, $p = .198$.

Faith-based Intentions Scale – Gender of respondent

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare how male and female parental respondents presented on the Faith-based Intentions Scale. There was a slight difference between the mean scores for male parental respondents ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 0.93$) and female parental respondents ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.77$). Based upon Levene's test for homogeneity of variances, $F(109.24) = 9.12$, $p = .003$, a t-test not assuming homogeneous variances was calculated. This indicated that there was no significant difference on levels of Faith-based Intentions Scale based on gender, $t(109.24) = 1.92$, $p = .057$.

Family Celebration Intentions Scale – Gender of respondent

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare how male and female parental respondents presented on the Faith-based Intentions Scale. There was a marginal difference between the mean scores for male parental respondents ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.62$) and female parental respondents ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.64$). Based upon Levene's test for homogeneity of variances, $F(578) = 0.87$, $p = .351$, a t-test assuming homogeneous variances was calculated. This indicated that there was no significant difference on levels of Family Celebration Intentions Scale based on gender, $t(578) = 1.00$, $p = .0320$.

Godfather Selection Criteria Faith Scale – Gender of respondent

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare how male and female parental respondents presented on the Godfather Selection Criteria Faith Scale. There was a slight difference between the mean scores for male parental respondents ($M = 2.09$, $SD = 1.05$) and female parental respondents ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 0.92$). Based upon Levene's test for homogeneity of variances, $F(134.44) = 7.04$, $p = .008$, a t-test not assuming homogeneous variances was calculated. This indicated that there was no significant difference on levels of Godfather Selection Criteria Faith Scale based on gender, $t(134.44) = 1.27$, $p = .205$.

Godfather Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale – Gender of respondent

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare how male and female parental respondents presented on the Godfather Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale. There was a very slight difference between the mean scores for male parental respondents ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 0.66$) and female parental respondents ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 0.67$). Based upon Levene's test for homogeneity of variances, $F(491) = 0.25$, $p = .617$, a t-test assuming homogeneous variances was calculated. This indicated that there was no significant difference on levels of Godfather Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale based on gender, $t(491) = 0.25$, $p = .799$.

Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale – Gender of respondent

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare how male and female parental respondents presented on the Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale. There was a marginal difference between the mean scores for male parental respondents ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.05$) and female parental respondents ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 0.97$). Based upon Levene's test for homogeneity of variances, $F(577) = 2.21$, $p = .138$, a t-test assuming homogeneous variances was calculated. This indicated a significant difference on levels of Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale based on gender, $t(577) = 2.13$, $p = .034$.

The results indicate that female parental respondents presented with significantly higher levels of godmother selection criteria based on faith at the time of the child's baptism. It should be noted that the pattern here differs from that for godfathers.

Godmother Selection Criteria Deputy Scale – Gender of respondent

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare how male and female parental respondents presented on the Godmother Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale. There was a marginal difference between the mean scores for male parental respondents ($M = 2.40$, $SD = .72$) and female parental respondents ($M = 2.62$, $SD = 0.70$). Based upon Levene's test for homogeneity of variances, $F(501) = 0.39$, $p = .534$, a t-test assuming homogeneous variances was calculated. This indicated a highly significant difference on levels of Godmother Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale based on gender, $t(501) = 2.67$, $p = .008$.

The results indicate that female parental respondents presented with significantly higher levels of godmother selection criteria based on being a deputy parent at the time of the child's baptism. Again it should be noted that this pattern differs from that for godfathers.

Summary: the influence of the gender of the parental respondents

Generally there were no significant differences between male and female parental respondents across the scales. However this was not the case concerning the parental selection of godmothers. In both cases of selection criteria based on faith and on being a deputy parent, female parental respondents indicated a greater level of importance placed on this selection procedure than did the male parental respondents. This suggests that male and female parental respondents use somewhat different criteria for the selection of godmothers but not for the selection of godfathers.

5.2.2 Is there a difference in how parental respondents of different age groups presented according to each scale?

Parental Religious Belief and Practice Scale – Current age of respondent

The potential effect of parental age on levels of parental religious belief and practice was explored by means of a one-way ANOVA based on the three age groups for parental respondents (i.e. Under 35, between 36 and 45, and Over 45). The results indicated that the difference between the three age-groups was statistically significant, $F(2, 655) = 5.64, p = .004$.

Table 5.2.2a

ANOVA Comparison of Parental Religious Belief and Practice Scale and age grouping of parental respondents

Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i> value
Between	7.03	2	3.52	5.64	.004
Within	408.09	655	0.62		
Total	415.12	657			

Further analysis indicated that the mean Parental Religious Belief and Practice Scale score for parental respondents over 45 was higher ($M = 3.06, SD = 0.84$) than that for parents aged under 35 ($M = 2.87, SD = 0.85$) or that for parents aged between 36 and 45 ($M = 2.83, SD = 0.73$).

Faith-based Intentions Scale – Current age of respondent

The potential effect of parental age on faith-based intentions for baptism was explored by means of a one-way ANOVA based on the three age groups for parental respondents (i.e. Under 35, between 36 and 45, and Over 45). The results indicated that the difference between the three age-groups was statistically significant, $F(2, 516) = 5.73, p = .003$.

Table 5.2.2b

*ANOVA Comparison of Faith-based Intentions Scale
and age grouping of parental respondents*

Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i> value
Between	7.24	2	3.62	5.73	.003
Within	325.84	516	0.63		
Total	333.08	518			

Further analysis indicated that the mean Faith-based Intentions Scale score for parental respondents over 45 was higher ($M= 3.12$, $SD= 0.84$) than that for parental aged under 35 ($M= 2.92$, $SD= 0.89$) or that for parents aged between 36 and 45 ($M= 2.86$, $SD= 0.69$).

Family Celebration Intentions Scale – Current age of respondent

The potential effect of parental age on family celebration intentions was explored by means of a one-way ANOVA based on the three age groups for parental respondents (i.e. Under 35, between 36 and 45, and Over 45). The results indicated that the difference between the three age-groups was not statistically significant, $F(2, 577) = 1.04$, $p=.355$.

It is however worth noting that the means for parental respondents in all age groups for this scale exceed the means of those in the Faith-based Intentions Scale. This is shown in Table 5.2.2c.

Table 5.2.2c

Comparison of Mean Scores for Faith-based Intentions Scale and Family Celebration Intentions Scale according to age group of parental respondent

Parental Respondent Age Group	Mean Score	Mean Score
	Faith-based Intentions Scale	Family Celebration Intentions Scale
Under 35	2.92	3.28
Between 36 and 45	2.86	3.29
Over 45	3.12	3.37

Godfather Selection Criteria Faith Scale – Current age of respondent

The potential effect of parental age on godfather selection criteria based on faith was explored by means of a one-way ANOVA based on the three age groups for parental respondents (i.e. Under 35, between 36 and 45, and Over 45). The results indicated that the difference between the three age-groups was not statistically significant, $F(2, 553) = 2.39, p=.092$.

Godfather Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale – Current age of respondent

The potential effect of parental age on godfather selection criteria based on being a deputy parent was explored by means of a one-way ANOVA based on the three age groups for parental respondents (i.e. Under 35, between 36 and 45, and Over 45). The results indicated that the difference between the three age-groups was not statistically significant, $F(2, 490) = 1.46, p=.234$.

Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale – Current age of respondent

The potential effect of parental age on godmother selection criteria based on faith was explored by means of a one-way ANOVA based on the three age groups for parental respondents (i.e. Under 35, between 36 and 45, and Over 45). The results indicated that the difference between the three age-groups was highly statistically significant, $F(2, 576) = 7.56, p=.001$.

Table 5.2.2d

ANOVA Comparison of Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale and age grouping of parental respondents

Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i> value
Between	14.47	2	7.23	7.56	.001
Within	551.12	576	0.96		
Total	565.58	578			

Further analysis indicated that the mean Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale score for parental respondents over 45 was higher ($M= 2.60, SD= 1.02$) than that for parents aged under 35 ($M= 2.45, SD= 1.07$) or that for parents aged between 36 and 45 ($M= 2.25, SD= 0.90$).

Godmother Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale – Current age of respondent

The potential effect of parental age on godmother selection criteria based on being a deputy parent was explored by means of a one-way ANOVA based on the three age groups for parental respondents (i.e. Under 35, between 36 and 45, and Over 45). The results indicated that the difference between the three age-groups was not statistically significant, $F(2, 500) = 1.13, p=.322$.

It is however interesting to note that across age groups the mean scores of the Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale exceed those of the Godfather Selection Criteria Faith Scale as shown in Table 5.2.2e.

Table 5.2.2e

Comparison of Mean Scores for Godfather Selection Criteria Faith Scale and Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale according to age group of parental respondent

Parental Respondent Age Group	Mean Score	
	Godfather Selection Criteria Faith Scale	Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale
Under 35	2.27	2.45
Between 36 and 45	2.11	2.25
Over 45	2.29	2.60

Summary: Age-related differences across scales

The above analysis suggests that the age of parental respondents may be a more important element in impacting upon godparent selection than the gender of parental respondents. On four of the seven scales, there was a statistically significant difference in how parents of different age groups presented.

The only instance of godparent selection criteria that was statistically significantly different according to the age of the parental respondent was in the perceived faith of the godmother. The Over 45s rated the faith of the godmother more highly than the other age groups. The Over 45s also rated both baptismal intentions based on faith and those based on family celebration highest across the age groups. It is therefore no surprise to see that the Over 45s scored highest on the Parental Belief and Religiosity Scale. This demonstrates that the Over 45s in this sample with higher levels of parental belief and religiosity at the time of their child's

baptism, also gave greater value to faith based baptismal intentions as well as family celebration based intentions. They also rated the selection of the godmother over that of the godfather.

An intriguing finding is in the distinctive profile of the parental respondents aged between 36 and 45. These parents scored lowest of all three age groups in all the scales where statistically significant differences were reached. The Between 36 and 45s had the lowest score in the Parental Religious Belief and Practice Scale, Faith-based Intentions Scale, Family Celebration Intentions Scale and Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale.

Anecdotal evidence may have predicted the religiosity of the older parental age group, however this data shows that the assumption of the younger the parents, the less important to them is religion is incorrect. This data shows that the younger parents, those under 35 at the time of completing the survey scored higher on all four scales than did those aged between 36 and 45. The reasons why this middle age group, those who generally belong to the socio-cultural category called 'The Pope's Children' display the lowest scores in these scales is worthy of further investigation.

5.2.3 What is the level of association between the various scales related to the parental selection of godparents model that is emerging from this research study?

A Pearson correlation coefficient matrix was computed to assess the relationships between the seven scales that were constructed. Throughout the level of statistical significance is based on the use of two tailed Pearson correlation coefficients. As shown in Table 5.2.3, all computations showed positive correlations. Duplicate correlations are excluded from the table. The scale labels are abbreviated as follows:

Parental Religious Belief and Practice Scale	PRBPS
Faith-based Intentions Scale	FBIS
Family Celebration Intentions Scale	FCIS
Godfather Selection Criteria Faith Scale	GFFS
Godfather Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale	GFDS
Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale	GMFS
Godmother Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale	GMDS

Table 5.2.3*Correlation Matrix of Likert Scales constructed in this thesis*

	GMDS	GMFS	GFDS	GFFS	FCIS	FBIS
PRBPS	0.18 .000	0.54 .000	0.24 .000	0.57 .000	0.56 .000	0.76 .000
FBIS	0.33 .000	0.66 .000	0.30 .000	0.62 .000	0.66 .000	
FCIS	0.24 .000	0.38 .000	0.31 .000	0.39 .000		
GFFS	0.33 .000	0.81 .000	0.55 .000			
GFDS	0.63 .000	0.44 .000				
GMFS	0.54 .000					

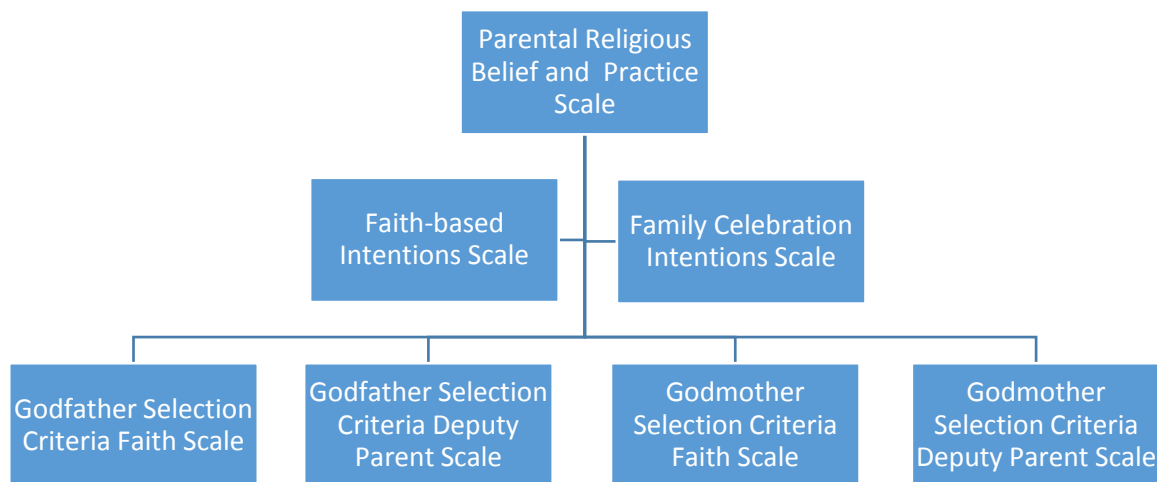


Figure 5.2 Model of factors influencing parental selection of godparents

These results show a medium to strong, positive correlation between a number of the scales that were constructed in this study. Eleven of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient values exceed the conventionally accepted value of $r = .50$ indicating a medium level correlation (above $r = .70$ a strong association is indicated).

The strongest correlation was between the Godfather Selection Criteria Faith Scale and Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale ($r = .81$) suggesting that, in this sample, parental respondents with higher levels of godfather selection criteria based on faith also had higher levels of godmother selection criteria based on faith.

The strong correlation ($r = .63$) between the Godfather Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale and the Godmother Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale is also noteworthy. It indicates that parental respondents in this sample who had higher levels of selection criteria of godfathers based on being a deputy parent also had higher levels of selection criteria for godmothers based on being a deputy parent.

The correlation coefficient between the Faith-based Intentions Scale and Family Celebrations Scale ($r = .66$) suggest that those parents in this sample with higher levels of baptismal intentions based on faith also had higher levels of baptismal intentions based on family celebration.

The correlation coefficient between the Faith-based Intentions Scale and the Godfather Selection Criteria Faith Scale ($r = .62$) was of similar strength as that between the Faith-based Intentions Scale and the Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale ($r = .66$). This indicates that the higher the level of baptismal intentions based on faith by parental respondents in this sample, there was a corresponding higher level of selection criteria based on faith for both godfathers and godmothers.

There was a medium correlation between the Godfather Selection Criteria Faith Scale and the Godfather Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale ($r = .55$) as well as between the Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale and the Godmother Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale ($r = .54$). This indicates that the parental respondents placed similar levels of importance on the selection criteria based on faith as on those based on being a deputy parent. This was the case in relation to the selection of both godfathers and godmothers.

There was a very strong correlation between the Parental Religious Belief and Practice Scale and the Faith-based Intentions Scale ($r = .76$). This indicates that parental respondents in this sample with higher levels of parental religious belief and practice at the time of their child's baptism also had higher levels of faith-based intentions for that baptism.

In a similar way there was a medium correlation between the Parental Religious Belief and Practice Scale and the Family Celebrations Intentions Scale ($r = .56$). Together with this, the correlation values of $r = .57$ and $r = .54$ respectively between that of the Parental Religious Belief and Practice Scale and the Godfather Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale, and

between the Parental Religious Belief and Practice Scale and the Godmother Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale are of note.

These results affirm the researcher's conceptual framework at the outset of the study and leads to the emergence of a robust innovative model. This model demonstrates that there is a connection between why parents select godparents and the intentions for parents choosing to have their child baptised and that these intentions in turn are influenced by the parental level of religious belief and practice.

5.2.4 Is there a statistically significant difference in how parental respondents of low, medium and high levels of Parental Religious Belief and Practice at the time of their child's baptism sought to secure a school place for their child?

Securing a school place for his / her child may, or may not be, an important educational intention on the part of the parent in the context of deciding to have his or her child baptised. Currently, there is much public discourse in Ireland as to whether or not parents are choosing to have their child baptised as a means to an end, the end being to secure a place for the child in a denominational school. Enrolment policies in some such schools use the family faith profile as a criteria for admission if the school is over-subscribed. Presently schools under denominational patronage are in majority in Ireland. The data available in this study allows an examination of this sensitive issue. The approach taken was that of conducting a one way ANOVA test on the levels of parental religious belief and practice (low, medium and high) with the variable 'Respondent sought to secure a school place for his / her child (attitude)'. Results indicated that there was a highly statistically significant effect, $F(2, 527) = 45.42, p = .000$.

Table 5.2.4

ANOVA Comparison of Levels of Parental Religious Belief and Practice and the variable 'Respondent sought to secure a school place for his / her child'

Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i> value
Between	83.19	2	41.60	45.42	.000
Within	482.63	527	0.92		
Total	565.82	529			

Further analysis indicated sharp differences between the mean scores of parental respondents with low ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.14$), medium ($M = 1.82$, $SD = 0.91$) and high ($M = 1.59$, $SD = 0.95$) levels of religious belief and practice. The result of this confirms the level of parental religious belief and practice as a differentiating criteria for these respondents in seeking a school place for their child at the time of baptism. This is an important contribution to current public discourse. Future research should further investigate not only the frequency of the school enrolment intention for baptism but also the reason that parents exhibiting different levels of religious belief and practice wish such enrolment for their child.

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This research study set out to empirically investigate the educational intentions influencing parental selection of godparents in contemporary Ireland. Following the construction of an original online research instrument, the 695 responses were analysed using the statistical software package PSPP, an open source package that is fully compatible with SPSS. The results were outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis. In this final chapter, the key results are discussed, implications of the findings expounded and recommendations for future research given.

6.1 Key findings of this research study

This research aimed to empirically study the educational intentions influencing parental selection of godparents in Ireland. The results of data analysis reported in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis are synthesised here in the form of key findings. Discussion follows based on the data and informed by the literature.

6.1.1 Kinship plays a role in the parental selection of godparents

The data showed that 60% of godfathers upon whom information was provided in this study were brothers of the parental respondents or the parental respondents' spouses. The corresponding figure for godmothers was 63%. This shows a strong level of kinship by both consanguinity and affinity in the parental selection of godparents in the Irish context.

The contribution of this finding to the existing literature on kinship and godparenthood is featured later in this chapter.

6.1.2 Parents select godparents based on two criteria: (i) the perceived faith of the godparent and (ii) the godparent's competency to be a deputy parent to the child

In selecting both godfathers and godmothers, the parents who participated in this research study indicated two main factors that influenced their decisions: (i) the perceived importance of faith to the godparent and (ii) the perceived competency of the godparent to act as a deputy parent. The parental selection criteria that reflected the perceived importance of faith to the godparent were the three attitudinal variables:

- How important was it that the [godfather / godmother] could talk about faith with confidence?

- How important was it that the [godfather / godmother] had deep religious faith?
- How important was it that the [godfather / godmother] was committed to forming the child in the respondent's faith tradition?

The strong Pearson Correlation Coefficient ($r = .81$) between the two scales constructed from these items (Godfather Selection Criteria Faith Scale and Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale) indicates that parental respondents who highly rated the perceived faith of godfathers at the time of selection also did so in relation to godmothers.

The parental selection criteria that reflected the perceived competency of the godparent as deputy parent were the five attitudinal variables:

- How important was it that the [godfather / godmother] could look after the child in an emergency?
- How important was it that the [godfather / godmother] had similar values to the respondent?
- How important was it that the [godfather / godmother] lived nearby?
- How important was it that the [godfather / godmother] was committed to the child's overall education and moral development?
- How important was it that the [godfather / godmother] was of the same socio-economic status as the respondent?

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient of $r = .63$ between the two scales constructed from these items (Godfather Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale and Godmother Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale) showed a medium to strong level of association. This indicates that parental respondents who rated the competency of the godfather as deputy parent also did so in relation to the godmother. However, this was a weaker level of association than in relation to the selection criteria based on the perceived faith of the godparents.

It is worth recalling at this point that there were slight differences in the factor loadings of these attitudinal variables between those relating to godfathers and those relating to godmothers. As explained in Chapter 5, for the purposes of cross-comparison between selection criteria for godfathers and godmothers, and supported by high Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ($\alpha = .71$ and $\alpha = .93$ respectively), the same component items for both scales were retained. Nonetheless, the data indicates that while parental respondents use the same selection criteria (faith and deputy parent), there is a difference in how they view the competency of godfathers and godmothers to be deputy parents. This gender difference also emerges in the next finding.

6.1.3 Female parental respondents rate the selection criteria of godmothers higher than the selection criteria of godfathers

Independent sample-t tests on the Godmother Selection Criteria Faith Scale suggest potential differences according to the gender of the parental respondent although these did not reach statistical significance. The mean score for male parental respondents was 2.21 and the corresponding score for female parental respondents was 2.45. There were, however, significant differences in relation to the Godmother Selection Criteria Deputy Parent Scale. In this case, the mean score for male parental respondents was 2.40 while it was 2.62 for female respondents. Both results showed a different pattern to the respondents' rating of selection criteria for godfathers.

The data suggests that female parental respondents indicated a greater level of importance placed on the selection criteria for godmothers than they did for godfathers. This reflects a number of significant results on individual items as reported upon in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

There was a significantly higher percentage of female parental respondents solely selecting the godmothers: 33% of female parental respondents in comparison to 8% of male parental respondents, $\chi^2(4, N=695) = 63.84, p = .000$.

67% of female respondents considered choosing this person as godmother to be of great importance. The corresponding percentage for male respondents was significantly lower at 49%, $\chi^2(3, N=689) = 26.31, p = .000$.

Female parental respondents presented with more positive perceptions of the godmother's belief in God at the time of the child's baptism. Only 17% of female parental respondents disagreed with this statement in comparison to 30% of male parental respondents, $\chi^2(3, N=651) = 11.06, p = .011$.

This and the previous finding both suggest notable differences in the parental perception of godfathers and godmothers, as well as the influence of gender on the selection process conducted by the parental respondent. It further features in the next finding.

6.1.4 There were differences between male and female parental respondents in their levels of religious belief and practice at the time of their child's baptism that impacted upon their intentions for baptism and selection criteria for godparents

An independent samples-t test of the Parental Religious Belief and Practice Scale according to the gender of the parental respondent showed a slight difference in the mean scores for male ($M = 2.81$) and female respondents ($M = 2.91$). Though not statistically significant, these scores reflect differences in individual items reported on in Chapter 4 of this thesis that were statistically significant. In alignment with the conceptual model generated from this research, these individual and statistically significant differences in parental religious belief and practice may explain the differences in the intentions for baptism and selection criteria for godparents between male and female parental respondents.

17% of male parental respondents strongly disagreed that they believed in God at the time of their child's baptism. This was significantly higher than the corresponding percentage of females (6%), $\chi^2(3, N=674) = 14.43, p = .002$.

14% of male parental respondents indicated that they strongly disagreed that they felt a sense of belonging to a faith community at the time of their child's baptism. This was significantly higher than the corresponding percentage of females (9%), $\chi^2(3, N = 674) = 10.41, p = .015$.

18% of male parental respondents indicated that they strongly disagreed that they practised according to religious tradition at the time of their child's baptism. This was higher than the corresponding percentage of females (11%) although not statistically significant. However, together these three results show a pattern of higher percentages of male parental respondents who strongly disagreed with the three aspects of parental religious belief and practice. This may explain the lower percentages of male parental respondents in comparison to female parental respondents in their rating of the intentions for baptism and the selection criteria of godparents, when using the conceptual model generated by this study.

6.1.5 Between parents of different age groups, there were differences in their levels of religious belief and practice at the time of their child's baptism that impacted upon their intentions for baptism and selection criteria for godparents

The results of this analysis provides empirical evidence that affirms that older parental respondents displayed higher levels of godparent selection criteria based on faith as well as on being a deputy parent. Congruent with the emergent model of potential factors influencing parental selection of godparents, this older age group also displayed higher faith-based and family celebration intentions for baptism that, in turn, reflected their higher levels of parental belief and practice.

However, this research showed that there was not a straightforward linear pattern of decline in the perceived role of the godparent in accordance with the younger age of the parental respondent. The youngest age group of parental respondents, those aged under 35 at the time of completing the survey, in fact presented with higher levels of godparent selection criteria, baptismal intentions based on faith and family celebration and parental religious belief and practice than the parental respondents aged between 36 and 45. This latter age group, culturally labelled ‘The Pope’s Children’, displayed lower levels across all the scales in this analysis. This raises two important issues that are recommended for further investigation:

- a) What factors influenced the ‘Between 36 and 45s’ to present with lower levels across these scales in comparison to both their younger and older counterparts?
- b) What factors contributed to the apparent resurgence in parental levels of religious belief and practice, baptismal intentions and godparent selection criteria in the parental respondents aged under 35 at the time of completing the survey?

The parental respondents in the Between 36 and 45 age group at the time of completing this survey were born between the years 1970 and 1980. Consequently it can be assumed that this age group participated in formal education from approximately 1974 to at least 1992. This group would have engaged with the 1971 Primary School Curriculum. It was during the formal education years of this age group that the Department of Education called upon the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment to review the 1971 Primary School Curriculum. This process culminated in the 1999 Primary School Curriculum, with which the younger parental respondents to this survey engaged.

When the parental respondents aged Between 36 and 45 at the time of the survey were at post-primary level education, similar reviews and reforms were underway. The younger parental age group would have been amongst the first to avail of such initiatives as the Leaving

Certificate Applied, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and a broadening of the Transition Year Programme.

(For more details, see the Department of Education and Skills. 1995. *White Paper on Education*. This is available online at <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Charting-Our-Education-Future-White-Paper-On-Education-Launch-Copy-1995-.pdf> [last accessed 20 May 2016])

The different circumstances of the formal education between the two parental age groups may be a contributing factor to how they presented differently according to the factors influencing their educational intentions at the time of their child's baptism and the subsequent selection of godparents. To investigate this possibility, it may be of benefit in a future replication of this study to include variables relating to the education of the parental respondents.

From a social, cultural and economic perspective, the parental respondents aged 'Between 36 and 45' at the time of completing the survey would have, in the formative years of their youth, experienced a different Ireland to that of the younger parental respondents. Whereas the older age group grew up in a time of economic difficulty with higher levels of emigration and lower levels of employment, the younger age group would have benefitted from the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' years with increased State investment across many sectors. It is possible that the parents aged 'Between 36 and 45' were beginning to raise children at the time when Ireland's economy nosedived into another recession post-2007.

The economic struggles that the older age group endured at the formative times of their own education and the early education of their children may have had an impact on both their attitudes towards the issues featured in this research and the educational opportunities available to them at that time. It is also recommended that a future replication of this study

include additional variables to explore the socio-economic and cultural background of the parental respondents.

From the time of the publication of the Ferns Report in 1995, there followed a stream of reports outlining the scandals that occurred within the Catholic Church in Ireland. The older parental age group would have experienced the media commentary and the devastation that ensued from these scandals in a different way than the younger parental age group. There has been speculation that such scandals caused many Irish people to distance themselves from the institutional Catholic Church (Donnelly, 2000). This may have impacted upon how parents rated their faith-based intentions for baptism and faith-based selection criteria for godparents.

Another possible explanation for the difference between these two age groups is the space in which they were at the time of completing the survey. The older the parent, the more hindsight may contribute to how they responded to the questions in this survey. A parent whose child is already in formal education may have engaged with issues such as securing a school place in such a way that a parent of an infant may not. Similarly, such parents of older children may have drawn upon experiences of how the godparents they selected actually related with the children in the years after baptism when responding to questions about those godparents.

Investigation of all these issues could be the basis of fruitful and insightful research in the future.

6.1.6 There is a discrepancy between the educational intentions of the parent when selecting godparents and the perceived efficacy of the godparents in carrying out their role

As evidenced in this analysis, whilst the parental respondents considered it important to choose these particular godparents, and made that decision with educational intent, the majority did not perceive that the godparents actually played a significant role in the education and faith formation of the child. While 52% of parental respondents indicated that the godfather was in regular contact with the child, only 26% reported that they perceived the godfather has having played a significant role in the education and faith formation of the child. 70% of parental respondents indicated the godmother was in regular contact with the child. Nonetheless only 43% felt that the godmother had played a significant role in the child's education and faith formation.

The reason(s) for this discrepancy (between the parental intentions at baptism as evident in their selection criteria of godparents and the subsequent fulfilment of those expectations by godparents) warrants investigation.

It must be noted that 71% of the children in this sample were under the age of 15 at the time the parental respondents completed the survey. Consequently, it is possible that the parental respondents viewed the godparent's role in their child's education and faith formation as still ongoing and responded accordingly.

If this is not the reason for the discrepancy, then the data suggests the need for interventions to be put in place and resources made available to support the educational relationships resultant from the parental selection of godparents.

6.2 Contribution of this study to existing corpus of literature

In this section, the researcher outlines how the findings of this study relate to the existing literature as reviewed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Commentary follows the same sequence as that which featured in Chapter 2.

6.2.1 Godparenthood as an etymological lens through which to study the intersectionality of faith, education and society

The discourse on lexical clarification, as called for by Alfani and Gourdon (2012) at the outset of the literature review of this thesis informed the researcher of the different terminology used by researchers in various disciplines, all focussed in some way on the phenomenon of godparenthood. Whilst this study did not explicitly set out to identify the most appropriate terminology for the Irish context, the identification of the factors influencing parental selection of godparents contributes to an understanding of whether the existing terminology in the literature reflects the current Irish context. Specifically the identification of selection criteria for godparents based on faith is congruent with the faith element (i.e. the terms ‘god’ or ‘spiritual’) of the terminology in the literature. Similarly the identification of selection criteria for godparents based on being a deputy parent also aligns with the use of the terms ‘co-parent’ and ‘compadre’ in the literature. This empirical research affirms the term ‘godparent’ as reflecting the views of the parental respondents who participated in the study.

The anthropological and sociological literature was founded in the study of kinship, in particular the three types – consanguinity, affinity and spiritual kinship. This research study found that alongside the selection criteria for godparents based on faith and on being a deputy parent, parental respondents in this study further indicated the importance that the godparent was a family member, affirming the relevance of kinship in godparenthood. 34% of parental

respondents stated that the godfather was their brother and 44% stated that the godmother was their sister. This attests to the relevance of consanguine kinship to godparent selection in this sample. A further 26% of respondents stated that the godfather was their spouse's brother and 19% indicated that the godmother was their spouse's sister. This is kinship by affinity. When the figures are combined, 60% of godfathers reported upon in this study were the brothers of the parent of the baptised child, and the corresponding figure for godmothers being sisters of the parent was 63%. The 'intensification' of existing links appears in this dataset to supersede the 'extensification' of existing links as explored by anthropologists Mintz and Wolf in 1950, with the majority of parental respondents selecting godparents already within the family network as opposed to outside of it. However, the findings of this study do not corroborate with Mintz and Wolf's third form of kinship i.e. spiritual kinship. This form of kinship focused on the ongoing new relationship between godparent and godchild brought about by the sacrament of baptism. The low percentages of parental respondents that indicated a regular level of contact between godparent and godchild, and the even lower percentages in relation to the parental perception that the godparent has played a significant role in the education and faith formation of the child suggest that spiritual kinship was less evident in this sample than kinship by consanguinity or affinity.

Two terms used in this research study emerged as being in need of similar lexical clarification ahead of future studies in this area. These were 'values' and 'celebration'. The importance of clarity in the contextual definition of these terms did not feature in the existing literature review and the researcher recommends that they be given due attention in further studies. Both terms are ambiguous in that they can carry a faith-based perspective and a secular perspective. For example, the findings of this study showed the high level of importance to parental respondents that the godparent have similar values to the respondent. However, the data also showed a variety in the levels of parental religious belief and practice as well as the parental

respondents' ranking of godparents' attributes and characteristics that pertain to religious belief and practice. 'Values' is a complex and contextually-based term. In order to optimally understand and represent the perspectives of parents, it is advisable in future research in this area to clarify their definition of 'values', especially if it is faith-based or otherwise. In a similar way, the term 'celebration' can have both faith-based and secular connotations. In this study, the two factors influencing parental intentions for baptism were identified as faith-based and family celebration-based. This is not to say that the family celebration intentions were devoid of a faith perspective, but the converse is equally not assumable. In order to optimally understand and represent the perspective of parents, it is also advisable in future research to clarify the definition of 'celebration', especially in terms of its faith / secular basis.

Viewed through an etymological lens, this study on godparenthood has affirmed that there are aspects to the phenomenon that are faith-based, others that have an education foundation, and some that are rooted in the societal norms of contemporary society. In other words, there are intersections in godparenthood between the realms of faith, education and society.

6.2.2 Godparenthood as a faith tradition and practice

In the literature review, the eligibility of godparents according to Canon Law was outlined. The findings of this study showed a varied practice in terms of adhering to Canon Law in this respect. Whereas Canon Law states that if there are two godparents, one must be male and the other female, there were instances in this sample that deviated from this norm.

Additionally, given the discrepancy between the educational intentions of the parental respondents and their perception of the role played by the godparent, it may be worthwhile in future research to examine how the canonical impediments may relate to the impingement of the educational potential of the godparent-godchild relationship. It could be that the best candidates to fulfil the educational intentions of the parents at the time of baptism are currently prevented from undertaking the role of godparent under Canon Law.

The parents in this study perceived that only 74% of godfathers and 80% of godmothers even believed in God at the time of the child's baptism. It is also noted that in ranking the characteristics and attributes of godparents, the percentage of parental respondents rating the characteristics and attributes explicitly relating to faith dropped sharply in comparison to the characteristics and attributes that did not explicitly mention faith. These findings, in addition to the aforementioned low percentages of parental respondents indicating that they perceived the godparents playing a significant role in the education and faith formation of the child suggests that the dimension of godparenthood as a faith tradition and practice is in a state of flux. This warrants further research.

6.2.3 The godparent as an agent in education

The findings of this study complement the theory of education as relationship as explored in the Literature Review of this thesis. In recognising the godparent as a party in the wider educational network that involves parents, child and the minister, the parental selection of the godparent can be seen as an educational act on the part of the parent. It affirms the parent as primary educator of the child as the parent initiates a new relationship for the child, and, in so doing, forging new possible avenues for the child to grow into ‘the potential space’ as described by Buber and creating new opportunities to navigate the ‘fusion of horizons’ as described by Gadamer.

The characteristics and attributes of the godparents as rated by the parental respondents in this study reflect the complex role of the godparent. This role includes character-building, moral formation, transmission of knowledge, transmission of religious heritage and a commitment to the child. These can be seen as educational characteristics and attributes.

This study, however, showed that there is a discrepancy in how godparents actually fulfil this complex role from the perspective of the parental respondents. The findings of this study intimate that a deeper inspection of the role (both intended and actualised) of the godparent be explored from more perspectives i.e the godparent, godchild, ministers. It may be the case that the godparent – godchild relationship could be enriched if greater support and resources were made available to the godparent. It is recommended that further investigation be undertaken to ascertain what resources and support godparents require in order to assist them to fulfil the educational intentions that influenced their selection by the parents. In so doing, this study moves on from viewing the godparent as an agent in education, and highlights the perspective of the godparent as an object of education. This could be a new area of research that would contribute to the current corpus of literature.

6.2.4 Godparenthood and Social Capital Theory

The bulk of the literature on godparenthood that was reviewed in Chapter 2 originated from anthropological and sociological studies that showed how godparenthood practices influenced the growth of social networks and impacted upon economic ties and social mobility. This research has brought an Irish perspective to these phenomena and does so from an educational viewpoint.

A key contribution of this doctoral thesis is the empirical findings relating to parents choosing to have their child baptised (and consequently requiring godparents) in order to secure a school place for their child. While 14% of parental respondents with high levels of parental religious belief and practice agreed that they sought to secure a school place for their child, the corresponding figure of 67% for parental respondents with low levels of religious belief and practice is a striking statistic. This finding will very important in informing the public debate on school admissions policies and the relationship between religion and education in contemporary Ireland.

The expansion of studies deriving from Social Capital Theory into areas related to religion have thus far included research into Congregational Social Capital (e.g. Francis and Lankshear 2015) and Associational Social Capital (Muskett 2016). This doctoral study shows how godparenthood also contributes to Social Capital Theory through its intersections with faith, religious heritage, education and society. In particular, the model of potential factors influencing parental selection of godparents that was generated by this research study is a significant contribution to Social Capital Theory.

6.2.5 Religiosity inheritance: Gender and the context of family

Analysis showed that there was a strong correlation between the levels of parental religious belief and practice and their subsequent intentions for baptism and selection criteria for godparents. This reflects the findings of Myers (1996) that asserted that adult religiosity was mostly determined by parental religiosity, however further longitudinal research on the children in this data set would be required in order to affirm or reject Myers' findings if applied to godparents.

The findings of this study also showed different levels of contact between godfather and godchild in comparison to godmother and godchild. This relates to the literature in two ways. Based on Iannaccone's (1990) claim that parent-child relations are a factor in the transmission of family religious heritage, this researcher proposes that the findings of this study encourage the future investigation of the influence of godparent-child relations on the religiosity of the offspring.

The difference in contact levels between godfathers and godmothers also raises the issue of gender difference in religiosity inheritance. This difference relates to firstly, the parental respondents, and secondly, the gender of the godparent. The findings of this study include a number of statistically significant areas where female parental respondents provided data differently to male parental respondents. The same applies to perceptions of godfathers being different in some areas to the perceptions of godmothers.

6.3 Instrumentation

This research study has resulted in the construction of an original instrument aimed at parents. As such, it is a response to the earlier instrument used by Alfani, Gourdon and Vitali (2012) who recommended that parents be the target population instead of baptisands and may be seen as complementary to their earlier work.

This study has also resulted in the construction of seven Likert Scales each with strong levels of internal reliability and validity.

The researcher welcomes further investigations that could be conducted using the instrumentation that was generated by this study.

6.4 Recommendations for future research

6.4.1 Replication of this research study to obtain equal proportions of male and female parental respondents

This research study set out to explore the educational intentions influencing the parental selection of godparents. The sample of this study was parents who chose to have their child baptised. However, there was a much greater proportion of female parental respondents in comparison to male parental respondents. It is recommended that this research study be replicated in conditions that will control for parental gender, resulting in more equal numbers of male and female parental respondents.

6.4.2 Modification of this research instrument to investigate godparenthood from other perspectives

The godchild

The voice of the godchild may provide an insightful perspective on godparenthood in contemporary Ireland. By modifying this research instrument, and engaging with godchildren (of all ages), the changing nature of the relationship between godchild and godparent could be investigated. It would be interesting to learn how this relationship evolves as both the godchild and godparent age and gain life experience.

The godparent

Similarly, the voice of the godparent may provide insights into how godparents view their role, how they carry it out and what interventions could be put in place to enable them to fulfil their duties more optimally. Following from this research, where some findings suggest that parents view godfathers differently from godmothers, it would be interesting to explore how

godfathers and godmothers perceive themselves and each other. It is recommended that some research be conducted with godparents (of all ages) to achieve a greater overview of the phenomenon of godparenthood in contemporary Ireland. This could be initiated through a modified version of this research instrument to be targeted at godparents.

The clergy

This research has shown that there are stipulations in Roman Catholic Canon Law on the qualifications, eligibility and responsibilities of godparents. It has also shown that practice sometimes deviates from these prescribed norms. It may be of benefit to ministers to have clear guidelines on the assignation and duties of godparents as they accompany parents in the preparation for their child's baptism. It is recommended that research be undertaken with clergy to gain their perspective on the role of the godparent in contemporary Ireland. This research could be based on a modification of this research instrument.

Parents who did not choose to have their child baptised

During this study, the researcher was contacted by people who opted for naming ceremonies rather than the sacrament of baptism. These people assigned significant adults to their children and in the absence of a suitable alternative name, they frequently named these adults 'godparents'. It is understood therefore by the researcher that some parents want to select a significant adult for their child with similar educational intentions, but outside that of the parameters of the sacrament of baptism. These parents' educational intentions for their children should not only be honoured, but also empirically explored. Therefore, it is recommended that a modified version of this research instrument be offered to parents who chose not to have their child baptised but who selected significant adults to fulfil the role that in other circumstances is called 'godparent'.

6.4.3 Developing Adult Religious Education opportunities for godparents

This study found that there was a discrepancy between the educational intentions of the parent at the time of the child's baptism and their perception of how the selected godparents fulfilled these expectations in their role.

At present, there is little formal preparation or ongoing support for godparents in their role. In some parishes, baptismal preparation programmes require the involvement of godparents. It is recommended that current practice, including the content of any existing baptismal preparation programmes, be evaluated to ascertain the opportunities for development of appropriate educational opportunities for godparents that would assist them in fulfilling the expectations of the parents. *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* affirms the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference's ambition to address this issue. It states that "parents, guardians, grandparents, godparents and sponsors, and all family members, [be encouraged] in their primary responsibility of sharing faith in the home with the coming generations" (SGN 4).

6.4.4 Developing Intergenerational Religious Education opportunities for godparents, parents and godchildren

Understanding education as relational and dialogical, godparenthood affords the godparent, godchild and parent with the opportunity of lifelong and intergenerational learning. Using the analogy of teacher and student, the teacher learns from the student just as much as the student can learn from the teacher. Similarly, the godparent, parent and godchild can learn from and teach each other in this unique educational relationship.

It is recommended that research be undertaken to identify the educational needs of the parties to this relationship, as they grow older and their context changes. It is also recommended that researchers explore how such needs could be best addressed and supported through the development of quality intergenerational religious education programmes with appropriate support and resources

6.4.5 Further research using the model of potential factors influencing parental selection of godparents

A significant contribution of this research study to the wider research community has been the construction of a statistically robust model of the potential factors influencing parental selection of godparents. Building from the initial conceptual framework, this model depicts the positive correlations between parental belief and religiosity, parental intentions for baptism (faith-based and family-celebration-based) and the selection criteria for godfathers and godmothers (faith-based and deputy-parent based). This model containing seven newly-constructed Likert scales is illustrated in Figure 6.1.

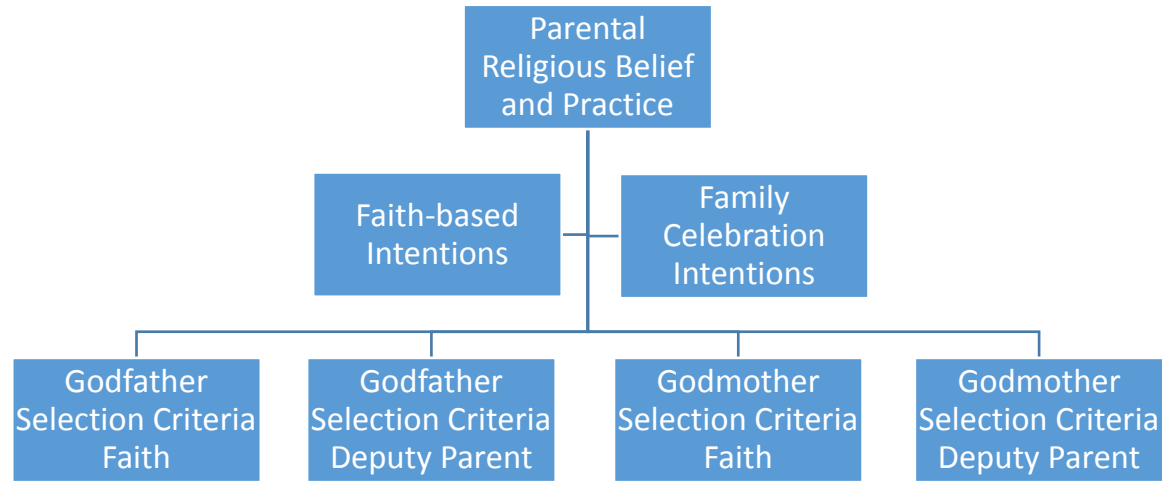


Figure 6.1 Model of factors influencing parental selection of godparents

Researchers, using this model as their conceptual framework, to investigate other contexts and cultures may significantly contribute to a variety of fields, disciplines and research communities.

6.5 Conclusion

This research set out to empirically study the educational intentions influencing parental selection of godparents in contemporary Ireland.

A reliable model was constructed that identifies the potential factors influencing parental selection of godparents. This model shows the relationship between the selection criteria of godparents, the parental intentions for baptism and parental religious belief and practice at the time of the child's baptism.

This study has contributed to public discourse particularly in relation to the findings regarding parents securing a school place for their child and the parental perceptions of the role played by godparents in the overall education and faith formation of their children.

Finally, this research study has contributed to the field of education, and religious education in particular, by empirically studying an area that has heretofore being under-researched in the Irish context and by also offering recommendations for future research in this and related areas.

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APPENDIX A

This appendix contains the research instrument and the material that preceded and informed it:

- I. Research Instrument employed by Alfani, Gourdon, and Vitali. 2012
- II. Pilot Study conducted by this researcher in 2013
- III. Research instrument for this thesis

I. Research Instrument employed by Alfani, Gourdon, and Vitali. 2012

Source: Alfani, G., Gourdon, V., and Vitali, A. 2012. Social Customs and Demographic Change: The Case of Godparenthood in Catholic Europe. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 51(3), pp. 482 – 504

SURVEY ON GODPARENTHOOD/ GODMOTHERHOOD

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

- 1- YEAR and PLACE OF BIRTH (town and county):
- 2- ARE YOU BAPTIZED? ☐ YES ☐ NO (if yes but with a rite different from catholic, specify)
- 3- PLACE OF BAPTISM (IF DIFFERENT FROM PLACE OF BIRTH)
- 4- GENDER ☐ M ☐ F

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR FAMILY AT THE TIME OF YOUR BAPTISM:

- 5- DID YOU HAVE UNCLES AND AUNTS (EVEN IN-LAW) STILL ALIVE AT THE TIME OF BAPTISM?
Specify the number of:
PATERNAL UNCLES: PATERNAL AUNTS:
MATERNAL UNCLES: MATERNAL AUNTS:
(paternal uncles and aunts= brothers and sisters of your father, and their wives/husbands; maternal uncles and aunts = the same, but regarding your mother)
- 5- DID YOU HAVE GRANDPARENTS STILL ALIVE AT THE TIME OF BAPTISM? (specify)
GRANDFATHER (FATHER'S SIDE): ☐ YES ☐ NO GRANDMOTHER (FATHER'S SIDE): ☐ YES ☐ NO
GRANDFATHER (MOTHER'S SIDE): ☐ YES ☐ NO GRANDMOTHER (MOTHER'S SIDE): ☐ YES ☐ NO
- 6- DO YOU HAVE BROTHERS AND SISTERS? (specify the number)
OLDER BROTHERS: OLDER SISTERS:
YOUNGER BROTHERS:..... YOUNGER SISTERS:

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR GODPARENTS

- 7- DID YOU RECEIVE A GODFATHER?: ☐ YES ☐ NO AND A GODMOTHER?: ☐ YES ☐ NO
- 8- WERE YOUR GODPARENTS ALSO RELATIONS? GODFATHER: ☐ YES ☐ NO GODMOTHER: ☐ YES ☐ NO
- 8b – IF YES, OF WHICH KIND? (mark with a cross)
- | | |
|--|---|
| GODFATHER: | GODMOTHER: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paternal uncle (brother of your father) | <input type="checkbox"/> Paternal aunt (sister of your father) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In-law paternal uncle (husband of your father's sister) | <input type="checkbox"/> In-law paternal aunt (wife of your father's brother) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maternal uncle (brother of your mother) | <input type="checkbox"/> Maternal aunt (sister of your mother) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In-law maternal uncle (husband of your mother's sister) | <input type="checkbox"/> In-law maternal aunt (wife of your mother's brother) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paternal grandfather | <input type="checkbox"/> Paternal grandmother |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maternal grandfather | <input type="checkbox"/> Maternal grandmother |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Older brother | <input type="checkbox"/> Older sister |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cousin | <input type="checkbox"/> Cousin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) |
- 9- DO YOU HAVE BROTHERS OR SISTER THAT RECEIVED RELATIONS AS GODPARENTS? IF YES, SPECIFY FOR ALL OF THEM:
Older brothers:.....
Older sisters:
Younger brothers:.....
Younger sisters:.....
- 10- IF YOUR GODPARENTS WERE NOT RELATIONS, THEY WERE:
- | | |
|--|--|
| GODFATHER: | GODMOTHER: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> colleague of your father | <input type="checkbox"/> colleague of your father |
| <input type="checkbox"/> colleague of your mother | <input type="checkbox"/> colleague of your mother |
| <input type="checkbox"/> neighbour | <input type="checkbox"/> neighbour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> friend of your father | <input type="checkbox"/> friend of your father |
| <input type="checkbox"/> friend of your mother | <input type="checkbox"/> friend of your mother |
| <input type="checkbox"/> employer or boss of your father | <input type="checkbox"/> employer or boss of your father |
| <input type="checkbox"/> employer or boss of your mother | <input type="checkbox"/> employer or boss of your mother |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |
- 11- DO YOU SEE REGULARLY YOUR: GODFATHER ☐ YES ☐ NO GODMOTHER ☐ YES ☐ NO
- 12- DO YOU RECEIVE REGULAR GIFTS (FOR EX. AT CHRISTMAS) FROM: GODF. ☐ YES ☐ NO GODM. ☐ YES ☐ NO
- 13- DID YOUR PARENTS ORGANIZE A PARTY FOR YOUR BAPTISM? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Research Instrument on Godparenthood

Pilot Study conducted by this researcher in 2013.

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

Pilot Survey on Godparenthood

The following information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time.

The purpose of this study is to discover the significant factors in the selection of godparents by parents who have requested the Sacrament of Baptism for their children in contemporary Ireland. This a pilot survey. Based on the feedback and responses received, a refined nationwide survey will be constructed.

Data will be collected through the completion of the attached questionnaire. Do not hesitate to ask questions about the study before participating or during the study. I would be happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed.

There are no known risks and / or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation are the contribution to the construction of a nationwide survey and the relating of information on godparenthood practice in Ireland which has not been researched to date.

Bernadette Sweetman, EdD Student, DCU

bernadette.sweetman@dcu.ie

Mobile : 087 9480828

PILOT SURVEY ON GODPARENTHOOD

The purpose of this questionnaire is to assist in designing a larger nationwide survey on godparenthood in Ireland. This questionnaire is aimed for parents / guardians in respect of any children they have presented for baptism. In completing this survey, you confirm that you have read and understood the attached plain language statement.

1. **What age is your child?** _____
2. **What is your relationship to the baptised child?** Mother ____ Father ____
3. **What is the birth order of your child?** _____
(i.e.. this is your first child, third child etc.?)
4. **At what age was your child baptised?**
____ less than three months
____ three to six months
____ six to twelve months
____ one year or older
5. **At the time of your child's baptism, which of the following best describe your faith and religious practice?** (please tick all that apply)
Part of everyday life _____ Non-practising _____
Religious _____ Spiritual _____
Prays regularly _____ Attends weekly mass _____
Attends only special liturgies (e.g. Christmas) _____
Other (*please specify*) _____
6. (a) **How many godfathers has your child?** _____
(b) **How many godmothers has your child?** _____
7. (a) **At the time of your child's baptism, which of the following best describe your understanding of your child's godfather's faith and religious practice?**
Part of everyday life _____ Non-practising _____
Religious _____ Spiritual _____
Prays regularly _____ Attends weekly mass _____
Attends only special liturgies (e.g. Christmas) _____
Other (*please specify*) _____

- (b) **At the time of your child's baptism, which of the following best describe your understanding of your child's *godmother's* faith and religious practice?**

Part of everyday life _____ Non-practising _____

Religious _____ Spiritual _____

Prays regularly _____ Attends weekly mass _____

Attends only special liturgies (e.g. Christmas) _____

Other (*please specify*) _____

8. **What is your relationship to your child's *godfather*? (i.e. "he is my....")**

Sibling _____

Parent _____

Child _____

Other relation (please specify) _____

Work colleague _____

Friend _____

Other (please specify) _____

9. **What is your relationship to your child's *godmother*? (i.e. "she is my....")**

Sibling _____

Parent _____

Child _____

Other relation (please specify) _____

Work colleague _____

Friend _____

Other (please specify) _____

10. **At the time of your child's baptism**, please rate the following characteristics of the godparents you selected in terms of how these influenced your choice of candidate:

	Of great importance	Of medium importance	Of little importance	Of no importance	Not relevant
Could provide for my child in case of emergency					
Has good rapport with children					
Has deep religious faith					
Is dedicated to educating my child in our faith tradition					
Is a family member					
Is a work colleague					
Is financially stable					
Lives nearby					
Other reason (<i>please specify here</i>)					

THANK YOU.

FEEL FREE TO PROVIDE ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON ANY ASPECT OF THIS SURVEY.

Survey on Irish Godparenthood

This survey is part of a doctoral research project exploring the nature of godparenthood both in Ireland and by Irish-born parents living elsewhere. It is designed to be filled in by ONE PARENT at a time. The parent (respondent) is encouraged to fill in this survey alone without consulting his / her spouse, and to answer the questions in relation to ONE CHILD only. You and / or your spouse are welcome to return to this survey and complete it again about another one of your children, if you wish.

Please read the plain language statement to learn more about how the data from this survey will be used, and to help you decide if you are happy to participate. Thank you.

***Required**

1. **Are you ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ male?
- ☐ female?

Section One - You

The questions in this section tell me a little about you and your background

2. **Were you baptized? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not know / I cannot recall

3. **What age are you NOW? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Under 25
- ☐ Between 26 and 35
- ☐ Between 36 and 45
- ☐ Between 46 and 55
- ☐ Over 55

4. **In what country were you born? ***

.....

5. **In what country do you now live? ***

.....

6. **How many brothers do you have? ***

Please include any brothers who are now deceased

.....

7. **How many sisters do you have? ***

Please include any sisters who are now deceased

.....

8. **What age were you when your child was baptized? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Under 25
- ☐ Between 26 and 35
- ☐ Between 36 and 45
- ☐ Between 46 and 55
- ☐ Over 55

9. **What was your relationship status at the time of your child's baptism? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Co-habiting
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Single
- ☐ Other

10. **What was your religious affiliation at the time of your child's baptism? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Church of Ireland (Anglican)
- ☐ Orthodox Christian
- ☐ Other Christian
- ☐ Other Non-Christian Religion
- ☐ Roman Catholic
- ☐ No religious faith

11. **Was your spouse of the same religious affiliation as yourself? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not know / I do not recall

Please respond to the following statements

12. **At the time of my child's baptism, I believed in God ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

13. **At the time of my child's baptism, I felt I belonged to my religious denomination's community ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

14. **At the time of my child's baptism, I practised according to my religious tradition ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

Section Two - Your child

The questions in this section are about your child

15. **Is your child ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ male?
- ☐ female?

16. **What age is your child NOW? ***

.....

17. **How many older brothers has your child?**

*

.....

18. How many older sisters has your child? *

.....

19. How many younger sisters has your child? *

.....

20. How many younger brothers has your child? *

.....

21. What is the birth order of your child? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This is my first child
- ☐ This is my second child
- ☐ This is my third child
- ☐ This is my fourth child
- ☐ This is my fifth child
- ☐ Other:

22. What age was your child when he / she was baptized? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Less than 3 months
- ☐ Between 3 months and 6 months
- ☐ Between 6 months and one year
- ☐ One year or older
- ☐ I do not know / I do not recall

Please think back to the time when you were planning your child's baptism and respond to the following statements

23. I really wanted my child to be baptized *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

24. My family really wanted my child to be baptized *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

25. My spouse really wanted my child to be baptized *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

26. I wanted to celebrate the birth of my child *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

27. I wanted to cleanse my child from original sin *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

28. I wanted to secure a school place for my child *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

29. I wanted to enter my child into my faith tradition *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

30. I wanted to enter my child into my spouse's faith tradition *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

31. I wanted to fulfil my duty as a parent *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

32. I wanted to give my child the opportunity of a faith-filled life *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

33. I wanted to thank God for my child *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

34. **Into what religious affiliation was your child baptized? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Church of Ireland (Anglican)
- ☐ Orthodox Christian
- ☐ Other Christian
- ☐ Other Non-Christian Faith
- ☐ Roman Catholic
- ☐ No religious faith

Section Three - Your child's godfather

The questions in this section tell me about your child's godfather. If your child has more than one godfather, please respond to the more detailed questions about one godfather only.

35. **How many godfathers has your child? ***

.....

36. **Is your child's godfather also the godfather of another of your children? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not know / I do not recall

37. **Who chose this person to be your child's godfather? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I chose the godfather
- ☐ My spouse chose the godfather
- ☐ I and my spouse jointly chose the godfather
- ☐ My child chose the godfather
- ☐ The person in question asked to be my child's godfather
- ☐ I do not know / I do not recall
- ☐ Other:

38. **How important was it to choose this particular person as your child's godfather? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

39. **Please respond to the following: At the time of the baptism, I understood that my child's godfather believed in God ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

40. **What was the religious affiliation of your child's godfather at the time of baptism? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Church of Ireland (Anglican)
- ☐ Orthodox Christian
- ☐ Other Christian
- ☐ Other Non-Christian Faith
- ☐ Roman Catholic
- ☐ No religious faith
- ☐ I do not know / I do not recall
- ☐ Other:

Please think back to the time when you were choosing who would become your child's godfather

Please rate the following in terms of importance at the time of selection

41. **My child's godfather could look after my child in case of emergency ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

42. **My child's godfather could talk about faith with confidence ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

43. **My child's godfather had deep religious faith ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

44. **My child's godfather had similar values to me ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

45. **My child's godfather lived nearby ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

46. **My child's godfather was a family member ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

47. **My child's godfather was a work colleague ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

48. **My child's godfather was committed to forming my child in my faith tradition ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

49. **My child's godfather was committed to my child's overall education and moral development ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

50. **My child's godfather was of the same socio-economic status as me ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

51. **My child's godfather was of greater socio-economic status as me ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

52. **What was your relationship to your child's godfather? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ He was my brother
- ☐ He was my spouse's brother
- ☐ He was my son
- ☐ He was my spouse's son from another relationship
- ☐ He was my father
- ☐ He was my spouse's father
- ☐ He was another male relation (e.g. cousin, uncle, nephew...)
- ☐ He was my spouse's male relation (e.g. cousin, uncle, nephew...)
- ☐ He was my friend
- ☐ He was my spouse's friend
- ☐ Other:

Section Four - Your child's godmother

This questions in this section tell me about your child's godmother. If your child has more than one godmother, please respond to the more detailed questions about one godmother only.

53. **How many godmothers has your child? ***

.....

54. **Is your child's godmother also the godmother of another of your children? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not know / I do not recall

55. **Who chose this person to be your child's godmother? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I chose the godmother
- ☐ My spouse chose the godmother
- ☐ I and my spouse jointly chose the godmother
- ☐ My child chose the godmother
- ☐ The person in question asked to be my child's godmother
- ☐ I do not know / I do not recall
- ☐ Other:

56. **How important was it to choose this particular person as your child's godmother? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

57. **Please respond to the following: At the time of the baptism, I understood that my child's godmother believed in God ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

58. **What was the religious affiliation of your child's godmother at the time of baptism? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Church of Ireland (Anglican)
- ☐ Orthodox Christian
- ☐ Other Christian
- ☐ Other Non-Christian Faith
- ☐ Roman Catholic
- ☐ No religious faith
- ☐ I do not know / I do not recall
- ☐ Other:

Please think back to the time when you were choosing who would become your child's godmother

Please rate the following in terms of importance at the time of selection

59. **My child's godmother could look after my child in case of emergency ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

60. **My child's godmother could talk about faith with confidence ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

61. **My child's godmother had deep religious faith ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

62. **My child's godmother had similar values to me ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

63. **My child's godmother lived nearby ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

64. **My child's godmother was a family member ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

65. **My child's godmother was a work colleague ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

66. **My child's godmother was committed to forming my child in my faith tradition ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

67. **My child's godmother was committed to my child's overall education and moral development ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

68. **My child's godmother was of the same socio-economic status as me ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

69. **My child's godmother was of greater socio-economic status as me ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Of no importance
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Of medium importance
- ☐ Of great importance
- ☐ Not relevant

70. **What was your relationship to your child's godmother? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ She was my sister
- ☐ She was my spouse's sister
- ☐ She was my daughter
- ☐ She was my spouse's daughter from another relationship
- ☐ She was my mother
- ☐ She was my spouse's mother
- ☐ She was another female relation (e.g. cousin, aunt, niece...)
- ☐ She was my spouse's female relation (e.g. cousin, aunt, niece...)
- ☐ She was my friend
- ☐ She was my spouse's friend
- ☐ Other:

Section Five - The role of godparents

The questions in this section tell me about the level of contact between your child and his / her godparents

71. **Please respond to the following: My child's godfather has played a significant role in the education and faith formation of my child ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

72. **What level of contact has your child's godfather with your child now? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I do not know
- ☐ He has died
- ☐ He has lost contact
- ☐ He is in contact for special occasions only
- ☐ He is in regular contact
- ☐ Other:

73. **Please respond to the following: My child's godmother has played a significant role in the education and faith formation of my child ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not relevant

74. **What level of contact has your child's godmother with your child now? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I do not know
- ☐ She has died
- ☐ She has lost contact
- ☐ She is in contact for special occasions only
- ☐ She is in regular contact
- ☐ Other:

Almost there! Just one more question please

75. **How did you find out about this survey? ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ By email
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Newspaper
- ☐ Radio
- ☐ TV
- ☐ QR Code
- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Other:

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APPENDIX B

This appendix contains the DCU REC Ethics Approval for this thesis.

Ms Bernadette Sweetman
School of Education Studies / Mater Dei Institute of Education

30th June 2014

REC Reference: DCUREC/2014/151

Proposal Title: A Sociological Study of Godparenthood in Present Day Ireland

Applicants: Ms Bernadette Sweetman, Dr Andrew McGrady

Dear Bernadette,

This research proposal qualifies under our Notification Procedure, as a low risk social research project. Therefore, the DCU Research Ethics Committee approves this research proposal. Materials used to recruit participants should state that ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee. Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Donal O'Mathuna'.

Dr. Donal O'Mathuna
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee



Taighde & Nuálaíocht Tacaíocht
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