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Irish Women's Collaboration in the Failure to Succeed

Siobhan Patricia Mulcahy

Edwina Kelly

**DESK
RESERVE 1**

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1. **Research Objective: Disparity of Political Representation**

This project will evaluate the causes of the phenomenon of democratic disparity in female political representation on the island of Ireland. Democratic disparity is the lack of equality in political representation between the sexes at all levels of government. As this thesis cannot hope to change the universe and must limit itself in scope, I have chosen to specifically investigate the lack of political success of Irish women in the national parliament, Dail Eireann.

This research project hopes to bring new evidence to bear on this long-standing issue, while adding to the knowledge already available and using evaluation methods not previously undertaken. See methodology section.

Research Contribution

When delivering the John Whyte Memorial lecture at UCD, Dr. Yvonne Galligan (22nd November, 2001) stated that research into democratic (dis)parity on the island of Ireland has not been adequately undertaken. Female political representation in both the Northern Assembly and Southern Parliament (Dail Eireann) is consistently less than in most other EU countries. It is a phenomenon that needs to be evaluated and explained.

The contribution to knowledge will be relevant to:

- Irish women's forums
- Policy directions on the island of Ireland
- The ERSI
- Women's groups in the EU

Research Questions

- Have the behaviour patterns and attitudes of Irish women contributed to their own failure to succeed?
- How have political structures and policies contributed to the democratic disparity in Irish women's political representation?
- How have progressive policies in other European countries altered/increased women's political participation?

A detailed literature review has already been completed around the variables mentioned in the above questions. For the purposes of this paper, while keeping in mind the limited amount of space available in this paper, I have included a sample below.

2. Literature Review

Galligan (2001a) stated that the lack of female political representation on the island of Ireland needs further research. Equal representation must be the goal for a more healthy democracy. Galligan highlighted the success of the 'list system' in operation in France and the 'quota system' which is a core value of the new Scottish parliament because these systems 'encourage' women to participate more fully in political life. Note: the list system in France requires that political parties must endorse equal numbers of men and women candidates for municipal, legislative and European elections. Quotas used in Scotland are implemented to ensure inclusion of a broad cross-section of the Scottish population in the new parliament.

Claffey (1993: p. 7) said the election of Mary Robinson as President of Ireland marked a fundamental change in Irish politics and we would see 'increased representation of women in Dail Eireann'. In 1993, 20 women candidates were elected to Dail Eireann, the highest number up to that point. Claffey admitted that this figure still left the Republic of Ireland (with 12%) way down the European league table for female representation in national parliaments. Today, 2001, the number of women represented in Dail Eireann is 21.

Disunity and rupture have marred women's organisations since the early 20th century. Ward (1982: pp.38-9) stated that in pre-Independence Ireland, political allegiances had no convenient geographic delineation; there were Unionist women in the south of Ireland, nationalist women in the north. Suffragist groups were divided on a number of issues: militarism versus pacifism, Unionism versus Nationalism, politically-aligned versus non-politically aligned, reformists versus radicals. Under such strains, feminists failed to maintain unity and the suffrage groups before Irish Independence disintegrated under the combined impact of world war and threatened civil war.

Smyth (1988: p.248) observed that Irish women's organisations in the 1970s were characterised by different approaches to tackling feminist issues. When it began in 1970, the Irish Women's Liberation Movement (IWLM) espoused radical and leftist feminism and distinguished itself carefully from 'reformist women's' rights feminism.

Smyth (1988a: p.248) further observed that The Council for the Status of Women founded in 1973 was liberal and reformist in both ideology and tactics. These two ends of the feminist spectrum often joined together in common cause in Ireland with many individual women moving from one to the other at different stages. But in 1974, Irishwomen United (IU) drew members from both organisations as well as younger radicals in order to gain progress on specific issues such as free legal contraception, the removal of bureaucratic obstacles to equality, and state provision of funds for women's centres. The disunity of purpose of the above

organisations meant that the women's movement in Ireland was in disarray (having argued to the point of discord) by the early 1980s. (Smyth 188b: p.248) Meaney (1991: p.230) argued that the image of suffering Mother Ireland and the self-sacrificing Irish mother are difficult to separate. Both serve to obliterate the reality of women's lives. The attractions of the traditional feminine role as defined by the Catholic Church are grounded in a 'deep distrust and loathing of femininity'. Some Irish women find it easier to identify with this image rather than striving to break the mould.

The identification of the family - rather than the individual - as the basic building block of society is more than a 'pious rhetoric' in the Irish Constitution. In post-colonial southern Ireland, this constriction of sexual and familial roles became the very substance of what it meant to be Irish. 'Feminism must interrogate different forms of nationalism' north and south of the border in order to maintain its own interests against monolithic national identities which perpetuate patriarchy. (Meaney 1991a: p.231).

Meaney (1991b: p.237) concluded that feminism must address women in both communities in Northern Ireland because women have been actively involved in every variant of both Nationalism and Unionism. They too have been prejudiced and supported violent actions. Though patriarchal history has portrayed women as bystanders in the political process, this is a lie. 'We have always been implicated even in our own repression'.

Daly (1989: p125) stated that powerlessness and joblessness often go hand in hand because it is through work that most people get a chance to influence decisions. 'There is no reason why having children should stop Irish women from getting a job', but in Ireland, little is done to make it easier for mothers to work outside the home.

Being married still makes a big difference to Irish women's employment situation, while it makes no difference to men's work patterns. Daly highlighted the 3 main barriers making it difficult for women to work outside the home: the absence of childcare facilities, negative attitudes towards working mothers and lack of encouragement and support for women returning to work. (Daly 1989a: pp.126-7).

Esping-Andersen (1996: pp.26-7) stated that one of the greatest challenges for the future welfare state is how to harmonize women's employment with 'family formation'. The Scandinavian experience demonstrates that these demands can be harmonized with a comprehensive network of public services, however, he points out that the fiscal strains of contemporary welfare states generally prohibit such an expansion.

The Council of Europe (1998: p.17) has recommended 'equality proofing' as a solution to democratic disparity in European parliaments. The proofing involves

the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that an equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy making. Though the recommendation is being incorporated into the Irish republic's national development plan, Galligan (2001b) believes that similar systems to those in France and Scotland must be implemented if the goals of gender balancing and democratic parity are to be achieved in the shorter term. The aim of gender balancing is the equalisation of the numbers of women and men at all levels of social, political and cultural representation in society.

3. Methodology

A combination of methodologies will be used in this thesis to test the initial hypothesis, to analyse the data collected and to arrive at verifiable conclusions. Grounded theory will form the backbone of the methodology, while ethnography and comparative methods will be used to enhance, and add depth to, the body of work.

Robertson D. (1993), p. 98 Comparative government or comparative politics is one of the main branches of the academic study of politics. The essence of comparative politics as a study is to compare the ways in which different societies cope with various problems, the role of the political structure involved being of particular interest. The aim is to develop an understanding of how different institutional mechanisms work within these contexts, and more ambitiously, to develop general hypotheses concerning government. A typical examination paper in comparative government will ask whether the French or American presidencies enjoy the most power, or to ask for a comparison of the roles of the legislatures in Britain and Germany.

Though comparative government is nowadays usually clearly differentiated from political theory, this is a recent and probably unfortunate development. Aristotle, who is normally thought of as apolitical theorist, certainly also carried out a comparative study of the political systems known to him, though unfortunately his collection of nearly 200 city state constitutions has not survived. Later theorists, such as Jean Bodin (1530-96) argued for comparative political analysis in the hope that it would reveal universally valid rules and values.

In studies of comparative government, progress has been made in some areas. For example, the effect of different electoral systems on the party system is fairly well understood from wide ranging comparisons, and predictive theories have been developed which work well in relationship to coalition membership in multi-party systems. The main problem for comparative government as a science is that it lacks a generally-agreed theoretical framework that would identify what the principal tasks of a political system are, and thereby locate the institutions or structures that should be compared. In other words, it is difficult to know what comparisons are worthwhile or sensible, and as a result, researchers have tended

either to stick to obvious comparisons within a limited range, or to rely on less than commonly accepted theories, usually borrowed from other approaches.

Another problem is that a fruitful comparison of two political institutions or societal structures involves a very deep knowledge of their history and culture in order to understand the data and avoid inappropriate comparisons between institutions that may be superficially similar. The increasing international or multinational nature of problems and responses promises to make for more fruitful comparisons and comparative theory structures.

Grounded Theory

Strauss A & Corbin B. (1990), p.23-4 A well-constructed grounded theory will meet four central criteria for judging the applicability of theory to a phenomenon: fit, understanding, generality and control. Fit means faithful to the everyday reality, understanding as it should be comprehensible to persons being studied and those who are not specific to the area investigated, general so that it can be applied to a variety of contexts related to that phenomenon, and finally, the theory should provide control with regard to action toward the phenomenon and the conditions to which it applied should be clearly spelled out.

The grounded theory approach is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon. The research findings constitute a theoretical formulation of the reality under investigation, rather than consisting of a set of numbers, or a group of loosely related themes. The purpose of grounded theory method is to build theory that is faithful to and illuminates the area under study. Researchers working in this tradition also hope that their theories will ultimately be related to others within their respective disciplines in a cumulative fashion, and that the theory's implications will have useful application.

Summary:

- the need to get into the field
- the importance of theory, grounded in reality to the development of the discipline
- the nature of experience and undergoing as continually evolving
- the active role of persons in shaping the worlds they live in
- an emphasis on change and process, and the variability and complexity of life
- the interrelationships among conditions, meaning and action

p.32 The original research question is a directive that leads the researcher immediately to examine a specific performance, the place where events are occurring, documents, people acting, or informants to interview. It gets the researcher started and helps with focus in the research project.

p.62-3 *Making comparisons and asking questions to break through assumptions* give grounded theory their precision and specificity. In fact, grounded theory is often referred to as the constant method of analysis.

p. 133 validating one's theory against the data completes its grounding.
Transcribing and analysing data Strauss A & Corbin B. (1990),

p. 61 **Open coding** is the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising data. Conceptualising (labelling) data become the first step in analysis, that is happenings, events and other instances of phenomena.

p.96-7 **Axial coding** is a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making the connections between categories. This is done by utilising a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interaction strategies and consequences. Open coding fractures the data and allows one to identify some categories, their properties and dimensional locations. Axial coding puts those data back together in new ways by making connections between a category and its sub categories.

Causal conditions: events, incidents, and happenings that lead to the occurrence or development of a phenomenon. Phenomenon: the central event about which a set of actions or interactions are directed at managing, handling and to which the set of actions is related. Context: the specific set of properties that pertain to a phenomenon. Intervening conditions: the structural conditions bearing on action or interaction strategies belonging to a phenomenon.

p. 116 **Selective coding**- the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development.

Story: a descriptive narrative about the central phenomenon of the study.
Storyline: the central phenomenon around which all other categories are integrated. Core category: the central phenomenon around which all the other categories are integrated. Description tells the story and conceptualisation analyses it.

P 121 Making a choice between two or more salient phenomena. The way to handle this problem is to choose one phenomenon, relate the other category to it as a subsidiary category, then write it as a single theory.

p. 158 The Conditional Matrix is an analytic aid, a diagram, useful for considering the wide range of conditions and consequences related to the phenomenon under study. The matrix enables the analyst to both distinguish and link levels of conditions and consequences.

Conditional Path: the tracking of an event, incident, or happening from action/ interaction through the various conditional and consequential levels, and vice versa, in order to directly link them to a phenomenon.

Interaction: people doing things together or with respect to one another – and accompanying action, talk, and thought processes.

Transactional system: a system of analysis that examines action/ interaction in relationship to their conditions and consequences.

p. 159-60 The conditional matrix is a framework that summarises and integrates all we have presented previously while at the same time explicates how the various kinds of conditions (causal, contextual, intervening) and consequences can be tightly woven into one's analysis. It is the integrating detail, procedures, and operational logic for achieving this that are the hallmarks of grounded theory.

We think of grounded theory as a transactional system, a method of analysis that allows one to examine the interactive nature of events.

All phenomena and their related action/interaction also lead to specifiable consequences. These in turn may become part of the relevant conditions that bear upon the next action/ interactional sequence.

p. 160 A transactional system possesses certain properties:
Conditions at any level may pertain to a phenomenon as (a) *cause* leading to that particular phenomenon, of (b) as *context* within which action/ interaction take place, or (c) as *intervening conditions* standing between context and action/ interaction that act to facilitate or constrain the latter.

p. 161 the transactional system of which we speak is a conditional matrix denoting a complex web of interrelated conditions, action/ interaction, and consequences that pertains to a given phenomenon.

p. 161 Merits of using the matrix
it helps you to be **theoretically sensitive to the range of conditions** that might bear upon the phenomenon under study
it enables you to be theoretically sensitive to **the range of potential consequences** that results from action/ interaction
it assists you to **systematically relate conditions, actions/ interaction and consequences to a phenomenon**

The conditional matrix may be represented as a set of circles, one inside the other, each (level) corresponding to different aspects of the world around us. In the outer rings stand those conditional features most distant to action/ interaction; while the inner rings pertain to those conditional features bearing most closely upon an action/ interaction sequence.

p.162 To maximise the generalisability of the matrix as an analytic tool, each level is presented in its most abstract form. The researcher needs to fill in the specific conditional features for each level that pertain to the chosen area of investigation. Specification of the conditions may come from the research itself. Or they may come from the literature and experience: then they would be considered provisional until data indicate their relationship to the phenomenon.

p.162-3 General features of the matrix levels

The outermost level may be thought of as the international level. It includes such items as: international politics, governmental regulations, culture, values, philosophies, economics, history and international problems and issues like environment.

The second level may be regarded as the national level. Its features include national politics, governmental regulations, culture, history, values, economics, problems and issues.

Next comes the community level, including all of the above items but as they pertain to the community. Each community has its own demographic features that give it singularity.

The organisational and institutional levels have their own structure, rules, problems, histories.

Sub-organisational, sub-institutional level includes the peculiar features of a city, hospital ward, or sub-location within a larger location where the study is taking place.

p. 164 Then we reach the collective, group and individual level. This level includes biographies, philosophies, knowledge and experiences of persons and families as well as those of various groups (special interest, professional and scientific).

Later we come to the interactional level. By interaction, we mean people doing things together or with respect to one another in regards to a phenomenon – and the action, talk, and thought processes that accompany the doing of those things. Even things done alone, like managing an illness, require interaction in the form of self-reflection, and contact with others to obtain medical supplies, counsel, and sometimes support. Interaction is carried out through such interactional processes as: negotiation, domination, teaching, discussion, debate, and self-reflection.

Finally, reaching the centre of the matrix, we find action: both strategic and routine. This level represents the active expressive, performance form of self and/or other interaction carried out to manage, respond to, and so forth, a phenomenon. Action is carried out through action processes.

These combine with interactional processes to complete the picture of action/ interaction. For example, the term 'division of labour', which refers to an action process for the carrying out of the phenomenon of work, involves much more than different people doing different tasks to some end. This process also encompasses the negotiations, discussions, legitimation of boundaries, and so forth, that take place in order to arrive at and maintain a division of labour and accomplish its associated tasks.

The Conditional Matrix in Grounded Theory

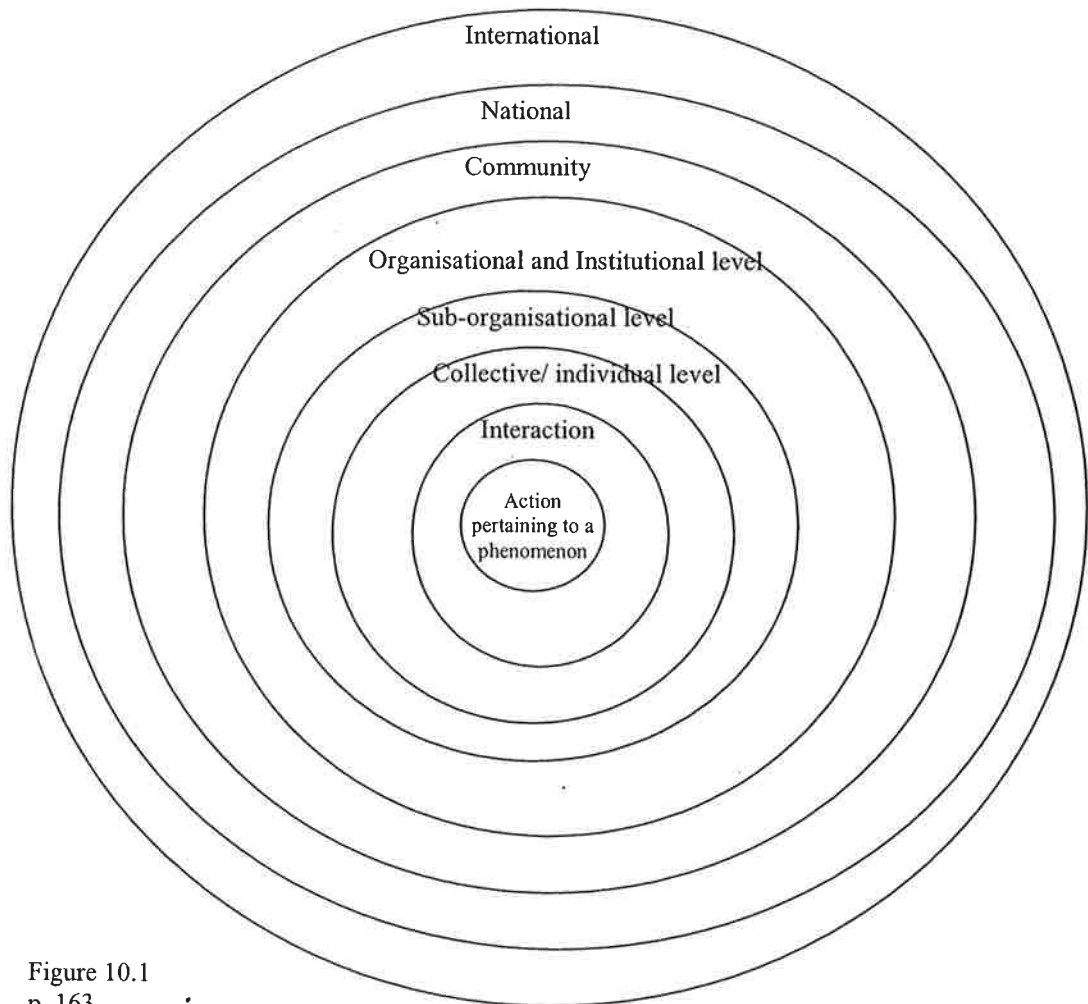


Figure 10.1
p. 163
Strauss A & Corbin B.

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