

*Inclusion, equality and deliberation: A gendered analysis of internal and external inclusion in Ireland's Convention on the Constitution (2012-14).*

Dr Clodagh Harris, University College Cork  
Professor David M. Farrell, University College Dublin  
Dr Jane Suiter, Dublin City University  
Mary Brennan, University College Dublin

Paper presented at the PSA Conference, Cardiff 2018.

**ABSTRACT**

Ireland's Convention on the Constitution (2012-2014) was a world-first process in mixing randomly selected 'lay' citizens and political representatives in a deliberative mini-public that made recommendations on a wide range of constitutional issues. Acknowledging the gender gap identified in studies of deliberative forums, the Convention made specific design choices to achieve both internal and external gender inclusion where external inclusion is concerned with representation in a process and internal inclusion with participation within it. This paper assesses its effectiveness in this regard. Using data collected during the course of the Convention we explore the effects of contextual (institutional rules, procedures and topics discussed) and actor related characteristics (gender, type of membership) on inclusion. Focusing on internal inclusion in particular, we expect that group composition, the topic for deliberation, membership type and the forum (public plenary session or private small group session) will influence gendered rates of participation. Measuring participation in terms of per capita number of speech acts, we find, unexpectedly, that contextual issues such as the topic discussed and the gender composition of the small roundtable deliberations did not influence gender rates of participation. The forum of participation does, however, matter.

## INTRODUCTION

Ireland's Convention on the Constitution, established by a resolution of the Irish Parliament in 2012, included randomly selected 'lay' citizens and elected politicians in a deliberative mini-public that was charged with making recommendations on constitutional issues ranging from amending the electoral system to introducing marriage equality. Similar to mini-publics elsewhere the Convention's work was grounded in theories of deliberative democracy.

Deliberative democrats contend that a political decision is legitimate if it can withstand scrutiny by those bound by it (Dryzek 2007; Beetham 2012). Collective decisions, it is argued, should be made using reflective public reasoning and they are legitimate to the extent that those subjected to them have the right, opportunity and capacity to contribute to deliberations on them (Hendriks et al. 2007). A defining feature of deliberations is the focus on 'reasonableness', which requires ordinary citizens to consider the arguments of differently situated and opinionated others; to present reasons for their own preferences; weigh up the arguments in 'a context of good information' (Isernia and Fishkin 2014:313); and to be 'amenable to changing their minds and their preferences as a result of reflection induced by deliberation' (Dryzek 2000:31). This focus on public 'reasonableness' characterises the deliberative aspect of deliberative democracy, while the emphasis on inclusion and equality ensure its democratic credentials (Dryzek 2009).

The relationship between inclusion and equality is captured in Young's discussion of external and internal inclusion (2000). Deliberations are externally inclusive to the extent that they are open to those affected by a decision (Curato et al. 2017; Mansbridge et al. 2010). However it is argued that including people in a process, though essential, does not guarantee equality of voice (Fraser 1992; Young 2002; Lupia & Norton 2017). As Karpowitz and Raphael assert, ensuring 'inclusion in practice is often far more complex than merely opening the doors of the forum to all comers or even than inviting a simple random sample of the public at large' (2016:17). It also requires guaranteeing voice within the processes, namely internal inclusion.

Studies of political participation in deliberative forums note that women are one cohort that may be disadvantaged in such processes as they tend to speak less than men thereby having less influence and authority (Hansen 2006; Karpowitz et al. 2012; Karpowitz & Mendelberg 2014).

However it has been observed that contextual issues such as institutional design and communication formats can go some way to redressing imbalances in participation rates (Karpowitz et al. 2012; Karpowitz & Mendelberg, 2014; Mendelberg et al. 2014). Mindful of the research in the field, Ireland's Convention on the Constitution used particular institutional design features in an effort to achieve both internal and external gender inclusion. These features (set out below) were reflected in terms of the recruitment of members and invited speakers as well as the procedures, processes, and rules.

This paper assesses its success in this regard by examining the effects of contextual (institutional rules, procedures and topics discussed) and actor related characteristics (gender, type of membership) on inclusion.

To set the context of the study we start in the first section with a brief overview of the Convention and its work. This is followed in section 2 with a discussion of how inclusion and

equality can be measured in mini-publics and an exploration of the gendered nature of deliberation in practice which results in a series of hypotheses. Section 3 sets out an analysis and discussion of the paper's findings.

## **IRELAND'S CONVENTION ON THE CONSTITUTION**

Established by the Irish Government through a resolution of the Houses of Parliament in July 2012, the Irish Convention on the Constitution included 100 members consisting of 66 private citizens, 33 elected legislators and a chair, Tom Arnold (the former chief executive of a leading international charity). Its work programme ran from January 2013 to March 2014 and it met 10 times in total (see Suiter et al. 2016a; Farrell et al. 2017).

The citizen members were selected at random by an independent market research company that was given a brief of ensuring that the membership was a fair reflection of the population in terms of gender, age, socio-economic status, and geography. The political parties determined how their members were selected. All major political parties on the island of Ireland as well as a grouping of Independent representatives were invited to send members to the Convention. The parties' allocations were proportionate to their representation in parliament. To allow for the possibility of members not being available for all meetings, a list of substitute members was compiled.

The parliamentary resolution that established the Convention tasked it with examining the following issues:

- Reduction of the term of office of the Irish President to five years;
- Reduction of the voting age to 17;
- Review of the Dáil (lower house of parliament) electoral system;
- Irish citizens' right to vote at Irish Embassies in Presidential elections;
- Provisions for same-sex marriage;
- Amendment to the existing clause in the Irish Constitution on the role of women in the home and encouraging greater participation of women in public life;
- Increasing the participation of women in politics; and
- Removal of the offence of Blasphemy from the Constitution.
- 'other relevant constitutional amendments that may be recommended by it' (see [www.constitution.ie](http://www.constitution.ie) accessed 20 December 2017).

The eclectic mix of topics include issues of political/technical reform and social/moral topics. In this paper we discuss two categories of topic that we refer to as technical and social (see table 2 for a list). From the beginning, the Convention was quite inventive in stretching their remit beyond the narrow confines set by the government. This was to result in no less than 41 specific recommendations (Farrell et al. 2017). Furthermore, the parliamentary resolution that established the Convention explicitly stated that its work need not be limited to the eight themes it was set to consider. Following the completion of its deliberations on the eight topics it could then consider other possible issues for constitutional amendment (ibid).

To that end, the Convention held nine regional meetings across the country (attended by almost 1000 people) and encouraged submissions for 'any other amendments' from civil society and the public more generally. In the end, there were 800 public submissions covering a range of 30 possible topics, which the members then voted on. Having sought government approval for time for an additional meeting, the Convention then allocated its final two weekends to discuss

the ‘any other amendments’, namely the reform of the Dáil and the insertion of economic, social and cultural right into the Constitution (see Suiter et al. 2016a; Farrell et al. 2017).

Informed by the Canadian citizen assemblies of the early 2000s (Fournier et al. 2011) and influenced by research on a pilot citizens’ assembly that had been organised a year earlier (see Suiter et al. 2016b; Farrell et al. 2013), the Convention operated along deliberative lines that included: mixing open plenary sessions with private roundtable discussions; arranging members in mixed (politicians and citizens) groups at tables of eight; and using trained facilitators and note-takers to ensure that members had an opportunity to speak, arguments were noted, discussions stayed on topic, and members were respectful of each other’s opinions.

Prior to the Convention, there had been concerns that the inclusion of parliamentarians would lead to adversarial forms of communication. At the inaugural meeting, the Chair set a deliberative tone asking his fellow members to agree to a core set of operating principles: openness and transparency; fairness; ‘equality of voice’; and collegiality. The deliberative approach was also reinforced by the facilitators who asked members to sign up to the world café rules of respectful and inclusive participation.

Public submissions, academic ‘expert’ presentations, stakeholder panels, and personal testimonies informed the Convention’s deliberations. In the case of invited speakers, care was taken to ensure a wide range of opinions, perspectives, experiences, and political views were presented. A close eye was kept to the gender mix of presenters and panellists. The Convention also monitored the gender balance at the roundtables.

Members’ feedback was sought each weekend in an attempt to ensure the process was reflective and responsive to members’ needs. Oversight was also provided by the Convention’s steering group which consisted of the Chairperson and representatives from the political parties and public members selected by the Convention. It was charged with assisting the Secretariat with core planning and operational issues namely overseeing the work programme for each weekend and the list of possible speakers.

As per the Parliamentary resolution that established it, the Convention made its decisions by a majority of the votes of members present and voting (with a casting vote for the Chairperson when required). At the Convention’s first weekend, it was agreed that all votes would be conducted by secret ballot. This removed pressure from political members to abide by the party whip. Additionally, members developed the ballot paper for each weekend and two representatives (one politician member, one public member) oversaw the counting of the votes.

## **DELIBERATIVE MINI-PUBLICS: INCLUSION AND EQUALITY**

Deliberative democracy requires two forms of equality: equal citizens and equal consideration of their opinions relating to voice and participation (Bohman 1997; Gerber 2015). For her part, Young (2000) distinguishes between external (representation) and internal (participation) inclusion. In practice deliberation has to work within real world systems marked by asymmetries in power, wealth, knowledge, access to information and so forth. As Bohman argues we ‘cannot assume that citizens are similarly situated or similarly capable of making use of their opportunities and resources’ (1997:326).

Yet how do we measure inclusion and equality in practice? We’ve witnessed the emergence of a critical scholarship on evaluating democratic innovations, in particular ‘mini-publics’ (Elstub

2014; Bächtiger et al. 2014; Smith 2009) which are described as democratic innovations that endeavour to operationalise citizen deliberation in political processes (Harris 2018).

The extent to which mini-publics enable inclusive deliberation rests on their design (Harris 2018; Bächtiger et al. 2014; Smith 2012; Geissel 2012; Smith 2009; Fung 2003). Curato et al. acknowledge the role actors ‘in and around deliberative processes’ can play in addressing inequalities (2017:31). For instance, recruitment processes may have a significant bearing on representation (i.e. external inclusion) (Fung 2003; Smith 2009; Bächtiger et al. 2014) while the composition of small group deliberations and decision making rules may help or hinder the participation of certain groups (i.e. internal inclusion) (Karpowitz & Mendelberg 2014; Karpowitz & Raphael 2016; Caluwaerts & Kavadis 2014).

Arguably, an examination of a mini-public’s inclusiveness requires an assessment of, inter alia, the selection rules, agenda setting processes, and oversight powers, as well as the impact more generally of contextual issues (institutional rules), notably those relating to: facilitation, decision-making rules, group composition, communication mode, and format (Smith 2009; Bächtiger et al. 2014; Felicettie et al. 2015).

The relationship between design features and a mini-public’s external and internal inclusion is captured in Table 1, where representation, descriptive and discursive (also known as opinion representation), considers recruitment, the agenda and agenda setting powers, presenter diversity (descriptive and discursive), and members’ oversight of these processes. Participation requires an examination of facilitation methods, group composition, the format, the decision-making rules, the communication mode, and members’ oversight of the rules and procedures.

[Table 1 about here]

Our analysis in this paper focuses on the gendered effects of these design features. Politics has long been viewed as a masculine arena in which women are less likely than men to declare an interest in politics and express their opinion (Burns et al. 2001; Norris 2002; Fraile & Gomez 2017). It has been shown that women participate differently to men (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Stolle & Hooghe 2011; Fraile 2014; European Commission 2014; Karpowitz & Mendelberg 2014) and have different attitudes to men on key policy issues such as defence spending, social programmes, environmental matters, health care and the use of military force (Hansen 1997; Electoral Commission UK 2004). Also women are significantly more interested in local politics, community oriented issues and social welfare (Coffé 2013; Fraile & Gomez 2017) and ‘women more than men, tend to favour, and to prioritize, the needs of those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged, poor, exploited, or stigmatized’ (Karpowitz & Mendelberg, 2014:20) This leads to our first hypotheses:

*H1 Women members will be less likely than men to attend a week-end that focuses solely on technical issues*

*H2 Women members will speak more on social issues than on technical ones.*

Research on gender dimensions in mini-publics remains pretty rare and with somewhat mixed findings. In her analysis of the distribution of talk in five American Deliberative Opinion Polls (DOPs), Siu finds ‘there were no statistically significant differences between the participation levels of men and women: in total minutes used, total statements made, or total words spoken’

(2017:122). Similarly, Gerber et al. (2016) note that gender did not impact on the quality of the Europolis DOP deliberations. In a separate study on the same EU DOP, Gerber reveals women members spoke significantly and substantially less than men and asked if this effected the degree to which a participant's contributions were considered (2015). Noting that the dominating groups did not purposely exclude the views of more 'peripheral actors' she concludes that with the exception of the working-class participants 'lacking consideration was not a serious issue for traditionally marginalised groups' (Gerber 2015:126). In contrast, other research finds that being a woman increases a participant's likelihood of being passive in deliberation (Hansen 2006). For instance, Bryan's study of 1,349 New England town hall style meetings in the US found that 46 per cent of those who attended were women, yet, 'they contributed only 28 per cent of the speaking turns to the average meeting' (cited in Karpowitz & Mendelberg 2014:11).

In their research on the gendered aspects of deliberation in small group settings Karpowitz and Mendelberg observe that 'one of the pitfalls most advocates of deliberation neglect is gender inequality' (2014:5). Using controlled deliberative experiments they assess the impact of group composition as well as formal procedures such as decision making rules on female participation, finding that women are disadvantaged and that this affects 'everything from how long they speak, to the respect they are shown, to the content of what they say, to the influence they carry, to their sense of their own capacity, and to their power over group decisions' (ibid). They conclude that: women participate less than their equal share when in a minority and at equal rates when in a large majority (at least under majority rule); women do best in homogenous groups; token female participants participate less than male tokens; women's influence gap shrinks as their numbers grow; 'less voice is an indicator of less influence not the product of a desire to avoid redundancy with preference allies' (2012:544); group composition has an impact on gender deliberations. They suggest that in order 'to avoid maximum inequality avoid groups with few women and majority rule' (2012:545).

Similar group composition effects were observed in Hickerson and Gastil's study of legal jurors in real case jury deliberations (2008). They found that 'a clear female-majority jury was the most likely to report both higher overall satisfaction and better treatment by fellow jurors' (2008:294) and concluded that gender effects arose in particular circumstances such as 'the composition of the group and the nature of the issue under discussion' (ibid:300).

One of the reasons attributed to women's lower levels of participation in deliberative processes in public arenas has been the so-called 'confidence gap' (Hansen 2006). Women have a tendency to underrate their abilities (Beyer & Bowden 1997), which we suggest may result in them feeling more comfortable speaking in small group private roundtable sessions than in public plenary. Finally, given the Convention's unique mix of regular citizens and political representatives, we distinguish between types of membership recognising that politicians by virtue of their profession will be more confident speaking up. This leads to the following hypotheses:

*H 3 Women will participate less than men in the plenary sessions.*

*H 4 Female politicians will participate at a greater rate than female citizens in roundtable and plenary sessions.*

*H5 Women's levels of participation will be higher than men's at tables at which they are in a majority*

Next we turn to the methodologies used to test these hypotheses and a discussion of the findings in terms of external and internal inclusion with regards to the Convention's contextual (institutional rules such as decision making processes and group composition and the topics discussed) and actor related (gender and membership type) characteristics.

## **EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL INCLUSION IN IRELAND'S CONVENTION ON THE CONSTITUTION: GENDER ANALYSIS**

Unlike other empirical studies of deliberation in practice (see Farrell et al. 2013; Grönlund et al. 2015; Karpowtiz et al. 2012) the Convention did not conduct its work in controlled 'laboratory' settings. One of the greatest challenges faced by the researchers was that the roundtable deliberations were not recorded. The absence of transcripts and the in-camera nature of the roundtable deliberations meant that the only way to measure participation rates was through note-takers recording how frequently each member spoke during these sessions. Data on the length, tone, substance and form of the individual speech acts in the roundtable discussions was not collected. Consequently the data gathered only captured gender and membership type thereby ruling out a deeper intersectional analysis that also considered socio-economic status, age and education.

Our examination of participation includes members' attendance rates each weekend as well as an assessment of the frequency of the speech acts according to gender, membership type (politician/private citizen), public/closed arena (plenary or roundtable), the gender composition of the roundtables, and the topic (technical or social – see Table 2 for overview).

[Table 2 about here]

This paper particularly focuses on the gendered nature of internal inclusion; asking if levels of participation varied among the male and female members. Following the same methodology used by Karpowitz et al. (2012) and Karpowitz and Mendelberg (2014), we measure participation per capita. This involves examining the participation rates of the average woman (total female participation/total number of women present) and the average man. The same approach is used to calculate average participation rates per membership type, i.e. average politician/average private citizen as well as membership type and gender.

### *External Inclusion*

The Convention was broadly representative (see Suiter et al. 2016a). This was achieved by employing an independent market research company to randomly select the 66 private citizen members. It was tasked with ensuring that the membership was broadly reflective of the population in terms of gender, age, region, education, and socio-economic status. There were, however, more male (56 per cent) than female (44 per cent) Convention members and more male than female members attended each of the Convention weekends.

The second weekend on reforming the electoral system recorded the highest percentage of male attendance with the weekend that discussed women's political representation and place in the home had the lowest percentage of men. There were always more male than female citizen members present. This was not always the case for the political representatives. There were three week-ends [1, 2 and 8] when more female than male politicians attended.

The lack of gender parity was in part a consequence of low levels of female representation in the Irish parliament: men accounted for 52 per cent of the overall citizen members and 60 per cent of the political representatives. The Convention's limited budget may also have had a negative impact. Due to a shortage of resources, childcare facilities were not offered making it more difficult for women with young children to attend. The lower number of female members made it difficult at times to achieve gender balance as a bare minimum at each table.

In our analysis, we find that gender did not impact on attendance, this was irrespective of topic (see Table 3). Our analysis shows that while the numbers varied depending on the subject for discussion, in general the percentage breakdown remained reasonably consistent throughout. There were nine weekends that could be coded by the subject type (technical or social)<sup>1</sup> and the data shows the slight dominance of men attending remained consistent regardless of subject type. Our first hypothesis is therefore rejected. Interestingly, there is also some evidence that private citizen members were more likely to attend than political members especially when the subject was a social one.

In terms of discursive representation, diverse opinions and perspectives on a topic was captured through the invited public submissions, the varying views and backgrounds of the Convention members (political and private) and those attending the regional meetings as well as the invited presentations that included expert witnesses from a broad range of academic disciplines, stakeholder panel contributions and individual testimonies. Finally, the parliamentary resolution establishing the Convention provided some limited agenda setting powers which gave the Convention the opportunity to extend its topics for discussion. The Convention used this to good effect, even requesting an extension to its original work schedule. Moreover the Convention's 41 recommendations indicate the level to which the Convention expanded its remit.

Concerted efforts were made to achieve presenter diversity. The gender composition of those who presented to the Convention is outlined in Table 2. It shows that female presenters were underrepresented: huge variance across the weekends is evident<sup>2</sup>. The reasons for this may include: the topic under discussion; the serious underrepresentation of women in professorial

---

<sup>1</sup> Institutional/Political issues were classified as technical, for example electoral reform, reducing the voting age, extending voting rights to citizens' abroad etc. Issues that had a moral and/or social aspect were classified as social, namely same sex marriage, removal of blasphemy as an offence etc. The second weekend which discussed the constitutional provision on women's place in the home and women's representation in politics and public life was a challenge as it contained both political and social elements but the discussion as reflected in the ballot paper and its recommendations focused primarily on the social aspect (place in the home and wider issue of gender equality) despite equal billing on the weekend's agenda (see [www.constitution.ie](http://www.constitution.ie) for details).

<sup>2</sup> For example, weekend 2 which discussed the constitutional provision on women's place in the home and women's representation in politics had four times as many female presenters as the weekends discussing reform of the electoral system (weekends 4 and 5).

positions in Irish academia (see HEA 2017), as well as their underrepresentation in political institutions and at leadership levels in political and organisational life (from which panellists were often drawn).

### *Internal Inclusion*

The Convention was designed to ensure participants were provided with equal opportunities and resources to participate and to influence the process and its outcomes. Its non-adversarial, deliberative communicative style and format blended accessible information sessions with small group facilitated discussion at tables that endeavoured to reflect the Convention's citizen/politician composition and achieve gender balance. This coupled with the oversight role of its steering committee and secret ballot endeavoured to achieve internal inclusion.

[Table 3 about here]

We anticipated that there might be a gender difference on levels of participation according to the nature of the topic – H2. To assess this we examined whether women spoke more on social than technical issues. While we see fewer speech acts at meetings that deliberate on the more technical issues, as Table 4 shows there is no evidence of a particularly gendered impact here – H2 is therefore rejected.

[Table 4 about here]

We find that women participated more than men in the small group discussions and had on average fewer individual speech acts in the plenary sessions (Table 4). A regression analysis to assess if this difference is statistically significant confirms that while all participants participated less at the plenary sessions, men made the fewest individual speech acts, but participated more at the plenary sessions<sup>3</sup> (Model 1, Table 5), thus confirming H3.

We also assessed the impact, if any, that membership type would have on rates of participation in plenary and roundtable sessions. In order to do so we deployed an all-female subset of the data, testing whether female politicians participated more than female citizens. The results in Model 2 of Table 5 partially confirm H4. We find female politicians do contribute more than female citizens, but this difference is only evident in small group/roundtable discussions. We should also note that the standard errors indicate a high level of variation and the coefficients are very similar.

The same analysis on an all-male subset provide similar findings (Model 3 of Table 5). That is, male politicians also participate more than male citizens, but again only at the roundtable sessions. Both male and female politicians are significantly less likely to participate at the plenary sessions, we suggest that this was in part due to the Convention's Chairman efforts to encourage private members to speak at these sessions. Interestingly, there is no evidence of a difference in participation rates between men and women public representatives.

---

<sup>3</sup> To ensure that the higher number of politicians, who are in the main male, is not confusing these results we controlled for participant type, but the results did not make any meaningful change to the result, for these regression results (see appendix Table 11).

[Table 5 about here]

Politician's 'over-participation' in the roundtable discussions does not seem to have been a problem for the citizen members. Citizen feedback as expressed in the Convention's final report noted politicians were an important source of information on technical issues ([www.constitution.ie](http://www.constitution.ie)). Additionally, interviews<sup>4</sup> with citizen members reveal that some of them appreciated the politician's participation in both the plenary sessions and small group discussions. As one female citizen member put it, '*I found their depth of knowledge*' helpful on the week-ends that focused on technical issues as they had '*a good knowledge of what could have been constitutional reform and what could have been done through legislation*'. Another citizen member (female) agreed saying that they '*brought differen questions, suggestions and viewpoints and opinions*' to the floor as well as what she referred to as a '*reality aspect*'.

In order to verify our results on gendered rates of participation, we considered an additional way of measuring participation from a gendered perspective. This involved calculating each member's contribution as a percentage of the overall total of the individual speech acts made by each table during the roundtable discussions. As each table had the same amount of time for these small group discussions, these percentages offer a different measurement of each contribution. In this instance, for a table with a small total number of speech acts, each measure will have a higher percentage score than the one from a table with a high number of contributions. This approach does not represent the actual length/percentage of each individual speech act, it merely attempts to provide another way of measuring the same data. Using this approach, we asked if an increase in the number of women by table would have an impact on participation (see Table 6). Our results show that the more women per table over all the weekends, the higher the number of contributions made and confirms that the lower the number of speech act are made at the plenary sessions.<sup>5</sup>

[Table 6 about here]

Assessing the impact of group composition, in particular the gender composition of the roundtables, on the gendered nature of the deliberations we found that of the men attending 61 per cent of them (see Table 7) were placed at male majority tables (that is tables that had more male than female convention members) and only 9 per cent at a female majority table. Women seemed to be more evenly spread with a little over half of them sitting at either balanced or female majority tables.

Noting that each table also included a facilitator and note-taker<sup>6</sup>, we conducted a second analysis that included them in the gendered description of the table (male majority, balanced, female majority), assessing whether their physical presence at the roundtables had an effect on average participation rates. Put another way, did their descriptive as opposed to substantive (as they did not contribute directly to the discussions) representation influence the members' average rates of participation? Including facilitators and note-takers in the gender composition

---

<sup>4</sup> A series of semi-structured interviews with nine of the citizen members was carried out in the final weekend of the Convention (February 22<sup>nd</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014), one of the questions posed was whether the politicians dominated the roundtable discussions

<sup>5</sup> In a further regression we controlled for participant type with no significant change to the results, see Appendix Table 12

<sup>6</sup> The Convention drew from a pool of 53 facilitators and note-takers, of these 30 were men and 23 were female.

of a small group deliberations had not been tested before. Their inclusion impacts on the composition of the tables over the 9 weekends (see Table 7). The majority of participants still attended a male majority table, with the biggest difference being the increase in the number of female majority tables and the decrease in the number of gender-balanced tables.

[Table 7 about here]

In general, our analysis shows that female convention members made a higher number of speech acts regardless of table composition type (see Table 8). Interestingly and somewhat unexpectedly, there was some slight variation if the table composition included the gender of the note-taker and the facilitators. Their inclusion reduced the average difference at male majority tables and interestingly reversed it at female majority tables, where we observe that average male participation rates were higher than average female ones at female majority tables. This raises questions about how we define group composition when researching such processes.

[Table 8 about here]

The use of simple averages with such small differentials makes it difficult to draw any definitive conclusions from this analysis. With this in mind we ran a regression (see Table 9) to further assess the impact of table composition on rates of participation. It confirms (but without significance) that table composition does not have an impact on the gendered nature of the small group discussions,<sup>7</sup> allowing us to reject our fifth hypothesis.

[Table 9 about here]

## CONCLUSION

The ‘gender gap in deliberation should be of concern for at least three reasons. Firstly, from the perspective of democratic legitimacy, the external and inclusion exclusion of a significant section of society risks gravely undermining the legitimacy not only of the outcomes but the entire process. Secondly, the absence of women’s opinions in the political arena is worrying when we consider that studies show that men’s and women’s attitudes differ on key policy issues. Thirdly, it is important in terms of throughput legitimacy as it has been observed that the higher the proportion of women in deliberations the higher the levels of respect and overall satisfaction with the process (Grünenfelder & Bächtiger 2007; Hickerson & Gasti, 2008; Pedrini 2014).

Acknowledging this gap, this paper explored the effects of contextual (institutional rules, procedures and topics discussed) and actor related characteristics (gender, type of membership) on external and internal inclusion in Ireland’s Convention on the Constitution.

Our analysis finds that women were underrepresented in the Convention membership. In terms on internal inclusion, differences in frequency of participation according to gender, membership status and the forum (public/non-public) are observed. As anticipated, politicians on average spoke more frequently than citizen members in the roundtable discussions. This is

---

<sup>7</sup> In a further regression we controlled for the presence of politicians with similar results, see Table 12 in Appendix

of concern when we consider inclusion. However, as Mansbridge argues, equal participation in a deliberative process does not require that everyone participates with equal numbers of words (1999:232). It does, however, demand that no one person or group dominates the deliberations. In the case of the Convention, we have found that politician's 'over-participation' in the roundtable discussions does not seem to have been a problem for the citizen members.

We also find that the forum matters. Men tended to speak more frequently than women in the public/plenary debates while women participated more than their male colleagues in the roundtable sessions. Surprisingly, table composition didn't influence gendered rates of participation as had been anticipated, although the absence of female majority tables on four of the week-ends had an impact on the amount of data available to us for this analysis. However, when the gender of the facilitators and note-takers is included in the table composition small differences are noted, raising questions about descriptive and substantive representation in assessing the effects of table composition in such processes. Finally, the topic did not seem to have an effect on participation or attendance rates from a gendered perspective.

In terms of external exclusion, the recruitment process endeavoured to achieve gender parity and a concerted effort was made to ensure a fair representation of female presenters. The underrepresentation of female politicians in the Irish Parliament as well as the prevalence of men in the higher echelons of the academy and organisational life in general made these objectives difficult to meet at times.

Considering Karpowitz and Mendelberg's research, that argues that inequality is maximised when women are few and the majority decision making is used we were concerned that the shortage of women majority tables would seriously hamper levels of female participation in roundtable discussions. Surprisingly this was not the case. We speculate that this effect was mitigated because of design features that assisted internal inclusion, namely the use of trained facilitators, the format and communication mode that favoured respectful, informed small group discussions and the decision making mode that gave each member equal decision making power. In addition, we may also surmise that the presence of sufficient (albeit not equal) numbers of women each weekend and the participation of female politicians may have encouraged greater female citizen participation.

Finally, it is hoped that this research contributes to our understanding of how deliberation proceeds in real life settings and the role actors 'in and around deliberations' may play in facilitating both internal and external inclusion.

## REFERENCES

- Bächtiger, A., Niemeyer, S., Neblo, M., Steenbergen, M.R., & Steiner, J. (2010). Disentangling Diversity in Deliberative Democracy: Competing Theories, their Blind Spots and Complementarities. *Journal of Political Philosophy* 18(1):32-63.
- Bächtiger, A., Setälä, M., & Grönlund, K. (2014). Towards a New Era of Deliberative Mini-Publics. In K. Grönlund, A. Bächtiger & M. Setälä (eds), *Deliberative mini-publics involving citizens in the democratic process*. Colchester: ECPR press, pp. 225-241.
- Beetham, D. (2012). Evaluating new vs old forms of citizen engagement and participation. In B. Geissel & K. Newton (eds), *Evaluating democratic Innovations curing the democratic malaise?* London and New York: Routledge, pp.56-68.
- Beyer, S. & Bowden, E.M. (1997). Gender Differences in Self-Perceptions: Convergent Evidence from Three Measures of Accuracy and Bias. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 23(2): 157-172.
- Bohman, J. (1997). Deliberative Democracy and Effective Social Freedom: Capabilities, Resources and Opportunities. In J. Bohman. & W. Rehg (eds), *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp.321-345.
- Bryan, F.M. (2004). *Real Democracy: The New England Town Meeting and How it Works*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Burns, N., Lehman Scholzman, K. & Verba, S. (2001). *The Private Roots of Public Action: Gender Equality, and Political Participation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Caluwaerts, D. & Kavadis, D. (2014). Deliberative democracy in divided Belgium: An alternative for democracy on edge? In K. Grönlund, A. Bächtiger & M. Setälä (eds), *Deliberative mini-publics involving citizens in the democratic process*. Colchester: ECPR press, pp.135-156.
- Coffé, H. (2013). Women stay local, men go national and global? Gender differences in political interest. *Sex and Roles* 69(5-6):323-338.
- Curato, N., Dryzek, J.S., Elcan, S.A., Hendriks, C. & Niemeyer, S. (2017). Twelve Key Findings in Deliberative Democracy Research. *Daedalus* 146(3): 28-38.
- Dryzek, J.S. (2009). The Australian Citizens' Parliament: A world first. *Journal of Public Deliberation* 5(1).

Dryzek, J.S. (2007). Theory, Evidence and the Tasks of Deliberation. In S.W. Rosenberg, S. (ed), *Deliberation, participation and democracy, can the people govern?* Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, pp.236-250.

Dryzek, J.S. (2000). *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Electoral Commission (2004). *Gender and Political Participation*. London: The Electoral Commission.

Elstub, S. & McLaverty, P. (2014). Introduction: Issues and Cases in Deliberative Democracy. In S. Elstub & P. McLaverty (eds), *Deliberative Democracy: Issues and Cases*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.2-16.

Elstub, S. (2014). Mini-publics: Issues and Cases in Deliberative Democracy. In S. Elstub & P. McLaverty (eds), *Deliberative Democracy: Issues and Cases*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.166-188.

European Commission (2014). *European Youth: Participation in Democratic Life, Flash Eurobarometer 375*. Brussels: The European Commission

Farrell, D.M., O'Malley, E. & Suiter, J. (2013). Deliberative Democracy in Action Irish-style: The 2011 We the Citizens Pilot Citizens' Assembly *Irish Political Studies* 28(1): 99-113.

Farrell, D.M., Harris, C. & Suiter, J. (2017). Bringing people into the heart of Irish constitutional design: The Irish Constitutional Convention 2012-2014. In X, Contiades & A. Fotiadou (eds), *Participatory Constitutional Change*. London: Routledge, pp. 120-136.

Felicetti, A., Niemeyer, S. & Curato, N. (2016). Improving deliberative participation: connecting mini-publics to deliberative systems. *European Political Science Review* 8(3): 427-448.

Fishkin, J.S. (2012). Deliberative Polling: Reflections on an ideal made practical. In B. Geissel & K. Newton (eds), *Evaluating democratic Innovations curing the democratic malaise?* London and New York: Routledge, pp. 71-89.

Fishkin, J.S. & Mansbridge, J. (2017). Introduction. *Daedalus* 146(3): 6-13.

Fournier, P., Van der Kolk, H., Carty, R.K., Blais, A. & Rose, J. (2011). *When citizens decide: lessons from citizen assemblies on electoral reform*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fraile, M. (2014). Does deliberation contribute to decreasing the gender gap in knowledge? *European Union Politics* 15(3): 372–388.

Fraile, M. & Gomez, R. (2017). Bridging the enduring gender gap in political interest in Europe: The relevance of promoting gender equality. *European Journal of Political Research* 56(3):601-618.

Fraser, N. (1992). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. In C. Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Boston: MIT Press.

Fung, A. (2003). Recipes for public spheres: eight institutional design choices and their consequences. *Journal of Political Philosophy* 11(3):338–367.

Geissel, B. (2012). Impacts of democratic innovations in Europe: findings and desiderata. In B. Geissel & K. Newton (eds), *Evaluating democratic Innovations curing the democratic malaise?* London and New York: Routledge, pp.163-183.

Gerber, M. (2015). Equal Partners in Dialogue? Participation Equality in a Transnational Deliberative Poll (Europolis). *Political Studies* 63(1):110–130.

Gerber, M., Bächtiger, A., Shikano, S. Reber, S. & Rohr, S. (2016). Deliberative Abilities and Influence in a transnational deliberative poll (EUROPOLIS). *British Journal of Political Science*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–26.

Grönlund, K., Herne, K. & Setälä, M. (2015). Does Enclave deliberation polarize opinions? *Political Behaviour* 37(4):995-1020.

Grünenfelder, R. & Bächtiger, A. (2007). Gendered Deliberation? How Men and Women Deliberate in Legislatures. Presented at the ECPR joint sessions, Helsinki.

Hansen, S.B. (1997). Talking about Politics: Gender and Contextual Effects on Political Proselytizing. *Journal of Politics* 59(1):73-103.

Hansen, K.M. (2006). The equality paradox of deliberative democracy: Evidence from a national Deliberative Poll. Presented at ECPR joint sessions, Nicosia.

Harris, C. (2018). Deliberative Mini-publics: Defining and Designing. In S. Elstub & O. Escobar (eds), *The Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance*. Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar

Hendriks, C.M., Dryzek, J.S. & Hunhold, C. (2007). Turning up the Heat: Partisanship in Deliberative Innovation. *Political Studies* 55(2):362-383.

Hickerson, A. & Gastil, J. (2008). Assessing the Difference Critique of Deliberation: Gender, Emotion, and the Jury Experience. *Communication Theory* 18(2):281-303.

Higher Education Authority (2017). Higher Educational Institutional Staff Profiles by Gender: A Report. Dublin: Higher Education Authority.

Isernia, P. & Fishkin, J. S. (2014). The Europolis deliberative poll. *European Union Politics* 15(3):311–327.

Karpowitz, C.F. & Raphael, C. (2016). Ideals of Inclusion in Deliberation. *Journal of Public Deliberation* 12(2): article 3.

Karpowitz, C.F. & Mendelberg, T. (2014). *The Silent Sex Gender, Deliberations and Institutions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Karpowitz, C.F., Mendelberg, T. & Shaker, L. (2012). Gender Inequality in Deliberative Participation. *American Political Science Review* 103(3):533-547.

Lupia, A. & Norton, A. (2017). Inequality is always in the room: Language and Power in Deliberative Democracy. *Daedalus* 146 (3): 64-76.

Mansbridge, J., Bohman, J., Chambers, S., Estlund, D., Follesdal, A., Fung, A., Lafont, C., Manin, B., & Marti, J. (2010). The Place of Self-Interest and the Role of Power in Deliberative Democracy. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 18(1): 64-100.

Mansbridge, J. (1999). Everyday talk in the Deliberative System. In S. Macedo (ed), *Deliberative Politics: Essays on Democracy and Disagreement*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp.211-239.

Mendelberg, T. & Karpowitz, C.F. (2007). How People Deliberate about Justice: Groups, Gender, and Decision Rules. In S.W. Rosenberg, S. (ed), *Deliberation, participation and democracy, can the people govern?* Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, pp.101-129.

Mendelberg, T., Karpowitz, C. F. & Oliphant, J. B. (2014). Gender inequality in deliberation: Unpacking the black box of interaction. *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(1):18–44.

Norris, P. (2002). *Democratic Phoenix reinventing political activism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Pedrini, S. (2014). Deliberative Capacity in the Political and Civic Sphere. *Swiss Political Science Review* 20(2):263-286.

Siu, A. (2017). Deliberation and the Challenge of Inequality. *Daedalus* 146(3): 119-128.

Smith, G. (2012). Deliberative democracy and mini-publics. In B. Geissel & K. Newton (eds), *Evaluating democratic Innovations curing the democratic malaise?* London and New York: Routledge, pp. 90-111.

Smith, G. (2009). *Democratic innovations: Designing institutions for citizen participation*. Cambridge University Press.

Steiner, J. (2012). *The foundations of deliberative democracy: Empirical research and normative implications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stolle, D. & Hooghe, M. (2011). Shifting inequalities. *European Societies* 13(1):119-142.

Suiter, J., Farrell, D.M. & Harris, C. (2016a). The Irish Constitutional Convention: A case of 'high legitimacy'? In M. Reuchamps & J. Suiter (eds), *Constitutional Deliberative Democracy in Europe*. Colchester, Essex: ECPR Press.

Suiter, J., Farrell, D.M. & O'Malley, E. (2016b). When do deliberative citizens change their opinions? Evidence from the Irish Citizens' Assembly. *International Political Science Review* 37(2):198-212.

Young, I.M. (2000). *Inclusion and Democracy*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Table 1 Mini-public design features: External and Internal Inclusion

<b>External Inclusion [Representation]</b>	<b>Internal Inclusion [Voice and Consideration]</b>
Recruitment	Facilitation
Agenda and agenda setting powers	Group Composition
Presenter Diversity	Format
Oversight	Decision making rules
	Communication mode
	Oversight

Table 2 Presenter diversity (Gender) per weekend

<b>Weekend</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Technical/Social*</b>
1	Presidential term and voting age	4	3	Technical
2	Role of the women in the home and women's participation in politics	2	8	Social
3	Same-sex marriage	11	10	Social
4	Electoral system reform	5	2	Technical
5	Electoral system reform	6	2	Technical
6	Voting rights for citizens resident outside the state	10	6	Technical
7	Removal of the offense of blasphemy	9	2	Social
8	Dáil Reform	7	4	Technical
9	Economic, social and cultural rights	6	2	Social
<b>Total</b>		<b>60</b>	<b>39</b>	

\* Institutional/Political issues were classified as technical, for example electoral reform, reducing the voting age, extending voting rights to citizens' abroad etc. Issues that had a moral and/or social aspect were classified as social, namely same sex marriage, removal of blasphemy as an offence etc. The second weekend which discussed the constitutional provision on women's place in the home and women's representation in politics and public life was a challenge as it contained both political and social elements but the discussion as reflected in the ballot paper and its recommendations focused primarily on the social aspect (place in the home and wider issue of gender equality) despite equal billing on the weekend's agenda (see [www.constitution.ie](http://www.constitution.ie) for details).

Table 3

## Logistic Regression explaining attendance at Convention weekends

Model 1	
(Intercept)	2.37 *** (0.62)
Gender (Male)	-0.11 (0.80)
Participant (Non Politician)	2.66 ** (1.09)
Subject (Technical)	-0.10 (0.73)
Gender * Subject	0.36 (0.92)
Participant Type*Subject	-1.43 (1.19)
Number of observations	662

\*\*\* p < 0.01, \*\* p < 0.05, \* p < 0.1,

Table 4 Participation by Subject Type, by Gender, by Session Type compared with a Cross Table of Average (per capita) Participation by Gender by Session Type

	Model 1
(Intercept)	15.04 *** (0.80)
Session Type (Plenary)	-14.59 *** (1.14)
Gender (Male)	-1.04 (1.09)
Subject (Technical)	-1.74 * (0.94)
Session Type (Plenary)*Gender(M)	1.14 (1.54)
Session Type (Plenary)*Subject(T)	1.86 (1.40)
Gender(M)*Subject(T)	-0.48 (1.32)
Session Type (Plenary) *Gender(M)*Subject(T)	0.40 (1.88)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.40
Adj. R	0.40
Number of observations	1270

\*\*\* p < 0.01, \*\* p < 0.05, \* p < 0.1

	No. of Speech Acts Round Table Sessions	No. of Speech Acts Plenary Sessions
<b>Female</b>	14	0.53
<b>Male</b>	13	0.58

Table 5 Participation by Gender and Participant Type by Session Type

	Model 1	Model 2 (Female Politician)	Model 3 (Male Politician)
(Intercept)	13.89 *** (0.47)	17.60 *** (0.83)	15.05*** (0.82)
Session Type (Plenary)	-13.35 *** (0.66)	-15.90 *** (1.29)	-13.90*** (1.16)
Gender (Male)	-1.41 ** (0.62)		
Participant Type		-5.42 *** (1.01)	-3.65*** (0.97)
Session Type (Plenary) * Participant Type	1.46 * (0.88)	5.08 *** (1.83)	2.84** (1.38)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.40	0.37	0.34
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.39	0.36	0.34
Number of observations	1270	388	715

\*\*\* p < 0.01, \*\* p < 0.05, \* p < 0.1

Table 6 Participation by Numbers of Women per Table by Session Type

	Model 1
(Intercept)	45.76 *** (5.90)
Women per table	11.43 *** (2.04)
Session Type (Plenary)	44.48 *** (8.34)
Women per table * Session Type (Plenary)	-10.69 *** (2.89)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.67
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.67
Num. obs.	1326

\*\*\* p < 0.001, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05

Table 7 Cross Table of Attendance by Gender by Table Type

<b>Table Type (Without Note-takers &amp; Facilitators)</b>			<b>Table Type (With Note-takers &amp; Facilitators)</b>	
	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
<b>Male Majority</b>	15% (44)	9% (32)	22% (62)	17% (60)
<b>Equal Gender</b>	37% (105)	30% (110)	22% (61)	20% (71)
<b>Female Majority</b>	48% (134)	61% (220)	56% (160)	63% (230)

Table 8 Cross Table of Average (Per Capita) Participation by Gender by Table Composition (with & without Facilitators & Note-takers)

<b>Table Type (Without Note-takers &amp; Facilitators)</b>			<b>Table Type (With Note-takers &amp; Facilitators)</b>	
	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
<b>Male Majority</b>	13	11	12	11
<b>Equal Gender</b>	14	13	14	13
<b>Female Majority</b>	16	15	16	17

Table 9 Regression of Participation at Roundtable Discussions by Table Composition

		Model 1
(Intercept)		13.49 *** (0.84)
Gender (Male)		-0.81 (1.18)
Table (Female majority)		2.44 (1.54)
Table (Male majority)		-0.52 (1.13)
Gender(M)*Table (Female majority)		-0.66 (2.35)
Gender(M)*Table (Male majority)		-0.80 (1.52)
R <sup>2</sup>		0.02
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>		0.01
Number of observations	636	

\*\*\* p < 0.01, \*\* p < 0.05, \* p < 0.1

APPENDIX

Table 10 Regression of Participation by Deliberation Type & Participant Type

Model 1	
(Intercept)	16.93 *** (0.64)
Session Type (Plenary)	-15.85 *** (0.91)
Gender (Male)	-1.33 ** (0.61)
Participant Type	-4.44 *** (0.66)
Session Type (Plenary) * Gender (Male)	1.40 (0.87)
Session Type (Plenary) * Participant Type	3.64 *** (0.93)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.42
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.41
Num. obs.	1270

\*\*\* p < 0.001, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05

Table 11 Participation by Numbers of Women per Table by Session Type by Participant Type

Model 1	
(Intercept)	46.01 *** (6.12)
Women per Table	11.42 *** (2.05)
Participant Type	-0.35 (2.22)
Session Type (Plenary)	-44.65 *** (8.65)
Women per Table * Session Type (Plenary)	-10.69 *** (2.89)
Participant Type * Session Type (Plenary)	0.23 (3.14)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.67
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.67
Num. obs.	1326

\*\*\* p < 0.001, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05

Table 12 Regression of Participation at Roundtable Discussions by Table Composition

		Model 1
(Intercept)	16.13 ***	(1.18)
Gender (Male)	-0.76	(1.16)
Participant Type	-3.92 **	(1.24)
Table Type (Female majority)	2.67	(2.24)
Table Type (Male majority)	-0.94	(1.56)
Gender (Male) * Table Type (Female majority)	0.18	(2.36)
Gender (Male) * Table Type (Male majority)	-0.90	(1.49)
Participant Type * Table Type (Female majority)	-0.59	(2.55)
Participant Type * Table Type (Male majority)	0.82	(1.59)
R <sup>2</sup>		0.06
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>		0.05
Num. obs.		636

\*\*\* p < 0.001, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05

