

# MISQ Archivist

## Investigating the Nature of Change in Factors Affecting Gender Equity in the IT Sector: A Longitudinal Study of Women in Ireland

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### Abstract

*How and why* do societal, organizational, and individual factors affecting gender equity in the IT field change over time? To answer this question, a longitudinal investigation of the nature of change in factors affecting the position of women in the IT profession was undertaken. It was conducted in Ireland against the backdrop of fluctuations in the nation's socio-economic status. The *individual differences theory of gender and IT* was used to analyze life history interviews conducted at four points in time with a total of 63 women whose stories cover the decades from the 1970s to the 2010s. What resulted is a dynamic extension of this theory through the addition of seven themes that characterize the nature of change in factors affecting women IT professionals. The effect on women of economic changes in Ireland is shown to occur through changes in other factors: environmental (i.e., policy, infrastructural, and cultural), identity (e.g., motherhood), and individual (e.g., family). The results reveal both gradual and dramatic changes in an evolving picture of women in this sector, against the backdrop of the peaks and valleys of Ireland's economy. Both transformational and enduring images emerge from this look at Ireland over five decades.

**Keywords:** Culture, gender, individual differences theory of gender and IT, interpretive, Ireland, IS profession, longitudinal, social inclusion, socioeconomic, women