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# Messengers of the People?

An analysis of representation and role orientations in the Irish Parliament

*By Mary-Clare O'Sullivan*

Submitted for the degree of Ph.D. in Political Science

University of Dublin, Trinity College

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## Summary

The objective behind this dissertation is to increase academic understanding of the operation of Irish representative democracy, since there has been no similar systematic and contemporary study of Dáil Éireann or its members. At a broader level, it contributes to the political science discipline by applying theories and models generated elsewhere to a political system unique in its institutional and cultural composition. It also differs from existing research in applying a broader conception of representation, viewing it not merely as one dimension of a representative's role, but rather as a defining feature underpinning all elements of an MP's functions and activities.

I use Irish TDs as my unit of analysis and draw upon theories of representation, role theory and the rational actor perspective. Based on data from face-to face interviews conducted with TDs as well as a survey, census data and material from the parliamentary record, I investigate the relationship between institutional rules and constraints, and the attitudes and behaviour of representatives.

In particular, I assess the extent to which theories and models of representation might help in understanding TDs' role orientations and, more generally, the operation of Irish democracy. I test the applicability of the responsible party and policy congruence models to the Irish case, and investigate the representational style and focus of TDs. After examining the relevance of these models and

concepts, I classify TDs according to a three-fold typology developed deductively, and assess the extent to which a TD's preferred role type predicts his or her behaviour.

The main findings are that Irish TDs are similar to colleagues internationally in being socio-economically unrepresentative of those that they represent. They are unusual in the degree to which their policy stances are unstructured according to an underlying liberal-conservative dimension. Nevertheless, they are similar to MPs in other countries in that party affiliation is a much stronger predictor of policy stances than socio-economic traits. TDs of different parties are much more polarised on most issues than their supporters in the population, but contrary to findings for other systems, TDs of all parties are more socially liberal and left-wing than their supporters.

TDs were found in the main to be trustees in relation to their voters but delegates in their relationship with their party, demonstrating an even higher level of party discipline in voting than in other liberal democracies. Constituency and national representation was much more important to TDs than interest groups, party members or voters and the most numerous role type among Irish TDs was national promoter followed by constituency promoters and interest promoters. However, classification in the typology was not found to significantly influence behaviour. Irish TDs are in the main more pragmatic in their approach to their job than MPs in other countries but overall can be described as more formalist than populist democrats.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1: Context – Irish Politics and International Research

"Political institutions are both empirical and normative entities, which cannot be understood fully unless their normative foundations are laid bare" (Rothstein 1996, 139).

The objective behind this dissertation is to contribute to a fuller understanding of representative democracy and, in particular, to assess the extent to which academic theories and models of democracy, both empirical and normative, contribute to an understanding of the everyday operation of political institutions in democratic political systems. This will be achieved through a case study of *Dáil Éireann*, the Irish parliament. I focus on the institution of parliament because popularly elected assemblies have long been seen as the centre-piece of democratic governance and the forum through which 'the people'[1] can hold the Executive to account. Farrell, for example, states in the Irish context that the establishment of the first Dáil Éireann "originally established the authentic representative credentials of modern Irish democracy" (Farrell 1994, 3). To understand how a democratic system works, one must therefore observe the operation of its parliament.

Political scientists have long recognised the importance of parliaments. This fact is demonstrated by the existence of the sub-discipline of legislative studies.[2] However, Irish political science is under-developed (see Coakley 1991) so that many topics comprehensively covered in international research have not been explored in any great depth for Ireland. I attempt to fill one such gap with this dissertation and by focussing on Dáil Éireann as

[1] The issue of exactly who comprises ' the people' is a topic of controversy in democratic theory (see for example Hyland 1995, 70-73).

[2] This is apparent also from the existence of journals dedicated to legislatures and their

the most powerful popularly elected Irish institution, I expect at one level to increase academic understanding of the operation of Irish representative democracy, but at a broader level to assess the viability of concepts and models of representation in the case of a small unitary state which remains remarkably homogenous despite its membership of the European Union since 1973.

The Irish political system is modelled on the Westminster model of government adopted during Ireland's transition to a democratic, independent nation state between 1921-1937.[3] Political power is concentrated in a Cabinet (Executive) appointed by the Prime Minister (given the title of *an Taoiseach*[4]) who is elected from and by the popularly elected assembly. This assembly, Dáil Éireann, is one branch of the *Oireachtas*, the national parliament. Dáil Éireann is constitutionally and in practice, the most powerful branch of the Oireachtas, as it is to Dáil Éireann alone that the government is responsible. The Constitution Review Group Report of 1996 describes Dáil Éireann as 'the paramount body under the Constitution in relation to proposals for legislation, public expenditure and taxation' (Constitution Review Group 1996, 37). The office of the President is largely a symbolic position with very limited political powers while *Seanad Éireann* is primarily imbued with 'delaying and deliberative functions' (CRG 1996, 37).[5]

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operation such as *Legislative Studies Quarterly, Parliamentary Affairs* and the *Journal of Legislative Studies.*

[3] 1921 signalled the end of the War of Independence with Britain and in 1937 the institutions and rules of the new system were finalised with the enactment of Bunreacht na hÉireann, the Irish Constitution.

[4] Literally meaning chieftain.

[5] In addition, the Cabinet and Taoiseach must be members of Dáil Éireann, apart from a provision that two Cabinet ministers can be members of Seanad Éireann. In practice, Cabinet ministers are nearly always TDs. Only three senators have ever served as ministers.

This study of Dáil Éireann will contribute more broadly to the discipline of political science by applying theories and models generated elsewhere (particularly the United States) in a political context where localism and personalism have been identified as key elements of prevailing political culture (Coakley 1999, 36 and 53; Gallagher and Komito 1999, 228). Obviously, such models would have increased value were they also to explain the operation of representation in a variety of political systems. In particular, comparing and contrasting the operation of representation in countries with different systemic features explores the relationship between particular institutional forms and the practical operation of representation. In Ireland's case, its use of the PR-STV electoral system combined with cabinet government and a unitary system contrasts with, for example, the presidential system of the United States which is also federal and based upon a plurality electoral system. Were models and findings from the United States and elsewhere to apply in the case of Ireland, it would demonstrate that certain universal features of representation and representatives exist that are not caused or created by institutional factors.

Apart from the contribution that such a study can make to political science, it will also provide an academic grounding for debates on the operation of the Irish representative system. Recent Irish political events such as the exposure of political corruption in Public Tribunals of Inquiry[6] have led to a more vocal questioning in some quarters about the extent to which Irish political leaders are accountable, responsive and responsible to the public. Another indicator of a developing gap between representatives and the public is the fact that, despite a consensus existing among the Irish political establishment in favour of the introduction of Divorce in a referendum in 1995 and the ratification of the Nice Treaty in 2001, a large proportion of

[6] For example the McCracken and Flood tribunals named after their Chairmen. For details on these go to www.ireland.com/ special/tribunals or see O' Halpin (2000).

the electorate voted against these measures.[7] Disquiet has also been expressed that the current government is maintaining its Dáil majority through the support of a group of independent TDs in return for the allocation of increased resources for their respective constituencies (see O' Connor Alison 2,000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2000d) This has been deemed antidemocratic and an example of minority interests prevailing over the general good. In addition, renewed discussions about the introduction of an alternative electoral system in Ireland involves normative assumptions about the proper relationship between representatives and the electorate (see Laver 1998a). Other proposals regarding Dáil reform (for example Fine Gael 2000) raise parallel questions about the functions and performance of the parliament and its members which this dissertation will attempt to address.

In contributing both to the discipline of political science and to the study of Irish politics, this research will, particularly in the next chapter, be placed in the context of a significant body of literature in various fields of political science including democratic theory, legislative studies and Irish politics. In the remainder of this chapter, I will describe the approach and methodology that I will use in the dissertation, discuss the theories and models that will be tested, list the key questions that will be explored, and outline the structure and content of the dissertation.

## 1.2 Assumptions and Approach

### (i) Roles, Rationality and Rules.

Legislative studies are similar to most sub-disciplines of political science in that different approaches and traditions have prevailed during different periods. At various times institutionalism, structuralism, and rational choice among others have dominated the study of parliaments (see Mezey 1993). The influential *new institutionalism* proposed by March and Olsen (1984)

[7] The introduction of divorce was narrowly carried by 50.3 % to 49.7 while the Nice Treaty was defeated by 53.9% to 46.1%.

involves the fusing of a number of approaches incorporating the study of formal and informal rules with the assumption that members of parliament are purposive individuals who adapt and make choices in the context of these rules constraining them (Searing 1994, 3). This approach gives weight both to the autonomy of the individual actor, and also to the structural context within which he or she must operate. I will follow this example by concentrating on the individual TD as a primary unit of analysis, while also investigating the relationship between institutional rules and constraints, and the attitudes and behaviour of representatives. From these specific findings, more general conclusions will be drawn about the operation of representative democracy in Ireland and the overall implications such observations might have for comparative political research.

Although when taken separately each involves different attitudes and assumptions about the nature of individuals, I will draw upon both the rational actor perspective and role theory in studying TDs as individual actors. According to the rational choice approach, an individual is viewed as an instrumentally rational agent with certain given preferences. This agent makes choices with the aim of maximising the likelihood of achieving these preferences. The performance and structure of institutions are explained merely as the aggregate of this individual action (for a more extensive introduction to rational choice, see Laver 1997 and Shepsle and Bonchek 1997). A further sub-set or version of rational choice that has been applied to research on political behaviour and institutions is principal-agent theory. It is based on the adaptation of concepts usually applied in an organisational management context and centred around the relationship between the employee (or agent) and the employer (or principal). The main dilemma that principal agent theorists attempt to solve is how to ensure that an agent acts in the interests of the principal even when the agent has different interests and an informational advantage. Such approaches can be traced back to Thomas Hobbes who used the notion of a contract to describe the

process by which individuals hand over sovereignty to a ruler in order to secure their own security. This ruler then acts in the name of the whole group as its accredited agent or representative (Sabine 1964, 469). Many empirical studies of representation have been based on this principal-agent approach, viewing the represented as the principal and the representative as the agent (for example Mayhew 1974 and Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991). I will incorporate some principal-agent assumptions in my analysis of Dáil Éireann by investigating whether TDs conceive of themselves as agents and for any who do, whom they identify as the principal. I also assume that Irish TDs are likely to be motivated at least to some extent by considerations of self-interest such as re-election.

However, the main assumptions of my approach come from role theory which as Saalfeld and Müller (1997, 1) state has "constituted one of the most influential traditions in social theory and research and has had a significant impact on empirical research." Essentially role theory connects individuals to roles associated with their social position. These roles are linked to particular internalised norms and behaviour, which are seen as appropriate for an individual fulfilling a particular role. Behaviour is thereby understood more fully by exploring the nature and content of these roles (for a more comprehensive discussion of role theory see Biddle 1979 and Saalfeld and Müller 1997). Borrowing from the precepts of role theory I assume that TDs are enabled to achieve certain objectives due to the power associated with their position, but that constraints also exist in the form of the normative expectations that they must fulfil by virtue of their occupying this position (Hollis and Smith 1986, 275-6). They are empowered to vote on the floor of the Dáil for instance, but are constrained by the expectation that they will vote as mandated by their party.[8] Failure to meet this expectation results in sanctions - for example TDs who vote against their

[8] Voting is somewhat different for Independent TDs and depends on whether any agreement or understanding exists with the Government. If it does not, tradition usually dictates that such TDs vote with the Opposition.

party usually lose the party whip.[9] Like institutionalists, I recognise that TDs are constrained by formal rules governing the Irish political system (e.g. the Constitution) and those specifically covering the Dáil (e.g. Standing Orders). I assume that TDs are influenced by some norms stemming directly from their own attitudes and beliefs, but that they are also affected by the norms of other actors holding either the same or different positions within the overall structure (Hollis and Smith 1986, 275). Examples of relevant actors for TDs include civil servants, cabinet ministers, and voters. The multiplicity of sources for norms increase the likelihood of role conflicts, with TDs having to decide which to prioritise in a particular context by balancing different obligations and dealing with situations which are not explicitly covered by regulations or established norms. In this regard, a distinction has been made between intra-role conflict (conflict of expectations/ demands within one role) and inter-role conflict (conflict between competing roles) (Saalfeld and Müller 1997, 6-7).

This conception of role "is sensitive to the interplay between institutional frameworks and individual preferences – and to the fact that this balance between framework and preference varies greatly from one role to another" (Searing 1994, 6). For the purpose of the dissertation, I will define roles as "particular patterns of interrelated *goals, attitudes* and *behaviours* that are characteristic of people in particular positions" (Searing 1994, 18) on the basis that this is a broad interpretation which allows for the incorporation of rational choice and institutionalist assumptions where appropriate. TDs will therefore be analysed as *rational role players* (Hollis and Smith 1986, 270).

The definition and version of role that I have adopted is one which is broadly compatible with recent attempts to further develop role theory and expand on Searing's approach (see for example Strøm 1997) through

[9] In practice this means losing all the privileges and resources that go with party membership.

placing a revised conception of role within a rational choice framework. I agree for example that parliamentary roles can be "driven by reasons (preferences), and constrained by rules" (Strøm 1997, 158). However, writers such as Strøm perpetuate the overemphasis that rational choice places on personal ambition as an end in itself and neglect such issues as the role of ideological or policy goals and the influence of unexpected events[10] on a political career. Specifically, to limit the rationale for parliamentary behaviour to four objectives: reselection, re-election, party office and legislative office is an oversimplification of the political experience, goals and attitudes of members of parliament, at least in the Irish case. It also fails to explain why TDs run for one party or another or in particular as an Independent candidate unlikely to obtain any legislative office.

I therefore prefer a broader motivational approach which allows for varying role conceptions among TDs by viewing roles as artifacts created by fixed institutional and cultural conditions applying to all TDs but also influenced by variables such as the constituency type, party or gender of a TD. I will use this conceptual framework to investigate the representational goals, attitudes, and behaviour of TDs, and in particular the extent to which theories and models of representation might help us to understand these role orientations and, more generally, the operation of Irish democracy.

**(ii) <u>The Functions of Parliament</u>.**

Another significant aspect of my approach is that Dáil Éireann will be analysed according to its status as a *representative assembly* rather than as a *legislature*, whose defining feature is its lawmaking function.[11] There are two principal justifications for this. Firstly, this focus recognises the importance of parliaments in performing other functions such as

[10] An obvious example is that many Irish TDs entered politics through the untimely death of a relative.

[11] For this reason Dáil Éireann will be referred to as an assembly or parliament rather than as a legislature for the course of this dissertation.

legitimation and system maintenance (Norton 1990). Secondly (and more importantly), it gives recognition to the centrality of representation to the whole system of democratic governance, something that has been underplayed in much of the existing comparative research on parliaments.

This is particularly obvious in the work of those who identify representation as just one of many parliamentary functions. For example, Michael Mezey identifies three models of legislative activity: the policy-making model, the representational model, and the legitimation model (Mezey 1979, 13-20). Similarly Wahlke *et al* state in their introduction to *The Legislative System*: 'we have proceeded on the assumption that ...many parliamentary bodies ... do in fact perform decisional, legitimizing, representative and other functions (Wahlke *et al* 1962, 6-7). However, to classify representation as one parliamentary function among others ignores the fact that representation is the mechanism by which the rule of a political elite can be termed 'democratic.' To separate a 'representing function' from a 'law-making function' implies that members of parliament are no longer representatives when they are drafting bills or placing amendments. The presumption throughout this dissertation is that because they are directly elected by the people as their representatives, members of parliaments are representatives in performing *all* their parliamentary activities. Therefore, all those activities of TDs that TDs themselves perceive to be part of their job will be viewed as elements of representative activity.

It is important to stress, however, that while Dáil Éireann will be analysed in this research specifically in terms of its status as a representative body, this does not imply that the law-making activities of TDs will be ignored. Rather it means that I will examine goals, attitudes and behaviour of TDs, in areas such as policy-making and executive scrutiny, specifically as activities carried out on behalf of the people as their elected representatives rather than as parliamentary functions separate from a representative function. As

will be highlighted further in Chapter Two, this is a change in approach from much of the previous Irish literature. Instead of merely seeing representation as involving constituency work, it will be assumed to encompass all elements and activities of a TD's job.

In summary, the focus of this thesis will primarily be the role orientations (comprising goals, attitudes and behaviour) of Irish TDs with a view to learning more about the operation of Dáil Éireann and the Irish representative system. In particular, it is hypothesised that TDs can be classified according to a three-fold typological scheme of role orientations. The extent to which existing models and theories of democracy and representation aid understanding of the operation of representation in Ireland will also be investigated. From this assessment, the general cross-national applicability of such models and concepts can be discussed and their usefulness for researchers in future political science research predicted. Firstly, however I will describe the various models that will be referred to in the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

### 1.3 Models of Democracy

The first set of models to be examined will be normatively based theories of democracy. Nowadays, democracy is accepted as the only morally defensible form of government, but systems of direct democracy (such as that which for example operated in ancient Athens) are no longer assumed to be practical.[12] Representation through the direct election of leaders is the way in which 'the people' retain a say in governance. Contemporary normative debates centre not on the merits of competing political systems, but rather on the relative importance of various democratic ideals, and which representational framework can best achieve these ideals. The fact

[12] Some authors disagree (see for example Pateman 1970 and Budge 1993). Also there are some limited opportunities for direct democracy in various political systems (e.g. for the US, see Bowler, Donovan and Tolbert 1998).

that representation and democracy are both contested concepts[13] means that such debates are ongoing and result in different institutional arrangements. No universally accepted model or uniform set of qualities exists against which a representative system can be tested, and there is even dispute about the kind of standards which should be applied.

One of the most central normative debates in democratic theory occurs around the extent to which the people should participate for a system to be classified as democratic. One perspective is held by *formal, proceduralist,* or *minimalist* democrats who support the Schumpeterian definition of democracy as: "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter 1987, 262).

*Substantive* or *populist* democrats hold a broader conception stressing the importance of formal rights and duties, but also emphasising the necessity of evaluating the extent to which these procedures allow for an input for the represented in day to day political decision-making. Procedures are a necessary but insufficient condition for this version of democracy which can be summed up as "equal *effective* rights of participation in the making of those decisions to which a person is subject" (Hyland 1995, 75). Procedural democrats argue that it is undesirable or, at the very least, unnecessary that the public should have more involvement in decision-making than merely electing leaders every few years. Substantive democrats on the other hand believe that democratic standards are not met simply by a population electing their leaders at free and fair elections every few years. Rather they believe that the relationship between the rulers and the ruled should be an ongoing one in which the governed should have as much say as possible in day to day political decisions.

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[13] The proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about ...(its)... proper uses on the part of ...(its)... users" (Gallie 1964, 158). For the five conditions a concept must fulfil to be classified as a contested concept in Gallie's terms, see p. 161.

These different interpretations result in radically different views of representation. For minimalist democrats, representation is seen as a positive mechanism which, by limiting popular participation, ensures that decisions are made in a considered way by a select group of leaders. They evaluate the representative process according to the extent to which electoral procedures are fair, and the opportunity is given to reject the leaders at the subsequent election. Such procedures are therefore assessed according to the extent to which the leaders are *accountable* and *responsible*. These criteria are also important for substantive or populist democrats, but they also judge processes of representation according to the extent to which they provide the represented with an influence in decision making between elections according to qualities of *representativeness* and *responsiveness*. To summarise, procedural democrats see representation as a political tool whereas for substantive democrats it is viewed more as a value.

For some extreme substantive democrats, the identity and background of elected leaders also matters. Who is elected is just as important as the procedures that govern their election. This view can be traced back to American Revolution and Alexander Hamilton's statement that "all classes of citizens should have some of their own numbers in the representative body, in order that their feelings and interests may be better understood and attended to" (Hamilton 1961, 257). This view, that representatives should mirror the population in socio-economic terms, has been labelled *microcosmic* or *descriptive* representation, and is considered by some substantive democrats to be the only way by which representative government can mean "accurate reflection of the community, or of the general opinion of the nation, or of the variety of interests of society" (Birch 1971, 61). This is based on an assumption that the backgrounds of individuals affects their policy stances, and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The first set of questions that I will address in this dissertation deals with the extent to which the Irish parliament operates according to substantive or procedural concepts of democracy. The central research questions addressed in this regard will be as follows:

- Do normative theories contribute to understanding the role orientations (goals, attitudes and behaviour) of Irish TDs?
- Do Irish TDs believe in formalist or populist conceptions of democracy?
- Are Irish TDs microcosmically representative of the population?
- Is there any evidence to support microcosmic theories of representation in the Irish case? In other words, is there a relationship between the policy stances of TDs and their socio-economic background?

### 1.4 Models of Representation

Other concepts and models of representation exist that are more empirical, and are particularly evident in comparative work on parliaments. One such conceptual framework will be used to structure the analysis of much of the remainder of the dissertation - the representational *style* and *focus* distinction first identified by Eulau *et al.*[14] Representational *style* refers to the degree of autonomy a representative has in acting for the represented. Representational *focus* refers to the interests that a representative takes into account when making a decision about how to act.

#### (i) Representational Style.

In normative terms, the key dichotomy in representational style is between trusteeship and delegation. One possibility is for representatives to act as an agent or delegate for the represented and follow their instructions. The alternative is for the representative to act as a trustee, using his or her own expert judgement according to what he or she believes is the best course of

[14] This distinction was first made in Eulau *et al* 1959 and developed in subsequent works, notably Wahlke *et al* 1962. See in particular p. 12 of the latter.

action. Whether one argues for the position of trustee or delegate usually stems from the opinion one has of the abilities of the general public and in particular their capacity for decision making. Both Edmund Burke in the eighteenth century and John Stuart Mill in the nineteenth century advocated the position of representative as trustee, stressing the importance of representation as a moral duty of the well-educated (Heywood 1994, 177). As Burke famously articulated to his constituents in Bristol "your representative owes you not his industry only but his judgement; and he betrays instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion" (Burke quoted in Pulzer 1975, 23). Similarly, J. S. Mill argued that "it is so important that the electors should choose as their representatives wiser men than themselves and should consent to be governed by that superior wisdom" (Mill quoted in Pulzer 1975, 25). Many contemporary writers still view leadership and the existence of expert and accountable elites as crucial for a democratic system to be stable and also to guarantee individual liberty (Sartori 1962, ch. 6, part 5, particularly p.118). Others who would subscribe more closely to the substantive democratic theories outlined in the previous section agree with the American revolutionaries and Thomas Paine at the end of the eighteenth century who viewed the representative as more of a delegate or agent (Heywood 1994, 179).

I will investigate the representational style variable by asking whether the role orientations of TDs correspond more closely to trustee or delegate conceptions of representation, and whether their own views or those of the voters are more important in determining their policy views. However, to obtain more detailed data, it is useful to differentiate analytically between different forms of delegation – party delegation, and voter or constituency delegation. The latter category can be further sub-divided into two groups - delegates who primarily promote the *opinions* of their constituents on policy issues, and delegates who primarily seek to achieve the *interests* or *needs* of

the constituency. I will examine the extent to which each of these forms of delegation exist in the Irish case.

Opinion delegation can be connected with theories of microcosmic representation. However, those who argue that representatives should represent the policy opinions of their constituents do not necessarily believe that policy interests and positions are connected with socio-economic characteristics. There are those who maintain that, for a system to be democratic, the policy stances taken by the representative should reflect that of their electorate. This form of delegation has been described as the *policy congruence model*. The extent to which policy congruence exists has been investigated for various cases, possibly most famously by Miller and Stokes in the United States through their construction of the 'diamond model' (see Miller and Stokes 1963 and chapter 2, section 3 of this dissertation ). I will assess the extent to which congruence exists in the Irish case by comparing the views of TDs on various policy issues with the views of the population.

Various points have been made with regard to the feasibility of the policy congruence model which lead me to predict that it will not be strongly apparent in the Irish case, and that other forms of delegation might be more applicable. For example, it is unlikely that voters or constituents are sufficiently homogenous in their positions on most issues for a uniform stance to be obvious to the representatives. If one believes that representatives should then promote the dominant constituency position, the difficulty of obtaining information on this position arises. Such weaknesses in the policy congruence model explain why an alternative form of policy delegation has been suggested which relies predominantly on the party political manifesto.

The centrality and strength of political parties in the representative process in most political systems outside the United States has led to the

construction of a model which reconciles a strong and stable party system with the idea of delegate representation of constituency opinion. This model, often termed the *responsible party model* describes a situation where political parties present coherent packages of policies to the voters at election time, the voters vote for the party whose policy stances are closest to their own, and the victorious party then gets the opportunity to implement its policy package in government (Norris 1997, 4-6).

Despite its initial attractiveness in explaining the process by which parties have become central to the governmental process, this model has been criticised on various different grounds (Thomassen 1994, 250-257). Many critics reject the basic assumptions of the model, particularly the claim that voters cast their votes after rationally analysing the various policy options presented to them. It can be predicted that this criticism will prove valid in the Irish case due to the fact that the electoral system of PRSTV compels the electorate to choose between members of the same party when casting their first preference vote. In other words, Irish voters cannot vote purely on the grounds of party policy, but must also choose between individual candidates of a party. The extent to which Irish TDs do in fact operate as party delegates will be addressed by investigating questions such as:

- How often do TDs disagree with their parties' policies on issues?
- In situations where TDs disagree with their party's policy on an issue, what strategies do they use to resolve the conflict?
- How often do TDs vote against the policy mandated by the party whip?
- What are TDs' attitudes to party discipline and its role in the Irish political process?

I will also explore the third form of delegate role for the Irish case: the promotion by representatives of the interests or needs of their constituents. A useful distinction has previously been made between *allocation* and *service* responsiveness where allocation responsiveness is pursuing the

general material needs of the constituency and service responsiveness refers to the redressing of individual grievances (Lawson 1980, 9).[15] As will be described in the next chapter, most of the existing literature relating to TDs focuses on this service element of their activity. In revisiting this issue the main point I will address is the extent to which previous research has neglected other forms of delegation or alternative representational style orientations. Particular questions that will be investigated here include:

- Is constituency work the principal activity that TDs perform?
- What is the attitude of TDs to constituency work? Do TDs resent this aspect of their role so that they would favour its extinction or do they in fact encourage and value it as a legitimate role for a TD?
- Are constituency work activities motivated by electoral considerations rather than role orientations?
- What proportion of their time do TDs spend on constituency work?

**(ii) <u>Representational Focus</u>.**

The investigation of the representational focus variable will further analyse party and constituency variables by testing their comparative importance with other representational foci of Irish TDs such as interest groups and the national interest. TDs do not have to be delegates to either party or constituency for these to be important elements of TD's representational orientation. In investigating whom it is that TDs represent, I will focus in particular on measuring the relative importance for TDs of foci such as the nation as a whole, party members, individual voters, party voters, and interest groups.

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[15] Service responsiveness can be defined as providing particularised benefits for constituents while allocation responsiveness can be defined as providing more generalised "pork barrel" benefits.

**(iii) Typology.**

Common practice in many previous studies of members of parliament has been to express patterns in their role orientations in the form of a classificatory scheme or typology. I will follow a similar approach and have devised a typology for the Irish case which I will test using interview and survey data. It incorporates findings about the goals, attitudes and behaviour of TDs in relation to theories of representation and representational style and focus. The broader interpretation of representation being used (incorporating all parliamentary functions) means that the typology will not be purely based on representational style and focus which describe only TDs' relationships with actors outside parliament. Another important function of TDs is to scrutinise the executive[16] so that TDs must decide how to orient themselves in the relationship between the institution of parliament and the Executive. In this regard, it is expected that TDs' role orientations will be constrained by various factors, both formal and informal. These include the parliamentary functions prescribed in Bunreacht na h-Éireann,[17] party loyalty, voter expectations and variables connected with social background and political socialisation.

I have derived my typology deductively based on dominant theories of representation and tested it on TDs by attempting to classify them in one of its three assumed types: national promoter, interest promoter and constituency promoter. The typology itself and the classification of TDs will be elaborated upon in chapter 9 of the dissertation.

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[16] Article 28.4.1° of Bunreacht na hÉireann states that "The Government shall be responsible to Dáil Éireann."

[17] Three can be identified: appointing the Executive, scrutinising the Executive and policy-making (Gallagher 1999, 177).

## 1.5 Methodology and Structure

More detail on the data collection and analysis procedures will be provided in Chapter Three. For the purpose of this introduction it is sufficient to say that the methodology I am using for this dissertation is face-to-face interviews with TDs, supplemented by mail surveys. This was an obvious way to proceed once the decision was made to focus on individual TDs as units of analysis. Interviewing was the preferred method on the basis that face-to-face interaction facilitates a deeper level understanding and more opportunities for open-ended responses than using mail surveys. An interview guide was devised to structure the interviews according to the key questions to be addressed and also to include specific indicators for the typology. I increased the sample by sending out mail surveys to TDs who did not participate in an interview. The primary data that I personally collected has been supplemented by other more objective measures such as parliamentary questions and speeches. I will also be referring to various surveys of public opinion, primarily opinion polls.

Various analytical techniques will be used including the coding of the interviews, surveys and parliamentary questions according to specific categories. I will also use statistical techniques such as regression analysis, difference of proportion tests, and factor analysis and these processes will be described in more detail in the chapters which follow.

In the next chapter, I will review a variety of existing research (covering areas such as democratic and representation theory, parliamentary studies and Irish politics) that relates to and has influenced my approach, while the third chapter will outline the methodology and data collection and analysis procedures in more detail. Chapter Four will investigate the background of Irish TDs over time, and consider whether there is evidence that social and economic characteristics affect the policy stances and behaviour of my sample. The following chapter will investigate whether policy congruence

exists in the Irish case, while Chapter Six will examine the extent to which Irish TDs hold formalist or populist theories of representation. Chapter Seven will deal with the representation style of Irish TDs while Chapter Eight will look at representation focus and the political goals of TDs. The penultimate chapter will introduce the typology derived from the data, outline the categorisation of TDs within it and investigate whether TDs' goals and attitudes predict their behaviour, or whether institutional or political factors are more influential. The final chapter will summarise the findings and analyse their implications for Irish politics and international political science as well as suggesting guidelines for future research.

# CHAPTER 2: THE STATE OF RESEARCH INTO POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

## 2.1 Introduction

There are various ways of classifying or organising literature on political representation. The main dichotomy is between theoretical and empirical approaches, but as Thomassen highlights, the objective behind most empirical research on representation is the testing of an empirical model of representation that is "deduced from a normative theory of democracy" (Thomassen 1994, 237). There exists therefore a wide range of literature that any broad ranging study of representation must acknowledge and apply. In this chapter, I will place my research in the context of a selection of research from fields such as democratic theory, comparative research, parliamentary studies, and Irish politics. The review will be organised around three forms of representation - symbolic representation, policy representation, and constituency representation. I will present examples of comparative literature for each form, and outline any existing work for the Irish case that will guide and provide the context for the questions I will investigate in subsequent chapters. In addition, I will briefly outline the methodology and findings of six books involving empirical parliamentary research that will frequently be referred to in this dissertation as either strongly influencing the scope and form of the research, or providing a useful case for comparison.

## 2.2 Symbolic Representation

Symbolic or microcosmic representation is based on the normative ideal that representatives should demographically reflect the society from which they are drawn. Two main claims underpin these theories. The first is symbolic. Unless certain minority or

underprivileged groups are represented, a parliament's status as a representative body may be undermined (Norris and Lovenduski 1995, 209) as representation is a symbolic indication that a group is recognised as being of equal value with others in society. In her work ' The Politics of Presence', Anne Phillips terms this 'the politics of recognition' (Phillips 1995, 40). The second reason is based on the assumption that the underrepresentation of certain social groups substantively alters the issue raised, stances taken, and policies implemented by parliaments. In arguing for increased representation for minority groups, Anne Phillips employs both justifications. In her major work 'The Politics of Presence,' she maintains that the gender, race and ethnicity of representatives comprise an important part of what makes those who represent 'representative' so that political changes must occur to ensure equal or proportionate presence in decision-making bodies for such groups (Phillips 1995, 12). This is particularly the case for systems where strong political parties dominate, and the policy packages that they offer exclude many groups and their interests.

Here Phillips is referring to the *responsible party model* already referred to in chapter 1 (section 1.4).[17] This model is similar to Anthony Downs' 1957 analogy of elections as a political market place where voters choose between competing policy packages at election times. Phillips argues that in such a marketplace, there is of necessity a limit to the combination of policy preferences that are available. She maintains that this fact means that even if attempts are made to take account of the interests of underrepresented groups, it is likely that policies would tend to be formulated <u>for</u> rather than <u>with</u> excluded groups and are unlikely to "engage with all relevant

[17] Various elements of this model have been disputed; for example, the assumption that voters vote based on policy packages of parties. For a full critique, see Thomassen 1995, 250-57.

concerns" (Phillips 1995, 13). This assumption is based upon her belief that political ideas and preferences are constrained by the characteristics of those who convey them (Phillips 1995, 13) so that the physical presence of such groups is the only way of ensuring that their identity, experience, and interests are reflected in public policy.

It is generally accepted that representation is important on the symbolic level. As Mellor ( quoted in Judge 1999, 33) states for the British case:

> it seems not unreasonable to contemplate how far apparently wider disaffection with parliamentary politics and government is compounded by a narrowing of the social base from which ... MPs are drawn.

However, there is little conclusive evidence to support the claim that policy preferences are coherently different among under-represented groups, so that their underrepresentation has policy implications. Various practical and theoretical difficulties exist in relation to the justification and empirical application of such theories. How can it be decided for example which groups should qualify for microcosmic representation? The only way of resolving this issue would be to determine which characteristics or backgrounds are relevant when it comes to policy formulation and articulation. Notwithstanding these difficulties, some attempts have been made to empirically test the connection between socio-economic traits and policy preferences and stances. Conclusions of such works tend to state that there is some relationship between the background of representative and their policy positions but that these are neutralised to a large degree by party considerations (see for example Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 31-39; Norris and Lovenduski 1995, 209-225).

In Chapter Four of this dissertation, I will examine the socio-economic backgrounds of current TDs and investigate the extent to

which there is evidence that these traits might influence their policy stances and priorities. Based on existing empirical research, the assumption that I will test is that TDs are not microcosmically representative of the population. Donald Matthews summarises previous findings succinctly when he states that cross-nationally, members of parliament are "better educated, possess higher status occupations, and have more privileged backgrounds than the people they represent" (Matthews 1987, 17). I will compare the traits that are particularly over-represented in Ireland with those identified by Matthews, and assess the extent to which Ireland conforms to or deviates from international patterns.

The background of TDs elected for the last 25 years has been documented in books published after each election to Dáil Éireann. These give an account of the election campaign followed by details of the socio-economic characteristics and recruitment channels of victorious candidates and a biography of each TD elected (see Nealon 1974, 1977, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1987, 1989, 1993, 1997; Donnelly 1993, 1998). At first glance, this data indicates that differences in background between TDs and the population in Ireland is similar to other liberal democracies, and that TDs are disproportionately older, better educated, and engaged in higher status occupations than those who elect them. The cross-national imbalance in gender representation also exists in Ireland. However, it has been argued that, although there are similarities between TDs and MPs elsewhere, "certain factors peculiar to Ireland produce a set of deputies rather different in some respects from most parliamentarians" (Gallagher 1985, 373). For a start, contrary to cross-national trends, owners of small businesses (notably publicans and undertakers) tend to be overrepresented in Dáil Éireann (Gallagher 1985, 376). This general trend has continued since

Gallagher first came to this conclusion in 1985 (see Gallagher 1987, 1989, 1993). The other major significant difference between Ireland and other parliamentary democracies is "the strength of (Dáil Éireann's) kinship index" (Gallagher 1985, 381), that is, the high level of TDs related to former or sitting TDs.

There has been very little analysis in the Irish context of the impact that different socio-economic backgrounds have in influencing either the attitudes of TDs, or their behaviour. Galligan suggests that in the area of gender representation, women's lobby groups have had more of an influence in shaping aspects of policy than female TDs and she concludes that 'on most issues, no marked difference in attitudes between women and men have surfaced' (Galligan 1999, 312). Nevertheless, some differences between the genders exist on what have been termed the 'moral issues' of divorce and abortion with women taking a more conservative stance in this regard (Galligan 1999, 312-313; Donoghue and Devine 1999, 250-256). Opinion poll data also suggests a gender gap in attitudes to neutrality and the European Union (Donoghue and Devine 1999, 261-263). Overall, any evidence of connections between social or economic characteristics and policy stances are qualified by the statement that party affiliation is by far the most significant variable in influencing policy stances.

There is another form of representation closely related to microcosmic representation, which shares its normative assumption that representatives should reflect the policy opinions of those that they represent. This is policy representation which, when perfectly achieved, can be labelled *policy congruence.*

## 2.3 Policy Representation

Miller and Stokes produced one of the seminal works on policy congruence in 1963, which measured the extent to which constituencies influenced the policy stances of their representatives by testing two different forms of constituency control (presented diagrammatically and known as the diamond model because it is shaped like a diamond). The first method of control is for the electorate to elect a representative who shares its views. In this situation, once a representative follows his or her convictions when voting, that individual is automatically reflecting constituents' policy stances. The alternative method is for a representative to vote according to what he or she perceives the constituency's attitude to be on an issue (Miller and Stokes 1963, 50).

Miller and Stokes based their study on interviews with incumbent Congressmen, their non-incumbent opponents, and a sample of constituents in 116 congressional districts. They investigated attitudes and perceptions on various policy issues, and identified three broad policy dimensions in their data: one related to attitudes to government intervention in social welfare, one connected with attitudes to American involvement in foreign affairs and the third to do with stances on the black civil rights issue. When they tested the extent to which Congressmen and their district agreed on the three issues (using the roll call behaviour of Congressmen), they found no agreement in the domain of foreign policy involvement. On issues of social and economic welfare, there was a small measure of agreement between elites and constituents with a larger degree of congruence (correlation of 0.3). However, it was in the civil rights domain that most agreement was found ( a correlation of nearly 0.6) (Miller and Stokes 1963, 48-49).

For this agreement to be due to more than pure chance and for it to affect roll call voting, three conditions needed to hold. Firstly, the representative had to be voting either based on his own policy views or on what he perceived his district' s policy views to be. Secondly, the representative should hold an accurate perception of the district's policy opinions. Thirdly, voters of the district must base, at least to some degree, their election of a representative on policy stances.

Miller and Stokes concluded that the first condition held in the cases that they were examining: representatives' policy views and their perception of the district's views influenced their votes. Together these factors predicted roll call votes for each issue to a significant extent – (the correlations were 0.7 for social welfare, 0.6 for foreign policy, and 0.9 for civil rights.) There was a less significant relationship however, between actual constituency opinion and congressional attitudes and perceptions. For the area of civil rights, the correlation between actual and perceived district opinion was just above 0.6. The correlations for the other two domains were much lower.

In relation to the third condition, relating to the motivations for district voting at elections, they found that the primary influence on voting was based on the party identification of the candidates, rather than any knowledge of their policy preferences. Their sample of representatives over-estimated the extent to which their legislative actions and personal records influenced the electorate, although in certain individual cases taking an unpopular stand on an issue had electoral ramifications, even when the challenger was not well-known (Miller and Stokes 1962, 55).

Miller and Stokes' overall conclusion was that the local constituency did have some degree of control over their representative's actions, but that the relationship between district attitude and roll call behaviour was rather weak overall as was the relationship between views of representatives and views of constituents. In addition, the extent of constituency influence depended on the issue involved. Miller and Stokes concluded that the responsible party model was dominant in the area of social welfare. In terms of foreign policy, the representative seemed to pay more attention to Presidential policy.

Attempts have been made to test the diamond model in other contexts, for example by Philip E. Converse and Roy Pierce in the case of France. They found a fairly modest level of congruence between constituent position on an issue and roll call votes. (Converse and Pierce 1986, 588-590). In general, broad left-right positions of the voters had more of an influence on the position of representatives than the specific district stance on the policy issue at stake.

They then proceeded to test the nature of the link between the representative's views and the views of his district by first focussing on collective representation (the average position of candidates compared with voters). Here they found that the candidates placed themselves to the left of the voter sample. (Converse and Pierce 1986, 596-597). They discovered that winning candidates were closer to the voters on left-right self-placement and a range of thirteen policy issues than losing candidates. However, the left-right placement congruence was the only one that withstood statistical testing. They did not find any convincing relationship between roll call votes and the aggregate policy position of the district.

They hypothesise that this might be due to the fact that representatives aim to represent their own voters rather than the whole district, and tested this by comparing the correlations between a deputy's positions and those of his or her own voters. They found that there was a greater degree of congruence between each deputy and those that voted for them than the whole district. When they re-tested the relationship between constituency views and roll call votes, differentiating between the candidate's supporters and the whole constituency, they found that the co-relation between the winning candidate's supporters and their representative's roll call votes was much higher than the co-relation between the views of the whole district and roll call votes or the supporters of the opponents of the representative and roll call votes (Converse and Pierce 1986, 625-626).

In investigating the extent to which the representatives correctly perceived constituency opinion, they found that there was more variation between issues than there was between individual representatives. The voters' views were more stable in some domains than in others, and hence easier for representatives to perceive. Often representatives tended to project their own views, or at least the views of their more highly educated voters instead of the actual voter position when they lacked information. However, winning candidates were not much better in perceiving district sentiment than their opponents (Converse and Pierce 1986, 630-663). Their overall finding was that policy congruence was not very strong in France although there was some variation depending on the issue.

Various problems have been identified with the empirical application of policy congruence models. These include the unlikelihood of a homogeneous stance on most issues within constituencies. (Thomassen 1994, 242). Even assuming there was such agreement, it would be highly impractical for a representative to survey constituency opinion on every vote. In addition, it has been argued that policy congruence models, such as that of Miller and Stokes, place too much emphasis on roll call voting at the expense of other forms of policy influence. These problems, and the strength of party discipline in Ireland, lead me to predict that policy congruence in the Irish case will be somewhat limited, although very little research has been conducted in the area. The bulk of literature in relation to Dáil Éireann and its members is based on the degree of service and allocation responsiveness of TDs, which tend to be rolled together and classified under the broad heading constituency work. [18]

## 2.4 Service and Allocation Responsiveness

One of the earliest and most influential works about the role of TDs as constituency workers was a primarily descriptive piece entitled "Going About Persecuting Civil Servants" (Chubb, 1963). The author argues that Irish people perceive government as a source of favours and benefits, which can only be obtained by personal contacts with intermediaries such as the local TD (Chubb 1963, 273). The electorate therefore expect their TD to perform as "adviser, contact man, expediter and intercessor", roles which are facilitated by the fact that TDs are usually locals and members of local authorities (Chubb 1963, 275-6). In addition, TDs pursue the claims of their constituents on matters such as housing, and also

[18] For example, in one of the most widely-used Irish textbooks, these areas are covered in a chapter called "The Constituency Role of TDs" (Gallagher and Komito, 1999).

lobby on broad constituency issues through the use of parliamentary questions, or by approaching government ministers directly. Based on the greater reference to local cases in Dáil debates, and the lack of systematic scrutiny of legislation in Ireland, Chubb concludes that TDs were less concerned than British MPs with policy-making activities (Chubb 1963, 283). The author further concludes that TDs do not resent this 'contact man' role and in fact resisted reforms that might reduce this element of their job (Chubb 1963, 283-284). It should be noted that the author himself states that his conclusions are somewhat impressionistic (Chubb 1963, 272). Furthermore, various changes in Irish politics and society since 1963 indicate that the role of TDs might have changed somewhat in the interim.

However, subsequent case studies of local areas broadly support Chubb's analysis. Two books published in 1976 describe and analyse the machine politics of particular constituencies, North East Donegal (Sacks 1976) and a rural area given the pseudonym of Patricksville (Bax 1976). Both of these works use the concept of a political machine to describe a process whereby local politicians establish a group of followers, who provide their particular politican with votes and support, in return for the politician securing for them the provision of various services and benefits such as housing and social welfare benefits. Bax (1976, 71) defines the resulting political machine as:

> A vast egocentred interaction system which functions not only during elections but also and more importantly between elections. This model consists of three elements: a prize-producing part, a prize-consuming segment and a leader who connects the former two.

These works were mainly intended to be descriptive, but they also offer some explanation of why these local political machines came to exist. Both identify Irish peasant political culture as the main

independent variable. This works in combination with the Irish electoral system, which, they argue, promotes intra-party rivalry between politicians competing for the party vote. Other authors have pointed out that by assuming strong Irish party identification, these works, although useful in documenting the way in which politics operated at a local level in Ireland at the time, fail to explain how these local party machines integrated into a strong and stable party system at the national level, and in turn structured behaviour at the local level (Carty 1983, 24).

In various articles on the subject of the local work of TDs, Lee Komito disputes the application of clientelist models to the Irish case (see Komito 1984, 1989, 1992). Through research conducted in the Dublin area, he concludes that politicians sought to win votes through utilising their specialist knowledge, and access to bureaucrats. However, he argues that voters do not become in any meaningful way, 'clients' of the politicians in question (Komito 1984, 174). He favours instead application of the concept of brokerage, the difference between the two being that clientelism "involves ... people who are in some way tied to the person who does things for them, whereas 'brokerage' implies a relationship that is not institutionalised" (Gallagher and Komito 1999, 215; for a more extended discussion of the difference, see Komito 1984, 176).

In these studies, Komito finds clientelism to be restricted to relationships within particular political parties, and although he identifies brokerage as a feature of Dublin politics at the time, it was not widespread. A Dublin survey of 1972 revealed that fewer than one in five respondents had actually contacted politicians (Komito 1989, 185). Furthermore, urban contacts were most commonly made by those most economically dependent on the state. Komito (1989,

175) concludes that brokerage is an outcome of structural features rather than rural values, as implied by previous research. He also suggests that political brokerage iss a manifestation of a broader tendency for brokerage in all areas of Irish society (Komito 1984, 189-192). This claim is supported by a 1970's survey where, when asked to choose some-one to help intercede with the authorities, four out of ten people chose some one outside the political and administrative sector (Komito 1992, 134).

Further research supports the idea that Irish voters expect constituency work from their TDs, and that constituency service and localism are important variables in determining how they vote. During six elections between 1977 and 1989, opinion poll questions asked voters which of a set of options was most important in influencing their vote. The options presented were "choosing a Taoiseach", "choosing ministers to form a government", "choosing between the policies of parties", and "choosing a TD who will look after the needs of the constituency". A bare majority professed to vote primarily on the criteria of party by selecting one of the responses that emphasised party voting. However, the most commonly chosen single response was to choose "a TD who will look after the needs of the constituency." This option was chosen by forty six percent in 1977, forty two per cent in 1981, thirty five per cent in 1982, forty one per cent in 1982, thirty eight per cent in 1987, forty per cent in 1989, and thirty seven per cent in 1992 (Sinnott 1995, 169).

There is conflicting evidence in the literature in relation to the orientation of TDs to constituency work. Chubb claims that TDs do not resent their role as constituency worker, and in fact promote such a role. Nearly forty years later, the group of independent TDs in the

current (twenty-eighth) Dáil who maintain the Government in power in return for achieving resources for their constituency[19] certainly seem to relish their role and support Chubb's analysis. Further results from 1978 research based on twenty interviews with TDs also supports the claim that TDs are strongly oriented to their constituency role. Of these twenty subjects, only five included participation in policy making at the national level as part of their role conception (Zimmerman 1978). Instead, they saw themselves as 'protectors' of their constituents or 'intermediaries' between constituents and government (Zimmerman 1978, 29). The small sample might however have affected these results.

These conclusions conflict with evidence from the national media and elsewhere, where TDs tend to write about their constituency role in less than favourable terms:

> deputies play less a role in the formulation and enactment of legislation, and more and more occupy their time as political favour pedlars, consumer representatives, and clerical messenger boys on behalf of constituents (former Labour party TD, Barry Desmond quoted in Farrell 1985, 238).

After her retirement from Dáil Éireann before the June 1997 election, former Fianna Fáil deputy and Cabinet Minister Máire Geoghegan-Quinn wrote a regular column for the *Irish Times*, in which a recurrent theme was the burden that constituency work places on TDs (see Geoghegan-Quinn 1998a, 1988b, 1998c.) However, she conceded that TDs were, at least to some degree, the architects of their own misfortune in this regard, with intra-party rivalry existing over who runs the most clinics (Farrell 1985, 259),

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[19] Also termed pork barrel politics, defined as "the process that allows a legislator to attain central government projects for his geographic constituency by directly influencing appropriations" (Lancaster 1986).

and inter-party agreements to cancel clinics during the Summer recess likely to be broken by at least one deputy seeking to gain electorally by claiming that they were 'working hard while the rest are off sunning themselves' (Geoghegan-Quinn 1998c).

An important question from a political science perspective is whether Irish members of parliament perform more constituency work than members of parliaments in other political systems. A 1997 article substantiates claims of TDs that they engage in more constituency work than other members of parliament do (Wood and Young 1997). They found through interviews with junior British MPs and TDs that the TDs spend 2.5 days per week on such work as opposed to 1.8 days for the British MPs. However, the difference between the two groups is not as great as the complaints of TDs might lead one to expect.

Comparative research tends to demonstrate that, internationally, legislators spend a large proportion of their time running errands for constituents (Mezey 1993, 336). For example, in the United States, constituency work has been described and investigated by many researchers. Using principal-agent models, David Mayhew identifies allocation and service responsiveness as important activities performed by Congressmen to ensure re-election (Mayhew, 1974). Furthermore, in a variety of contexts, it has been found that constituency work can improve the re-election prospects of an incumbent. (Norton and Wood 1990; Norton & Wood 1993; Cain, Ferejohn & Fiorina 1987). A 1996 study of Australia, however, produced rather conflicting results when it was found that local constituency work actually reduced an incumbent's vote (Studlar and Mc Allister, 1996, 82-83). The authors hypothesise that this may be due to the fact that, in Australia, time devoted to national party

activity tends to garner more votes than constituency service, due to the strength of party control over selection and election. Therefore, they suggest that a better strategy for an MP to secure re-election was to spend time building a profile within the party, and in the national media (Studlar and Mc Allister 1996, 85-86).

Some research indicates that allocation responsiveness should not be strong in the Irish case. For example, Lancaster suggests that countries with multi-member districts are less likely to be characterised by pork barrel politics (essentially allocation responsiveness) than countries with single member districts, and he classifies Ireland as one of the least likely cases such a phenomenon to occur (Lancaster 1986, 70-71). However, an observation of the everyday operation of Irish politics suggests that this is not the case, and that TDs and Government Ministers do pay special attention to projects in their constituency. For example, plans to decentralise Government Departments and Offices had to be postponed in 2000 because so many TDs and Ministers were making representations on the matter that "the decentralisation plan had turned into an ad hoc frenzy with Ministers, Ministers of State, and backbenchers aiming to claim Government Departments and agencies for their areas" (Donohoe 2000b). [20] I will be testing the conflicting assumptions about constituency work in Ireland in subsequent chapters.

[20] Other contemporary examples include the Minister for Tourism and Sport granting proportionately more National Lottery funding to his own area than other equivalent areas (see Brennock 2000a). There has also been disquiet about some decentralisation decisions already made, for example the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform moving the Legal Aid Board to his own constituency (Haughey 2000), the Minister for Defence decentralising civil defence staff to his electoral constituency, and the current Minister for Foreign

## 2.5 Parliamentary Research

The field of legislative studies is vast and a wide body of research exists in relation to various aspects of representation and parliamentary activity. I will therefore be referring to many works dealing with different aspects of representation during the course of the dissertation. However, individual case studies in the legislative field have been particularly influential in guiding the scope and structure of the dissertation. Six works in particular will be frequently mentioned, and I will introduce them briefly now.

They are, listed in order of date of publication, *The Legislative System* by John C Wahlke, Heinz Eulau, William Buchanan and LeRoy C Ferguson, *Westminster's World* by Donald Searing, *A Democracy comes of Age* by Kathleen Cheek-Milby, *Representation from Above* by Peter Esaiasson and Soren Holmberg, *Members of Parliament in Western Europe: Roles and Behaviour* edited by Wolfgang C. Müller and Thomas Saalfeld and *Parliamentary Representation* by Donald R. Matthews and Henry Valen. I will briefly discuss each in the order listed above.

**(i)<u>The Legislative System</u>.**

The objective behind the *Legislative System* was to identify the functions of four state legislatures in the United States and assess how well or badly they performed these functions (Wahlke *et al* 1962, 3). It was based on interview data gathered from 474 of these four US State legislatures in 1957. Although written in the 1960's, *The Legislative System* continues to be influential in the field of

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Affairs (while Minister for Health) moving the National Disease Surveillance Centre to his constituency (Cusack 2000).

parliamentary research for two reasons. Firstly, its authors were among the first to use the concept of role in analysing legislatures. Secondly, they made the original distinction between the representational variables of *style* and *focus*. By far the most enduring set of their role types were those in the representational set of trustee, delegate, and politico. These concepts have been widely used since, and have been helpful organising concepts for this dissertation particularly for Chapter Seven.

In their research, Wahlke *et al* are similar to most authors in perceiving representation quite narrowly as merely one role in the 'core roles sector' of a representative. Other core roles they identify are *purposive roles* which 'have to do with behaviour appropriate to the substantive goals or purposes of legislation and the legislative operation,' and *consensual roles* which deal with behaviour related to the institutional rules of the game (Wahlke *et al* 1962, 11-12). Representation is thereby merely viewed as one behavioural role among others. A broader approach such as is being taken in this dissertation is, however, given implicit support by the authors when they state that:

> because, by virtue of representation they participate in legislation, the represented accept legislative decisions as authoritative. It would seem, therefore, that legislation and representation are closely related (Wahlke *et al* 1962, 267).

A second major difference that should be highlighted between the approach of this dissertation, and that of Wahlke and his collaborators is that within their different role sectors, exist different role orientations. In other words, Wahlke and his colleagues divide the role orientations of their intervieweees into three functional role sectors, and within each of these sectors are different role types. Therefore, each of their subjects is classified within a role type for

each sector. This creates some difficulties, as the large number of combinations of roles (there are fourteen different types overall) meant that they did not have sufficient cases to present an overall framework of the interaction of their role types. I will avoid this difficulty by classifying TDs according to one set of role types, which covers all their roles and activities.

**(ii)Westminster's World.**

Searing's objective in this work was to provide a greater understanding of political life in the British Parliament in the 1970s (although the book was not published until 1994), and as such his focus was more on description than explanation. He uses the framework of role analysis, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, I will be employing his conception of role in this dissertation. His data was generated from 521 face-to-face interviews, and he classified TDs according to a typology involving eight political roles: four informal (policy advocate, ministerial aspirant, constituency member and parliament man) and four leadership roles. A further thirteen sub-types for these informal roles were also identified. Searing concludes that constituency characteristics, socio-economic characteristics of MPs, personal characteristics and institutional factors all contribute to the role orientations of his subjects. However, he does not to any significant degree make inferences about existing representational models, and nor does he compare his case study with existing comparative research, both of which will form a significant element of my study on Dáil Éireann.

**(iii) A Legislature Comes of Age.**

Kathleen Cheek-Milby's work describes the Legislative Council of Hong Kong which shares with Ireland its status as a former British

colony.[21] The main element of the book consists of a historical and descriptive account of the operation of the Legislative Council, with the aim of investigating the degree of institutional stability of the system, and comparing the Council with other legislatures. However, she also employes role analysis to study the orientations and behaviour of Hong Kong's Legislative Council using data from two groups of interviews with 52 of its members.

Her main finding is that method of election is an important variable in influencing role orientations of Hong Kong legislative council members.[22] Appointed members are much more oriented to policy making than elected members, who chose representation as their primary function. Over time, elected members increasingly prioritise their constituency, while appointed members promote the Hong Kong people as their main representational focus. She concludes that, compared with members of parliament in other countries, Hong Kong legislators spend more time on representational activities (her term for constituency work). Their representational focus is also simpler than in other countries, involving a simple dichotomy between district and the public interest. Party, interest groups, and other foci were insignificant. She also found that Hong Kong's representatives are more likely to perform the delegate role than those of other countries.

**(iv) <u>Representation from Above</u>.**

In this research, Esaiasson and Holmberg analyse representative democracy in the Swedish case from two perspectives: firstly, the

[21] However, Hong Kong has a significantly larger population density than Ireland with a population of over seven million.

[22] During her first period of interviews, the Legislative Council contained members elected by electoral colleges of regional bodies and functional constituencies and members appointed by the Governor. During the second

extent to which the Swedish representative system is more elitist or populist in its operation, and secondly whether it conforms more to what they term collectivist or individualist models of representation, (in other words whether parties or individuals should be seen as the principal representative actor). The resulting study has been particularly influential in providing a guide to the structure of this dissertation. They begin by testing the extent to which Swedish MPs are socially representative of the population, and then examine the extent to which these social background characteristics might influence their policy positions. In a subsequent chapter, they explore the extent of policy congruence in Sweden by comparing the policy positions of voters and legislators on certain issues. Finally, they analyse the representational role conceptions of MPs, and test whether these role orientations tangibly affect parliamentary behaviour. Their data covered a period of over twenty years from 1968-1988, and was derived from mail surveys and from face-to face interviews with members of parliament and voters. Parliamentary behaviour was measured by analysing the content of all government, party and private members bills, oral questions and floor debates from 1985 and 1988.

They conclude that the lack of policy congruence in the Swedish case, together with a top-down process of opinion formation, is indicative of an elite-driven political system run from above. Furthermore, they found that the Swedish MP's role orientations are very much based on trustee rather than delegate models. In terms of socio-economic representation, although the Riksdag was more socio-economically representative than the parliament of many other countries, they found that Swedish MPs are more highly educated

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period, the electoral college was abolished and some members were instead directly elected from regional constituencies

and of higher status occupations than the public. Finally, they conclude that, although party membership is most significant in influencing roll call votes, other interests such as local, sectoral and corporate interests also have some implications for MP' s behaviour. That is to say, individual role conceptions influence behaviour, so that the identity of the individual candidates selected from the party list is significant.

**(v) "Members of Parliament in Western Europe: Roles and Behaviour."**

The group of studies in this book first appeared in a Special Issue of *The Journal of Legislative Studies* (Vol. 3 No. 1, Spring 1997), and originated from papers presented at a Conference on the Political Roles of MPs in West European Countries. The broad aim of the authors was to "broaden the debate and provide both empirical material and theoretical stimuli to use, test and further develop roles of legislative behaviour" (Saalfeld and Müller 1997, 1). As such, it has influenced this dissertation by clarifying the framework that role theory can provide for the study of parliaments. It also contains empirical findings from six countries (Britain, Germany, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands and Belgium) against which to compare my results for Ireland. Individual chapters and their findings will be particularly referred to in Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine.

**(vi) "Parliamentary Representation: the case of the Norwegian Storting."**

The aim of this work is to investigate how representative government in Norway operates, with the further objective of making more general inferences about contemporary models of representation. The data consists of a voter survey of 2,180 people, a mail survey of party candidate nomination committees, a mail survey

of Norwegian MPs, and biographical data of MPs collected by the Norwegian Social Science Data service. Norway was chosen for the case study because of its status as a small, relatively homogenous state with a lack of cleavages and institutional complications. (Norway is similar in population to Ireland[23] with a parliament of 165 members.) The authors claim that this renders it easier to observe processes of representation than in other more complex political contexts. Matthews and Valen focus on a different level of analysis to this dissertation - the collective level of parliament - so that they primarily concentrate on aggregate representation, rather than on the individual level. They examine three types of representation - policy, service and symbolic representation -and I will be comparing results in these areas with my own at various points of the dissertation, due in particular to the similarity in size and societal homogeneity between Ireland and Norway.

Their main findings were that the Norwegian Storting displayed a relatively high level of congruence with the population, with a majority of the representative agreeing with the majority of the voters on most policy issues. They concluded that political parties simplified and structured party competition in Norway, but that voters voted for parties based on their past record rather than on their policy manifestos. They also found that the Storting performed comparatively well in terms of symbolic representation, although its members tended to be better educated, and have higher status occupations than in the population. Their results indicated that Storting members prioritised service responsiveness, with more than half spending at least ten days per month in their districts. In

[23] In fact, the Norwegian population is slightly larger than that of Ireland with a population of 4.5 million compared with the Irish population of about 3.8 million.

addition, an important criterion for their choice of parliamentary committee membership was the benefits that committee membership might provide for their districts.

Given the relative similarities between Norway and Ireland in terms of size, population, and societal homogeneity, a comparison of the findings from this work and the Irish case will indicate the extent to which common structural features create similar models of representation. In fact, I will compare my findings with those of all six of these works throughout this dissertation, in addition to other pieces of research that are particularly relevant in the context of individual chapters. This will enable me to investigate the interrelationship between institutional structures, and the attitudes and behaviour of elected representatives.

## 2.6 Conclusion

It is clear from the research referred to in this chapter that studies of representation have ranged from highly normative to empirical. Some of the more theoretical approaches provide a yardstick against which to judge the Irish system, while concepts such as policy congruence and representational style and focus are useful tools in trying to understand more fully the way representation operates in Ireland.

Comparative investigations of the socio-economic backgrounds of representatives lead me to expect that TDs will not be socio-economically representative of the population, and that it may be difficult to identify linkages between such traits and policy stances. I would also expect problems with policy congruence to apply to the Irish case, although the Norwegian evidence indicates that the degree of congruence may vary from country to country. The mainly

descriptive and journalistic pieces relating to the Irish case suggest that constituency work will be a major activity mentioned by Irish TDs. However, evidence in relation to TDs' attitude to this work is ambiguous, and will be an important area for investigation in later chapters. Comparative role orientations tend to centre around the principal parliamentary functions, so that roles such as legislator, constituency worker and interest promoter have been evident in much of the research cited. However, the importance of interest groups varies from country to country, and comparative research suggests that the interrelationship between party and constituency variables seems to depend on the electoral system, and other institutional features. It is therefore important to assess the importance of such variables in the Irish case, and this will be a primary focus of Chapter 8.

Before investigating such issues, I must in the next chapter discuss my data collection and analysis procedure, and compare it with some of the research I have already referred to in this chapter.

# CHAPTER 3: DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

I have already outlined in the first chapter the research questions and the theoretical framework of this dissertation. In chapter 2, I located my research in a political science context by reviewing literature that was particularly significant in influencing its scope and methodology. I also described some parliamentary research that will frequently be referred to in the course of the dissertation. In the last of these 'scene-setting' chapters, I will describe the data collection and analysis procedure I used. Both these stages of the research were time consuming, more so than I envisaged, and the magnitude of the task I faced is more obvious when placed in a comparative context. I will therefore briefly describe the data used in five of the works introduced at the end of the last chapter, before describing my own data collection and analysis methods.

## 3.1 Data Collection and Analysis in Comparative Context

### (i) The Legislative System.

*The Legislative System* was based on four state legislatures (California, New Jersey, Ohio and Tennessee), and relied mainly on interview data gathered from members of these four legislatures during 1957. This interview material was supplemented by what the authors termed 'unsystematic data', from the observation by each author of one of the four legislatures during the 1957 legislative session (Wahlke *et al* 1962, 37). The choice of the particular legislatures was, according to the authors, largely accidental, as three of them were selected as the home states of the authors (Wahlke *et al* 1962, 30). The authors' objective was to interview all members of each selected legislature, and the eventual response rate was above ninety per cent for each state, comprising 474 interviews in all. The interviews were conducted using a mixture of open-ended and closed questions, and ranged in length from one to five hours, with an average duration of about two

hours. The authors conducted just over half of these interviews, while professional colleagues and students, both graduate and under-graduate, completed the remainder. Four secretarial staff also worked on the project. Between them, the authors received financial assistance from nine Universities or Institutes. The collaboration on the project began in 1955, the authors met for the last time in relation to the study in 1960 and the final report was published in 1962. Overall, the authors estimated that they spent twenty five per cent of the total time and energy of the project on the field work, fifteen per cent on design and planning, twenty per cent on coding and analysis, and forty per cent on writing of reports.

**(ii) <u>Westminster's World</u>.**

The research project that culminated in the publication of '*Westminster's World*' in 1994, commenced in 1971. The main body of the data came from interviews conducted with British members of parliament over twenty one months, from January 1972 to September 1973. Interviews were conducted with 521 MPs out of a total of 630 MPs, a response rate of 83 per cent. The interviews ranged in length between a half-hour and five hours (the average interview lasting one and a half-hours), and involved both closed and open-ended questions. Searing also supplemented this interview material with published data, such as the oral and written questions asked by MPs and their voting records. He also engaged in what he termed participant observation gathered over two years when he:

> drank with Members in Westminster's Bars, ate with them in the dining rooms, and during the summer months chatted with them over strawberries and cream on the terrace" (Searing 1994, 408-409).

The rather enjoyable activities involved in this participant observation might help to explain the lengthy duration of the study. Once they were finished, the transcription of the interviews took a further 22 months to complete. The first stage of coding lasted for 18 months, and the coding was finalised

four years later. The book was eventually published 23 years after the commencement of the project. Involved in this project were Searing himself and four other interviewers, two administrative secretaries, an unspecified number of graduate students and a pool of six typists. Funding was provided both by the university employing Searing and also from various research funding bodies.

**(iii) Representation From Above.**

The data used by Esaiasson and Holmberg in their case study of the Swedish parliament, covered a period of over twenty years from 1968-1988. Unlike the two works already described above, data came from both face to face interviews and mail surveys of members of parliament. The bulk of the data came from interviews conducted in 1968, and two mail surveys of 1985 and 1988. The combined response rate of these three studies was about 97 per cent of the 349 members of the Swedish Riksdag. Because these three studies were not specifically collected for their project, Esaiasson and Holmberg supplemented them by conducting a small set of face to face interviews with twenty MPs in 1991.

As well as goals and attitudes, the authors sought to measure the parliamentary behaviour of MPs and this was achieved by an analysis of the content of all government, party and private members bills, oral questions and floor debates from 1985 to 1988 (all available in electronic form). For their chapters dealing with voter attitudes, they used voter data from the Swedish National Election studies, which have been operating since the 1950s, and an annual survey of Swedish citizens conducted at Göteborg University. Finally, they used some data based on the content analysis of media reports, again from Göteborg University. The authors of this study used a broad range of data. It should be noted that this was readily available (usually electronically), and they did not have to collect a significant amount of data themselves. Apart from the authors themselves, members of the

project team included research and coding assistants, whose employment was made possible through research grants.

**(iv) A Legislature Comes of Age.**

Kathleen Cheek-Milby's work was based on 173 interviews with legislators, staff, constituents and other observers. One hundred and four of these were with members of the Legislative Council (the Hong Kong legislature), a response rate of 91 per cent. The interviews with members of the Council were conducted over two periods between May 1987 and June 1988 and from May 1992 to February 1993. The interviews ranged in length from 35 minutes to 4½ hours, an average of about an hour for each. The author stated that she had very little behavioural data at her disposal since, during most of the period of the study, the proceedings of the Council were closed and ritualistic. However, other data that she used included the number of questions asked by members, the total of bills and amendments that passed through the Council, and the number of speeches made in the Council (all analysed for certain specific time periods). Through a research grant, the author employed three research assistants, and also had the assistance of a data analyst. The project lasted 11 years from its inception to the final publication of the book.

**(v) Parliamentary Representation: The Case of the Norwegian Storting.**

The data used for this Norwegian case study involved a voter survey of 2,180 people conducted after the election of 1985, and a mail survey of 548 members of party candidate nomination committees. The MP data consisted of a mail survey of Norwegian MPs conducted between 1988 and 1989 with a response rate of 94 per cent. Biographical data of MPs collected by the Norwegian Social Science Data service was also used. Similarly to the data used in *Representation From Above*, only a small part of the data was specifically collected for the project, namely the survey of the nomination committees. No face to face interviews were used, probably because the

focus was on parliament at an aggregate level rather than on its individual members. The research was funded by grants from four institutions. The study lasted for approximately 15 years, from the early 1980s until eventual publication of the book in 1999.

The details of the data collection and resources of all these works are summarised and compared with those of this dissertation in Table 3.1 below. The main point to note is that it is rather unusual for the authors of published studies to arrange, conduct, transcribe, analyse and write up the results of a significant amount of interviews with no research funding or administrative assistants. The fact that I collected other data and also analysed official Dáil records stretched time and resources further. It is important to stress the issue of resources, because it had an influence on various decisions and choices made during the course of the research project and these will be referred to further as I proceed. The limitations I faced have been summarised by Alasdair Blair who stated:

> Professional studies have certain advantages over research undertaken by doctoral students who seek to collect their own data set. In the first instance, they tend to be conducted by trained researchers with prior experience.... Secondly, they benefit from the financial backing of large research grants that permit more detailed surveys, including follow up contact (Blair 1999, 117-118).

**TABLE 3.1 Comparative Interviewing Procedures and resources**

| Work | No of interviews | No of interviewers [i] | Funding | Other staff | Duration of project [ii] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Legislative system* | 474 | 4 authors did just over 50%. Assistants did remainder | Nine sources | 4 Sec. staff | 7 years |
| *Westminster's World* | 521 | Author & 4 assistants | Three main sources | 2 Secs, 6 typists & grad students | 23 years |
| *Representation from Above* [iii] | 20 + set conducted by another source | 2 authors | Two sources | 3 research assistants & 2 coders | Not stated but minimum 5 years |
| *A Legislature Comes of Age* | 104 + 69 non MPs | Not stated | 1 main source | 3 research assistants + 1 analyst | 11 years |
| *Parliamentary Representation* | None. Mail survey (548 responses) | N/A | 4 sources | Not stated but at least 2 worked on manuscript. | Not stated but approx. 15 years. |
| **This dissertation** | 50 | 1 | 1 student grant | None | 4 ½ years |

i Including the authors (s).
ii I have calculated the duration based on the time between commencement of the project and publication date.
iii This project is not strictly comparable as the authors used interview data already collected but will be included to give a general guide of the resources used.

## 3.2 Data Collection and Analysis Methods of this Dissertation

### (i) Choices for Data Collection.

As highlighted above, a comparison of the time duration and resources of these five projects with my own demonstrates the relatively meagre resources I had at my disposal. These factors operated as constraints on my research design, and the volume of data I could realistically collect and analyse. Various compromises had to be made along the way, their nature influenced by the important considerations of validity and reliability, which must underpin any scientific research. In addition, as already alluded to in a previous chapter, the under-developed nature of existing Irish data further limited the material at my disposal when investigating both elite opinion

and, in particular, public attitudes and behaviour. It is expected that the resources for future PhD researchers in Irish politics will improve dramatically in the next few years. Recent positive developments include the electronic development of the Opinion Poll Archive in 1998,[24] and the placing of Parliamentary Debates on the Irish Government web-site in 2000.[25] A particularly significant development is that an Irish National Election Study will be conducted for the first time at the 2002 general election. This will be the first detailed and significant mass survey of the electorate by political scientists, and is likely to provide a valuable source of data on subjects never previously covered.

Apart from resource issues, my research design was heavily influenced by comparative approaches and methodologies used in the study of representation and legislatures. It is worth stating the obvious and stressing that the most appropriate methodology and data-set for a particular study is dependent on the unit of analysis and intended scope of the research. In this particular case, I had made a decision to focus on individual deputies rather than on parliament as a unitary actor (see Chapter 1). In addition, by choosing the framework of role theory, I was placing particular emphasis on the goals and attitudes of these individuals, rather than on their behaviour or outputs. These, although relevant, were not the primary focus of the project. Once I had made these decisions, options for data collection seemed limited to either conducting face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews or mail surveys.

After some deliberation, I concluded that face-to-face interviews would be most suitable in providing answers to my research questions. The choice of interviews was based on the fact that role analysis involves a detailed examination of the opinions and attitudes of individuals, and these are better

[24] This is available at www.tcd.ie/Political_science/cgi.
[25] Debates from 1997 are available at www.irlgov.ie/oireachtas/frame.htm.

gleaned from open-ended questions which can be asked in interviews. (Devine, 1995, 138-139). Mail surveys limit the range of questions that can be asked as they lend themselves more to brief and closed questions (Blair, 1999, 120-121) In addition, face-to-face meetings provide the interviewer with the opportunity to note an individual's body language and demeanour, observe that individual in his or her environment and clarify and follow up responses where necessary (Manheim and Rich, 1995, 143). While recognising the advantages of the use of interviews as a data collection technique, there are also limitations or difficulties with the use of interviews that should also be mentioned (see Bell, 1999 , chapter 9; specifically in relation to problems with elite interviewing see Manheim and Rich 1995, 161-164). Some of these relate to interviewing generally, others are specifically connected with my work.

**(ii) <u>Setting up Interviews and Sample Bias</u>.**

One of the major limitations of my research was the fact that I had to arrange, conduct, transcribe and analyse interviews myself over a relatively limited period of time without the help of collaborators or assistants. This shortage of resources influenced the size of the sample that I could reasonably and realistically hope to obtain. When studying a relatively small population, such as the 166 members of Dáil Éireann, the ideal would have been to aim, as Wahlke and his collaborators did, to interview all members of the parliament. I decided that this was not feasible but chose not to set a specific sample size at the beginning of the data collection process. Although Devine (1995, 142) states that a small sample of approximately 30-40 interviewees is the norm for qualitative studies, I decided to interview a slightly larger sample to increase generalisability. After conducting several interviews and monitoring the amount of time and resources involved, I concluded that a total of fifty interviews would be large enough to enable me to draw conclusions about the entire population of 166 TDs, whilst taking account of the time and resource limitations.

An important factor in research involving interviews or surveys is the representativeness of the sample used. The smaller the sample, the more critical this issue is. My relatively modest sample of around thirty per cent of TDs necessitated a careful monitoring of the attributes of those interviewed to avoid significant over or under representation of any relevant variables in the sample. Given the general difficulty for researchers of gaining access to elites, I decided not to start the process by targetting particular samples of the Dáil. Rather, I wrote to all 165 members[26] of the Dáil on 22 April 1999, explaining the background to my research and asking those who agreed to participate to contact me to schedule an interview. Some of these initial replies from TDs were by letter; others were over the telephone.

Obvious issues arise in terms of selection bias which must be acknowledged. For the sample to be completely representative, the fifty TDs interviewed would have to be an identical microcosm of the population as a whole. Previous experience of surveying Irish TDs, and comparative research on members of parliament in general, led me to expect that the response rate would be relatively low. A previous mailed questionnaire that I administered for another project (see Katz and Wessels 1999) yielded a response rate of 43 per cent (after sending a postcard reminder and making a follow up telephone call). The added demands of participating in a face to face meeting, as opposed to filling out a survey, led me to anticipate that the response rate would be rather less than 43 per cent. A particular difficulty was that I did not have the resources to travel outside Dublin to conduct interviews, so that for the most part it was possible to interview TDs from constituencies outside Dublin only on days when they were in Dublin. These days tended to coincide with days when the Dáil was in session, and

[26] Pat Upton TD had died earlier that year and the by-election to replace him was not held until later that year, hence the figure of 165 rather than 166.

there were various demands on the time of TDs such as attendance at votes, debates and question time on the floor of the house, and parliamentary party and committee meetings. In addition, rural TDs often tend to use their three or so days in Dublin to make contact with or meet Dublin-based civil servants and journalists. These other commitments significantly limited the availability of these deputies.

Had all 165 TDs responded to the initial letter, I would have selected TDs according to variables such as gender, party membership, constituency type, age and length of Dáil membership. However, as expected, my response rate was somewhat less than this utopian ideal. Sixty-four Deputies replied, consenting to an interview, 88 TDs did not respond to the letter, while 13 TDs replied stating that they could not participate. Of those who refused an interview, most were either Cabinet ministers or Junior Ministers. Given the demands of such posts, this was to be expected.

Once a favourable response to my initial letter had been received, the next step was to schedule dates and times for interviews. This was not however as straightforward as it seemed. Of those who agreed to an interview, 18 proved impossible to contact, or, alternatively, repeatedly failed to commit to an actual time and venue. Some of these asked me to telephone them on a day when I was in Leinster House interviewing one of their colleagues, and they might be able to 'fit me in'.

Usually when I rang them in this situation, they were impossible to reach. Other interviews were repeatedly cancelled. A significant factor which delayed the interview process, was that Local Authority Elections were scheduled for 11th June of 1999 and many TDs contesting these elections asked me to contact them to schedule an interview after these Elections were

over.[27] Some of these obliged when I called them again; others seem to have forgotten who I was in the interim. In general, once I had made more than three unsuccessful attempts to schedule an interview, I conceded defeat. As time went on interviews proved more and more time consuming to arrange. The most willing TDs were interviewed first and after about the thirtieth interview, it began to get progressively harder to make contact with TDs, and then to arrange a specific time and date.

As I was proceeding through the interview process, I was monitoring the sample in terms of variables such as party, constituency type and gender, and began to notice an imbalance in all three categories. In particular, I noted that rural male Fianna Fáil TDs were under-represented. At this point, I had conducted 46 interviews, and interviews were proving more difficult to schedule. I attempted to rectify the sample bias somewhat by following up the initial letters with telephone calls to male, Fianna Fáil TDs, some of whom agreed to a meeting. This reduced, but did not entirely rectify the imbalance, which can partly be explained by the fact that most of those in executive positions are Fianna Fáil TDs given that Fianna Fáil was the major party in government between 1997 and 2002. In addition, as mentioned already, it was more problematic to arrange interviews with TDs from constituencies outside Dublin because of the limited amount of time that they spend in Dublin, and the various demands on this time. The breakdown of the final sample in terms of party membership, gender and constituency type are detailed in Tables 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 below.

[27] As I will outline in Chapter 4, local authority membership is an important recruitment channel for TDs and recent attempts to ban what has been called the dual mandate were abandoned by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government in June 2001 due to opposition from backbench TDs.

**TABLE 3.2 Interview Sample by Party**

| Party* | Sample % | Dáil representation % |
|---|---|---|
| Fianna Fáil | 34 | 46 |
| Fine Gael | 38 | 33 |
| Labour party | 18 | 13 |
| Progressive Democrats | 2 | 2 |
| Others and Independents | 8 | 6 |
| Total | 100 n=50 | 100 n=165** |

* The parties are listed in order of size. The Government at the time was a coalition of Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats. The category of 'others' includes the Green party who had two TDs and the Socialist Party and Sinn Féin who both had one. At the time of the interviews, there were seven Independents.

** See footnote 26.

**TABLE 3.3 Sample by Gender**

| Gender | Sample % | Dáil Representation % |
|---|---|---|
| **Male** | 84 | 87 |
| **Female** | 16 | 13 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100 |

**TABLE 3.4 Sample by Constituency Type***

| Type | Sample % | Dáil Representation % |
|---|---|---|
| **Urban** | 60 | 50 |
| **Rural** | 40 | 50 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100 |

* Constituencies were classified as urban or rural based on population density from census data contained in Table 3 of Volume 2 of Census 1996. Based on the proportion of the population living in urban areas, all Dublin constituencies were classed as urban along with Cork North Central, Cork South Central, Galway West, Limerick East, Kildare North, Louth, Wicklow and Waterford.

The effects of any imbalance in the sample will become more apparent in later chapters, where I will test the extent to which these variables affect the role orientations of TDs. Specifically, the next chapter investigates the

effect of socio-economic background on legislative performance, and policy positions. Existing research indicates that in particular, the type of constituency that a TD represents might be expected to influence legislative roles and behaviour in various ways.

Firstly, commentators and TDs themselves have claimed that TDs from rural backgrounds and underprivileged areas are expected by their constituents to perform more constituency work than those from larger, more anonymous urban areas, or prosperous constituencies that do not need such service (Gallagher and Komito 1999, 211-212). Secondly, TDs from rural backgrounds must travel between their constituencies and Leinster House, which is situated on the south side of Dublin City centre. Depending on the location of the constituency, travelling could occupy a significant proportion of a Deputy's time. These rural TDs are also likely to spend more time travelling around their constituency given that the population is more widely distributed.[28] Later on in the dissertation, I will be investigating how TDs allocate their time between different activities, and will assess whether differences do in fact exist between urban and rural TDs. I will also assess whether differences in role orientations exist based on party, constituency and gender.

**(iii) <u>Interview Structure</u>.**

The format of the interview had been determined after a review of methodological issues and previous research which had involved elite interviewing, some of which I have referred to previously. I also had access to mail surveys, previously administered to elites, which guided me as regards the wording of questions. Over a few months, I prepared an interview guide of 45 questions, some of which involved several parts.

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[28] Some constituencies combine two counties while others counties have multiple constituencies. As these are decided based on population rather than size of the county, some TDs have quite a large constituency to cover, although in practice many of them will concentrate on their own bailiwick.

These were divided into categories dealing with 'Information About Entry into Politics', 'Concepts', 'Role as a TD', and 'Policy Stances.' (See Appendix 1).

This was a large number of questions (although Cheek-Milby for example had 89 in her interview guide) and this had to be reduced to a more realistic number once I had an idea of the likely duration of each interview. Given the fact that the dissertation was testing various different features and models of representation, each of the final set of questions was included with a specific chapter in mind. For example, the part of the guide dealing with 'Concepts' was designed to obtain information about the subjects' conceptions of democracy and representation for Chapter Six of the dissertation, while the section on 'Information About Entry into Politics' was intended to provide an insight into TDs' political goals for Chapter Eight. The objective of the 'Policy Stances' category of questions was to compare the policy stances of TDs with the population on various issues, and will be reported in Chapter Five. The section that contained questions relating to TDs' roles was the central core of the interview, and therefore contained the most questions. These primarily related to deputies' attitudes to their job, how they spent their time and how they resolved the various competing demands and role conflicts associated with their positions. Responses to questions in this section will primarily be used for Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine of the dissertation.

The interview guide contained a mixture of open-ended questions and questions with fixed responses. An advantage of interviews as a data collection technique is the opportunity it gives to vary questions and approaches. The closed questions (for example those in the 'Policy Stances' section), facilitated comparability and statistical analysis. Open-ended questions were more suitable for other areas of investigation, particularly those investigating the interviewees' role orientations.

**(iv) Conduct of Interview.**

A majority of the interviews were scheduled for Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays when the Dáil was in session. This led to time constraints and occasional interruptions, when votes were called or matters arose which demanded the deputy's immediate attention. I also spent a significant amount of time waiting before interviews either in the visitors' waiting room, or in the viewing gallery of the Dáil chamber itself. This waiting time before interviews could last between fifteen minutes to one hour. Interviews outside Dáil sittings tended to last longer and involve less interruption. The longest interview lasted just over an hour while the shortest was about fifteen minutes. Obviously the more time allocated, the more questions that could be asked, although some deputies were more concise and to the point than others and in these cases the interview covered a lot of ground in a relatively short period. Other subjects were more rambling and long-winded. For example, in response to a closed question (question 9) which required respondents to rank four theories of representation in order between 1 and 4, one interviewee talked for about ten minutes about each option without providing a direct answer ( the following is an extract) :

> So the promoting the interest of the constituency are not at all at variance with the need to be national parliamentarian. Also implicit in that particular heading is the question as to whether we are group of glorified messengers, red nosed, hard-necks, running up and down the country-side with big red noses, making representations for a greedy, selfish population with an insatiable desire to advance at the expense of every-body else. It's a load of hog-wash because, in actual fact, we also in order to achieve the true measure of what the country needs, you (sic) have to get down into the community, and learn what the people are thinking before they become lobbyists. In other words, you need to have the one to one argument, as opposed to a group of people who become a national movement, you need to be able to talk to those people who have a grievance or a need, and to be able to convert that into legislation or to be able to reflect it in legislation, and to contribute to the passing of legislation, which would create the framework within which they can achieve their objectives provided that they

> are laudable and that they are of benefit. There's no, I feel that we shouldn't, and I shouldn't, and I won't, actually contribute to somebody who has a selfish desire to achieve something at somebody else's expense, and agendas are in abundance nowadays. They are ten a penny, every-one has an agenda, they won't always tell you what their agenda is but a classical example would be for instance in relation to an issue locally in my own area, the proposal by somebody to build an incinerator…

As time went on (and particularly after this interview), I began to prioritise the questions, as it became clear that in most cases, I would not have the opportunity to ask all the questions, and some were more critical to the research than others.

Most interviews took place in deputies' offices and were tape-recorded. Four had to be conducted in public areas, and could not be recorded, as tape recording is forbidden in public areas in Leinster House. In these situations, written notes were taken and the interview was written up in a report as soon as possible after the interview was conducted.

Without exception, the interviewees were given a guarantee of anonymity. In other words, they were told that any quotes or responses would be presented in a form that would prevent their identification. This was deemed necessary to ensure maximum co-operation. In addition, little academic benefit would be obtained from naming names in the research. When reporting results throughout the dissertation, TDs will be identified by gender, regional background, and party where relevant, but only where this information will not lead to their identification. Some groups are so small that details of regional or socio-economic background would render them instantly identifiable.

In general, I found TDs pleasant and anxious to help, although often rushed and distracted. However, as the interviews proceeded, it became clear that, apart from the odd exception, it was proving difficult to get a response to

many of the closed questions. Some of these involved ranking various options in order, while others required a quantification or numerical response. Some respondents explicitly criticised the approach behind such questions, one TD stating for example "life is more complex than three questions devised in Trinity College", while others simply did not seem to view their role and behaviour according to such frameworks. Perhaps an older and more experienced (possibly male) researcher may have managed to receive a more satisfactory response to such questions.[29] For example in an article about the use of various data sources, Blair (1999, 118) states:

> It is often unclear how a Ph.D. student can extract information from politicians and officials who are, after all, adept at evading questions and manipulating interviews.

In addition and as already mentioned, time shortages meant that I did not get to ask a number of the respondents some of the particularly significant questions. In particular, , the length of time I would spend with each TD was unpredictable (even I suspect to the TD himself or herself) so that I could never be sure in advance how many questions I would be able to include. Furthermore, there was particular difficulty with a question asking TDs to estimate how much time they spent on various activities. It became clear that a more detailed version of this question would have been preferable.

Once the fifty interviews had been conducted, and indeed before they were all completed, I had to transcribe those that were recorded on micro-cassette. The quality of the recordings varied due to background noise in certain environments. For example, one interview was conducted in the dining room of a hotel, while another took place while the deputy's roommate was making telephone calls and watching television in the same office. The content of the interviews were typed immediately onto

[29] Any-one conducting interviews must be aware of interviewer effects. I am a young female from Dublin. I would expect that being both female and young might have under-

computer, and depending on the clarity of the tape and length of the interview, each transcription took between 1½ and 6 hours. It was also a fairly tedious task. A couple of interviews were not transcribed in their entirety, due to the complete irrelevance of some of the answers, and the time constraints involved in the whole process. However, in general, considerable effort was taken to ensure that every possible word of an interview was committed to written form. In the end, this amounted to approximately 147, 000 words.

It is difficult to quantify precisely the amount of time spent on each interview. Each one involved engaging in prior research about each interviewee, arranging the interview, inevitable waiting time before it (up to 1 ½ hours), conducting and transcribing it, so that even before analysis and follow up, an enormous time commitment was involved. This time was distributed between the date of the first interview on 28 April 1999, and the last conducted on 10 November of the same year. The last transcription was completed in December 1999. In addition, this does not allow for time spent attempting to arrange interviews that never occurred, and time preparing for cancelled interviews.

**(v) <u>Follow up Surveys</u>.**

Various issues that arose during the interview phase persuaded me that two follow-up procedures were necessary. The first action I decided to take was to send all interviewees a supplementary sheet containing a reformulated version of the question relating to their time allocation. (this will be referred to further in Chapter 9). For cases where shortage of time was an issue, I also included a selection of five of the particularly crucial closed questions based on whether they had been covered during the interview or not . These

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mined somewhat my ability to control the interview. In addition, TDs from rural areas may have made certain assumptions about me based on my Dublin accent.

were sent out on 17 May 2000 and the response rate was excellent, 78 per cent or 39 of those interviewed[30] returned the supplementary survey. Appendix 1 shows the questions that were prioritised for this follow-up phase.

To increase my sample size, and thereby improve the overall generalisability of my conclusions, I also decided that I would conduct a mail survey of the 116 TDs that I did not interview. Apart from the general advantages of surveys,[31] such as their being relatively economical in terms of time and enabling respondents to complete them at a geographically remote location, there were other more specific advantages to my using mail surveys at this stage. Surveys are a good method of confirmatory analysis, enabling a researcher, through relatively brief questions, to assess validity of hypotheses or conclusions already reached through the analysis of other data. In addition, I suspected that the use of a mail survey where respondents could read and take their time to respond might improve the response rate to the closed questions. It was also expected that those holding executive positions would be more likely to respond to a mail survey than a face to face interview request. Therefore, I devised a one page survey[32] over a month or so with questions for inclusion determined by two main criteria – the relative importance of that question to the research, and its compatibility with a questionnaire-style format. In addition, I reformulated three questions based on experience gained at the interview stage. The questionnaire contained mainly, but not exclusively, closed questions (for the full survey, see Appendix 2). These surveys were sent to 116 TDs on 6 March 2000.

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[30] One of my respondents had died in the interim so that the supplementary sheet was only sent to 49 Deputies.

[31] For a discussion of advantages and processes of survey research, see De Vaus 1994.

[32] Although the length of one page was somewhat restrictive, I judged that a questionnaire of one sheet was much more likely to achieve responses than a longer document.

I sent a reminder e-mail to all non-respondents on 13 May, attaching the survey and made a further telephone call to all non-respondents on 8 June. A significant number of TDs were not contactable by telephone, so I mainly left messages. I had identified the end of June as the cut off point for responses, allowing TDs well over three months to respond. I did receive three more surveys later on in the year, but these were too late to incorporate as the analysis was well underway. The final response rate was a rather disappointing 39 out of 116, or 34 per cent, which increased my combined sample of subjects to 54 per cent of all TDs. The breakdown of the survey sample by party, gender and constituency type is contained in Tables 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 below. These tables also contain a breakdown of the combined sample, which demonstrates the fact that the survey improved the representativeness of the sample somewhat.

**TABLE 3.5 Survey Sample and combined sample by party compared with the total in Dáil Éireann**

| Party | Survey % | Combined % | Dáil Representation % |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Fianna Fáil** | 46 | 39 | 46 |
| **Fine Gael** | 33 | 36 | 33 |
| **Labour party** | 10 | 15 | 13 |
| **Progressive Democrats** | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| **Others / Independents** | 3 | 6 | 6 |
| **Unclassifiable** | 5 | 2 | - |
| **Total** | 100 | 100 | 100 |

**TABLE 3.6 Survey and combined sample by gender compared with the total in Dáil Éireann**

| Gender | Survey % | Combined % | Dáil Representation % |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Male** | 85 | 84 | 87 |
| **Female** | 10 | 14 | 13 |
| **Unclassifiable** | 5 | 2 | - |
| **Total** | 100 | 100 | 100 |

**TABLE 3.7 Survey Sample and overall sample by constituency type compared with the total in Dáil Éireann**

| Type | Survey % | Combined % | Dáil Representation % |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Urban** | 49 | 55 | 50 |
| **Rural** | 46 | 43 | 50 |
| **Unclassifiable** | 5 | 2 | - |
| **Total** | 100 | 100 | 100 |

One final variable worth investigating in terms of the representativeness of the sample compared with Dáil members as a whole is the number of Dáil terms served by those interviewed and surveyed compared with the total. It has been suggested that less senior members of parliament are more likely to respond to surveys or agree to interviews than executive members (Blair 1999, 119). In addition, previous research has indicated that seniority, or whether an MP has a safe seat, influences his or her attitudes and behaviour. For example as Norton and Wood (1993, 147) state "for more senior MPs it may be more difficult to disguise personalised policy positions, and it is likely that less time is available for constituency-related work."

However, no such imbalance is apparent when length of service of the sample as a whole is examined. As can be seen from Table 3.8 below, the aggregate number of terms served by TDs sampled is remarkably similar to members of Dáil Éireann as a whole. Those interviewed were more likely to

be first term TDs than all members but the difference was not found to be significant in a difference of proportion test (p=0.15).

**TABLE 3.8: Interview sample and combined sample by number of Dáil terms served compared with the total in Dáil Éireann.**

| Terms Served | Interview Sample % | Combined Sample % | Dáil representation % |
|---|---|---|---|
| First Term | 28.0 | 20.7 | 21.1 |
| Second Term | 10.0 | 12.6 | 14.5 |
| Three terms or more | 62.0 n=50 | 66.7 n=87 | 64.3 n=166 |

**(vi) Data Analysis.**

While transcribing the interviews, I was also considering the nature of the coding scheme, and making final decisions of the best way to proceed after completion of the transcription. For the closed questions, this was relatively straightforward, although decisions had to be made about how to deal with those responses (such as the one already quoted at length) that did not conform to the set structure of the questions. Decisions in this regard will be reported with results for particular questions. For the open-ended questions, the responses were simplified into categories or themes extracted from the data and each answer was coded into at least one, and often more than one, of these categories. Due to non-responses, the total of responses varied from question to question and this will be apparent when responses are presented.

A final questionnaire was sent to fifteen of the interview respondents, requiring further details about their time allocation. This is relevant to results that will be reported in Chapter Nine, and the justification for, and procedure of, this last survey will be explained and reported there. Finally, other data was used in the course of various chapters, including public opinion poll data and parliamentary questions. These, and any other data

employed will be discussed where they are referred to in specific subsequent chapters.

Now that I have outlined the scope, methodology and political science context of this dissertation, I will, in the next chapter, proceed to the reporting of results, the first set of which relate to the extent to which Irish TDs are representative of the population in microcosmic terms and whether these traits influence their policy stances.

# CHAPTER 4: MICROCOSMIC REPRESENTATION[33]

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I am going to test one model of representation originally derived from a normative theory of representation: microcosmic or descriptive representation. I am also going to investigate the recruitment channels of TDs over time, partly to highlight distinctive features of Irish recruitment, but also on the basis that the route that a TD followed to gain selection and election is likely to have an impact on that individual's role orientation. The main findings of this chapter are that Irish representatives correspond to international patterns in being disproportionately male, older, more highly educated, and of higher status occupations than the population that they represent. They reflect the population in being ethnically homogeneous and primarily Roman Catholic. However, there are certain distinctive features of the backgrounds of Irish TDs, including the relatively high number that have come from commercial backgrounds, and the significant proportion of TDs that were preceded as Dáil members by close relatives.

In the first two chapters, I outlined the theoretical basis for microcosmic theories of representation. In brief, for many democrats, fair and free elections are just one element of a genuinely democratic system along with other requirements, for example that the economic and social diversity present in society should be reflected amongst the members of parliament. Most people would agree with this principle to the extent that they would see value in achieving as broad a range of backgrounds as possible in parliament. However, the claim that such recognition is needed to avoid bias in the formulation and implementation of policy is more controversial. Robert Putnam poses the essential question in this regard when he asks, "do elites of differing sociological composition, but facing similar decisions,

[33] Some sections of this chapter have been previously published as part of O'Sullivan 1999.

actually produce different policies?"(Putnam 1976, 41). Even before attempting to answer this question, difficulties arise when attempting to decide which qualities or characteristics are relevant for such an analysis, and which can be omitted. For instance, it is difficult to convincingly justify why occupation is usually included in such research, and marital status is excluded although intuitively such a decision makes sense.

For the moment, I will bypass the philosophical aspects of this debate by using the findings of comparative empirical research, and in particular of Irish research, to select the variables that I will investigate. Most comparative research on recruitment focuses on variables such as gender, social class/ occupation, ethnicity, age, and educational levels. However, as Edinger and Searing (1967, 431) state:

> Social background categories are usually chosen *ad hoc* and assumed to be *prima facie* operational ... It seems ... plausible that some background characteristics have more relevance than others for ... a particular national political system.

While acknowledging that, depending on one's normative view-point, some variables chosen for analysis might be viewed as more significant than others (for example, feminists are more likely to see women's representation as important), I will select background variables for inclusion primarily on the grounds that they have usually been included in previous research on this theme. Therefore, I will focus on the fixed characteristics of age and gender, and then examine educational background, occupation, and finally religious background. This last variable has not often been covered in research for Ireland, but its inclusion can be justified on two grounds. Firstly, the existence of an overwhelming majority of Roman Catholics in the Irish political elite would substantiate fears of Unionists in Northern Ireland about their future in a state heavily influenced by this elite. Secondly, it is interesting to investigate whether the increased secularisation of Irish society over the past fifteen years or so has led to increased

representation for religious minorities (in effect non-Roman Catholics.) Many nation-states contain sizeable ethnic minorities, so that ethnic background is frequently examined in research into the composition of parliaments. However, Ireland is comparatively homogenous in ethnic terms, and ethnicity has not to date been a significant factor in political recruitment.[34] Given this lack of variation in ethnic background, there is very little to document in this regard.

According to theories of microcosmic representation, socio-economic characteristics of TDs are important. However, it is also important to examine the paths that these individuals have followed in their quest to achieve election to Dáil Éireann. Such information is particularly significant for two reasons. The first is that recruitment channels may contribute to an explanation of why certain groups are overrepresented at the expense of others. Secondly, if certain characteristics are found to shape the policy priorities and stances of TDs it is also likely that the early political socialisation and experience of TDs will affect these stances and preferences.

Two factors have been held to be particularly important in this regard over time: familial relationship with former TDs, and membership of local authorities (Barry 1992, 5). The significance of these features have been attributed to the personalism and localism of Irish political culture (for an introduction to Irish political culture, see Coakley 1999), and the preference that the voters have for politicians that are known to them, or are prominent figures within their local area (Gallagher 1985, 375). Another springboard to Dáil membership has been membership of the Upper Chamber, Seanad

[34] The huge publicity around the election of Moosajee Bhamjee in 1992 who was of South African extraction indicates the novelty of candidates of an ethnic minority. There has been no other TD from an ethnic minority in recent memory.

Éireann. It has been a useful temporary home for defeated TDs to lick their wounds and prepare themselves to regain their seats at the subsequent election. Because of the composition of the Seanad electorate, membership of a large party or local connections are likely to enhance the chances of election to the Seanad[35], which in turn provides valuable political experience, networking opportunities, and financial remuneration for aspiring TDs.

Specifically then, this chapter will detail the age, gender, religion, education, and occupation of TDs over time. I will also measure the number of TDs that were preceded in the Dáil by a relative, and count the number of TDs who have been members of a local authority or Seanad Éireann. Not all these categories have been covered for all Dála in existing research, and there has never been a comprehensive, comparative analysis of backgrounds of TDs and the population. I have therefore used existing secondary sources to obtain data before 1987. For the years after 1987, I have mainly aggregated the data published for individual Dála in a valuable series of books edited by Ted Nealon for all Dála since 1973. For the population, I will be relying on data gathered from the censuses of population conducted since 1926. These have not always been consistent in their questions over time, which in some cases restricts comparability considerably, but I will comment on specific problems in this regard where they occur. A particular emphasis will be placed on the most recently elected Dáil in 1997 (the 28th Dáil), as this is the group of TDs that are the subject of my interviews and surveys. It should be noted that, because the data comes from guides relating to the results of each general election, mid-term changes in composition after by-elections are not reflected. Nonetheless, many TDs first elected in by-elections are re-elected at the subsequent general election,

[35] Seanad membership can only be achieved either at the appointment of the Taoiseach or by election. The electorate consists of university graduates of certain universities,

and will therefore often be included in the analysis of the subsequent Dáil.

Now that I have outlined the variables and data for the analysis, I will proceed to the first section dealing with the fixed characteristics of age and gender.

## 4.2 Fixed Characteristics

### (i) Gender.

A balance between men and women in the composition of political elites is symbolically important, but feminist theory goes further in predicting that equal representation for women would change the character of politics and the nature of political outputs (see for example Lovenduski 1996). If this was shown to be the case, and an increase in female representatives could be shown to affect legislative performance and policy outputs, proportionate gender representation would be all the more essential.

Empirical investigations of the relationship between social characteristics and legislative performance have found gender to be more salient than class, age or education. Studies in both Europe and the United States provide evidence that women express different view-points and have different policy priorities from men. Esaiasson and Holmberg found women MPs in Sweden to be "more ecologically-oriented, morally more conservative, and more positive on issues of welfare and care" (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 35). For the Norwegian case, Matthews and Valen concluded that women were to the left of men for thirteen out of the eighteen policy areas that they investigated including sexual equality, environmental protection, level of public expenditure, and support for nursery schools (Matthews and Valen 1999, 141). Studies in the United States have shown that women are more likely to sponsor bills in areas such as health and welfare, and more likely to prioritise the issue of women's rights (Norris 1996b, 91). Further research

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members of city and county councils, the Dáil and the outgoing Seanad.

on Scandinavia and the European Parliament found that female representatives raised issues of particular applicability to them, including sexual equality and women's issues (Dahlerup 1998, 291-292; Norris 1996b, 91). However, women have been found to differ from men in more than their propensity to raise "women's issues": they also have distinct perspectives on particular issues. A 1996 study of Britain found that although both men and women prioritised economic issues, women were more concerned with part-time work, low pay, and pension rights, whereas men were more concerned about unemployment (Lovenduski 1997, 208). These findings indicate that the level of representation of women does matter in terms of the representation of certain interests and perspectives, and also in determining legislative outputs.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that women bring a different style to parliament, for example that they are more co-operative, less confrontational, less aggressive and so on (Thomas 1994, 10). Feminists also predict that an increase of women in parliament would result in a reform of parliamentary structures making them more conducive to women, who are likely to have to combine family and child rearing responsibilities with their political career (Thomas 1994, 11).

Notwithstanding the significance of gender representation indicated by such research, comparatively speaking, "the big losers in legislative recruitment everywhere have been women" (Matthews 1987, 21), and Ireland fits this pattern. Over the seventy-year period between 1922-1992, only about four per cent of nearly four thousand Dáil seats won have been taken by women. In addition, (as Gallagher points out and is shown in Table 4.1), over half of these women elected have been related to a former male TD, or a male who took part in the fight for independence (Gallagher 1995, 7). From the first fifty years of independence until 1981, women's representation never reached five per cent (see Table 4.1. below and Gallagher 1995, 7). Levels

of women TDs have ranged from about five to nine percent between 1977 and 1989, until the largest ever increase of over four per cent to twelve per cent in 1992. Comments made after the 1992 election, such as the statement made by one Fianna Fáil member that "women are emerging as the key element in the political landscape" (quoted in Gardiner 1993, 79), were proved to be mere hyperbole in 1997 when there was no further increase in the number of women elected. In fact, the 1997 election signified a drop in female representation, as women had increased their representation through by-elections between 1992 and 1997.[36]

[36] Three women were elected in by-elections between 1992 and 1997 and two of them retained their seats in 1997. Two women have won seats in by-elections since 1997 but one female TD died in 2000 so that the current total is 21 or just under thirteen per cent.

**Table 4.1: Women members of Dáil Éireann 1922 - 97.**

| Election | Number of women | % | Women elected for first time | Total number of different women elected | Total unrelated to male independence figure or former male TD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1922 | 2 | 1.6 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| 1923 | 5 | 3.3 | 4 | 6 | 2 |
| 1927[1] | 4 | 2.6 | 1 | 7 | 2 |
| 1927[2] | 1 | 0.7 | 0 | 7 | 2 |
| 1932 | 2 | 1.3 | 1 | 8 | 2 |
| 1933 | 3 | 2.0 | 3 | 11 | 3 |
| 1937 | 2 | 1.4 | 0 | 11 | 3 |
| 1938 | 3 | 2.2 | 1 | 12 | 3 |
| 1943 | 3 | 2.2 | 0 | 12 | 3 |
| 1944 | 4 | 2.9 | 1 | 13 | 3 |
| 1948 | 5 | 3.4 | 0 | 14* | 3 |
| 1951 | 5 | 3.4 | 0 | 14 | 3 |
| 1954 | 5 | 3.4 | 2 | 16 | 4 |
| 1957 | 5 | 3.4 | 1 | 18* | 4 |
| 1961 | 3 | 2.1 | 0 | 18 | 4 |
| 1965 | 5 | 3.5 | 0 | 21* | 4 |
| 1969 | 3 | 2.1 | 0 | 21 | 4 |
| 1973 | 4 | 3.5 | 0 | 21 | 4 |
| 1977 | 6 | 4.1 | 3 | 25* | 5 |
| 1981 | 11 | 6.6 | 7 | 33* | 11 |
| 1982[1] | 8 | 4.8 | 1 | 34 | 12 |
| 1982[2] | 14 | 8.4 | 3 | 37 | 14 |
| 1987 | 14 | 8.4 | 5 | 42 | 17 |
| 1989 | 13 | 7.8 | 2 | 44 | 19 |
| 1992 | 20 | 12.0 | 9 | 53 | 26 |
| 1997 | 20 | 12.0 | 5 | 61* | 29 |

*Source*: All figures until 1997, from Gallagher 1995 16; for 1997 calculated from Nealon 1997.

* Some women were first elected at by-elections occurring between two general elections; this applied to one woman in 1945, one in 1956, two in 1964, one in 1965, one in 1979, one in 1994, one in 1995 and one in 1996.

When comparing the number of female parliamentarians in Ireland with international trends, one might predict that the representation of women should be relatively high in Ireland, as cross-nationally the average percentage of women representatives in proportional systems is greater than

in majoritarian systems. Norris cites the example of parliaments elected across all democracies between 1989-1994, when the average representation for women was around 8 per cent in majoritarian systems, nearly 13 per cent in semi-proportional systems and just over 17 per cent in proportional representation systems (Norris 1996b, 199-200). In 2001, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union database for women in parliaments, Ireland was in fifty-fifth position of all liberal democracies for female representation in parliament, and twelfth of all EU members (www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm 20/8/01).

One explanation for this comparatively low level of female representation is that women are under-represented as parliamentary candidates (Galligan 1998, 36), and the larger parties select fewer women than the smaller parties. It is likely that the political elites of these parties would need to be convinced that the voters demanded more women candidates, were they to actively promote the selection of women as candidates. In addition, the voters would need to believe that increased representation of women would make a positive difference in terms of legislative performance and policy outputs.

However, when investigating for the Irish case whether the gender of representatives (and indeed other variables) have made a difference, it is important to note Dahlerup's suggestion that a critical mass of women is necessary for their presence to make a difference in parliament. She distinguished between *uniform groups* where one group is dominant, *skewed groups* where minorities are below 15 percent, tiled groups where minorities are between 15 - 40 percent, and balanced groups with ratios within 60: 40 (Dahlerup 1996, 28). It is claimed that only a tiled or balanced group can make a substantive difference as, until this stage, they are merely token representatives and tend to cut themselves off from others of their group. This theory of the critical mass effect is significant in the Irish case because,

if it is true, testing for gender effects in Dáil Éireann will be largely futile, given that the representation of women in the Dáil has never risen above 14 per cent. Researchers of women's involvement in Irish politics have suggested that in general, women's lobby groups such as the Council for the Status of Women and the Rape Crisis Centre have had a more immediate influence on specific aspects of law than female TDs. (Galligan 1999 310; Gardiner 1992, 22). Other significant changes for women, such as the right to access to contraception, and a limited right to abortion, were achieved through judicial review in court cases of 1973 and 1992 rather than policy initiatives of TDs.

I will investigate the impact of gender on policy stances of Irish TDs in the next chapter. For the moment, I will move on to the next fixed variable, that of age.

**(ii) Age.**

The first competitively elected Dáil of 1922 was a young body with an average age for deputies of about 41 years . However, the average age of TDs increased over the next 25 years to a mean of just over 51 years in 1948 (Gallagher 1984, 242). The age distribution for selected Dála is shown in Table 4.2. As Farrell stated: "this ageing trend reflects the dominance of a revolutionary élite for the first twenty to thirty years of the new state" (Farrell 1984, 323). As the first generation retired, a new elite group emerged, and the average of deputies fell again, although not to the level of the youthful cohort of 1922. The average age of TDs in Dála of the 1960s was about 49 years (Gallagher 1984, 242). By the 1970s, the age profile increased slightly but fell again in November 1982 when the mean age of deputies was 45 years, an average age below that of any members of the competitively elected parliaments in the developed world (Gallagher 1985, 383).

**Table 4.2: Age breakdown of selected Dála over time**

| Age | 1922 % | 1932 % | 1944 % | 1961 % | 1969 % | 1973 % | 1977 % | 1981 % | 1982[1] % | 1982[2] % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **21-29** | 14 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 3 |
| **30-39** | 39 | 27 | 12 | 16 | 25 | 24 | 24 | 16 | 24 | 27 |
| **40-49** | 24 | 39 | 31 | 36 | 27 | 35 | 36 | 41 | 36 | 37 |
| **50-59** | 19 | 27 | 37 | 21 | 27 | 24 | 24 | 27 | 27 | 27 |
| **60+** | 6 | 7 | 18 | 24 | 15 | 15 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 5 |
| **45+** | 29 | 49 | 72 | 61 | 53 | 56 | 56 | 59 | 56 | 56 |
| **n** | 101 | 121 | 124 | 73 | 144 | 144 | 148 | 166 | 166 | 166 |

Source: Farrell 1984, 324.

Although it is interesting to monitor trends in the age profile of TDs over time, the main focus of this chapter is on the extent to which TDs are a mirror of those that they represent. It is therefore important to examine whether the rise and fall in TDs' ages has coincided with similar patterns in the age profile of the electorate. General trends indicate that TDs are always older than the population as a whole, with the average difference ranging between ten years in the 1920s to twenty years in the 1990s. Having said that, given that the oldest TD in the Dáil is usually under 75 years of age and there is a relatively small number over 65 years, it is clear that there is also an older section of the population that is consistently under-represented.

The under-representation of young people in the population can, to some degree, be attributed to the fact that only citizens over 21 are eligible to run for the Dáil. Since 1936, 36% of the population or more has been less than 19 years of age, meaning that to begin with, nearly 40 per cent of the population are ineligible to run for parliament. In more recent years, Ireland has had the youngest population in Europe, with over 48 per cent of the population under thirty years of age (National Youth Council 1998, 1). The age profile of TDs does not reflect this, as is shown in Table 4.3, where it

can be seen that the number of TDs under the age of forty has dropped from just under one third in 1987 to under one fifth in 1997. The under-representation of those over 60 years of age is due to the fact that most TDs retire before the age of 65, if they have not lost their seat before they reach this age. As can be seen in Table 4.3 below, when one compensates for eligibility rules, and calculates the average age of the population based on those eligible to run for the Dáil, the average age of TDs is only marginally higher than the age of population, the difference ranging from under a year in 1987 to about three years in 1997. More significant differences are apparent in the distribution within the various age brackets between TDs and the electorate. Those aged between 30 and 60 are over-represented in the Dáil while those aged under 30 and over 60 are under-represented.

**Table 4.3: Breakdown of age of TDs compared with the population aged over 21 from recent Dála.**

| Age | 1987 % | Census 86 % | 1989 % | Census 91 % | 1992 % | Census 91 % | 1997 % | Census 96 % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **21-30** | 4.2 | 25.1 | 6 | 23.0 | 2.4 | 23.0 | 3.6 | 22.9 |
| **31-40** | 28.9 | 21.9 | 23.5 | 22.0 | 23.5 | 22.0 | 16.9 | 21.7 |
| **41-50** | 36.2 | 16.1 | 33.1 | 18.3 | 41 | 18.3 | 36.2 | 19.4 |
| **51-60** | 24.1 | 13.5 | 29 | 13.5 | 25.3 | 13.5 | 33.7 | 13.8 |
| **61-70** | 6.6 | 12.5 | 7.8 | 11.9 | 7.8 | 11.9 | 9.6 | 10.9 |
| **71-75** | 0 | 5.0 | 0.6 | 4.7 | 0 | 4.7 | 0 | 4.6 |
| **76+** | 0 | 5.9 | 0 | 6.6 | 0 | 6.6 | 0 | 6.5 |
| **n** | 166 | 2,123609 | 166 | 2,189922 | 166 | 2,189922 | 166 | 2,365854 |
| **%** | 100 | 100 | 100 | 99.9 | 100 | 99.9 | 100 | 100 |
| **Mean age (years)** | **45.8** | **45.5** | **46.8** | **46.0** | **47.4** | **46.0** | **49** | **45.8** |

*Source*: For the population Census 1986, Vol. 2, 22-23; Table 13, pp. 69-70; Census 91 Summary Population Report , 40- 4; Census 96, Vol. 2, 9, 27. For TDs, Nealon 1987, 158; Nealon 1989, 162; Nealon (1993) 175; Nealon 1997, 177.

Those, such as Anne Phillips, who believe that groups need to be present in parliaments to have their interests reflected and represented would regard this lack of representation for these age groups as significant in terms of policy outputs. Even without conceding this however, it can be suggested

that the lack of both youth and older representation in Dáil Éireann is, at the very least, likely to be significant in symbolic terms. The under-representation of younger members of society projects the idea that politics is irrelevant to those in their twenties and perpetuates the image of politicians as conservative, middle-aged men in grey suits. It can also be argued that a lack of older TDs suggests to older members of society that it is not possible to contribute significantly to society after a certain age. Cross-nationally and in Ireland, younger voters and those over sixty are less likely to vote than middle-aged members of the electorate (Crewe 1981, 258; Marsh 1991; Sinnott 1995, 142). Low turn-out of these groups cannot be directly connected with their under-representation in parliament, but low representation is likely to contribute to the continuation of non-voting among these age groups.

Other evidence shows that in terms of Irish values and attitudes, age was the best predictor of a lack of interest in politics with those between 18 and 24 years most likely to say that they were not interested in politics (Fogarty *et al* 1984, 256). According to the European Values surveys of 1981 and 1990, confidence in parliament increased with age among Irish respondents (Hardiman and Whelan 1994, 104). In addition, the output of political parties who lack youth representation is likely to emphasise the negative aspects of youth culture, rather than the difficulties and issues that particularly pertain to the young. As an opinion writer in a national newspaper on the topic noted: "I recall the last election manifesto of my own party, Fianna Fáil with horror, where the only reference to young people was in relation to litter" (Byrne 2000).

Effects in terms of policy outcomes are more difficult to predict conclusively, and little focus has been placed on the implications of a lack of representation for older sections of society in comparative research. However there is a widely assumed cross-national tendency for voters to

become more conservative with increasing age (see Stokes 1981, 276). Data from the 1991 European Values study suggests that, when political and social conservatism is being measured, "the important differences emerge involve contrasts with those under thirty, those aged between thirty and sixty, and those aged sixty or over" with those under thirty being most liberal and those over sixty most conservative (Hardiman and Whelan 1994, 123). It has also been found that age bears a clear relationship to partisanship, with those under thirty least likely to vote for Fianna Fáil, and those over sixty most likely to support the same party (Hardiman and Whelan 1994, 146). Other studies have found that voters under the age of 35 years are less likely to vote for either Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael than those over that age (Sinnott 1995, 189-190; Laver and Marsh 1999, 169-170). Irish parties have acknowledged the need to court young voters and activists by their establishment of youth wings of their parties (Gallagher 1985, 127). However, as we have seen, this has not translated into the election of a proportionate number of candidates under the age of 35 years to Dáil Éireann.

When one moves to socio-economic characteristics, imbalances between TDs and the population are also evident.

### 4.3 Socio-Economic Characteristics

**(i) <u>Education</u>.**

As already mentioned, international patterns have been for members of parliament to be more highly educated than the population that they represent. Although Ireland has conformed to this pattern, the level of education of TDs over time has been somewhat less than members of parliament in other countries (Gallagher 1995, 6). Existing research on educational levels of TD has documented some general trends over time, but studies have differed in the post-secondary education classification used. Some authors have focussed on university degrees while others use the

category of 'tertiary' or 'third level, ' a broader conception of post second level education, as it also includes diplomas and certificates achieved from a variety of colleges, institutes, and universities. I will refer to both forms in the subsequent analysis.

Although more highly educated than the population, the levels of education of TDs dropped slightly from 1922 until after the 1940s when, as can be seen in Table 4.4, the proportion of TDs with third level education began to substantially increase with the only slight dip apparent in 1977. TDs' presence at secondary level education similarly increased between 1944 and 1961. The number of TDs with a university degree rose and fell from highs of 26 per cent to lows of 19 per cent between 1922 and 1948 (Gallagher 1995, 15). Apart from a marginal dip in 1973, the level of TDs with a degree has steadily risen since the 1960's to an all time high level of 49 per cent in 1997. This is however still lower than the level of members of parliament with degrees in other countries. For example, in 1988, 63 per cent of Swedish MPs had achieved a university education, (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 21) and in 1992, 70 per cent of British MPs elected were university graduates (Norris and Lovenduski 1995,114). In addition, in a recent study of MEPs, Ireland had the lowest level of university educated representatives of all member states in the European Parliament (Norris and Franklin 1997, 191).

**Table 4.4: Educational background of TDs in selected Dála**

| Level of education | 1922 % | 1932 % | 1944 % | 1961 % | 1969 % | 1973 % | 1977 % | 1981 % | 1982[1] % | 1982[2] % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Primary | 40 | 44 | 48 | 22 | 10 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7 |
| Secondary | 34 | 32 | 29 | 51 | 49 | 52 | 56 | 44 | 39 | 36 |
| Tertiary | 26 | 24 | 22 | 28 | 41 | 40 | 37 | 49 | 54 | 54 |
| n | 101 | 121 | 124 | 73 | 144 | 144 | 148 | 166 | 166 | 166 |

Source: Farrell 1984, 324.

Although trends in TDs education levels have been documented over time, these levels have not been directly compared with the educational attainment of the population. In Table 4.5 below, I compare education of TDs elected in the last 13 years with the population. The census of 1966 was the first where educational details were investigated. For all years for which there is comparable data, educational levels of TDs have been significantly higher than those of the population as a whole but the overall difference has fluctuated from a high of +56 in 1971 to its lowest level of nearly +39 in 1981.

**Table 4.5: TDs' educational levels over time compared with those of the population (%)**

| | 1969 | 1966 % | 1971 | 1971 % | 1981 | 1981 % | 1987 | 1981 % | 1989 | 1991 % | 1992 | 1991 % | 1997 | 1996 % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | TDs | pop | TDs | pop | TDs | pop | TDs | pop | TDs | pop | TDs | pop | TDs | pop |
| First level | 10.0 | 65.5 | 8.0 | 63.7 | 7.0 | 45.6 | 3.6 | 45.6 | 3.6 | 34.4 | 1.8 | 34.4 | 2.0 | 29.5 |
| Second level | 49.0 | 25.6 | 52.0 | 27.2 | 44.0 | 40.7 | 36.7 | 40.7 | 30.7 | 52.0 | 30.7 | 52.0 | 31.0 | 50.8 |
| Third Level | 41.0 | 8.9 | 40.0 | 9.1 | 49.0 | 13.8 | 59.7 | 13.8 | 65.7 | 13.6 | 67.5 | 13.6 | 59.0 | 19.7 |
| Diff | | +55.5 | | +55.7 | | +38.6 | | +46.0 | | +52.1 | | +53.9 | | +43.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100.1 | 100 | 100.1 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

* There may be a slight distortion for third level in the population up to 1987 as I have classed all those who had 'vocational education' as secondary educated and those with 'vocational and secondary' in the third level category.

Sources: For TDs up to 1987 Farrell 1984; for TDs after 1987 Nealon 1987, 1989, 1992,1997. For the population, Census 1966 vol. 7; Census 1971 vol. 12; Census 1981, vol. 19; Census 91 vol. 9; Education Table 3A, 31; Census 96 Education, Vol. 8. Unfortunately the question for education in the 1986 Census was not detailed enough to be included.

From one perspective, the fact that TDs are more highly educated than the population can be viewed in a positive light as ensuring that they are better qualified to perform tasks such as the scrutiny of legislation and participation in committees. The perception that graduates might be more suitable for high office is reflected in the fact that they have been shown to be more likely to achieve ministerial office (Gallagher 1995, 7). In addition

in 1992 and 1997, they were more likely to be re-elected to the Dáil than non-graduates were (Gallagher 1999,124), indicating that the electorate do not resent a superior level of education among their representatives. The other significant issue is whether educational levels influence policy stances or priorities. For the Norwegian case, Matthews and Valen found that there were statistically significant differences between university-educated MPs and those with less education on six issues: taxation, interest rates, unemployment, atomic weapons, welfare levels, health care, education, environmental and child care policy (Matthews and Valen 1999, 141-143). Esaiasson and Holmberg found that for Swedish MPs in 1995, educational level was correlated with the left-right opinions in all parties (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1995, 38). In the British case, Norris and Lovenduski concluded that British MPs who were university graduates were more liberal on a liberal-authoritarian scale than non-graduates (Norris and Lovenduski 1995, 213-216).

**(ii) Occupation.**

Although Ireland corresponds to international patterns in that TDs are consistently from a higher status occupations than the population, there are certain features of TDs' occupations in Ireland over time that are more unusual (see Table 4.6). The consistently low level of TDs from manual backgrounds, and the high level from professional backgrounds conform to empirical findings from other countries.

The number of TDs from professional backgrounds has steadily risen since 1922 from 25 to 47 per cent of all TDs. In 1997, the corresponding rise for the population over time is from only 5 per cent to 14 per cent. Female TDs are especially unrepresentative in this regard. Over 85 per cent of successful female Dáil candidates in the four elections since 1987 were engaged in professional occupations before their election. Accountants, lawyers and barristers dominate within the higher professional group.

However by far the most numerous profession in the Dáil is that of schoolteacher; one-fifth of all TDs elected in 1997 are of this occupation. Teachers posses the political advantage of gaining a high profile in rural areas and gain communications skills through their job. In addition, they do not have to resign if elected to parliament; instead, they can take (open-ended) career breaks with the security of knowing that they can return to their former position if they lose their seat. The over-representation of other professional occupations has partly been attributed to the fact these occupations often provide various benefits to aspiring public representatives. These can include flexible working hours, long holidays, social networks, communication skills, and opportunities to take leave rather than resign, thereby providing a valuable safety net in the event of an unsuccessful election campaign (King 1987, 146).

The number of TDs who were formerly manual workers has never been higher than 6 per cent, and in the current Dáil only just over 1 per cent of all members were formerly in manual occupations. Contrastingly, since 1961 census data indicates that over 30 per cent of the population have been manually employed. Before this date, over half of the population was employed in some form of agricultural work. The decline in farming from the 1960s on is reflected in a reduction in the number of farmers in the Dáil.

A distinctive element of Ireland's political recruitment is that a significant group of TDs over time have come from commercial backgrounds, usually these are owners of small businesses, such as publicans, shopkeepers, undertakers and auctioneers. As Gallagher states (and as is apparent from Table 4.7): "the explanation for this lies not in any great profusion of small entrepreneurs in Ireland... but in the political resources with which their occupations endow them" (Gallagher 1995, 3). Such businesses result in daily contact with a large number of voters and result in a high profile,

which can be used to good effect in politics, particularly in the context of a political system where local factors are highly significant.

The occupation of TDs and their party membership is also related. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael TDs have historically been more likely to come from farming or commercial backgrounds than TDs from the Labour Party, who have tended to be classified as nonmanual employees or professionals (Gallagher 1995, 4). However, the number of professionals among TDs of the Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael parties rose from 36 per cent of both parties' total TDs in 1992 to 47 per cent in 1997 (calculated from Gallagher 1995, 14; O'Sullivan 1999, 188).

**Table 4.6: Occupation of TDs in selected Dála***

| Election | Manual employee | Non-manual employee | Commercial | Farmers | Lower Professional | Higher Professional | Other/ unknown | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | % | n |
| **1922** | 4.7 | 15.6 | 18.0 | 10.9 | 3.9 | 21.1 | 25.8 | 100 | 128 |
| **1932** | 3.9 | 5.9 | 24.8 | 26.8 | 5.2 | 19.0 | 14.4 | 100 | 153 |
| **1944** | 5.8 | 8.7 | 23.9 | 28.3 | 3.6 | 13.0 | 23.9 | 100 | 138 |
| **1961** | 2.8 | 9.0 | 29.9 | 21.5 | 9.7 | 12.5 | 14.6 | 100 | 144 |
| **1969** | 2.8 | 9.7 | 31.2 | 17.4 | 7.6 | 16.0 | 15.3 | 100 | 144 |
| **1977** | 2.0 | 16.9 | 31.8 | 13.5 | 12.2 | 23.6 | - | 100 | 148 |
| **1982**[2] | 2.4 | 13.9 | 27.1 | 12.7 | 17.5 | 24.1 | 2.4 | 100 | 166 |
| **1987** | 3.6 | 12.7 | 24. | 13.3 | 19.3 | 26.5 | - | 100 | 166 |
| **1989** | 4.2 | 14.5 | 24.1 | 10.8 | 21.7 | 24.7 | - | 100 | 166 |
| **1992** | 3.0 | 16.9 | 21.1 | 12.0 | 24.1 | 22.9 | - | 100 | 166 |
| **1997** | 1.2 | 18.1 | 21.1 | 12.7 | 22.9 | 24.1 | - | 100.1 | 166 |

Source: Up until 1992, Gallagher (1994); for 1997, O'Sullivan (1999)

* These are the occupations of TDs before their election to the Dáil. Many TDs become full-time politicians once elected and some of these give this as their occupation for the purpose of guides such as Nealon's. As this is uninformative for the purpose of this chapter, TDs have as far as possible been classified using their previous occupation. Some TDs have multiple occupations and as far as possible they have been classified according to the primary one.

## Table 4.7: Occupations of TDs from selected Dála compared with the population

| | 1922 TDs | 1926 pop | 1932 TDs | 1936 pop | 1944 TDs | 1946 pop | 1961 TDs | 1961 pop | 1969 TDs | 1971 pop |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Manual** | 4.7 | 12.9 | 3.9 | 14.9 | 5.8 | 14.7 | 2.8 | 26.7 | 2.8 | 31.3 |
| **Non-manual** | 15.6 | 18.7 | 5.9 | 18.9 | 8.7 | 19.6 | 9.0 | 27.7 | 9.7 | 29.7 |
| **Commercial** [1] | 18.0 | 7.8 | 24.8 | 8.2 | 23.9 | 7.9 | 29.9 | 2.5 | 31.2 | 3.8 |
| **Farmer** [2] | 10.9 | 51.4 | 26.8 | 48.1 | 28.3 | 45.7 | 21.5 | 28.9 | 17.4 | 21.1 |
| **L Professional** | | | | | | | 9.7 | 3.8 | 7.6 | 5.2 |
| **Higher Professional** [3] | 25.0 | 4.2 | 24.2 | 4.6 | 16.6 | 5.4 | 12.5 | 3.2 | 16.0 | 3.8 |
| **Other/ unknown** [4] | 25.8 | 5.1 | 14.4 | 5.5 | 23.9 | 6.7 | 14.6 | 7.2 | 15.3 | 5.1 |
| **Total** [5] | 100 | 100.1 | 100 | 100.2 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| **N** | 128 | 1305100 | 153 | 1339000 | 138 | 1298300 | 144 | 1108108 | 144 | 1119531 |
| | **1977 TDs** | **1981** [6] **pop** | **1982**[2] **TDs** | **1981 pop** | **1987 TDs** | **1986 pop** | **1992 TDs** | **1991 pop** | **1997 TDs** | **1996 Pop** |
| **Manual** | 2.0 | 31.9 | 2.4 | 31.9 | 3.6 | 31.2 | 3.0 | 32.8 | 1.2 | 32.1 |
| **Non-manual** | 16.9 | 32.7 | 13.9 | 32.7 | 12.7 | 34.3 | 16.9 | 23.8 | 18.1 | 23.7 |
| **Commercial** | 31.8 | 5.7 | 27.1 | 5.7 | 24.7 | 5.8 | 21.1 | 14.4 | 21.1 | 16.3 |
| **Farmer** | 13.5 | 13.2 | 12.7 | 13.2 | 13.3 | 11.4 | 12.0 | 8.6 | 12.7 | 6.8 |
| **Lower Professional** | 12.2 | 7.4 | 17.5 | 7.4 | 19.3 | 8.2 | 24.1 | 9.5 | 22.9 | 10.7 |
| **Higher Professional** | 23.6 | 4.5 | 24.1 | 4.5 | 26.5 | 4.5 | 22.9 | 4.7 | 24.1 | 5.2 |
| **Other/ Unknown** | 2.4 | 4.6 | - | 4.6 | - | 4.6 | - | 6.2 | - | 5.2 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| | 148 | 1271574 | 166 | 1271574 | 166 | 1329239 | 166 | 1382870 | 166 | 1533964 |

*Source:* For population, *Census of Population of Ireland 1946 & 1951, General Report* Table 88 p. 110; *Census 1971*, vol. 5 Table 6 p. 132; *Census 86* (1993) Vol. 7 *Occupations* Table H. p. 17; Census *1996*, (1998) vol. 7 *Occupations* Table 14, p. 49. For TDs Gallagher (1995) Table 1; O' Sullivan (1999) p. 187.

*Notes:* (1) There may be a discrepancy here, as until and including 1941 for the population, this category comprises what is described in the Census as 'commercial, finance and insurance occupations.' In 1961-1986 it includes only 'employers and managers.' For 1991 and 1996 it encompasses 'employers and managers' and 'own account workers'.

(2) Up until and including 1961 this covers 'agricultural occupations.' After this date until 1986, it is described in the census as 'farmers, farmers relatives and farm managers.' In 1991 and 1996 it is described as 'farmers'.

(3) Up until 1951 professionals were not separated for the population between higher and lower categories so that those described as professionals were placed in the Higher Professional Category.

(4 ) For the population this includes fishermen until 1971 and between 1971-1986 'other agricultural occupations and fishermen.' In 1991 and 1996 it includes 'agricultural workers' and 'all others gainfully occupied and unknown.

(5) The total for the population is the total gainfully employed. The remainder of the population are either children under 14/15 or those not in the labour force.

(6 )There was no occupational data available from the 1979 Census.

As with education, there are two perspectives from which the implications of higher occupational status for representatives can be viewed. If the emphasis is on achieving the highest calibre of representatives, then a higher level of education and occupational background might be seen as a positive development, in creating TDs better suited to making the judgements and decisions necessitated by their role in legislating and executive scrutiny.[37] The predominance of verbal and professional occupations might likewise be seen as positive in producing articulate TDs with experience in communication, and training in important policy areas such as law, medicine, education, or agriculture. With regard to the primary focus of this chapter, the microcosmic representation perspective, it would not be viewed as positive that less educated sectors of the population from lower status occupations are not present in great numbers in parliament. Historically, Social Democratic, Labour and Communist parties were founded to reflect working-class opinion, according to the assumption that only members of the working-class can adequately reflect and express working-class opinion and interests (Norris and Franklin 1997, 207). Some Irish observers have argued that being of a higher level of education and occupational status could bias TDs in favour of policies favouring the more privileged in society, and neglecting the interests of those suffering from unemployment and poverty (Lynch 1996, 492-3). The Irish budget of 1998 was seen as evidence that the underprivileged in society were being excluded from much of the benefits of the economic boom in a process whereby "the powerful... get their voices heard and their demands met while the needs of the weak, the excluded and the voiceless are left waiting until "resources become available"(CORI 1998, 8).

In terms of concrete empirical research to substantiate the claims outlined above, some connection has been identified between people's socio-

[37] This view of representatives is particularly associated with Edmund Burke (see Pitkin 1967,168-89).

economic background, and their policy stances and political opinions, but empirical evidence in this regard has been rather mixed. For example in the Swedish case, Esaiasson and Holmberg found that MPs from more highly educated and white-collar occupations tended to be more left wing, while farmers and the self-employed tended to be more right-wing (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 37-39). Matthews and Valen's research in Norway resulted in findings showing that higher level occupational groups in the Storting had significantly different scores from lower level groups on eleven of eighteen issues, primarily economic ones, but also on issues related to foreign and defense policy. (Matthews and Valen 1999, 141). However, Norris and Lovenduski found that in Britain, occupational class failed to predict attitudes on any of their four scales related to left-right, liberal-authoritarian, post-materialist and 'feminist' values (Norris and Lovenduski 1995, 213-216). They also found no evidence that working-class members in the British parliament were significantly more likely to articulate concerns about social policy matters such as welfare services (Norris and Lovenduski 1995, 219).

Existing research indicates that conclusions as to whether occupational background affects political attitudes, priorities and policy stances depend on the context and policy issues concerned. However, the issue of a critical mass is once again relevant. Perhaps with a significant working class membership, policy outputs in Dáil Éireann would be different. Intuitively it might be expected, although not scientifically proven, that a parliament with a large number of farmers or teachers is more likely to prove sympathetic to these groups, and to protect their interests than those of under-represented groups or occupations (see for example Hardiman, 1998).

**(iii) Religion.**

The population of the Republic of Ireland is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic[38], and this has historically been reflected in the religious affiliation of members of Dáil Éireann. In fact, the religious background of members of Dáil Éireann has historically been practically identical to that of the population. Since 1926, the level of Roman Catholics in the population has not fallen below 90 per cent (Coakley and Gallagher 1999, 364). Religious background has not been documented for Dála before 1987, probably because, as Gallagher notes in his examination of the background of TDs elected in November 1982, "One factor not given extended examination is religion, since there is little to examine. The Dáil contains just four members of minority religions (one Protestant and three members of the Jewish faith) the rest being Catholics of varying degrees of piety" (Gallagher 1984, 242 ff. 2). For the four Dála since 1987, the level of Roman Catholics have fallen marginally from just under 98 per cent in 1987 to just under 96 per cent in 1997.

In fact, religious background is the demographic variable where TDs have been most representative of the population. The fact that the political elite have, with few exceptions, been members of the Roman Catholic Church contributes to explaining the close historical connection between the Roman Catholic church and the Irish state. After independence, the Church used its control of education and health services to heavily influence the state's social policy. The population as a whole, and their political leaders, accepted the clerical views on social policy and morality. The 1937 Constitution was strongly influenced by Catholic teaching (see for example Articles 41, 42 & 44), and a series of legislative measures incorporated tenets of Catholic teaching into Irish law (see Hogan 1987). Various examples of Church influence over state policy until the 1970's include the

[38] However, there is no data in relation to the number of lapsed Catholics who are only Catholics by birth and choose not to practice as Catholics through attendance at Mass etc.

Mother and Child Scheme controversy of 1951,[39] and the censorship laws under which many publications were banned. Ireland's membership of the EEC from 1973, and the liberalising policy of the coalition government elected in 1982 in particular, resulted in a decline in Church influence, and the continuing high level of Catholic representation in the Dáil did not prevent such liberalising measures as the introduction of bills to decriminalise homosexual practices in 1993, and the introduction of divorce in 1995. These developments were facilitated by a decline in public support for the Roman Catholic hierarchy due to the exposure of various scandals associated with the clergy in the 1990s. Although various conservative and right wing groups have attempted to mobilise electoral support for more traditional values in recent elections, they have achieved little success amongst an increasingly liberal and secular Irish society (these issues will be discussed further in the next chapter).

We have shown in the previous section that TDs are similar to representatives in other countries in being more likely to be male, middle-aged, highly educated and occupying higher status occupations than the population they represent. So, what routes of entry are most common in facilitating the election of such individuals to Dáil Éireann? Two factors have been particularly important over time: familial relationship with former parliamentarians, and membership of local authorities (Farrell 1985, 239). These recruitment channels continue to be significant for members of the 28th Dáil.

[39] The Government failed to support the welfare proposals of its Minister for Health in response to pressure from the Catholic Church. The Government of the day fell and a debate about the proper relationship between Church and State ensued (for a full account of this controversy, see Whyte 1980,196-272).

## 4.4 Recruitment Paths

### (i) Local Authority Membership.

A common route to the Dáil has been through first achieving membership of a local authority. Local elections have been described as 'a breeding ground for the potential TDs of later years' (Barry 1992, 5), and the number of TDs who were members of a local authority before their election to the Dáil has increased over time (see Table 4.8). Some TDs have also become members of a Local Authority after their election to the Dáil, possibly in an attempt to consolidate their constituency ties, and compensate for their absence from the locality when attending Dáil sessions in Dublin. Since 1987, the number of TDs who have never been local authority members has consistently been below 15 per cent. This may contribute to explaining why the *Local Government Bill 2000* was amended in June 2001 after protests from backbench TDs against a provision preventing TDs simultaneously holding local authority seats. Such dual membership is likely to affect TDs' role orientations and performance in various ways.

Firstly, TDs who are local authority members must spend time (usually once every fortnight) attending local authority meetings and travelling to and from these meetings. As I will highlight in later chapters, many TDs complain about having too little time to perform the range of duties associated with the position of TD, and also about the time that they must spend travelling. Occupying a second elected position with its own demands is likely to worsen this situation.

**Table 4.8: Percentage of TDs who were Local Authority members prior to election in selected Dála**

| Election | Local Authority members | |
|---|---|---|
| | % | N |
| **1923** | 29.4 | 45 |
| **1932** | 59.5 | 91 |
| **1944** | 67.4 | 93 |
| **1961** | 56.2 | 81 |
| **1969** | 50 | - |
| **1977** | 60.1 | 89 |
| **1982**[2] | 66.3 | 110 |
| **1987** | 70.5 | 117 |
| **1992** | 73.5 | 122 |
| **1997** | 74.1 | 123 |

Source: Gallagher 1995, 17; O'Sullivan, 1999, 191

**(ii) Seanad membership.**

Another career path is for aspiring TDs to serve in the Upper House (Seanad Éireann) before election as a TD. It is particularly common for Taoisigh to use their right of nomination to give a promising party newcomer some experience, and a higher profile by appointing them to the Seanad. In addition, Taoisigh have nominated defeated TDs, and provided them with a continuing income, and the option to run to gain re-election at the subsequent election. Some TDs have been members of Seanad Éireann both before election to the Dáil, and between terms as a TD. Figures for Seanad membership of TDs have not been collated in previous research, but in my analysis of Dála since 1987, the number of TDs who have served in the Seanad at some stage in their career has been increasing, from 21 per cent in 1987 to 31 per cent in 1997. For the more cynical observer, this may contribute to explaining why the major political parties have not pursued

abolition of the Seanad more actively.[40] However, experience in the Seanad gives prospective TDs valuable experience in policy scrutiny, committee work and other duties, and as such, is likely to improve their performance if they are subsequently elected to the Dáil.

**Table 4.9: Percentage of TDs who have been Senators since 1987**

| Election | Before % | Between % | Before & Between % | Ever Member % | Never members % | Total N | Total % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1987** | 13.3 | 5.4 | 1.8 | 20.5 | 79.5 | 166 | 100 |
| **1989** | 16.3 | 6.0 | 2.4 | 24.7 | 75.3 | 166 | 100 |
| **1992** | 15.1 | 9.0 | 2.4 | 26.5 | 73.5 | 166 | 100 |
| **1997** | 17.5 | 9.6 | 3.6 | 30.7 | 69.3 | 166 | 100 |

It has been argued that recruitment channels in Ireland have contributed to the under-representation of women in Dáil Éireann. To investigate this claim, the levels of male and female TDs that have followed the traditional paths to Dáil membership must be compared. Over the ten years since 1987, female TDs were more likely to be members of the Seanad before election than men were. For example, in 1987, 29 per cent of female TDs had been Senators before their election to the Dáil, compared with 7 per cent of male TDs. In 1997, one quarter of female TDs had been Senators before their election to the Dáil, compared with one fifth of men. Women on the other hand were, until 1997, marginally less likely than men to have been members of a Local Authority before achieving Dáil membership. At the last election, this gender gap disappeared: 74 per cent of men were Local Authority members before their election to Dáil Éireann compared with 75

[40] The Progressive Democrats did propose abolition in a proposed new constitution published in 1988 but they continue to have Seanad representation and the issue seems to have been dropped from their political agenda. The Constitution Review Group of 1995 recommended a more comprehensive review of the future of the Seanad but suggested that it might be reconstituted to represent groups in society not receiving adequate Dáil representation (see Laver 1996; Lynch 1996; *and Report of the Constitution Review Group* pp. 65-71).

per cent of women. However, it is in the final recruitment channel where the gender difference is most dramatic, and has persisted until the present.

### (iii) Family relationships with former TDs.

An unusual element of Irish recruitment is the level of TDs that are related to a former TD, and in practice, there have been two routes for family relationship to facilitate the election of individuals to the Dáil. Some directly inherit the seat of a family member according to the phenomenon which has been termed the 'hereditary TD' (Farrell 1983,90). There are also TDs who have a close family relationship with a former TD although they may not represent the same constituency as their relative. Over the thirty-six years between 1961 and 1997, at least one fifth of members of each Dáil have been related to former TDs. The highest level was 31 per cent in 1973.

**Table 4.10: Percentage of TDs over time preceded as a Dáil member by close relative***

| Election | % | N |
|---|---|---|
| **1961** | 23 | 73 |
| **1969** | 28 | 144 |
| **1973** | 31 | 144 |
| **1977** | 25 | 148 |
| **1981** | 26 | 166 |
| **1982**[1] | 26 | 166 |
| **1982**[2] | 28 | 166 |
| **1987** | 22.3 | 166 |
| **1989** | 21.1 | 166 |
| **1992** | 20.5 | 166 |
| **1997** | 23.5 | 166 |

Source: Prior to 1987, Farrell 1984, 329 and since 1987 calculated from Nealon 1988, 1990, 1993, 1998.

* Where a TD was related to more than one former TD the most recent TD to have preceded them was the one included. Relationships between those who were members of the same Dáil are not included.

As mentioned previously, there is a huge gender gap in this regard. Until 1977, the few women who were elected to the Dáil were in the main preceded by a male relative (usually a father or husband). Until 1987, of the 25 women elected, only five were not preceded by a male relative (Gallagher 1995, 7). This remained a more common channel of recruitment for women up to an including the election of 1997, as can be seen in Table 4.11. Between 1987 and 1997, women TDs were twice as likely to be related to previous TDs than men and in the current Dáil, this difference is nearly 25 per cent. It should also be mentioned that of the six TDs under the age of thirty in the 28th Dáil, two are daughters and one is a son of former TDs, all of whom achieved election in the constituency of their fathers. This indicates that the already small number of young and female TDs are largely reliant on family connections for their election.

**Table 4.11: Percentage of TDs related to former TDs amongst male and female TDs since 1987.**

| Year | Men % | Women % | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1987** | 20.4 | 42.9 | 22.5 |
| **1989** | 19.6 | 46.2 | 26.6 |
| **1992** | 19.2 | 30.0 | 10.8 |
| **1997** | 20.6 | 45.0 | 24.4 |

## 4.5 Conclusion

Overall the background of TDs has been fairly consistent over time, with members being older, more highly educated and from higher status occupations than the population, and women's representation remaining disappointingly low. Ireland's elite conforms in the main to international patterns although the levels of education and of women's representation in Ireland have been somewhat lower than those of other liberal democracies. At the very least, this overall imbalance has repercussions at a symbolic

level, since representation for minority groups demonstrates a symbolic recognition of their equal status. Representation also encourages the political allegiance of such groups and their alienation can undermine democratic stability within a state. In addition, there is some international, empirical evidence to suggest that the socio-economic qualities of TDs might influence their political positions, and thereby ultimately contribute to policy outcomes. In the next chapter, such hypotheses will be tested. Through data collected from questionnaires and interviews, I will explore the political attitudes of TDs and attempt to connect these with the variables that I have analysed during this chapter.

# CHAPTER 5: POLICY STANCES AND POLICY CONGRUENCE

## 5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the socio-economic background of TDs was outlined. It was found that over time, on an aggregate level, members of the Dáil have been older, of a higher occupational and educational status than the population, and disproportionately male. Various pieces of comparative research cited in that chapter gave an indication as to how this lack of socio-economic representation might affect policy stances and priorities. In this chapter, policy stances of TDs will be empirically investigated from two perspectives.

In the first section, I will describe the policy stances of the sample of TDs on various issues, and compare TDs of different socio-economic traits (gender, education, occupation and age) to assess whether these characteristics have any clear impact on policy stances. I will also investigate whether political variables such as constituency type, party and political experience might affect political positions. Overall, the findings are that TDs' party membership was most significant in predicting their policy stances, but on certain issues other variables had some effect.

In the second part of the chapter, I will examine the extent to which policy congruence exists between TDs and the population on these same policy issues. The title of a member of Dáil Éireann, *Teachta Dála*, literally means 'messenger to the Dáil'. Implicit in this terminology is the assumption that TDs should, through their behaviour in parliament, reflect the wishes of the people. This suggests that the concept of popular influence is a normative principle of Irish government. However, various manifestations of popular control can exist and it can occur at different levels and in different forms.

Policy congruence between the represented and their representatives is one possible method of popular control, a form of which is the constituency control described in Miller and Stokes' diamond model. As described in Chapters 1 and 2, constituency control can result from at least three different processes. Representatives can have similar policy beliefs and priorities to those of the voters due to voters voting for representatives on the basis of similarities in policy between themselves and the candidate. Alternatively, the voters might elect representatives who are similar to themselves either in background or experience, and policy stances might be similar because of these common features. Finally, congruence might exist between members of parliament and the electorate due to deliberate efforts of the representatives to ascertain the opinions or policy preferences of the electorate, and then to act according to these preferences.

The form of behaviour that is usually used as an indicator of congruence is roll-call voting. However, because of the strength of the party whip in dictating the voting of Irish TDs (which will be discussed further in Chapter 7), any attempts to measure the effects of constituency opinion in the Irish context by focussing on voting is unlikely to produce significant constituency effects. Because of this factor, and due to a lack of constituency level public opinion data to measure constituency congruence, I will concentrate in this chapter on policy congruence at an aggregate level, focussing on attitudes rather than behaviour. In Chapter 7, which deals with the variable of representational style, I will investigate the extent to which TDs aim to represent the policy opinions of their constituents and the degree to which they are party delegates. The main findings in relation to policy congruence at an aggregate level are that it does not exist to any great extent, nor are TDs particularly close to the supporters of their parties.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: the next section will describe the data used and policy areas highlighted. I will then examine the results for

TDs and assess whether their stances are related to socio-economic traits. In the following section, I will examine the extent to which there is congruence between TDs and the population on particular policy stances. Finally, I will investigate whether TDs' positions on these issues configure according to a left-right dimension.

## 5.2 Data and Variables

Given that there were two reasons for collecting data on policy stances - to compare TDs' stances with each other, and also to compare them with the population - various factors had to be considered in choosing the policy issues to be compared, and how stances on them might be measured. Available public opinion data for Ireland is limited to Eurobarometer data[41], opinion polls commissioned by newspapers[42] and data from European Values studies.[43] The extent of the comparability of such data with the data specifically collected for the project is limited for various reasons. One issue is that the wording of the commercial polls can be imprecise or inaccurate on occasion, as it is designed for media reporting rather than

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[41] This type of European Community study originated in 1970 but was launched as Eurobarometer in 1974. They tend to concentrate on levels of support for European integration, national goals and political issues, political party preferences, ideological orientations and subjective well-being. They have also explored a variety of special topics as part of specific Eurobarometer studies and it was these special studies which were most useful for this thesis. For more information and debate about this data see Reif and Inglehart 1991 or the Eurobarometer web site at http:// europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/epo/org.html. In the Irish case, a random sample of just over 1,000 adults is conducted.

[42] These have been conducted by the Market Research Bureau of Ireland for the Irish Times, Irish Marketing Surveys for the Independent group and Lansdowne Market Research since the mid 1970s. These have been made available in machine-readable form through the efforts of Professor Michael Marsh, Trinity College and can be accessed at http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/cgi/. MRBI polls are usually based on quota sampling of respondents aged 18 and upwards using 100 sampling points throughout all constituencies in the Republic of Ireland. IMS and Lansdowne tend to be based on a quota sample of approximately 1050 respondents again above 18 and in 100 sampling points. These samples are broken down by party support, region, age, marital status, gender, and social group.

[43] The only relevant European Values study was in 1990 and had 1000 Irish respondents. For results, see among others Ashford and Timms 1992 and Hardiman and Whelan 1994.

academic analysis. Secondly, the range of policy issues covered is very limited: questions concentrate on party support, satisfaction with party leaders, and opinions on a few policy issues which are either salient at the time when the poll is conducted, or which the market research body have been paid to administer by an institution, group or individual. The ideal for this research would have been to commission a survey of a representative sample of the electorate during the same period as the TD data was collected, and to use exactly equivalent question wording. The ultimate sample would have been selected according to its equivalence with the TD sample for variables such as gender, age, education, occupation, gender, constituency and party affiliation.[44] Resource constraints, already outlined in Chapter 2, prevented such a mass survey being undertaken.

The dual purpose of the policy indicators meant that the issues investigated for TDs had to be ones where recent data existed for the population. In addition, researchers on policy stances tend to choose areas which are interrelated in measuring an underlying concept. One of the most common examples is a scale which uses individual policy statements to estimate the position of an individual on a left –right, or liberal-conservative continuum or dimension. I followed this strategy in designing the policy statement questions by choosing issues associated with this policy dimension. While acknowledging the contested nature of these concepts, I follow the example of Inglehart and Klingemann in using these terms interchangeably and using a definition first proposed by Lipset *et al.* :

> By Left we shall mean advocating social change in the direction of greater equality – political, economic, or social; by Right we shall mean supporting a traditional, more or less hierarchical social order, and opposing change toward greater equality. (Quoted in Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976, 257-258).

[44] It has already been explained that the TD sample is not completely representative in these terms.

The specific policy statements were selected based on existing elite research, and the analysis of party policy manifestos according to spatial dimensions (see for example Laver and Budge 1992; Laver 1998b). Finally the wording of policy items was influenced by previous elite survey research both Irish and comparative. [45]

Eight policy issues were finally chosen – Ireland's involvement in EU defence and security policy, policy against crime, attitudes to taxation and welfare, legalisation of soft drugs, immigration, Trade Unions, environmental protection, and abortion. Seven of the statements were either taken directly or adapted from a survey of Fine Gael members (see footnote 5).

The structure of the question was a battery of statements (see Table 5.1), one for each issue, and respondents were invited to either *strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree* with each statement. This form of intensity question is one of the most commonly used (Converse and Presser 1991, 119), and is informative in demonstrating not merely the respondents' attitudes on an issue, but also the intensity with which they hold that attitude.

## 5.3 TDs' Policy Attitudes

Table 5.1 below lays out the exact wording of the eight policy statements, and the combined results from both interviewees and respondents. I will discuss TDs' attitudes on each issue including the aggregate results, and also

[45] Two questionnaires were particularly influential: a survey conducted in 1999 of Fine Gael party members by Professors Michael Gallagher and Marsh to be published in Gallagher and Marsh (2002) forthcoming, and a members of parliament questionnaire which I administered in Ireland for a study of Political Representation in Europe. The results of this latter study are detailed in Katz and Wessels 1999 and Schmitt and Thomassen 1999.

compare the stances of particular sub-groups.[46] As can be seen from the 'no response' column in the table, ranging from between around 3 per cent to 11 per cent, there were some questions respondents refused to answer or stated that they had no opinion on.[47]

**TABLE 5.1 TD's aggregate policy responses (Interview and Survey Data)**

| Policy statement | S A % | A % | D % | S D % | N/R % | Total % | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ireland should join the PfP* | 24.7 | 52.8 | 11.2 | 7.9 | 3.4 | 100 | 89 |
| Tougher action should be taken against criminals even if this means curtailing civil liberties | 15.7 | 38.2 | 34.8 | 3.4 | 7.9 | 100 | 89 |
| Taxes on the higher paid should be increased to improve services | 4.5 | 40.5 | 46.1 | 4.5 | 4.4 | 100 | 89 |
| The use of marijuana should be decriminalised | 0 | 5.6 | 48.3 | 36.0 | 10.1 | 100 | 89 |
| There are too many immigrants being let into this country | 4.5 | 7.9 | 58.4 | 23.6 | 5.6 | 100 | 89 |
| Trade Unions have too much power in Ireland | 0 | 12.4 | 71.9 | 11.2 | 4.5 | 100 | 89 |
| Job creation should be a priority even when this means some damage to the environment. | 0 | 20.2 | 64.0 | 7.9 | 7.9 | 100 | 89 |
| Women should be free to decide for themselves on abortion | 11.2 | 28.1 | 39.3 | 10.1 | 11.2 | 99.9 | 89 |

* The mail surveys were administered after Ireland joined the Partnership for Peace so the wording for the 38 surveys was "Ireland's membership of the PfP is a positive development". For an explanation of this issue, see section 5.4 (iii).

After examining results at an aggregate level, responses were further broken down into sub-groups by the age, gender, occupation, and education of the respondents. Gender and education were coded as binary variables: for education, TDs were classed according to whether they had a university degree or not. As regards occupation, five categories were used: non-

[46] I had assigned a number to each mailed questionnaire so that I would be able to measure variables such as party, gender etc. However, two TDs removed the number so it was impossible to identify them and ascertain such characteristics. They were therefore omitted from the analysis of sub-groups.

[47] The usual response was that he/she never answered questions on this topic (usually to the abortion question), or that it was impossible to give a black-and-white answer.

manual, farmer, commercial, professional and manual. TDs were also categorised by age (variables were created differentiating between TDs who were in their twenties, thirties, forties, fifties, or over sixty when they participated in the interview or survey process.) Although not related to socio-economic background, I also expected that political variables such as constituency type (urban or rural), party background, and ministerial experience might influence policy stances. Constituency type and ministerial background were coded as binary variables: urban/rural and Minister/non minister (based on whether a respondent had ever held office at Minister or Minister of State level). Parties included were Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the Labour Party, the Progressive Democrats and Others.

The significance of these variables was first investigated through a series of two-tailed t-tests (in the form of a difference of proportion test) using the Stata computer package. For these tests, the categories of the dependent variables were collapsed into two categories – agree and disagree. In common with most cross-national research in this area, party affiliation was by far the most powerful predictor of policy stances but other variables had some effect in relation to particular policy issues. Because of the strength of the party effect, and also to incorporate the four categories of the dependent variables, the effects of the independent variables were further examined by conducting a series of multiple ordinal logistic regressions in Stata. Multiple regression analysis was used because it takes the effect of each of the independent variables into account while controlling for the effects of each of the others. [48] For example, within the sample, most rural TDs are either from Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael (92%) while of the urban TDs, only 65% are from these two parties. It is important therefore that constituency effects are controlled for the effect of party.

[48] Ordinal logistic regression was used because the dependent variable consisted of ordinal categories.

**(i) Gender.**

Cross-national research outlined in the previous chapter suggested various differences in policy stances between men and women in parliaments, but these varied from case to case. For example, after controlling for party, women were found to be more left-wing in Norway but more morally conservative in Sweden. An initial examination of cross-tabulations of policy stances by gender showed that female Irish TDs were more likely to be against Ireland's membership of Partnership for Peace, tougher action against criminals, the statement that there were too many immigrants in Ireland and that job creation should be a priority even if meant some environmental damage. Female TDs were more in favour of raising taxes to improve services, and in favour of a woman's right to make her own decision on abortion.

The significance of these initial observations was tested using a difference of proportions test (a two-tailed t-test) in Stata. Differences between men and women were only found to be significant (at the 0.05 level) in the case of two policy areas: PfP and immigration. It was confirmed that men were significantly more likely to favour joining PfP than women ($p=0.03$) and were also more likely to agree that there were too many immigrants in Ireland ($p < 0.001$). These findings fit with theories already outlined that women tend to be more opposed to militarism than men, and are more compassionate in their stances towards marginalised groups.

However, when these relationships were further tested using ordinal logistic regressions (differentiating between strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree), the only difference found to be significant was on the issue of Trade Unions. Women were significantly more likely to agree that these bodies were too powerful than men although when predicted values (see page 113) were calculated, on average, both genders were most likely

to disagree with the statement, explaining why the difference of proportions test showed the gender effect overall to be insignificant.

**(ii) Age.**

Existing research (for example Norris and Lovenduski 1995 214-219; Matthews and Valen 1999 141-144) indicates that older members of parliament tend to be more conservative, both socially and economically, whereas younger MPs are more liberal. However, such a pattern is not apparent from this data for the Irish case. On some issues, TDs in their twenties were significantly more conservative than their older colleagues. Difference of proportion tests between those of each age-group and the rest of the population showed significant differences between those of different ages on the issue of the legalisation of marijuana. Those in their twenties ($p = 0.0013$), thirties ($p < 0.001$) and sixties ($p < 0.001$) were more against legalisation while those in their forties ($p < 0.001$) and fifties ($p < 0.001$) were significantly more in favour. Those in their thirties ($p = 0.01$) were significantly more likely to be against increasing taxes to improve services, while those in their fifties were significantly against the statement that trade unions were too powerful ($p<0.001$).

However, none of these variables were found to have a significant effect when tested using ordinal logistic regression analysis.[49]

**(iii) Education.**

Prior research has generally found that more highly educated members of parliament are more liberal and left-wing than less educated colleagues. Initial cross-tabulations supported this hypothesis for the Irish case. Respondents with degrees were more in favour of tax increases to improve services, the legalisation of marijuana, and a pro-choice position on

[49] The variables included were twenties, thirties, fifties and over sixty. Forties was the control variable which was excluded from the regression analysis.

abortion. They were more against Ireland joining PfP, against tougher action against criminals, against the statement that there were too many immigrants in the country, against the statement that Trade Unions were too powerful and against the statement that job creation should be a priority even if this meant damage to the environment. Overall on every issue, TDs with degrees took a more liberal position than those without degrees.

As can be seen in Table 5.2, when the significance of these relationships were tested using difference of proportion tests, education was found to be significant in three policy areas – PfP, the legalisation of marijuana and immigration. TDs with degrees were more likely to disagree with PfP membership, to agree with the legalisation of marijuana, and to disagree that there were too many immigrants in the country. As with age, when ordinal logistic regressions were conducted, there was no significant effect for the education variable.

**TABLE 5.2 Agreement with Policy Statements by Education**

| Policy | Degree | No degree | Difference | p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Joining PfP** | 65.8 | 88.7 | -22.9 | **0.0107** |
| **Tougher on crime** | 48.7 | 65.9 | -17.2 | 0.1239 |
| **Raise taxes** | 53.7 | 45.3 | 8.4 | 0.4661 |
| **Legalise marijuana** | 10.8 | 4.9 | 5.9 | **0.0002** |
| **Too many immigrants** | 7.5 | 23.8 | - 16.3 | **0.0000** |
| **Trade Unions too powerful** | 12.5 | 14.0 | -1.5 | 0.8941 |
| **Jobs a priority** | 13.5 | 28.6 | -15.1 | 0.1081 |
| **Pro-choice on abortion** | 52.6 | 35.9 | 16.7 | 0.1333 |

*p = two-tailed t- test where $p < 0.05$ is significant and these are the figures in bold

**(iv) Occupation.**

As outlined in Chapter 4, the relationship and level of significance between occupational background and policy stances tends to vary from country to country. When the significance of occupational effects on policy for Irish TDs were tested using difference of proportions tests, some occupation effects were evident. TDs from professional backgrounds were the most liberal, being less likely to agree with tougher action against criminals than their colleagues from other backgrounds ($p = 0.04$), less likely to agree with the promotion of job creation at the expense of the environment ($p < 0.001$), and more likely to agree with the decriminalisation of marijuana ($p = 0.002$). The views of TDs who came from 'non-manual worker' backgrounds did not differ from those of their colleagues on a clustered liberal-conservative dimension. They were significantly more likely to agree with tougher action against criminals ($p = 0.009$), to agree with the decriminalisation of marijuana ($p = 0.009$) and to agree that job creation should be a priority over environmental concerns ($p = 0.0484$). Those from commercial backgrounds were not significantly different from their colleagues on any of the eight policy areas. Farmers were the most conservative – significantly in favour of PfP ($p < 0.001$), against the decriminalisation of marijuana ($p < 0.001$) and in favour of tougher action against criminals ($p = 0.04$).

Only in one policy area was an occupational variable found to be significant after testing using ordinal logistic regressions:[50] the variable of 'farmer' in relation to the statement on tax increases. Farmers were significantly more likely to disagree with tax increases than those of other occupational backgrounds (see page 113 ).

[50] The variables involved were professional, farmer, commercial, with the non-manual category as the control variable. As there was only one manual worker in the sample, this variable was not used.

**(v) Party.**

Party affiliation was by far the most powerful predictor of TDs' stances as can be seen in Table 5. 3. In nearly all policy areas, Fianna Fáil TDs were the most conservative, being most strongly against raising taxes to improve services, and a pro-choice position on abortion, with members also taking a unanimous stand against legalising marijuana. In addition, Fianna Fáil deputies were most likely to agree with tougher action against criminals, and to believe that there are too many immigrants in Ireland.

Another striking finding was the confirmation of the closeness of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael on policy issues. The Irish party system has often been described as 'Fianna Fáil versus the rest', but in terms of the policy stances measured in this research, the clear configuration is Fianna Fáil as the most conservative followed by Fine Gael, with the Labour party and Fianna Fail holding significantly different positions from each other in relation to four of the policy issues.

After the next election, it is likely that the government will be composed of either Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael in coalition with the Labour party. This analysis suggests that government formation in Ireland is based more on historical cleavages than policy compatibility. The compromises that may need to be made in negotiations of a government programme of policy between the Labour party and Fianna Fail after the next election are apparent from the very different policy stances of their TDs.

**TABLE 5.3 Agreement with statements on policy Stances By Party[a]**

| Policy | FF | FG | Lab | Other/Ind |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Joining PfP** | 88.2 | 96.7 | 30.8 | 0 |
| **p*** | 0.0647 | **0.0013** | **0.0000** | **0.0000** |
| **Tougher on crime** | 70.7 | 60.7 | 38.5 | 20.0 |
| **p** | 0.0613 | 0.6659 | 0.1072 | 0.0798 |
| **Raise taxes** | 28.1 | 48.4 | 92.3 | 100.0 |
| **p** | **0.0019** | 0.8601 | **0.0007** | 0.1158 |
| **Legalise marijuana** | 0.0 | 0.0 | 38.5 | 33.3 |
| **p** | **0.0012** | 0.0608 | 0.1592 | 0.1758 |
| **Too many immigrants** | 28.1 | 10.0 | 7.7 | 0 |
| **p** | **0.0000** | 0.2807 | **0.0000** | 0.3416 |
| **Trade Unions too powerful** | 17.6 | 6.7 | 7.7 | 25.0 |
| **p** | 0.2909 | 0.8187 | **0.0000** | 0.4943 |
| **Jobs a priority** | 25.0 | 25.0 | 16.7 | 0 |
| **p** | 0.5235 | 0.6065 | 0.6965 | 0.2260 |
| **Pro-choice on abortion** | 32.3 | 35.7 | 76.9 | 75.0 |
| **p** | **0.0025** | 0.2693 | **0.0099** | 0.1951 |

[a] Given the relatively small number of cases, party effects were limited to the 3 main parties and PD and Green party respondents were placed in the 'other' category

*p= two-tailed t-test between FG/FF/Labour and all other parties where $p<0.05$ is significant.

When relationships were tested using ordinal logistic regressions (Fianna Fáil was used as the reference variable), party membership was a significant predictor of stance in relation to many issues. Fine Gael TDs, Labour party TDs and the Other/Independent group of TDs took a significantly different stance on Partnership for Peace from each other. Labour party membership was also a significant predictor of stance on tougher action against criminals, tax increases, the decriminalisation of marijuana, immigration, Trade Unions and abortion. Fine Gael members were significantly different from colleagues of other parties in relation to increases in taxes and immigration. Independents and Others were also significantly different

from other TDs on the issues of tougher action against criminals, decriminalisation of marijuana, and job creation at the expense of the environment.

**(vi) Constituency.**

Observers commonly refer to the urban-rural divide in Irish society and when results of difference of proportion test were examined, there was some evidence of this among TDs from rural and urban constituencies. Rural TDs were in general more conservative, favouring tougher action against criminals ($p=0.04$), and against a pro-choice position on abortion ($p=0.02$) and the decriminalisation of marijuana ($p=0.03$). They were also significantly more in favour of PfP membership ($p=0.01$).

However, no significant effects were observed when tested using multinomial ordinal regression analysis. This suggests that party may be an intervening variable in the relationship between constituency and policy stances, since rural TDs are mainly from Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil and TDs from these parties have already been shown to be the most conservative on most issues.

**(vii) Ministerial Office.**

Ministerial experience appeared to be the least significant variable from an analysis of difference of proportion tests. Those who had been ministers appeared to be more likely to hold a favourable position on the legalisation of marijuana, and to take a pro-choice position on abortion. They seemed more likely to oppose the statement that Trade Unions have too much power and that job creation should be a priority at the expense of the environment. However these differences were not found to be statistically significant.

When ministerial effects were tested further using ordinal logistic regression analysis, the difference between the stances of those who had been Ministers

and those who had not on the legalisation of marijuana was found to be significant. Those who had been ministers were more likely to be in favour of legalisation than those who had not held such positions (see below).

**(viii) Predicted values**

From the results of the ordinal logistic regressions, it was possible to calculate predicted values for those variables that were found to be significant by plugging the correlation coefficients for all independent variables into the regression equation. The value of each (strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree) was interpreted using the value of the points where the regression line intercepted the x-axis. As can be seen in Table 5.4 below, some variables were significant in influencing strength of a stance rather than the stance itself. For example, although gender is significant in predicting attitude to Trade Union power, the predicted values for men (0.47) and women (-1.42) both fall in the range of the disagree category.

**TABLE 5.4 Predicted values of significant variables after ordinal logistic regressions**

| Policy issue | Independent variable* | Predicted Value | Predicted Stance |
|---|---|---|---|
| **PfP** | Fine Gael membership | -1.05 | Agree |
| | Independent/other | 7.32 | Strongly disagree |
| | Labour membership | 3.25 | Disagree |
| **Tougher action against criminals** | Labour membership | 1.10 | Disagree |
| | Independent/other | 2.31 | Disagree |
| **Higher taxes for services** | Fine Gael membership | 1.17 | Agree |
| | Labour membership | 2.53 | Agree |
| | Farmer | -1.17 | Disagree |
| **Decriminalisation of Marijuana** | Labour membership | 3.28 | Disagree |
| | Other/Independent | 5.01 | Agree |
| | Minister | 1.64 | Disagree |
| | Non-minister | 0.52 | Disagree |
| **Too much Immigration** | Fine Gael membership | 1.13 | Disagree |
| | Labour membership | 1.56 | Disagree |
| **Too much power for Trade Unions** | Men | 0.47 | Disagree |
| | Women | -1.42 | Disagree |
| | Labour membership | 2.20 | Disagree |
| **Pro-choice on Abortion** | Labour membership | 1.53 | Agree |
| **Job creation at expense of environment** | Other/Independent | 2.28 | Strongly disagree |

* All predicted values for party affiliation are relative to the base party (Fianna Fáil) which was therefore omitted from the regressions so its effects cannot be predicted.

The results of the statistical tests provide limited evidence to support the argument that demographic characteristics affect policy stances. Gender, education and occupation have some influence depending on the issue. However, by far the most important independent variable in influencing policy stance is party. This suggests that those who are interested in the relationship between demographic variables and policy influence should focus on the relationship between these variables, party membership and how party policy is decided or formulated. This latter issue is one that I will be returning to in Chapter 7. One of the most important findings of this section is that policy is polarised between Fianna Fáil as the most conservative party, followed by Fine Gael, with Labour party TDs taking a different stance from both these parties on most issues studied. The extent to

which these party differences also exist among the population is one of the issues that will now be examined.

## 5.4 Policy Congruence –TDs and the electorate

### (i) International Evidence.

Apart from research specifically testing the diamond model already outlined in Chapter 2, various research has tested the extent to which policy congruence exists between MPs and the voters in different contexts. Using data from the 1988 Swedish Election study, and a Riksdag study conducted in the same year, Esaiasson and Holmberg found, in relation to twelve specific policy areas, that the highest area of agreement between voters and Riksdag members was in the defence area (with a mere 1 per cent difference), while the largest disagreement was on membership of the EC (a 36 per cent difference). The average difference on all 12 issues was 13 per cent (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 85). They also found that left wing MPs were to the left of their voters, and non-socialist MPs were to the right of theirs. This model where left parties are to the left of their voters, and right parties are to the right of theirs, is quite common and has been observed at different periods in the United States, Italy, Holland, Denmark, West Germany, Britain, Belgium and France (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 93)

The authors found no connection between the amount of contact representatives had with their voters, and the degree to which they agreed with them on policy. Neither was there a relationship between degree of congruence, and whether representatives held voter-oriented conceptions of representation. Backbenchers and powerful MPs did not differ in their degree of congruence on policy with voters. Neither was there any education effect; those with higher levels of education showed the same degree of congruence with the voters (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 99).

However, age, gender and occupation did have effects. Middle aged representatives, older representatives and male representatives were more likely to show policy congruence with their equivalents in the population than younger representatives and women.

In their study of Norway, Matthews and Valen found that voters tended to vote for parties whose issue positions they perceived as being closest to their own. However, due to a lack of knowledge of what their preferred party's position was, a large number of voters were unable to compare the attitudes of the party to their own on many issues (Matthews and Valen 1999, 121). When the researchers compared the policy preferences of Storting members to their party voters on eight broad issues, they found that the degree of congruence depended on the issue (Matthews and Valen 126-127).

In a chapter on issue congruence between members of the European parliament and their constituents, Thomassen and Schmitt found that opinions of members of national parliaments and their colleagues in the European parliament were more highly correlated on issues ($r = 0.96$), than co-relations between public opinion and either of the elite groups. Voter and MEPs formed roughly the same pattern on left-right positions, but MEPs were distributed more to the left (Thomassen and Schmitt 1999, 192). On two issues specifically related to the European level, there was particular disagreement between voters and their European representatives. Over half of MEPs had no difficulty with the idea of getting rid of national borders compared with only one in five of the voters. Disagreement on the issue of the Single European Currency was even higher. More than 60 per cent of MEPs were at the extreme point in favour of EMU, whereas fewer than 20 per cent of voters felt the same way. In the Irish case, the mean position for Irish voters on EMU was six on a scale where ten is completely in favour. Irish MEPs were on average at between 9 and 10 on this same scale.

Existing research seems to suggest that overall congruence between voters and their representatives depends on the issue at stake. Despite difficulties with data, which I will describe further below, the extent to which this finding holds true in the Irish case will be investigated.

**(ii) Data.**

Apart from difficulties with comparing public opinion and the TD data due to varying question wordings and different interviewer effects, there is also a problem in terms of time discrepancies. The interviews with, and surveys of TDs were conducted over approximately a year between 1999 and 2000. However, it was impossible to confine the public opinion data analysed to surveys taken within this time period, as data on specific policy topics is too limited. I therefore decided where necessary, to include relevant data from public opinion studies between 1990 to 2000, while at the same time recognising that many changes have occurred over that ten year period, in particular the remarkable growth of the Irish economy and the liberalisation of Irish social policy. When presenting public opinion data, I will describe its context where I believe significant changes have occurred.

Over the past ten years, many analysts have observed that policy differences between Irish political parties have diminished in areas such as budgetary and fiscal policy, European policy and Northern Ireland policy. As Mair states, whether "speaking about long-term ideology or short-term policy, there is now less and less to choose between the competing protagonists" (Mair 1999, 147). Minority groups have claimed that their policy opinions are not reflected in Dáil Éireann. This has most commonly been asserted by the more socially conservative sections of society, represented by such figures as Nora Bennis, the leader of the National party and MEP (Dana) Rosemary Scallon.[51] The results of the 1995 divorce referendum when 49.5 per cent voted against divorce, despite the fact that all the main parties were

[51] Rosemary Scallon is a former singer by profession with the stage name of Dana. She ran

in favour of the proposal, was used by small conservative lobby groups to justify their existence. Mrs. Bennis for example founded the National party because " the attachment of all the main parties to the 'liberal agenda' left half the Irish people without a political voice" (Coulter 1997a).

Despite such claims, these small parties and conservative groups did not capitalise from such sentiments in the general election of June 1997. There was little correlation between their votes, and the constituencies where there were the highest scores recorded against the divorce referendum (Coulter 1997a). However, the success of Rosemary Scallon in the 1997 presidential election, in earning just below 14 per cent of the vote, despite lacking the resources of a party machine, was bolstered by the support of "forgotten opponents of (the) liberal agenda" (Coulter 1997b). After her subsequent election to the final seat in the Connacht-Ulster European Parliament constituency, Ms. Scallon stated " I think family values won out here. It is really a universal truth that the stability of the family is essential to the stability of society" (Irish Times, 14 June 1999). Her election was also said to have focussed renewed attention on the abortion issue. In addition, the defeat of the Nice Treaty referendum in June 2001, despite it receiving the support of the four main political parties in the Dáil, indicates that at least on certain specific policy issues, the electorate does not seem to be represented by its TDs.

To investigate whether this lack of congruence extends to a variety of political issues, I will compare the positions of TDs with the electorate at an aggregate level for issues where comparable data is available. I will also compare sub-groups of TDs with the equivalent sub-groups in the opinion polls. No public opinion data existed either in relation to the legalisation of

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in the Irish presidential election in 1997 as an independent candidate, won just under 14 per cent of the vote and was subsequently elected to the European Parliament in 1999. She presented a Christian talk show in the US prior to her political involvements and has

marijuana or the issue of Trade Union strength, so it was impossible to investigate congruence on these issues. In addition, no data on sub-group positions was available for Eurobarometer data, so that where this data is being used, only aggregate TD and public opinion data can be compared. Finally, there were not enough Progressive Democrat TDs (2 cases) among the sample to carry out a significance test for all policy stances and those that were produced should for this reason be interpreted with caution.

**(iii) Partnership for Peace.**

Partnership for Peace is a NATO-led initiative, which involves Irish troops serving with NATO forces on peace-keeping missions. Although the Fianna Fáil party had historically opposed membership and pledged in their 1997 election manifesto to hold a referendum on the issue, party policy changed, and the Government decided that a referendum was unnecessary. A bill was passed in the Dáil on 9th November 1999 by 112 votes to 24 to facilitate Ireland's membership. This was despite opposition from groups such as the National Platform and the Peace and Neutrality Alliance, and the fact that the Labour party,[52] together with some of the smaller parties, voted against the bill. This issue was selected as the most salient foreign policy issue at the time of data collection, and one where there was some disagreement among the political parties.

Two questions have been posed on this issue in MRBI polls. The first was in 1996 (MRBI/4420/96 or MRBI-54-23 on the Internet Opinion Poll Archive), where 1000 respondents were asked whether they "agree or disagree that Ireland should be prepared to join the NATO led Partnership for Peace programme for the purpose of engaging in joint peacekeeping exercises" In the second poll in November 1999 (MRBI /5040/99, Irish

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also been associated with conservative Catholic groups in the US. She is expected to run for election to Dáil Éireann at the next election.

[52] The Labour party had favoured a referendum on the issue although their 1997 election manifesto was broadly in favour of membership.

Times, 5 November 1999), respondents were asked "If there was a referendum on Partnership for Peace, how would you vote?" The results of both these polls are presented by party in Table 5.5 where TDs are compared with the average voters positions between the two polls.

Although Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, TDs did not differ significantly from their supporters, there was a significant gap between Labour party and Other/Independent voters and their TDs, an average difference of 50 per cent between the Labour party voters and their TDs and of 62 per cent between Independent and small party TDs and their voters. The overall percentage difference is not as great (only about 3 per cent), as these parties were quite a small proportion of the overall public opinion sample. Women in the population, like their counterparts in the Dáil, were less likely to agree with PfP membership than men, showing that at least on this issue women TDs were representing the policy stance of their gender.

**TABLE 5.5 Comparison of TDs and Public Opinion on PfP by Party***

| Party | Agree with PfP membership | | | D[1] | p[2] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | TDs | voters | | % | |
| | | 96 | 99 | | |
| FF | 88.2 | 89.0 | 83.0 | - 2.3 | 0.7426 |
| FG | 96.7 | 93.3 | 80.9 | - 9.9 | 0.1291 |
| Lab | 30.9 | 87.1 | 74.7 | - 50.1 | **0.0000** |
| PD | 100.0 | 88.1 | 82.1 | + 14.9 | **0.0039** |
| Others | 0 | 75.3 | 43.8 | + 62.0 | **0.0000** |
| All | 79.8 | 88.1 | 77.8 | - 3.2 | 1.0000 |
| N | 67 | 641 | 505 | | |

* The category of no opinion was excluded for both groups

(1) Calculated as the difference between the average percentage of the voters in favour (in 1996 and 1999) and the percentage of TDs in favour.
(2) two-tailed t-test where $p<0.05$ is significant

In general, when comparing both 1996 and 1999 public opinion data with the TD data, the positions of TDs on this issue differ a lot more across parties than do supporters of different parties in the population. The larger

parties were more strongly in favour of membership than their voters, while the smaller parties were more strongly against.

**(iv) Civil Liberties and Crime.**

Attitudes to reducing crime have always been an important political issue particularly as a differentiating feature between political parties. Since the murder of the crime journalist Veronica Guerin in 1996, the world of organised, and particularly drug-related crime has been an increased preoccupation of the Irish government and the Irish public. The statement that was presented to TDs in relation to crime was adapted from a EU wide survey already referred to, and reported in two sources to date (Katz and Wessels 1999; Schmitt and Thomassen 1999). I added the second section of the statement *'even if this means curtailing civil liberties'*. This was for two reasons: firstly, the issue of resolving the trade-off between reducing crime and threatening civil liberties had arisen in the Bail Referendum of 1996. Secondly and more crucially, without this clause, the wording of the statement was vague, and likely to elicit a disproportionately high agreement rate, rather like asking TDs to agree with a statement such as "more efforts should be made to create jobs". In fact, in the EU survey, this is what occurred: of the Irish respondents to this survey 91 per cent agreed, compared with an agreement rate of 54 per cent in my research (WZB, Political Representation in Europe Codebook, 1997).

Public Opinion data on this issue is limited to a statement presented to respondents in an MRBI poll of 1997 (MRBI/4510/97; MRBI-57-13 in the Archive), asking respondents for their level of agreement with the statement that "we must tackle crime and lawlessness even if it means giving up some of the civil liberties we now enjoy". TDs were significantly more liberal in this regard than the public, as can be seen in Table 5. 6 and this was the case for all parties. As with stances on PfP, TDs of different parties differed a lot more in their views than voters of the various parties. The biggest difference

was between the Labour party TDs and Other/Independents and their supporters, with over twice the proportion of their supporters in favour of tougher action than their TDs. However, there were also significant differences between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael TDs and their supporters. Those of the public in higher status occupations (ABC1 class) were more conservative than professionals among TDs (<0.01), while women in the population were significantly more conservative than their counterparts in the Dáil (p= 0.001).

**TABLE 5.6 Comparison of conservative position on law and order between TDs and their party supporters*.**

| Party | Agree with tougher action against criminals TDs % | Pop % | D % | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fianna Fáil | 69.7 | 86.0 | +16.3 | **0.0150** |
| Fine Gael | 60.7 | 87.2 | +26.5 | **0.0004** |
| Labour party | 38.5 | 89.9 | +51.5 | **0.0000** |
| PD's | 0 | 80.9 | +80.9 | - |
| Other | 20.0 | 73.9 | +53.8 | 0.1679 |
| Total | 57.5 | 85.3 | +27.8 | **0.0000** |
| n | 46 | 291 | | |

* Others' in this poll includes Democratic Left voters. This party merged with the Labour party in January 1999 so that its TDs (5% of the TD sample )are classified as being Labour party TDs in the TD data. This is likely to produce a discrepancy between both the Labour party TDs and 'other' TDs and their voters.

**(v) <u>Taxes and Services</u>.**

The statement that "taxes on the higher paid should be increased to improve services" was designed to investigate potential left-right economic stances as historically, "the essence of the left-right dimension lies in disagreements over the scope of government intervention in the economy" (Inglehart and Klingemann 1976, 257). The central plank for many years of economically liberal parties such as the Progressive Democrats in Ireland, was tax reform, involving the reduction of rates of taxation. It could therefore be expected that TDs who agreed with this statement were more left than right wing.

A similar statement is usually used in surveys; for example in the *Political Representation in Europe* study, the statement included was "current levels of welfare should be maintained even if this means raising taxes". Given the economic situation in Ireland of recent years, the cutting of benefits was not a salient policy, particularly with rising inflation and the booming economy. However, services such as health, transport, and roads are still seen as a problem and of concern to both the public and politicians. It was felt therefore that a statement balancing taxation against an improvement in such services would give a clearer indication of what constituted TDs' priority in this trade-off. In the *Political Representation in Europe* study, TDs were very widely distributed on this issue. Fifty one per cent of TDs agreed that levels of welfare should be maintained through tax increases if necessary, compared with 34 per cent who disagreed (WZB, Political Representation in Europe Codebook, 1997).

The only directly comparable question was asked in an MRBI poll of 1997 (MRBI57-12 in the Archive), where respondents were asked whether they agreed that "Taxation must be reduced even if it means that the Government makes significant reduction in its services". It must be noted that any overall comparison of the population's response to this question with TDs responses' on the taxation issue must be treated with caution on two grounds. Firstly, the fact that statements involve different terminology is likely to have influenced responses, and therefore limits the validity of comparisons. Secondly, there was a two year time difference between the questions, and in the interim period significant tax cuts were made in the budget of 1998. The standard and higher rate of taxes were reduced by two per cent, and basic personal allowances were also increased. Therefore in the case of this policy issue, more focus should be placed on party differences between voters and between TDs.

As can be seen from Table 5.7 and in common with the two policy issues already examined, TDs from different parties were more polarised in their position on this issue in comparison with their supporters, whose positions were remarkably similar. The lack of variations among voters on this issue demonstrate how little classic left-right positions influence Irish voting behaviour. Of particular note is the low level of agreement with tax increases to fund services among Labour party supporters.

**TABLE 5.7 Comparison of left-wing position on tax increases between TDs and their party supporters**

| Agree with tax increases | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Party** | **TDs %** | **Pop %** | **D %** | **p** |
| Fianna Fáil | 28.1 | 33.7 | -5.6 | **0.0000** |
| Fine Gael | 48.4 | 38.9 | +9.5 | 0.1665 |
| Labour party | 92.3 | 36.9 | +55.4 | **0.0445** |
| PD's | 0 | 34.3 | -34.3 | **0.0000** |
| Other | 100.0 | 43.1 | +56.9 | 0.0702 |
| Total | 47.0 | 36.7 | +10.3 | 0.1113 |
| n | 41 | 570 | | |

**(vi) Immigrants.**

Immigration has become a significant political issue in Ireland for the first time over the past five years or so, given that annual applications from asylum seekers have increased from just over 400 in 1995 to over 7,700 in 1999 (http:/www.irlgov.ie/justice/Press Releases/Press-2000/pr0507.htm). There is also a huge increase in the numbers of foreign nationals coming to work in Ireland, both from the EU and outside. A relatively small number of TDs agreed that there were too many immigrants in the country. The most recent public opinion data in this regard: an MRBI poll taken in January 2000 (MRBI/5122/00 reported in the Irish Times of 18 and 19 January 2000), contained a rather ambiguous message as regards public attitudes to immigration. Results of comparisons based on this data must therefore, be undertaken with caution. For example, 81 per cent of those

who responded agreed that the number of refugees entering the state should be limited, compared with 19 per cent who disagreed. However in the same poll, 60 per cent agreed when asked whether a more generous approach should be taken to refugees and immigrants, in view of the Irish history of emigration and current prosperity levels. Kevin Rafter of the *Irish Times* interpreted the discrepancy as follows:

> qualitative research conducted by MRBI shows that the harder line on refugees more accurately reflects the Irish attitude. A more generous approach – as the question was posed could mean that voters merely want a more humane attitude to refugees while the numbers allowed to stay in the state should be strictly limited. (Rafter 2000).

A comparison between TDs and the population (see Table 5.8) on this issue indicates that TDs are more similar to each other in their positions than they are to their supporters. Regardless of party support, the public are significantly more conservative in their attitude to immigrants than TDs, regardless of party. As can be seen in the Table below, the average percentage difference between TDs and the public is over 68 per cent. Compared with data from earlier opinion polls (see Table 5.9), public opinion is generally becoming more negative towards immigrants over time but for each poll differences between TDs and the population are significant. This is despite different wording in each of the public opinion questions.[53]

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[53] Pop 1998 is IMS-143-17 (on the archive). Respondents were asked "the question of people seeking refugee status so as to be allowed to live in Ireland has been the focus of public debate. As far as you personally are concerned, do you feel that Ireland should use every legal mechanism to ensure that the number of people allowed to live here is kept to the absolute minimum, or do you feel that Ireland should adopt an "open door" policy to asylum seekers?" Pop 1997- 2 is IMS –141-23. The question posed was "Ireland has seen substantially increasing number of people, mainly from Romania and certain African countries, arriving here seeking refugee status. Do you feel that Ireland has accepted an appropriate share of refugees or do you think we should be prepared to take more?" Pop 1997-1 is Eurobarometer 47.1. Q. 53.8 "(Our country) has reached its limits; if there were to be more people belonging to these minority groups we would have problems"

**TABLE 5.8 Comparison of conservative position on immigration between TDs and their party supporters.**

| Party | Too many immigrants/ numbers should be limited TDs % | Pop 00 | D % | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fianna Fáil | 28.1 | 81.4 | +53.3 | **0.0000** |
| Fine Gael | 10.0 | 82.5 | +65.0 | **0.0000** |
| Labour party | 7.7 | 81.9 | +74.2 | 0.8662 |
| PD's | 0 | 84.0 | +84.0 | **0.0009** |
| Other | 0 | 88.5 | +88.5 | **0.0005** |
| All | 15.9 | 84.1 | +68.3 | **0.0000** |
| n | 13 | 729 | | |

**TABLE 5.9 Comparison of conservative public opinion on immigration over time**

| Opinion Poll | % | n | p* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pop 1998 | 75.5 | 753 | **0.0000** |
| Pop 1997- 2 | 64.5 | 647 | **0.0000** |
| Pop 1997-1 | 41.6 | 279 | **0.0000** |

* Two-tailed t-test of significance of difference of proportions between level of TDs holding conservative position on immigration, and the population in 3 opinion polls.

**(vii) <u>Job Creation Versus the Environment</u>.**

As can be seen from Table 5.1, none of the TDs strongly agreed with the statement that "job creation should be a priority even if this means some damage to the environment" and only 20 per cent of them agreed. However, this has to be judged in the 1999-2000 context when unemployment was below 5 per cent. There is no recent opinion poll data where Irish voters were asked an identical question. However, in a Eurobarometer of 1995, (Eurobarometer 43.1, v 348) respondents were asked to rate the importance of environmental protection against economic development. The validity of comparisons is somewhat limited by (a) the fact that the comparison is with

economic development rather than job creation (b) the data was collected four years earlier before the peak of the Irish economic boom and (c) the fact that Eurobarometer respondents were offered a middle response favouring a balance between economic development and environmental protection.[54] While recognising these factors, a comparison indicated that TDs were nearly 15 per cent more likely to favour environmental concerns and this difference was significant (p=0.03). (There was no sub-group data published in the Eurobarometer report).

**(viii) Abortion.**

By looking at data from the European Values Survey of 1990, Sheena Ashford and Noel Timms (1992) concluded "the Republic of Ireland is markedly more anti-abortion than the rest of Europe".[55] However after the X case of 1992,[56] many Irish people began to understand the complexities of the issue and the different scenarios which might face a pregnant woman, and opinion has become less black and white and more ambiguous. The abortion issue is one where there has been extensive opinion polling over the years, particularly around the time of the X case in 1992, and the three subsequent referendums. Some of the questions are unrelated to the legality or morality of the issue itself, but rather relate to the question of whether there should be a referendum at particular points in time, or whether various types of wording would be suitable. The results quoted here will only relate to the most recent data in relation to whether women should be permitted to

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[54] The precise wording was " I am going to read you three opinions which you sometimes hear about environmental problems. Which one comes closes to your own? 1. Economic development should get higher priority than concerns about the environment. 2. Economic development must be ensured but the environment protected at the same time. 3. Concerns about the environment should get higher priority than economic development." For the purposes of comparison, I omitted those who chose the middle response.

[55] According to 1990 data on a scale of 1-10 where 1 means abortion is never justified and 10 it is always justified, Ireland scored on average 2.4 compared with the rest of Europe 7.0 (Whelan 1994, 35)

[56] For a summary of the background to the X case and the subsequent abortion referendums, see Kennelly and Ward 1993.

have an abortion freely or otherwise. The public opinion data comes from two 1997 MRBI polls (MRBI-63-12 and MRBI-63-11 in the archive).

Although conducted in the same year, these questions yielded rather different results, perhaps due to the wording. Poll 97-1 asked "should the medical profession in Ireland provide abortion facilities or not?" while the other poll presented four statements as to the conditions when abortion should be permitted, the only pro-choice one being "an abortion facility should be provided to those who need it".[57] TDs attitudes were therefore compared separately with public opinion measured in each poll.

As mentioned before, comparisons must be made with caution but, in general, congruence in opinion was dependent on the question wording, with TDs being significantly more liberal than the population for one poll, and significantly more conservative than the population according to the other. Overall, it can be seen that on average, public opinion was quite close to the TD opinion at an aggregate level. Labour party TDs, and those from smaller parties, were more liberal than their voters particularly when compared with the second poll. The most conclusive finding is that Labour party TDs are most liberal on this issue, as are their supporters, and both agree more closely on this than on many of the other issues already examined. Overall, however, this table demonstrates the degree to which wording can influence responses, and affect the validity of comparisons.

[57] The other options were "Abortion should not be permitted in any circumstances," "Abortion should be permitted when the mother's life is at risk" and "Abortion should be permitted when the mother's health is at risk".

**TABLE 5.10 Comparison of liberal position between TDs and their party supporters**

| Party | TDs | Pop | | D % | | p | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 97-1 | 97-2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Fianna Fáil | 32.3 | 57.1 | 26.8 | -24.8 | +5.5 | **0.0314** | 0.5465 |
| Fine Gael | 35.7 | 61.8 | 26.4 | -26.1 | +9.3 | **0.0062** | 0.3192 |
| Labour party | 76.9 | 67.7 | 40.1 | +9.2 | +36.8 | 0.5087 | **0.0138** |
| PD's | 100.0 | 72.4 | 43.4 | +27.6 | +56.6 | - | - |
| Other | 75.0 | 68.8 | 34.4 | +6.2 | +40.6 | 0.8006 | 0.0981 |
| All* | 43.6 | 61.1 | 29.5 | -17.5 | +14.1 | **0.0000** | **0.0000** |
| n | 34 | 492 | 248 | | | | |

## 5.5 : Liberal Conservative Scale

All of these policy issues (except that relating to PfP), were chosen because they have been identified in previous research as comprising part of a left right or liberal conservative scale. For example, Laver and Budge computed a left-right scale measuring left-wing attitudes through frequency counts for manifesto references to 'state intervention,' 'peace and co-operation," 'democracy,' 'social service: positive', 'education: positive' and 'Labour groups: positive'. To measure right-wing attitudes, they counted the frequency of references to 'Capitalist economics,' 'social conservatism,' 'freedom .... and 'military: positive' (Laver and Budge 1992, 27).

Although the policy data was principally collected for two other purposes, I decided, as a last step, to analyse the results in order to assess whether they supported the existence of a left-right dimension among Irish TDs, and, if so, where individual TDs could be placed on this dimension. Here, agreement with the statement in relation to criminals, on immigration and on Trade Unions and disagreement with the statement in relation to tax increase, drugs and abortion was interpreted as right-wing or conservative.

An exactly reverse position on the same statements was interpreted as being left-wing or liberal.[58]

The first step that was taken was to assign a score for each case based on his or her responses to each of these statements. All responses were found to have a significant co-relation with the rest of the scale (using SPSS 10.0). This indicated that the scale was unidimensional (De Vaus 1996). A reliability test was then conducted to assess the overall reliability of the scale, in other words the item-item correlations or consistency of a person's response on each item. Two of the statements, relating to an increase in taxes and the power of trade unions, produced correlations which were less than 0.3, and therefore insignificant. In addition, the alpha was .6110 (less than the figure of 0.7 generally suggested as ensuring internal consistency, Spector 1994, 260). When these two items were dropped, the alpha score for the scale was still below the desired level, indicating that there was not a reliable underlying dimension (or scale) underpinning the indicators. To confirm this, a factor analysis was conducted. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was .694, indicating that unidimensionality could not be assumed (a KMO level above 0.7 would have been necessary to assume unidimensionality). In the analysis, two factors with eigenvalues of greater than one were isolated. However, between them, they accounted for only 55 per cent of the variance, again suggesting that the items did not constitute a unidimensional scale.

There are two possible interpretations of this. The first is that the measures were not valid for the purpose of isolating a left-right or liberal–conservative dimension. The second is that TDs policy stances might not be

[58] It could be argued that liberal and economically left wing positions and economically right-wing positions and social conservatism do not necessarily correspond. This is most relevant in the case of the Progressive Democrats who are commonly defined as economically conservative and socially liberal. However, this discrepancy is not an issue for other parties so coherence of economic and social policy will be assumed. For one categorisation of parties which supports my approach see Laver 1998b.

aligned according to such a dimension. In addition, given that 79 per cent of the sample were either members of centre right parties (Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael), or Independents, one might not necessarily expect to find a very polarised left or right stance for such deputies.

Most pre-existing literature suggests that the Irish party system does not fit very well into a left-right or liberal-conservative scale. It has been stated for example that "the left-right dimension seems to have a relatively unclear meaning for the Irish public. Both the partisan and the ideological component are weak in Ireland" (Budge, Crewe and Farlie 1976, 270). In addition, contrary to the pattern in most of Europe, left-right self-placement in Ireland does not correspond closely to party identification. Moreover, the fact that Irish parties are also said to be increasingly moving towards the centre tends to confirm the absence of clear policy configurations. Clearly, the differences between the two main parties, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, are not differences in policy, either in the Dáil or in the population. What is most striking is the fact that these two parties continue to co-exist with such similar policy stances, and between them, capture over 70 per cent of the vote.

## 5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I tested the applicability of two theories or models of representation in the Irish case: microcosmic representation and policy congruence. I found that there was little evidence to support microcosmic theories of representation (or the concept of the politics of presence): the idea that demographic variables influence policy positions . Similarly to most other countries, party affiliation was by far the best predictor of policy stance. Fianna Fáil TDs were the most conservative on issues, followed by Fine Gael representatives, while the Labour party TDs took quite different stands from both their potential coalition partners.

TDs of different parties were much more polarised on most issues than their supporters in the population, with Labour party, Progressive Democrats and those from small parties and Independents being particularly distant from their voters on many issues. This suggests a lack of policy congruence for the Irish case. TDs from all parties tended to be more socially liberal and economically left-wing than the population contrary to findings from other countries where MPs of the left are generally more left-wing than their supporters and MPs from the right are more right-wing than theirs.

In comparing these findings for Ireland with that of other countries, the overall finding is the same as for most other countries – the degree of policy congruence depends on the issue concerned. In Ireland, congruence was lowest on the issue of immigration and tougher action against criminals, while it was highest in relation to Partnership for Peace. To some degree this corresponds to suggestions that congruence can be expected to be highest concerning politicised issues at the centre of political debate, and lowest with regard to newly emerged or little-disputed issues (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1995, 88). Immigration is certainly a newly emerging issue and to some degree tough action against criminals can be seen as emerging as a major issue after the murder of Veronica Guerin. However, PfP cannot really be seen as a politicised issue central to political debate. Arguably abortion and the taxation questions could be seen as the most centrally politicised of the issues but findings on the level of congruence on these was somewhat inconclusive.

Findings for the Swedish case, suggesting that policy agreement was greatest on left-right questions connected with the economy and political power and lowest on social questions and issues of economic growth and ecology (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1995, 89), were to some degree substantiated in this chapter. However, the fact that TDs and their supporters

did not tend to agree on the central issue of taxation and services indicates a lack of left-right structuring of political views among the Irish population. In addition, the lack of configuring of TDs' views along a structured left-right dimension, supports previous suggestions that Irish politics lacks the usual ideological cleavages of most liberal democracies.

I will now examine whether this lack of ideological structuring holds for another dimension - populist or formal models of democracy.

# CHAPTER 6: CONCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY AND REPRESENTATION

## 6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1, I outlined the difference between formalist and populist models or theories of democracy. The distinction has been summarised by Esaiasson and Holmberg as the difference between democratic systems 'run-from-above,' and systems 'run-from-below' (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 5). These two extremes are, however, ideal types, and democratic systems range in the degree to which they involve popular participation or elite governance. Although representative democracy necessitates the handing over of power from the population at large to a small governing elite, certain institutional structures give more power to the general population than others. Therefore, even if the size of contemporary societies and the complexity of governance limit popular participation, these factors do not impose a uniformly low level of participation on all representative democratic states. Choices of governmental structures are justified on various grounds, some pragmatic, prioritising efficiency, stability and leadership, while other criteria are normatively based, invoking values such as governmental responsiveness and accountability. The weight given to considerations of 'democraticness,' and the vision of democracy varies from state to state, according to variables such as political culture and a country's history.

In this chapter, I will investigate which of these theories corresponds more closely with the conceptions of representation and democracy held by Irish TDs. It is expected that these attitudes will influence TDs' role orientation and behaviour, since TDs who value more formal models of democracy might be expected to be oriented to trustee styles of representation. A more populist perspective could be anticipated to be accompanied by an

orientation to the delegate role and its corresponding behaviour. In analysing the responses of TDs to five statements designed to measure the extent to which TDs held populist or more formalist theories of democracy, the measurements themselves did not correlate as expected. However, an analysis of TDs' responses to individual statements indicates that TDs have a rather ambiguous attitude to popular participation, which depends on its context and effects. The overall link between formalist/populist positions and role orientations will be investigated further in the next chapter on representational style. In this chapter, I will place the indicators chosen to measure attitudes to democracy in both theoretical and empirical context, before reporting the results and drawing conclusions which will be built upon in the subsequent chapter.

## 6.2 Elite versus Populist Theories

The Schumpeterian definition of democracy (already quoted in Chapter 1): "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter 1987, 262) encapsulates the formalist democratic position in the contemporary context of mass, global societies. In such societies, extensive and meaningful popular participation, as implied by populist democratic positions, is feasible only in certain circumstances, and always as part of a representative democratic structure. The extent to which individuals value popular participation seems to be directly connected with their opinion of the capacity of the mass public for political decision making. Schumpeter, a formalist democrat, stated for example that "the typical citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field....He becomes a primitive again" (Schumpeter 1987, 269).

Giovanni Sartori presented a similar view of the capacity of the public for meaningful decisions: " the average citizen is neither interested nor active in the political discourse. His information is indeed thin and his perception of the issues is distorted and aprioristic" (Sartori 1965, 75). Contrary to what other theorists have argued, this incapacity is not a function of poverty or a low standard of living, because "political participation does not increase as wealth increases" (Sartori 1965, 88). In his 1987 work, '*The Theory of Democracy Revisited*', Sartori's basic position had not altered despite changes that had occurred during the intervening period. He continued to hold that:

> the ordinary citizen has little interest in politics, that citizen participation is minimal if not subminimal, and that in many respects and instances the public has no opinion but, rather, inarticulate feelings made up of moods and drifts of sentiment. (Sartori 1987, 103).

In a context where the public does not have the knowledge, skills or inclination to participate meaningfully by devoting "body and soul to politics" (Sartori 1965, 255), political leaders or specialists are necessary to ensure the successful functioning of democracy. Once access to a political elite is open, and its members are accountable to the majority, the existence of elites is not in conflict with democratic ideals. Regular, open, multi-party elections are sufficient for a political system to be classified as democratic. According to this perspective, democracy can be defined as "a political system in which the influence of the majority is assured by elective and competitive minorities to whom it is entrusted," (Sartori 1965, 126) and leaders can quite legitimately influence rather than follow public opinion: "It almost never happens that popular sovereignty is the real starting point. Before exerting an influence the people are influenced" (Sartori 1965, 77). Participatory democracy is not favoured, as it either necessitates a form of elitism (since it is only in small numbers that individuals can make a difference), or a form of referendum democracy, which results in majority

tyranny based on a false impression of the quality of public opinion (Sartori 1987, 113-120).

Theorists who value a more substantive version of democracy hold a higher opinion of the general public's capacity for decision making. Pateman, for example, suggests that the apathy and incompetence of the masses is due to certain institutional factors connected with low socio-economic status (Pateman 1970, 104). Were political participation to be encouraged and developed, the ability and propensity of individuals to participate would increase. Furthermore, anti-democratic tendencies would erode in such an environment (Pateman 1970, 105). Through the presentation of examples of participation at lower levels such as the work-place, Pateman demonstrates the possibilities of participatory structures. However, she acknowledges that for such participation to be possible, an extension of the scope of politics is essential to cover levels below central government such as the family, the education system and housing (Pateman 1970, 106-111).[59] Participation at such levels could co-exist with representative democracy within a system where mass elections would primarily deal with complex national issues.

Robert Dahl (1989) proposes an alternative to contemporary political systems in the form of a "mini populous" for each major policy issue, of about a thousand randomly selected citizens that would meet by telecommunication. By deliberating on an issue and announcing its choices, the outcome of the deliberations of a mini populous would represent the judgement of the public on that particular topic. John Burnheim advocates an even more radical system, *demarchy*, involving the abolition of nation-states and the introduction of a new form of political rule (Burnheim 1988). He claims that this would eliminate tendencies in today's representative

[59] For a more recent example of case studies and a discussion of popular participation outside elections, see Khan, 1999.

democracies towards a form of tyranny whereby "the power brokers, operating through political parties and professionally organised lobbies, manipulate ...votes into concentrations of power for their own aggrandizement" (Burnheim 1988, 7). According to Burnheim's alternative system, people would participate only in the making of decisions where they had a legitimate material interest. This is based upon his (somewhat questionable) assumption that people are most capable of making sensible choices when it comes to concrete issues which directly affect them (Burnheim 1988, 16). Elections would be abandoned and public office holders would be selected by lot as a statistically representative sub-group of the population ( Burnheim 1988, 9). Such participation would be educative: "(demarchy) could create conditions that would lead to improvements in the level of moral and scientific awareness in the community through a self-reinforcing process" (Burnheim 1988, 13).

From this brief review of both perspectives in the formalist/populist democrat divide, two clear indicators of an individual's position seem apparent. The first, is the opinion he or she has of the public's level of knowledge and capacity for decision-making. The second, is directly related, and is centred on whether an individual believes that public opinion is uninformed, so that leaders and elites must mould it, or alternatively whether such opinion formation from above is unnecessary. As will be described in the next section of this chapter, I constructed two items based around these indicators to measure the degree to which TDs are populist or formalist democrats. Three further measures were devised referring to a specific institutional feature which involves public participation: the popular referendum.

## 6.3 Specific Institutional Features and the Irish Democratic Context

Although many writers suggest that advances in computer technology facilitate increased political participation even in today's vast nation states (see for example McLean 1989), there is little evidence that such radical proposals as those outlined in the previous section are being considered by those in the political and intellectual mainstream. Notwithstanding this, there are institutional devices and features in many nation-states, including Ireland, which provide at least a limited degree of participation for the public in certain contexts, and on certain issues (in relation to direct democracy in Europe see Auer and Butzer ed. 2001; for the United States, see Bowler, Donovan and Tolbert 1998). Another way of assessing TDs' attitudes to democracy, is to examine their attitude to proposals for, or practices of, popular participation in the Irish context.

Ireland has often been analysed in the context of its status as a post-colonial state, but as rather unusual in being a " a poor new nation that remained democratic" (Kissane 1995, 43). Various reasons for Ireland's democratic stability have been suggested, many of them in some way relating to the British influence (see for example Chubb, 1992). This view has been developed by others, including Garvin in a significant work: '*1922 the birth of Irish democracy*' (1996). Here, Garvin argued that Ireland is not as unique as previous writers had claimed, perhaps most famously John Whyte, who asserted that the Irish political context was *sui generis* (Whyte 1974, 648). In contrast to those who recognise only the British influence on Irish democracy, Garvin argues that European and American political ideas and practices were also influential in the development of Irish political ideals. He maintains that Ireland's isolated position, and the fact that it managed to tame its armed forces in the 1920s, contributed to the consolidation of Irish democracy, whereas other formerly democratic states lapsed into fascism and authoritarianism (Garvin 1996, 9). He also identifies the influence of

Catholicism, partition, conservatism and the authoritarianism of Irish society as contributing factors in explaining Ireland's democratic stability (Garvin 1996, 22-26).

While recognising the alternative influences described by Garvin, it is also important to note the significance of Ireland's connection with Britain in training Irish political leaders and influencing the nature of the institutional structure adopted after independence. Although Irish sovereignty was achieved through a War of Independence from Britain, the independence movement itself was " a revolution within and against a democracy and could not help using many of that system's institutions and procedures" (Pocock quoted in Chubb 1992, 5). The basic values of liberal democracy were accepted, and even through a turbulent period of civil war, a majority of the population accepted the elected government as the legitimate authority within the state (Chubb 1992, 5). The first institutional structures were established by the Constitution of Dáil Éireann in 1919, replaced by the Irish Free State Constitution of 1922, and modified again in Bunreacht na hÉireann, the current constitution which was enacted in 1937. The institutional structure has remained largely unchanged since this date.

The Irish political system was modelled on what Lijphart describes as the 'majoritarian model' of the United Kingdom, rather than the 'consensual' model which dominates in countries such as the Netherlands and Switzerland (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 1995, 44). A majoritarian model is characterised by an adversarial system where the opposition's role is to oppose the government, and opposition members of parliament rarely get a chance to contribute significantly to legislation. On the other hand, in consensual systems, norms and structures dictate that best practice is to try to reach a compromise between government and opposition. It has been suggested that consensual systems, where the parliament is stronger relative to the executive, are more substantively democratic, in that parliament is

directly elected by the people, whereas the executive is not. In Ireland, this distinction might not be quite so significant, since all members of the executive are elected members of parliament, although it must be noted that the negotiation of coalition governments have not always reflected the preferred composition of the electorate.[60] In addition, despite its status as a majoritarian system, the Irish political system involves one extremely significant indicator of populist democracy, namely the popular referendum.

A referendum can be defined as a situation whereby " a mass electorate votes on some public issue" (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 1995, 44). In today's political systems, referendums are conducted in the context of representative democracy, so that only regarding certain selected issues does the public have direct control. The issues that are put to referendum and the way in which the referendum is institutionalised vary from one political system to another. A distinction can be made for example, between 'prescribed' and 'discretionary' referendums, where 'prescribed referendums' are referendums "according to rules", while 'discretionary referendums' are "at the discretion of some person or institution" (Uleri 1996, 6). Irish referendums are prescribed, in that any amendment to the constitution must be put to the people. The second situation when a referendum can be called is if one third of members of the Dáil, and a majority of the Seanad request the President to submit a bill to referendum. This has never occurred.

Referendums can also be a *binding* vote, where the outcome "must be accepted and adopted by parliament and government", or an *advisory* vote "where its outcome has formally only indicative value with the last word going to parliament and government" (Uleri 1996, 7). Irish referendum

[60] This was held to be the case in 1992 when the Labour party entered government with Fianna Fáil contrary to previous statements made on the issue by the Labour party leader of the time (for a discussion of the evidence in this regard, see Marsh and Sinnott 1999, 161-169).

results are binding. A third differentiation can be made between referendums originating from the government, referendums that are constitutionally required, and referendums that originate with the people (Uleri 1995, 8). In practice, few countries apart from Italy and Switzerland have provision for popular initiative.[61] Ireland does not, although such a provision existed in the Irish Free State Constitution.

The crucial difference between referendum provisions for analyses of attitudes to democracy and participation, is the "degree to which they remove control over the making of laws from elected representatives and transfer it to ordinary voters" (Butler and Ranney quoted in Uleri 1996, 9). In other words, to what extent is a system of representative democracy modified by popular participation in referendums? Obviously, binding referendums cede more power to the people than consultative referendums. Furthermore, if the public can initiate a referendum, it is given more autonomy than when it is only consulted in conditions mandated by constitutional provisions. Systems where referendums are held only at the behest of the government involve the least secession of power from elites to the electorate, except in situations where an individual government is particularly favourable to popular participation, and opts to hold regular referendums.

Debates in the Dáil in 1928 in relation to a proposal to narrow referendum provisions, by eliminating the opportunity for popular initiative referendum, demonstrated both sides of the debate on the merits of the referendum as a democratic device (Gallagher 1996a, 87). One side argued that the referendum was a valuable democratic tool. The other argued that the public was not informed enough to vote on specific issues, and that the purpose of electing representatives was specifically to decide such issues on

[61] Overall, it is Switzerland that has the most referendums. Up until late 1995, there never had been a referendum in the Netherlands, while there had been 437 in Switzerland.

its behalf. However, little evidence exists to explain why some countries employ the referendum more often than others do (Gallagher 1996b, 233-235). Therefore, it cannot be definitively stated that systems with prescribed, binding referendums, and provisions for popular initiative are more substantively democratic than states without such provisions. After all, other factors, such as strength of local government, and the policy making structure of a system are likely to be significant in determining the extent to which a system is elite dominated, or has a strong tradition of public participation. Nonetheless, an individual's attitude to the device of a referendum is an indicator of his or her perspective of democracy. Michels, for example, was against the referendum, because of the "incompetence of the masses and their lack of time to consider issues" (Michels quoted in Gallagher 1996, 240-241).

The fact that the referendum is such a familiar device in Ireland, and was used eight times in the 1990s alone, means that TDs and the public have wide experience of referendums and their effects. Various court cases have also been heard over the past ten years relating to the role of the executive and the media in referendum campaigns, and in particular the extent to which each can publicly favour one side or the other. These include *Mc Kenna versus an Taoiseach* of 1995, where the Supreme Court judged that the Government did not possess the right to spend public money promoting only one side in a referendum campaign. Another significant judgment, was that in *Coughlan versus RTE Broadcasting Complaints Commission and the Attorney General* of 1998. This judgment found that the national broadcaster was obliged to ensure that a roughly proportionate amount of airtime was given to each side in a referendum campaign.

Attitudes to the various types and conditions for referendums seemed a useful way of measuring TDs' attitudes to popular participation, and, by extension, populist forms of democracy. TDs were therefore presented with

three statements in relation to the conduct and conditions for referendums. These, along with the two items described earlier, were combined with the intention of constructing a scale measuring the degree to which TDs were liberal or populist democrats. Before outlining the findings, the specific indicators used and more general measurement issues will be described.

## 6.4 Measurement Issues

Some of the difficulties of measurement, "the process of linking abstract concepts to empirical indicants" (Carmines and Zeller 1994, 2), were outlined in the last chapter measuring policy stances. Problems with indicators and wording identified there also apply in this analysis. However, additional issues arise here in relation to the measuring of a complex and abstract concept such as democracy, which is not directly observable. In such cases, measurement can be achieved through the construction of a scale which is a "set of attitudinal items intended to capture empirically the essential meaning of (a concept)" (McIver and Carmines 1994, 139).

The scale that I have derived is an exploratory device, its validity dependent on the following hypotheses: firstly, that it is possible to measure the concept and secondly, that it is relevant to Irish politics, and in particular to the cognitive framework of TDs. If these assumptions do not hold, then the scale will be invalid, or will not measure what it is intended to measure. (Carmines and Zeller 1994, 4). Validity will be tested later in the chapter, through the use of various tests in SPSS version 10.0. The reliability of the measure, or "the tendency towards consistency found in repeated measurement of the same phenomenon" (Carmines and Zeller 1994, 4), will also be connected with the reliability of the interview and survey material as a whole, an issue already discussed in Chapter 3.

As already mentioned, for the purpose of the analysis, five indicators were derived from an analysis of theories of democracy and empirical knowledge, both of the Irish political system, and also institutional devices which provide for popular participation. Responses to each individual item were combined into a unidimensional scale, where respondents were assigned a score of between zero and three depending on their level of agreement with each item. The first three statements were connected with the referendum procedure, while the fourth and fifth referred to TDs' attitudes to the capacity of the public for decision making, and the proper role of leaders (for the full wording of each statement, see Table 6.1 below).

The first statement was designed to measure whether TDs believed that the public should be able to initiate referendums, in other words whether the provision for popular initiative in place in Italy and in Switzerland should be introduced in Ireland. The assumption behind using this as an indicator is that populist democrats among TDs would favour the introduction of such a device, and those who agreed with formalist theorists would disagree with the introduction of such an initiative.

The second statement was included to investigate a suggestion, discussed by the Constitution Review Group, that it should be possible for the Oireachtas to amend certain aspects of the Constitution, without the holding of a referendum (it concluded that such a measure should not be introduced, see CRG Report 1996, 398-399). The introduction of such a provision is justifiable on the grounds that, due to its age and depth of detail, the Irish Constitution contains certain technical or linguistic flaws that are necessary and straightforward to rectify, and should not necessitate the specific consent of the public through a referendum. Here, it was assumed that populist democrats would disagree with the statement, since such suggestions imply the transfer of power from the people to the elite. Those who prioritise effective and efficient elite government, rather than popular

participation on the other hand, would be expected to agree with the statement.

The third item refers to a 1995 legal judgment already mentioned in this chapter, which ruled that the Irish government did not have the right to use taxpayers' money to promote its point of view in a referendum. The case was brought by a Green party MEP, Patricia McKenna, who argued that the fairness of the referendum procedure was being perverted by the spending of public resources on promoting the side of the argument favoured by the Government. She viewed such spending as an attempt to manipulate public opinion towards one side, rather than providing the public with balanced information, and giving individuals the freedom to decide their own position. The position of McKenna, and others who supported her argument, is implicitly based on populist democratic assumptions that the public has the capacity to make reasoned decisions, and should not be persuaded to vote a particular way through use by the elite of tax-payers' money to promote just one side in a referendum debate.

The Mc Kenna judgment resulted in the establishment of a Referendum Commission, which is charged with providing public information on both sides of the argument during a referendum campaign. The Referendum Commission has been in operation as a statutory body since 1999 and has worked on four referendums. Ad hoc commissions managed previous campaigns for three referendums in 1998. In general, operation of referendum campaigns has been viewed as unsatisfactory since the judgment. Many who agree with the actual judgment, disagree with the way it has been implemented. Others believe that the government should be entitled to promote its preferred outcome (for a discussion of these issues see Mansergh 1999). For example, many who favoured ratification of the Nice Treaty in 2001 blamed the McKenna judgment for the low turnout and defeat of the amendment.

Because a negative attitude to the operationalisation of the McKenna judgment does not necessarily imply opposition to the judgment itself, the statement chosen does not refer specifically to the current procedure of public information, but rather asked TDs to indicate whether they agreed that "the Government should be allowed to fund the promotion of amendments to the constitution, contrary to the ruling in the McKenna judgment."

The final two statements were formulated to measure more directly attitudes to the public's capacity for decision making, and the proper relationship between an elite and the public. I outlined earlier the perspective of formalist democrats who favour top-down opinion formation, and had a poor view of the public's capacity for decision making. Populist democrats on the other hand, favour providing the public with opportunities for decision-making, and conceive of the process of opinion formation as one by which leaders should be responsive to the public.

## 6.5 Results

The level of agreement of all respondents with each statement is presented below in Table 6.1, where it can be seen that a majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with all statements, the level of agreement with the final statement receiving a particularly high level of agreement of over 95 per cent. An initial analysis simply based on the aggregate distribution of responses, suggests that the majority of TDs hold formalist rather than populist conception of democracy, assuming that agreement with the second, third, fourth and fifth statements and disagreement with the first statement implies a formalist position.

**TABLE 6.1 Attitudes to statements (aggregate of interviewees & survey respondents)**

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | DK/ NR* | Total N | Total % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Provision should be made for popular initiative to amend the Constitution. | 10.1 | 48.3 | 27.0 | 11.2 | 3.4 | 89 | 100 |
| Amendments to the Constitution that are deemed to be purely stylistic or technical should be permitted to be made by simple acts of the Oireachtas. | 34.8 | 31.5 | 10.1 | 21.4 | 2.2 | 89 | 100 |
| The Government should be allowed to fund the promotion of amendments to the Constitution, contrary to the ruling in the McKenna Judgment | 25.9 | 44.9 | 15.7 | 5.6 | 7.9 | 89 | 100 |
| The public do not have enough technical and specialist knowledge to adjudicate on everyday legislation. | 9.0 | 55.1 | 23.6 | 6.7 | 5.6 | 89 | 100 |
| It is the role of political leaders to lead public opinion on certain issues | 43.8 | 52.8 | 2.3 | 0 | 1.1 | 89 | 100 |

* The no response/don't know category represents those who refused to answer or who said that they held no position.

To analyse the results more fully, a range of scores was assigned to each statement and TDs total scores were calculated. The scores allocated ranged between zero and three, a low score signifying a formalist democrat and a high score a populist.[62] A TD who held a consistently populist version of democracy would, according to this scoring mechanism, obtain a score of 15 and a pure formalist would receive a zero score. As can be seen in Table 6.2 below, which shows the percentage distribution of TDs within each score,

[62] The scores were attributed as follows: for the first statement strongly agree = 3, agree = 2, disagree = 1 and strongly disagree = 0. For all other statements, the reverse was the case : strongly agree = 0, agree = 1, disagree =2 and strongly disagree = 3.

three quarters of TDs who gave a response to each statement[63] were positioned at a formalist point on the scale while the remainder were located at a populist position.

**TABLE 6.2 Respondents position on a formalist/populist scale of democracy**

| Type | Score | % | Total % | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Formalist | 0 | 0 | 75 | 57 |
| | 1 | 0 | | |
| | 2 | 4.0 | | |
| | 3 | 2.6 | | |
| | 4 | 10.5 | | |
| | 5 | 15.8 | | |
| | 6 | 23.7 | | |
| | 7 | 18.4 | | |
| Populist | 8 | 14.5 | 25 | 19 |
| | 9 | 5.3 | | |
| | 10 | 3.9 | | |
| | 11 | 1.3 | | |
| | 12 | 0 | | |
| | 13 | 0 | | |
| | 14 | 0 | | |
| | 15 | 0 | | |

To test the extent to which these scores do indeed signify TDs' positions on a democratic scale, the internal consistency and validity of the scale had to be tested in order to assess whether it did in fact measure a coherent underlying concept, and also that the scores clustered in a way that indicated the validity of the concept in structuring TDs' opinions. Various tests were conducted using SPSS version 10.0. The reliability of the scale was tested through obtaining alpha scores both for the entire scale, and also the average score on the scale were each item to be deleted. The alpha score was very disappointing (0.26), and together with the low inter-item correlations shown in Table 6.3 below, suggested the items did not measure an

[63] Rather than replacing missing values with the mean, I omitted any cases where there was missing data which resulted in the omission of 12 cases.

underlying concept.[64] Additionally, the alpha score did not significantly improve with the removal of any of the individual items. Further testing for validity using factor analysis failed to support the presence of a single construct underpinning the items. Three factors with eigenvalues of over one were produced, the first accounting for only 27% of variance.

**TABLE 6.3 Correlations between attitudes to individual statements (using SPSS 10.0)**

**Correlations**

| | | POPINT | STYLIS | MCKEN | PUB | LEADR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| POPINT | Pearson Correlation | 1.000 | .038 | .106 | .044 | -.006 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .729 | .351 | .696 | .953 |
| | N | 86 | 85 | 80 | 82 | 86 |
| STYLIS | Pearson Correlation | .038 | 1.000 | .186 | .055 | -.159 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .729 | . | .094 | .621 | .141 |
| | N | 85 | 87 | 82 | 83 | 87 |
| MCKEN | Pearson Correlation | .106 | .186 | 1.000 | .139 | .228* |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .351 | .094 | . | .226 | .040 |
| | N | 80 | 82 | 82 | 78 | 82 |
| PUB | Pearson Correlation | .044 | .055 | .139 | 1.000 | .021 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .696 | .621 | .226 | . | .847 |
| | N | 82 | 83 | 78 | 84 | 84 |
| LEADR | Pearson Correlation | -.006 | -.159 | .228* | .021 | 1.000 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .953 | .141 | .040 | .847 | . |
| | N | 86 | 87 | 82 | 84 | 88 |

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

There are different interpretations of this result. The first is that this is a concept which simply cannot be operationalised empirically. The lack of correlations might also indicate measurement error, for example, that the theoretical assumptions behind the scale, the selection of items or their wording were flawed. It might also be the case that this was simply not a relevant concept for Irish TDs, that they are neither formalist or populist in democratic belief, but rather adopted a pragmatic approach to each issue leading to a lack of patterning in responses. A way of obtaining further clarity as to why the scale did not perform as intended was to examine the

[64] Spector suggests that Cronbach Alpha should be at least .70 for a scale to demonstrate internal consistency (Spector 1994, 258).

responses to each statement further, and in particular the qualitative responses that these items invoked among the interview respondents.

Comments made in response to the first three statements, suggested that to a large degree they did seem to measure attitudes to public participation and democracy although TDs did not necessarily display consistent attitudes to all three. For example in response to the statement regarding the passing of technical amendments, one TDs displayed a more elitist view stating:

> Technical? In an ideal world that would be better of course. People don't understand technical ones.

A party colleague of his took the populist position stating:

> A constitution is a constitution, what's in it is in it and ... it would be downgrading it so that any parts of it could be changed by simple act. It would take away the power from the people who have the power to change it.

Another TD provided an example of a similarly populist view in response to the statement regarding popular initiative to amend the constitution:

> I don't see anything wrong with that. The constitution belongs to the people. They are the guardians of it. Nothing wrong with them promoting change.

However, an Independent TD took a very different view on this issue:

> I think that would be absolutely stupid because people will sign anything to get rid of the people who are looking for them to sign it.

A third TD stated in response to this statement:

> I think there has to be an element of trust in public representatives and I don't think you can promote a type of mob rule. .. It isn't how organised democracy should work.

A similarly formalist response was evident in the response of a Fianna Fáil TD in relation to the statement regarding the McKenna judgement:

> Certainly I think governments should be allowed to support one argument and I think they are elected by the people to legislate for the people. They bring forward a referendum and then they are not allowed to support it, it's ridiculous.

However, the statement about the level of knowledge of the public and its ability to adjudicate on issues produced a variety of responses, which suggested that the item did not in fact measure populist or formalist democratic positions. Twelve per cent of interviewees who agreed with the statement remarked that they did not believe that TDs had enough information on issues either (indicating that agreement here did not indicate a specifically negative attitude towards the capacity of the public for decision-making.)

As one TD stated :

> I suppose I'd agree with the fourth one (statement) in so far as ...we in here don't have a lot of the necessary, technical and specialist knowledge and have to make exhaustive efforts to try and get assistance on legislation.

Others claimed that were the media and government to improve their performance of their communication roles, individuals would have the knowledge required to take decisions. Another group seemed incapable of responding to such a hypothetical statement. One respondent stated:

> The public aren't adjudicating on everyday legislation necessarily. I'd have no views on that question because I don't see it as being relevant really.

A colleague responded similarly stating

> the public can't adjudicate on legislation anyway. Legislators are appointed to do that job. ... They're not entitled to... I don't understand the question.

Such responses indicate that this item did not in fact measure attitudes in relation to the topic under investigation. Other items performed better in

producing response that fitted with different views of democracy, but TDs did not tend to produce consistently formalist or populist responses, rather their position seemed to vary depending on the individual issue.

## 6.6 Conclusion

From evidence in this chapter, it can be tentatively suggested that the majority of TDs hold formalist rather than populist conceptions of democracy. Whether this leads to the operation of a formalist or elitist form of politics and representation in the Irish case will be investigated through further data in the next chapter. It must be noted however, that the measures used to assess TDs' position in relation to interpretations of democracy were not found to be either internally consistent or valid when various tests were conducted. The most that can conclusively be abstracted from this analysis is that a majority of respondents favoured more power for leaders in amending the constitution and the conduct of referendums. They also felt that it was appropriate for them to have a role in leading public opinion. Although nearly 65 per cent of respondents agreed that the public did not have enough knowledge to adjudicate on legislation, this did not in all cases stem from a view that the public were incapable of decision-making in comparison with Irish leaders or elites. In fact, about 58 per cent favoured the introduction of provision for popular initiative to amend the constitution. Overall, TDs' attitudes can be described as somewhat contradictory from an analytical point of view. This is a feature which will be noted in further analysis in subsequent chapters.

# CHAPTER 7 : REPRESENTATIONAL STYLE

## 7.1 Introduction and Theoretical Context

In previous chapters, abstract theories of microcosmic representation, policy congruence, and democracy were tested in the Irish context, primarily at an aggregate level. In this chapter, the focus will primarily be on TDs at an individual level. The concept of representational style will be used to investigate the degree of autonomy, from both constituency and party, that TDs believe they should have, and also, (at least to some degree), the extent to which these beliefs and attitudes actually influence their behaviour. Findings from this chapter will contribute to the derivation and allocation of TDs within the typology that will be the subject of Chapter 9 of this dissertation. These findings indicate that a majority of TDs conceive of decision-making as a process within which they should consider, but not necessarily act upon, the wishes and opinions of constituents and voters. Their behaviour is, however, primarily dictated by party affiliation, since the most significant Irish parliamentary activities, such as voting on legislation, and electing the executive are processes governed by a party whip. Nonetheless, it is important to note that members can influence party policy and actions if enough like-minded individuals use the channels of influence available, such as parliamentary party meetings, and informal contacts with the party hierarchy. Overall, the conclusion that can be drawn from this chapter is that in their relationship with constituents and voters, most TDs consider themselves trustees. Within their party structures, individual TDs are primarily delegates, although if their stance on an issue is contrary to party policy, but shared by colleagues, party structures of influence can be used to achieve changes on certain occasions.

The concept or variable of representational style is commonly said to have originated from a 1774 speech made by British MP Edmund Burke to his electors, where he argued that MPs should prioritise the national interest, and act on their own judgement (acting as a *trustee*), rather than on the instructions of their constituents (performing a *delegate* role). Eulau *et al.* (1959) adopted this idea, adapting it to differentiate between representational *style* and *focus*. Style refers to the degree of autonomy a representative should have, while representational focus (which will be explored in the next chapter) relates to whom an MP should and does represent. Findings of recent empirical research indicate that the increased strength of political party discipline limits the extent to which variation on the representational style variable can, and does exist, in most contemporary parliaments, particularly in European systems. In this chapter, I will be assessing the extent to which such a conclusion is applicable in the Irish context. In the remainder of this first section, I will place representational style in its theoretical context, in the second section I will outline findings of existing empirical research, before examining in the third and main section, the evidence provided by my own data.

Eulau *et al.* (1959) identified three categories within the variable of representational style: *trustee, delegate* and *politico*, which they empirically investigated in a later work (Wahlke *et al.* 1963, 273-286). Here they define trustees as those who behave according to their own moral convictions and take decisions based on their own judgement and understanding of an issue (Wahlke *et al.* 1963, 273). The defining aspect of a delegate for Wahlke and his collaborators is that such individuals take decisions based on instructions or orders, whether it be from constituents, interest groups or a political party

(Wahlke *et al.* 1963, 467). MPs classified as delegates by Wahlke *et al.* varied in the degree to which they obeyed instructions. Some believed that they were obliged to carry out the wishes or beliefs of others, even if these ran contrary to their own beliefs, other delegates merely felt that they should inform themselves before decision making by consulting their constituents or other relevant parties. Delegates are described as having a more simplistic approach to the representative process than trustees (Wahlke *et al.* 1963, 277). The third category of politico is composed of those who act according to both criteria - their own independent judgement, and a mandate. This might involve either attempting to reconcile both criteria simultaneously when taking a decision (often causing role conflict), or switching between trustee and delegate roles depending on the issue or activity at stake. For example, on local issues, a legislator might choose to be a delegate and on all other matters a trustee. Alternatively on some issues he or she might be a party delegate and on others a free agent (Wahlke *et al.* 1963, 277-280).

In their central empirical study, Wahlke and his collaborators found that among the subjects of their research, the trustee orientation appeared more frequently than either of the other two: 63 per cent of their interviewees were classified as trustees, 23 per cent were politicos and 14 per cent delegates (figures calculated from Wahlke *et al.* 1963, 281 Table 12.1). However, their demarcation lines between the trustee and delegate categories are somewhat blurred. For example, the interviewee who made the following statement was classified as a trustee: "Of course at times you want advice – if you are not sure what the effect of a proposed bill may be. Mostly I prefer to do my own thinking" (Wahlke *et al.* 1963, 275). Another interviewee who said: "I do ask them (i.e. constituents) quite often, especially when there's doubt in my mind" was categorised as a

delegate (Wahlke *et al.* 1963, 276). I would contend that the shade of difference in the content of these quotes is insufficient for their originators to have been classified as opposing types. In addition, the category of politico is a form of catch-all category, sometimes describing pure pragmatism when it comes to decision making while at other times incorporating legislators who differentiated sharply between local and national policies or party and personal issues. A typical politico said:

> there is an age-old question – should I vote according to my own convictions, or according to the people back home? I think I should follow my convictions but consider the people back home. However, their views are not necessarily best (Wahlke *et al.* 1963, 279).

Overall, Wahlke and his collaborators' empirical operationalisation of representational style is somewhat vague and although it has been extremely influential in subsequent research, its continued relevance has been questioned by some researchers.

In a discussion of research on representation, Jacques Thomassen suggests that in modern democracies, the distinction between trustees and delegates is immaterial, since contemporary parliaments represent the national interest and are vested with supreme power (Thomassen 1994, 240-1). He maintains that the representational style variable was more applicable in feudal times, when MPs represented local and regional interests in opposition to the supreme power of the monarchy. Thomassen's view can however be disputed, given that executives have replaced monarchies as the institution where most power rests. With the acknowledged decline of parliaments, members of parliament can still be regarded as less powerful representatives of public and regional interests in opposition to the centre.

Thomassen's second argument against the continued use of the representational style variable is that at a general policy making level, specific local interests are not at stake (Thomassen 1994, 241). For some issues, this is undoubtedly the case. However, to a large degree, views on the relationship between interests and overall policy depend on how one conceives of politics. If one defines politics as:

> the activity by which differing interests within a given unit of rule are conciliated by giving them a share in power in proportion to their importance to the welfare and survival of their community (Crick quoted in Hague, Harrop and Breslin 1992, 4)

or "who gets what, when, where and how" (Lasswell quoted in Pennock and Smith 1964, 7), it is clear that decisions between competing interests are necessary and cannot be taken on the basis of an obvious homogeneous 'national interest'. The fact that members of parliament often electorally represent geographical units made up of individuals, and usually also a political party, creates tensions between this national level and local interests, even if such considerations are motivated only by electoral considerations. It is for this reason that a public choice framework such as principal-agent theory can be criticised as being unsuitable for analysing processes of representation.

According to the principal-agent perspective, representatives or elites are considered to be agents employed by the public (as principal) to represent their interests in the political arena. These agents are however motivated by self-interest, and are in possession of desires and incentives contrary to that of their principals. They also have superior knowledge. A central challenge for representative democratic systems therefore is how mechanisms can be developed so that principals can (given information asymmetries and self-

interest of agents) control the agent, and ensure that he or she is acting in the interests of the principal rather than as a self-interested trustee (for a comprehensive analysis of various aspects of parliamentary democracy from a principal-agent perspective, see Bergman, Müller and Strøm, eds. 2000).

However, such an approach fails to differentiate between an agent who fails to act in the interests of a principal due to his or her own selfish goals, and an agent who does not follow the wishes of the principal because a greater good exists (such as the national interest or the protection of a minority group). This is partly because principal-agent approaches assume that the principal is a unitary actor, rather than composed of various collectivities (such as constituencies' party branches and interest groups, all of which are constituted of individuals with different goals, incentives and opinions). In reality, the represented do not have a single discrete set of interests, priorities or political goals, so that a model which allows for multiple incentives and goals from different sources (cultural, social and psychological) allows for a fuller and more substantive picture of everyday politics than the rather narrow framework allowed for by principal-agent assumptions.

The issue of competing interests and groups will be dealt with in the next chapter on representational focus. The central distinction between trustees and delegates which remains useful in analysing representatives is whether they feel obliged to represent what *they judge* to be in the overall interests of their constituents, balanced against the national interest – this is the key characteristic of trustees. In contrast, delegates believe that they are obliged to further the opinions and interests that their constituents express and value,

regardless of whether they agree with such interests and opinions or not, or the effect that this might have on the national good.

For the same reason as principal-agent theory can be criticised, it is unlikely that a pure constituency delegate position is a feasible role in practice, since multiple interests and opinions among voters exist. As Thomassen stated: "the lines of political dispute cut across purely geographical boundaries" (Thomassen 1994, 242). In other words, individuals in constituencies are likely to prioritise different issues, and have varying positions on each issue. This means that even if an individual member of parliament wanted to be a constituency delegate, there would exist no obvious homogeneous constituency position on most issues for that individual to pursue. Furthermore, even if a constituency did contain one homogenous view, for the delegate model to stand, the member of parliament must be correctly informed of the constituency position.

In Chapter 5, reference was made to Miller and Stokes' research in the United States, and similar studies in other systems, where the existence of constituency delegation was investigated by examining parliamentary voting patterns (Miller and Stokes 1963). In the European context in particular, it has been found that after controlling for the party affiliation variable, very little variation exists in parliamentary voting (Thomassen 1994, 245-248). A similar conclusion might be expected for the Irish case, because of the fact that, as I will highlight later, deputies vote against the party whip so rarely. When deputies do vote against the party whip, this might be for constituency considerations, but their vote might also be based on an issue of conscience. Such votes against the whip for reasons of conscience conform to the idea of a trustee voting

according to his or her own judgement or moral conviction, rather than as a delegate acting in accordance with a mandate.

However, voting is not the only form of behaviour by which delegates can represent the opinions, and interests of their constituents or interest groups. For example, private members bills can be introduced as a result of lobbying by a particular group, particular issues raised by constituents might be referred to in speeches, or constituents' concerns can be raised behind the closed doors of a parliamentary party meeting. In my interviews with TDs, such activities were discussed by many TDs, and will be described later on in this chapter.

Another way of employing the concept of delegates is to conceive of TDs as party delegates, since a large proportion of their behaviour seems to be based on the will or mandate of the party. One attempt to combine the idea of delegation to voters with the influence of party is the responsible party model already referred to in Chapter 2. To recapitulate, according to this model, voters vote for a party based on its distinctive policy package, and the party that wins most votes implements its programme. The voters pass judgement on parties' performances at the following election. As Thomassen outlines, there are various bases for disputing the validity of this model (Thomassen 1994, 251-7). Firstly, as outlined in detail in the previous chapter, elite theorists have argued that the general public are not informed or interested enough to make sensible policy decisions, so that their voting is unlikely to be based on a reasoned assessment of policy options. Secondly, it is unlikely that a voter will agree with all aspects of a party's policy. It is therefore likely that in such situations, a voter will vote based on the issue or set of issues that he or she considers to be most important. It is debatable

whether a vote on this basis can be seen as a general policy mandate. Thirdly, there are various competing models of voting behaviour, such as the party identification model which would posit alternative causes for party voting (see Niemi and Weisberg 1993, 210-283). Finally, the prevalence of coalition governments in many political systems undermines the applicability of the responsible party model as the inevitable bargaining that must occur means that no single party can implement its entire manifesto. It is unclear to voters which government party voters should reward or punish for government performance at the subsequent election.

Such difficulties with the responsible party model do not necessarily suggest that representatives are not party delegates. They merely indicate that the existence of disciplined parties does not necessarily create a mechanism by which representatives are delegates to their voters in terms of policy preferences. Members of parliament, particularly in systems which use the Westminster model, are governed by a party pledge and whip. It can therefore be anticipated that, in the European context, there might be two forms of delegation to be considered - constituency delegation which is clearly linked with representation, and party delegation which is less obviously connected with the relationship between voters and their representatives. Both forms of delegation have been empirically investigated in many contexts.

## 7.2 Empirical Research

In an examination of the representational style of Hong Kong Legislative Councillors in 1988 and 1993, Cheek-Milby concluded that, on average, 56 per cent of councillors were trustees, 19 per cent were delegates and 25 per cent were politicos (Cheek-Milby 1996,

210). Her classification was based on responses of members to various questions relating to the factors which they considered in taking decisions. For example, in a choice between the relative importance of the views of constituents, and their own personal convictions, 69 per cent of respondents prioritised their own convictions, 19 per cent selected their constituents' position, and 9 per cent said that it depended on the issue. They were also asked whether they thought that a legislative councillor should act based on the wishes of constituents, regardless of whether his or her own opinion was to the contrary. Only 14 per cent agreed that constituents views should predominate, and 81 per cent disagreed, indicating that Hong Kong councillors are predominantly trustees in orientation (Cheek-Milby 1996, 202).

In an investigation of the applicability of the style variable to the Dutch case, Andeweg found that in 1990 most MPs chose the politico position (Andeweg 1997, 113). Fifty seven per cent of respondents stated that, in the event of a conflicting position between themselves and their party voters on an issue, their choice of decision would depend on the issue at stake. Thirty four per cent of respondents selected the trustee position, while nine per cent preferred the delegate option. In response to a similar question where the choice offered was between MPs' own view and that of their parliamentary party, a majority (69 per cent) chose the politico role, 11 per cent the trustee position, and 20 per cent the party delegate position (Andeweg 1997, 114).

Similarly, Patzelt states that "trustee and delegate are no mutually exclusive role orientations for German MPs. In a sense, all of them are 'politicos'" (Patzelt 1997, 69). Damgaard reports for Denmark that a large majority of Danish MPs (76 per cent) hold a trustee

position in relation to the voters, believing that in the event of a conflict between their own opinion and that of the voters, they should prioritise their own opinion. However, in the event of a conflict between their own view and that of the party, only 16 per cent would choose the trustee orientation (Damgaard 1997, 83-84).

For the Norwegian case, Heidar (1997, 99-101) constructed a trustee-delegate scale using three questions related to the importance of various tasks or functions. Contrary to many other countries, he found that the delegate role dominated among MPs with 46 per cent of MPs scoring as delegates compared with only 8 per cent who were classed as trustees. However, it is important to note that this scale encompassed a delegate position, both to constituency and party. Sixty eight per cent of Norwegian MEPs ranked to 'argue party's policy' as a 'very important' task compared with only 19 % who stated that mirroring the electorate's opinion was 'very important.'

From their Riksdag data, Esaiasson and Holmberg concluded that a large majority of Swedish MPs believed that they should vote according to their own views, rather than that of the voters (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 52, Table 3.1). Such is the dominance of political parties in Sweden that Esaiasson and Holmberg argue that "today's Burkeans show their independence by repudiating the dictates of their party" (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 51). Using 1988 data, they tested for trustees according to this criterion, and found that 43 per cent of MPs surveyed prioritised the party view when voting, while 35 per cent of Riksdag members stated that their own view should determine their vote (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 51).

In a ranking of the relative importance of the party delegate, trustee and constituency delegate, 47 per cent chose the party delegate role, 32 per cent the independent trustee, and 14 per cent the delegate position (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 53). However, the extent to which delegates in the Riksdag carried this principle through to their behaviour was found to be extremely limited, indicating that:

> In the Swedish context, a classification as Trustee or Delegate is little more than a Sunday suit that MPs put on to show their feathers, or to make inquisitive researchers happy (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 57).

Evidence exists to suggest that such a conclusion can be extended to most European countries. In a study of members of 11 national parliaments in Europe (MNPs), together with members of the European parliament (MEPs), one of the areas investigated was the issue of whether MPs were more influenced by their own judgement, the view of the voters of their party or the view of their national party (Katz and Wessels 1999). Seventy five per cent of MEPs and 72 per cent of MNPs, ranked their own judgement first alone or tied with one of the other alternatives (Katz 1999, 63-64). Katz was somewhat surprised by this, given the degree of strong and stable government in the relevant systems and argued, similarly to Esaiasson and Holmberg, that responses might have been influenced by a desire for social approval. Overall Katz (1999, 65) concludes that:

> It is clear that when given a choice between deferring to their party positions as reflected in the views of the party's voters or to the party's positions as reflected in their national party or EP group, MPs at both levels disproportionately report that they would give priority to party (organisation) or group.

The individual results for the Irish cases obtained from the codebook for the MNP study, showed that a high proportion of TDs (24 out of

71) had either not replied to this particular question at all or, contrary to the instructions in the question, had ranked more than one option equally, suggesting that my difficulties in obtaining responses to closed questions is related to a general inability of Irish TDs to respond conventionally to such measures. The classification of their responses to this question from the MNP survey (1996) is therefore somewhat complicated, as can be seen in Table 7.1 below. From the table, it can be seen that nearly half of all Irish respondents chose their own judgement as the most important criterion, while nearly 75 per cent of them chose this option in combination with at least one other. Another point to note is that the national party was a more important criterion for respondents to this question than voters.

**TABLE 7.1 First and Second Criteria for decisions when presented with a choice between their own judgement, the party voters, and the view of the national party.***

| Options | First choice % | Second choice % |
|---|---|---|
| Own judgement | 49.3 | 15.5 |
| View party voters | 4. 2 | 21.1 |
| View party | 12.7 | 23.9 |
| Own & party | 12.7 | 0 |
| Party voters & party | 1.4 | 14.1 |
| Own & party voters & party | 11.3 | 0 |
| NA | 8.5 | 25.4 |
| Total | 100 n= 71 | 100 n= 71 |

Source: WZB Political Representation in Europe European Members of Parliament study Code book Release 27, 27.06.97

* The question asked in 1996 was "In many cases people have differing views concerning matters that the National Parliament must decide upon. On which one of the following would you be most inclined to base your decision in such cases?" The choices offered were "your own judgement" "the view of the voters of your party" and "the view of your national party."

These Irish results, in combination with the other empirical research described above, indicate that a delegate position according to the

original style variable is no longer common among members of parliament. A delegate orientation towards the political party is far more prevalent, although a large proportion of MPs consider that their own judgement is the most important criteria in decision-making, whether they act according to this belief or otherwise. It is important to note, however, that delegation to constituency residents or voters was not presented as a choice in the question from the MNP/MEP study. Given that localism is a strong feature of the Irish political system, I expected that the dominance of the trustee and national party delegate would be somewhat diminished by the inclusion of constituency orientation in my analysis.

## 7.3 Irish Representational Style

### (i) Trustees or Delegates to Voters?

Various questions were posed during the interviews and in the surveys, to explore the representational style of Irish TDs. Although many of these were closed questions, some illuminating qualitative material arose in response to these questions. Many of the points made contributed to explaining why particular answers were chosen, qualified responses, or gave relevant examples to illustrate the context within which decisions are made. Quotations will be cited where appropriate to illustrate findings, and provide additional insight into the motivation and attitudes of respondents.

One of the questions addressed to the interviewees asked them to rank four theories of representation in order of how close each was to their conception of representation. The exact wording was as follows:

> What do you think is implied by the term representation? Rank between 1 and 4. (i) Acting as a trustee for the people, making decisions primarily based on one's judgement on what is best for the nation as a whole. (ii) As close a match as possible between representatives and the people in socio-economic terms (iii) Promoting the interests of the local constituency (iv) Reflecting the policy opinions of the local constituency.

The first option represents the trustee position, the second microcosmic theories of representation, and the third and fourth - delegate positions differentiating between a preference for acting according to the *opinions* of constituents, and acting in order to protect the *interests* of their constituents. In hindsight, it was felt that it would have been better to include the option of microcosmic representation elsewhere, and this question was reformulated in the survey. However, as can be seen in Table 7.2, this option was, in any case, the fourth choice of most of the respondents, with a large majority choosing one of the delegate or trustee concepts.

One of the most obvious points is that only 60 per cent of interviewees ranked the options as requested. Of the remainder, 10 per cent picked only one option as close to their view, 16 per cent ranked two options equally, while the remainder talked around the question, or refused to answer at all coherently in the desired format. Notably, of the 10 per cent who only ranked one option as close to their view, all of them chose the trustee option. Therefore, it is clear that of the four theories, the trustee model was closest to what most TDs felt was implied by the term representation. The median response was to rank trustee as one, delegate to interests as two, delegate to opinions three and microcosmic theories of representation fourth.

**TABLE 7.2 Which of four representational roles respondents felt was implied by the term 'representation?'**[1]

| Rank Order | Trustee % | Microcosmic theories % | Delegate to interests % | Delegate to opinions % | No Response [2] | Total % | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | 54 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 30 | 100 | 50 |
| **2** | 10 | 0 | 38 | 12 | 40 | 100 | 50 |
| **3** | 4 | 8 | 14 | 34 | 40 | 100 | 50 |
| **4** | 2 | 46 | 2 | 10 | 40 | 100 | 50 |

(1) The four options were (i) Acting as a trustee for the people, making decisions primarily based on one's judgement on what is best for the nation as a whole. (ii) As close a match as possible between representatives and the people in socio-economic terms (iii) Promoting the interests of the local constituency (iv) Reflecting the policy opinions of the local constituency.

(2) Ten per cent only gave one ranking so that the 'no response' category is higher for ranking 2,3, & 4.

Qualitative responses to the questions were, perhaps, more enlightening in demonstrating TDs' attitudes to representation than a mere analysis of their ranking of the options. For example, two of the respondents - one of these ranked the interest delegate position first, the other ranked opinion delegate first - argued that there was a difference in role orientation between backbench/opposition TDs and those who held ministerial positions. The first, a rural Fine Gael TD, stated:

> A minister has a responsibility to represent the national question whereas as a TD, he is elected by the people in the first instance to represent their needs, and aspirations.

His colleague representing a Cork constituency concurred:

> Unless you are a minister or a junior minister ...as a TD representing, in my case, one hundred thousand people on the

> south side of Cork, then my job is to promote and highlight their interests, and work for them, or promote the whole area.

This possibility was interesting enough to investigate further. Were former or current Ministers or Junior Ministers more likely to prefer the trustee position than those who had not held such positions? On an initial examination this seemed to be the case. Of those that responded, 93 per cent of those who had held executive office ranked trustee as their first option, compared with 72 per cent of TDs who had never held such positions. However, when this was tested for significance using a difference of proportion (two-tailed t-test), the difference was not found to be significant. Variables of gender, constituency type, and party were also tested for an effect on TDs' likelihood of choosing the trustee option. Gender was the only variable found to be significant with women more likely to choose the trustee option ($p=0.0033$). I also used correlation analysis to test whether TDs who had been assigned a lower score on the scale described in the previous chapter (as formalist democrats), were any more likely to choose the trustee position in response to this question, but the correlation proved not to be significant.

Only 14 per cent of interviewed TDs questioned the separation between opinion and interest delegate, although the distinction has seldom been made in the literature. One element of the difference was alluded to by a Cork TD who remarked:

> Policy opinions and interest, there's a subtle difference there because I think if you reflect the policy opinions of your local constituency then sometimes you may have to be just representing the vocal side of your constituency that actually let you know what their policy opinions are.

Others identified additional difficulties with the idea of opinion delegation. A Fine Gael TD argued:

> Four [opinion delegation] presupposes that the policy opinions of the local constituency are going to be uniform which they never are. Or else it presupposes that the elected representative is going to make a statement on behalf of one organisation who visits him on an issue one day, and then some other organisation comes in, and puts an entirely different view.

The same point was made by a party colleague who stated:

> I can't speak for something one day, and then speak out for another interest, because that may contradict exactly what I said before so I need to make judgements.

One former Minister argued that he had not suffered electorally from being a trustee, stating:

> I've frequently been in conflict with very strong opinion within my constituency, and it's never done me any harm to stand up to crowded meetings who are urging, even vehemently, a certain point of view and you disagree with it. To have the courage to say that and argue your case doesn't bring you political ruin, but can be politically beneficial as well.

This TD was very strongly oriented to the trustee position stating:

> The national interest would always supersede the local interest and I would always, if there is a clash between the two, I would take the national interest.

Many who ranked trustee as closest to their view were not quite so emphatic. Twenty three per cent of the TDs who ranked trustee as most important mentioned the need to listen to constituents and other groups when making their own judgement on the best way to act.

A Labour party TD stated:

> We do always act as a trustee [*sic.*] for the people. We do try to make decisions based on our judgement which we consider to be in the best interest and in that process I consult a lot.

A former minister chose the trustee view but added:

> Well, primarily based on one's own judgement after consultation with constituents.

Another former minister, this time from Fianna Fáil, made a similar point:

> Now obviously to form a judgement, you would listen to what is being said around you but at the end of the day... one would have to take the broad view... if you can argue your case. If what you are doing is right, you can defend it. If it's wrong, you shouldn't be at it.

The typical counter view was promulgated by a Fianna Fáil backbencher who agreed with the delegate position stating:

> Representing the individual constituents. That's what we're here for... You come here not to represent your own views. You come here to represent the interests and views of your constituents.

He was one of those who argued that there was no difference between opinion and interest delegation.

In designing the survey, it was felt that a question differentiating more purely between delegation and trusteeship would supplement the material from the interviews, and provide a clearer position of where TDs stood when faced with a straight choice between the trustee and delegate position. Therefore, in the mail survey, a new trustee-delegate question was included. The microcosmic option was moved to a separate section of the survey, and the distinction

between types of delegation was not explored (primarily due to shortages of space). The redesigned question took the form of a scale, where respondents were invited to place themselves between a position of 1 and 10, one signifying a pure trustee and 10 indicating a pure delegate (See Table 7.3).

Fifty three per cent of TDs described themselves as trustees, while 35 per cent described themselves as delegates. The median response was at number five in the scale indicating a moderate rather than strongly polarised view for most TDs. There is a chance that respondents may have mistakenly assumed that five was the mid-point of the scale, and therefore indicated a neutral position between trustee and delegateship. This possibility should be recognised when classifying this group of respondents. However, such TDs could have written 'no response' or 'neither' beside the scale if they had really sought to register disagreement with its content. While acknowledging the point therefore, the responses will be interpreted as intended to signify moderate trusteeship.

When results were analysed by party, 56 per cent of Fianna Fáil TDs placed themselves in trustee positions compared with 54 per cent of Fine Gael TDs and 50 per cent of all other parties and Independents.[65] Fifty eight per cent of urban TDs described themselves as trustees, compared with 50 per cent of rural TDs. Sixty seven per cent of women categorised themselves as trustees, compared with 53 per cent of men. When broken down by ministerial experience, 52 per cent of former ministers described themselves as trustees compared with 56 per cent of those who had never been ministers. However, none of these differences was

[65] The total here was only six, so all parties were combined apart from Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.

found to be significant when tested using difference of proportion tests (calculated as the difference between groups of TDs classifying themselves as trustees). Neither did any relationship exist between TDs' score on this scale and their score on the democracy scale reported in the previous chapter.

**Figure 7.1 Positioning of survey respondents on a trustee-delegate Scale***

| ← Trustee → | | | | | | ← Delegate → | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **N/R** |
| % | 5 | 5 | 10 | 5 | 28 | 13 | 11 | 8 | 0 | 3 | **13%** |
| | | **53%** (n=21) | | | | | **35%** (n=13) | | | | (n=5) |

* The question as it was presented on the survey is as follows: Members of parliament have often been categorised as either trustees or delegates where **trustees** feel that their role is to judge each issue on its merits, in the light of their own judgement, regardless of the views of their constituents, while **delegates** believe that their role is to represent the views and demands of their constituents regardless of whether they personally agree with these. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represent a TD who sees themselves entirely as a trustee and 10 represents a TD who sees themselves entirely as a delegate, where would you place yourself? *Please circle the appropriate number under the scale.*

The framing of the questions reflects the fact that TDs are being asked how they view their role, defined as "particular patterns of interrelated *goals, attitudes* and *behaviours* that are characteristic of people in particular positions" (Searing, 1994, 18). The questions seek to incorporate all three constituents of role. Role conflict was noted spontaneously by one respondent who wrote 'speak like trustee, vote - delegate' beside the scale and marked himself at 10. There were a further four respondents who did not respond as envisaged. One wrote 'disagree' beside the scale while two others marked themselves at 2 points, 1 on the trustee end and 1 on the delegate end. One interpretation of these responses is that TDs perceive role conflict, for example they would have a personal

orientation to the trustee role but structural or circumstantial factors dictate that they behave like a delegate. Alternatively, they might conform to different role conceptions depending on the political context of the issue and the parliamentary function in question. Another possibility is, of course, that such responses were simply errors and do not have any substantive meaning.

In Chapter 9, where the focus is on the classification of TDs according to a typology, role conflict and the relative importance of goals, attitudes, and behaviour in classifying TDs will be discussed extensively. For now, it is sufficient to note that more surveyed TDs regarded themselves as trustees rather than as delegates, but since a majority placed themselves somewhere in the middle of the scale, there was not much polarisation in positions.

To explore this issue further, interviewed TDs were presented with an example of a situation where they might have to choose between using their own judgement or prioritising the views of voters. They were asked "when discussing policy options behind the closed doors of a parliamentary party meeting, what is the bigger influence on your input – your own personal views or those who voted for you?" The results are shown in Table 7.6. As a large number of TDs said that both were important, a third category describing this was added, referred to in Table 7.6 as 'mixture'. As can be seen from the table, of those who responded to the question, most said that their own views were most important, followed by those who regarded both as equally influential, with only a small number considering the biggest influence to be their voters' views. Of those who did not respond, four per cent were not members of a parliamentary party, so the question did not apply to them. TDs' responses to this question were not significantly correlated to their gender, party background,

ministerial experience or constituency type. These findings are similar to those of the comparative research outlined earlier.

**TABLE 7.3 TD's priority at parliamentary party meetings***

| Response | % |
|---|---|
| Own view | 50 |
| Voters' views | 12 |
| Mixture | 22 |
| No response/not applicable | 16 |
| Total | 100<br>n= 50 |

*The exact wording was: When discussing policy options behind the closed doors of a parliamentary party meeting, what is the bigger influence on your input – your own personal views or those who voted for you?

Again it is useful to analyse these responses in more detail by examining the qualitative comments of TDs. Of those who responded to this question, over half explained their position, although the question posed did not require this.[66]

Of those who said that their own view was most important, a prominent former Minister responded:

> Your own personal views. You're doing it in private for one thing.

Another group (25 per cent of those who prioritised their own view) qualified this by arguing that their own views were shaped by those of the voters. For example, a Labour party TD stated:

> When it's in that context you'd be giving your own view, I think. Your personal views but, I mean, who shapes your personal views but those who voted for you?

[66] In fact, a lot of questions which were designed to be closed produced extra data which has added to the research considerably. This is one of the advantages of using face-to-face interviews rather than mail surveys.

A Fianna Fáil backbencher took a similar position stating:

> Well, I would be arrogant enough to think I would represent the views of those who voted for me.

Others argued explicitly that they had a mandate from their voters so that reflecting the voters' views was not the role that they were expected to play. As a Fine Gael TD from Dublin stated:

> That's not my job quite frankly to represent my constituents on every point of policy... I hope they saw me as someone who has considered views on these matters and is able to articulate those views.

A current Junior Minister agreed saying:

> I would take the view that the people who voted for me gave me a mandate to act in the best interest on what I've outlined in terms of my country, and obviously all the people in it, so therefore I would be free to make the choice based on my own personal judgement, and I would test the judgement against the views of the people at the next election.

The same individual also stated:

> Even though on certain issues, your constituents or a significant number of them might disagree with you on an issue, they nevertheless will support you because they will take the view that you are honestly dealing with the issues that confront you as you see them, and they will not punish you because of that.

Others, while not directly expressing the concept of a mandate, felt that their duty was not to present their voters' views. A prominent former Cabinet minister told me:

> I would have a view, and if it matched those who voted for me fine. I would always do what I believed was right. I would vote for it, even if some people who voted for me might disagree.

Of those who said that their input was equally influenced by their own views and their voters, 64 per cent took such a position because they felt that the impact any proposal had on their constituency had to be considered. A Fine Gael TD from Connacht stated:

> I would give my own opinion on it, and the opinion of how it would go down in the constituency as well.

A TD from a small party was also aware of constituency opinion:

> I'd be very much aware of both. I would have to. I'd be very mindful of how things could be interpreted, and that there would be no banana skins out there.

A former minister from Munster made a similar point saying:

> It would be your own views which would develop a concept and move it forward, but then you'd measure that against the possible political consequences to see in political reality is it a runner.

A first term deputy also argued that her input was a mixture of both:

> If I put down motions at the parliamentary party, it would be something that either I felt very passionately about or something that had been brought to my notice by constituents.

Others who said that their input was a mixture argued that it depended on how strong their feelings were, and what the issue was. A Fianna Fáil backbencher stated:

> If you were being lobbied intensively by constituents or groups in your constituency, you'd have to take account of their views as well but I wouldn't be one to shirk from a point of principle. If it was an issue of principle, and the vast majority of my constituents were against it, if I felt very strongly for it, I'd have to go with my own judgement on it.

A former Minister made a similar point saying:

> It would depend on how serious the issue is or how major the issue is.

Strikingly, the same and only example given of an issue where voters and TDs were likely to disagree, and TDs were likely to have to take a stand contrary to that of the voters was given by several TDs and related to the location of Travellers' Halting Sites in constituencies.[67]

Of the 8 per cent who said that the voters' views were most important, none of them felt a need to justify or explain this simply saying "the voters who voted for me" and not elaborating further. This may be due to a belief on their part that this was the obvious or normatively appropriate response, and did not need justification or clarification. It could of course be simply that such individuals are more taciturn than others. However, in other areas of their interview, they were more expansive than they had been in their response to this question.

The issue of socially desirable responses raises the point that responses to all these questions must be interpreted with caution. There may not necessarily be a connection between attitudes expressed and behaviour (perhaps because of role conflict or institutional constraints). Inconsistencies even existed between attitudes expressed by an individual at different times in his or her interview. For example, eight per cent of interviewees responded

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[67] Up until recently, the travelling community was the only substantial ethnic minority in Ireland. There is significant prejudice against them and residents of various settled areas tend to be hostile to the location of halting sites in their locality complaining among other things that it reduces the value of their property to have these sites for the parking of caravans and so on in the area.

that their voters' views were more important than their own at parliamentary party meetings, and 20 per cent ranked delegate positions above the trustee option. However, as outlined in Chapter 6, 96 per cent of interviewees agreed with the statement that "it is the role of political leaders to lead public opinion on certain issues." To be consistent, those who had chosen the delegate option would have been expected to reject a leadership role on opinion, as such a role implies acting to influence the will or opinions of the people rather than to follow them.

So far, the data indicates that in a choice between trustee and delegate positions according to the original conception of representational style, the trustee position is dominant among TDs, although most considered listening to the voters' views to be important. An examination of the extent to which TDs prioritise their own views over that of their party produces a rather different picture of the extent of their overall autonomy.

**(ii) Party Delegation.**

I have already outlined various problems with the responsible party model that undermine the claim that representatives are policy delegates to the voters through the mechanism of political parties and their manifestos. The principal points that have been raised disputing the assumptions of the model are:

(a) parties are not necessarily presenting distinctive policies.

(b) party voters are not necessarily voting for their party based on policy platforms laid out in manifestos.

(c) parties are participating in coalition government and are therefore unable to redeem pledges made in pre-election

manifestos. In addition, it is not always clear which party is accountable for mistakes or to be credited for good governmental performance.

In Ireland, as for other countries, the assumptions behind the responsible party model are not supported by empirical reality. The main parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, are very similar on left-right issues and on overall policy (Sinnott 1995, 160-164), and the centre-right has historically garnered a majority of about 80 per cent of the vote at elections. (Mair 1999, 137-142). Recently, even more constraints on the potential for policy difference between parties have emerged, due to Ireland's joining of the European single currency and the close party consensus on Northern Ireland (see for example Mair 1999).

The second assumption is that voters must vote based on policy differences between parties. Limited evidence suggests that substantially more voters base their vote on constituency concerns than choosing between parties based on policy (Sinnott 1995, 169). Furthermore, in an exit poll from the 1997 general election, 74 per cent claimed that local candidates influenced their vote (Laver and Marsh 1999, 173). Even when voters do choose on the basis of party, Irish voters have tended to possess strong, lasting party loyalties and therefore fit the party identification model rather than an issue based model (Laver and Marsh 1999, 167). Even if Garry and Mansergh exaggerate when they state that "most of us have never even seen a party manifesto, let alone taken the time to sit down to actually read one" (Garry and Mansergh 1999, 82) the fact that two political scientists could declare this at the beginning of a chapter in which they analyse such manifestos in detail, indicates that even those who study them doubt their impact on the voters. In addition, the fact that all the major parties have been in government

in the last ten years means that the extent to which voters are voting on a single party's policy performance is somewhat limited. As Mair states "all parties are now coalitionable, and what is perhaps more important, all are now more or less capable of coalescing with all the others." (Mair 1999, 147)

These observations suggest that none of the assumptions of the responsible party model holds in the Irish context, so that TDs are not delegates to the voters through the mechanism of political parties and their policy pledges. However, TDs might still be party delegates, and in fact behavioural evidence suggests that this is likely to be the case. Party discipline is very strong in Ireland, and TDs vote against their party very rarely. Data for this was difficult to obtain even for the past ten years, as figures for votes against the whip do not appear to be recorded.[68] An approximate figure based on the data sections from selected volumes of *Irish Political Studies* (see Table 7.7), and discussions with experts on Irish politics is that between January 1993 and December 2001, twelve TDs have either voted or abstained on votes contrary to position mandated by the party whip. Nine of these renegades lost the party whip for a time as a result. Considering the number of votes that take place in the Dáil, an annual average of 95 between 1997 and 2000 (figures from the Public Relations Office of the Oireachtas), the level of Irish party discipline in voting is quite remarkable. In fact it can be estimated that over 99 per cent of Dáil votes are in line with the party whip[69]. Of those who voted against the party, about half were on issues of personal conscience, while the remainder were based on the effects of the proposed policy on their constituents.

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[68] I attempted to obtain figures from Dáil Éireann as well as the individual parties.

[69] If one assumes that there have been on average 95 votes per year and over 8 years only twelve votes have been against the whip out of a potential total of about 155 (taking account of pairs and non-whipped TDs).

**TABLE 7.4 TDs who lost the party whip/voted against the party whip 1993-2001.**

| Date of vote | Vote | TD(s) | Party | Issue | Category |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 June 1993 | Against party | Mary Flaherty Alan Shatter Brendan McGahon | Fine Gael | Hare coursing | Issue of conscience |
| 7 July 1993 | Against party | Tony Killeen Síle de Valera[70] | Fianna Fáil | Shannon airport | Constituency effect |
| 29 June 1994 | Abstained | Derek Mc Dowell, Róisín Shortall | Labour party | Aer Lingus | Constituency effect |
| 29 June 1994 | Against party | Tommy Broughan, Seán Ryan | Labour party | Aer Lingus | Constituency effect |
| 5 April 1995 | Abstained | Paddy Harte | Fine Gael | Abortion information | Issue of conscience |
| 3 October 1995 | Abstained | MJ Noonan | Fianna Fáil | Divorce | Issue of conscience |
| 10 February 1999 | Against party | Beverly Cooper-Flynn | Fianna Fáil | Censure of her father | Personal issue |

Of the 50 TDs I interviewed, only five had ever voted against their party. It must be noted however that four (eight per cent) of the interviewees were either Independent TDs, or members of parties where the whipping system did not apply, so that it is more accurate to state that 14 per cent of the interviewees where the whipping system applied had ever voted against the whip. This is a high degree of party discipline, even by European standards. Müller and Jenny (2000) report that of 183 Austrian MPs interviewed, 30 per cent claimed that they had voted against the party whip, and the authors deem this to be "evidence of a high degree of party

[70] Síle de Valera did not vote against her party as she was in the US on the day of the vote but she resigned the party whip due to her party's stance on the issue on the same day as Killeen and stated that she would have voted against the whip if she had been available.

cohesion" (Müller and Jenny 2000, 4). They claim that no country displays a higher degree of cohesion (Müller and Jenny 2000, 5) but my findings suggest that Ireland may in fact be more cohesive

Of the five Irish TDs who had voted against the whip, three of them claimed that their decision was based on local considerations, while for the other two, their vote was related to a point of personal principle. I also asked interviewees: "was there ever an occasion where you felt very strongly about an issue and your position was contrary to that mandated by the party whip?" Of those who responded, only two TDs (four per cent ) said that this had not occurred. Both of these were first term TDs.

Of those who said that they had disagreed with their party, 23 per cent of them gave an unsolicited example. Among the issues mentioned were pub licensing laws, extradition, neutrality, Northern Ireland policy, the closure of rural post offices, and contraception. I proceeded to ask those who stated disagreement with the party, how they had resolved the situation. Ninety per cent of those who responded mentioned lobbying their party front-bench, or speaking up at the parliamentary party meeting. As one Fine Gael backbencher stated:

> it could be that if the numbers game is very strongly stacked... they'd be forced to re-look (sic) the issue... If you can make a logical case, and if you can make in particular one which doesn't involve enormous amounts of additional expenditure, then you might be reasonably successful.

Of those who had mentioned specific issues, one third of them gave an example of how a proposed policy had been modified, and felt that their intervention at the parliamentary party meeting had influenced this.

Other options apart from lobbying were also mentioned to resolve the situation, for example, voting with the party but speaking against the party position on the floor of the Dáil. This option was mentioned by a Fine Gael Backbencher who said:

> If the party goes agin you, that's it but you still have the opportunity to raise these issues in the Dáil even though you mightn't agree with the opinion of the party so you vote with them yet raise your concerns about it. You're still free to do that.

These claims by individual TDs, that they can make a difference without actually voting against the party, is supported by other sources, although such information can be difficult to obtain, primarily due to the lack of information available on what happens at parliamentary party meetings. After an examination of backbench revolts in parliamentary parties during Irish coalition governments, Mitchell (1999, 279) concluded that:

> One of the surprises to emerge from the identification of the events that destabilised these coalitions (the 1981-82 and 1982-97 governments) was just how many of them were primarily revolts within the coalition's parliamentary parties.

He classified nearly half of the incidents that destabilised these governments as caused by intraparty conflict, and found that in 10 out of 14 of these instances, a renegotiation of the particular policy occurred.

An example of a recent situation where backbenchers were seen to have been influential in altering government policy is the O'Flaherty affair of 2000, where an appointee to an EU position was forced to withdraw due to backbench opposition (see Holland 2000; Brennock 2000a; Donohoe 2000a). Recent issues where backbench disquiet

was heavily publicised in the media included the issue of Partnership for Peace (Donohoe, 1999), policy on regionalisation for EU funding (Tynan 1998a, 1998b) and provisions in the Local Government Bill (O' Connor 2001). Former Government minister David Andrews (2000) has claimed that:

> The (parliamentary party) meetings provide backbenchers with a real say in the policy, and strategic direction of the parliamentary party ... all members are forthright in the defence of, and in advancing, the interests and views of their constituents and constituencies.

Other tactics in dealing with conflicts identified by TDs included mobilising groups outside the Dáil to write to their TDs. As one Fine Gael TD said:

> I learnt the hard way not to have flaming crusades of my own but to actually work and lobby people who you feel could be brought on board, and create a group of people who would support you when you brought it on board next time, and also to tell people outside who are interested in the same issue that they really must write in and write to their TDs, and the leaders of the parties, because that is the greatest influence in Ireland, because of the constituency competitiveness.

Another strategy mentioned by another Fine Gael TD was to request a pair, [71] a tactic he had used in the past on an issue of difficulty. He explained:

> I made my case on one or two occasions clear to the party whip and I said 'I wish to be excused. I don't wish to be asked to vote on this particular occasion' and I have done that ... I have kept faith with my own ideas and my own ideals and the party decided on one or two occasions to say 'okay. We'll let you off.'

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[71] This is where one party whip makes an arrangement with an opposing party whip that an equal number of TDs from each party can be excused from voting. This pairing of two non voters together means that the overall Dáil arithmetic is unaffected as obviously this arrangement is only made with whips on the opposite side of the house.

He conceded however that it was easier to gain party agreement in such situations when in opposition rather than government.

Individuals identified other factors which affected the extent to which they could deviate from party policy, such as whether TDs could return to their previous career if they failed to be re-nominated as an election candidate by their party. The size of the party and attitude of the leadership to dissent were also mentioned as influencing the degree to which an individual TD's objections would be taken on board by the party hierarchy. Two TDs argued that there should be a free vote on certain issues of conscience.

Others were more concerned with party discipline than ensuring their own views were reflected in party stances on issues. Twenty eight per cent of those asked about strategies in the case of disagreement with the party specifically talked about the importance of the party whip, and maintained very strongly that if persuasion at parliamentary party level failed, the only option was to vote with the party for the sake of democracy and stability. One first time Fianna Fáil TD argued:

> if the backbenchers of the government voted on every single issue that they didn't agree with, we'd be having an election once every three to four weeks. So I think sometimes you just have to swallow the pill and head for the lobbies even though you mightn't totally agree with it.

A Fine Gael backbencher made a similar point:

> When you are selected you sign a party pledge.... That's the system we have and you have to have a system which is based upon the majority views within the parliamentary party, otherwise parliament would break down and wouldn't work.

Former Minister Andrews (2000) also articulated this view stating that:

> for parliamentary democracies such as ours to operate effectively, political parties must be relatively disciplined...Without the whipping system... governments would lack stability, uncertain of their parliamentary majorities.

Such concerns are reflected by the party pledge which election candidates for the three major parties, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Labour party must sign. These pledges vary slightly in content but contain some form of words which commits the candidate to abiding by majority party decisions and voting with the party. For example, the Fine Gael party pledge states:

> I undertake ... to abide by all majority decisions of the Parliamentary Party, to sit, act and vote in Dáil Éireann and in any of the Committees/ Sub Committees as a member of the Fine Gael Parliamentary Party.

TDs appear to take such obligations seriously - two thirds of TDs interviewed were able to rule out the possibility of ever voting against the whip when asked directly could they ever imagine doing so.

Those I interviewed who had broken with party discipline and voted against the party whip justified their action on the grounds that there were some constituency issues that were more important than party loyalty.

One such TD stated:

> I would ultimately do what's in the interest of my constituency... their interest would come first you know.

Overall, these findings indicate that allegiance to the principle of the will of the party majority is very strongly ingrained in Irish TDs. Not only have very few of them actually voted against the party whip, most of them would find it normatively undesirable that they would have the freedom to do so on most issues, believing that the whip is a facilitator of rather than a barrier to democracy. However, justifications for party discipline and loyalty were not explicitly based on the idea that discipline in supporting party policy was necessary to pursue the policies voted for by the electorate. More commonly mentioned was the importance of democracy within the party and the necessity for government stability.

## 7.4 Conclusion

Findings from this chapter suggest that Irish TDs are similar to Hong Kong TDs in considering themselves to be trustees. The data suggests most TDs consider their constituents' views when making decisions but are not politicos like the Dutch and German MPs described earlier. Similar to Danish and Swedish MPs, they are trustees in relation to their constituency and delegates in relation to their party.

Many TDs were uncomfortable at the idea of representing policy opinions of their constituency. In addition, it is possible that the Irish electorate do not tend to seek to influence their TDs on policy issues as much as in other countries except where specific local interests are at stake. As one interviewee stated:

> I would find that ninety nine per cent of my communication with the public is on their own one problem, that we have very simply little debate on where legislative changes are needed.

If this is true, it suggests that TDs simply do not see constituency representation involving the stance of their constituents on policy areas but rather raising local issues where appropriate and dealing with case-work. This is captured by one former minister who said:

> I see it as a straightforward issue of both individual representation of those who approach me about various issues, community based and so on and secondly to have a national perspective on policy through a national party.

Ireland is similar to most other European states in that party discipline and loyalty is very strong. When it comes to the most important decisional activities such as voting, the party affiliation variable is by far the most important. On very rare occasions, a small group of TDs might consider the option of voting against their party. This might be either because a policy is expected to impact detrimentally on their constituency or, even more rarely, because it conflicts with their personal sense of morality.

Other less publicised activities can be used to try to modify party policy on an issue and examples of situations where such tactics were successful have been cited. Evidence for this from the interviews is supported by other sources. Before deciding where they stand on an issue however, TDs have to weigh up their own view against that of their constituents and voters. Data aggregated from the closed questions suggests that for at least half of TDs their own view dominates over that of the voters in deciding on an issue. For about a quarter, it depends on the issue, while a small number prioritise the constituency view. However, the qualitative data indicates that decision-making is not necessarily based on one criteria or the other. Most TDs consider the views of their constituents together with their personal views to some degree, and

the ultimate stance taken tends to be based on some form of reconciliation of the two. Overall when it comes to their official position on an issue (represented by their votes), members of government parties vote with the government and members of the opposition vote against it according to an adversarial model of politics. This indicates that institutional rather than role-based variables are more influential in predicting the most significant elements of parliamentary behaviour.

The validity of this preliminary conclusion will be further assessed in the next two chapters dealing with representational focus and the extent to which role types predict behaviour.

# CHAPTER 8: REPRESENTATIONAL FOCUS AND POLITICAL GOALS

## 8.1 Introduction

The central issue examined in the last chapter was the extent to which TDs are autonomous in acting for those that they represent, and in particular, whether they should be viewed as trustees or delegates in relation to the represented, and their political party. The assumption behind the previous sentence is that there is a homogenous group that constitutes 'the represented.' A group exists that is called the electorate, comprising those that are eligible to participate in the election of representatives, and in the broadest sense, the TDs that are the subject of this dissertation are charged with representing this electorate, as well as those ineligible to vote. However, when one examines more carefully the organisation of the Irish political system, and the sub-groups that exist within the electorate, it is clear that the representative relationship does not consist merely of a simple interaction between a TD and his or her electorate. In this chapter the various representational foci of an Irish TD will be identified, their varying degrees of significance assessed, and the extent to which TDs differ in this regard examined. Overall findings indicate that, as expected, local or constituency representation is an important focus. Representation of the nation as whole is also a relevant focus for many TDs, but party and interest group representation seems less significant. In addition, TDs are motivated by other goals and attitudes which must be explored, in order to understand more fully the operation of Irish representation. These are affected by, and influence in turn, the relative importance of the potential representational foci that exist for Irish TDs.

Ireland is divided into 41 constituencies, so that each TD is elected from one of these geographical entities. At constituency level, it is common practice

for TDs to have a particularly strong base within their own local area of the constituency, sometimes termed a *bailiwick*. The area that a TD comes from is the main component that parties consider in striving to achieve a balanced ticket, when they have more than one candidate running in a constituency (see Galligan 1999, 64-65; Carty 1983, 121-124, 136). This is particularly the case when a constituency consists of two counties.[72] In addition, parties often adopt vote-management strategies, instructing party voters in one section of the constituency to give their first preferences to one party candidate, and another area to give their first preferences to their running mate(s).[73] Such tactics are most common when a constituency contains a popular and high profile candidate, (often a Minister or former Minister), who is electorally secure and generous enough to co-operate with such an exercise. It is a possibility therefore that TDs might prioritise constituency representation at the level of their bailiwick, rather than for the whole constituency.

Another issue for investigation is whether TDs are more conscious of representing their voters within the constituency, rather than any particular area (although these are likely to coincide to a large degree). This matters because a TD whose chief concern was to promote the whole constituency, or an area therein, is likely to prioritise pork-barrelling activities, such as lobbying for increased spending and resources for their area (allocation responsiveness). A TD whose main goal was to represent his or her own specific voters could be expected to concentrate on case-work by responding to individual grievances and mediating between individuals, local authorities and central government (service responsiveness). Such an

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[72] There are such constituencies currently: Longford-Roscommon, Cavan-Monaghan, Laois- Offaly, Carlow-Kilkenny, and Sligo-Leitrim.

[73] This can be a risky strategy. For example in 1989, former Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald came close to losing his seat in Dublin South-East after requesting supporters to vote for Joe Doyle his running mate. In the event the strategy was successful and Fine Gael won two seats in the constituency, a feat they have not achieved since.

individual could also be expected however to engage in some degree of pork-barrel activity.

Many references have already been made, particularly in the previous chapter, to party discipline, and the extent to which TDs vote with their parliamentary party. Most TDs are first selected by a political party, and then elected as candidate for that particular party. It is everyday parlance to describe a TD as a Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael representative. Party representation is therefore another representative focus which must be examined. It is not immediately obvious however what is meant when an individual is described as a party representative. Does this denote someone who aims to represent the ideology or policy of the party, the members of the party or the party voters? If TDs regard themselves as policy or ideological representatives, did they base their choice of party on these ideological beliefs or policy priorities? Alternatively, did party identification come first followed by an adherence to, or belief in, the policies or ideologies associated with that party?

Finally, it is possible that TDs might act and believe in theories of microcosmic representation that were described in Chapter 4. In this case, TDs would associate representation with identity or experiences –for example, female TDs might feel a responsibility to speak for and represent women, or farmers might view themselves as representatives of the farming community. Younger TDs might identify themselves as youth representatives.

Many possible answers exist to the question of whom TDs represent or what constitutes their representational focus, and it is unlikely that all TDs will prioritise the same focus. As most are both party and constituency representatives, it is doubtful that they can consistently pursue one of these at the expense of the other. Although individual TDs might be more

oriented to one focus over others, competing normative and institutional demands are likely to result in multiple foci for all TDs. One question that will therefore be investigated is whether there is one primary loyalty which can be identified for each TD. In addition, the number and nature of TDs' representative foci will be assessed. Furthermore, there exists the question of what causes or influences these different foci. Empirical evidence exists in relation to such questions for other countries, and some of these findings will be outlined in the next section of this chapter, before using my data to explore representational foci in the Irish case.

## 8.2 Comparative Empirical Research

Representational focus has been investigated in many different political contexts and it is useful to outline some international findings in order to investigate the extent to which Ireland is similar or different to other countries. In summary, the main conclusion will be that Ireland is more like some countries than others. Constituency representation varies in significance from state to state but even when important it tends to be second or third choice after national or party representation. Overall, a party focus is an important one for most MPs - in some systems this is the party organisation, in others party voters are more important, while in some research it is not clearly defined as to whether party means party voters in the constituency, party voters at a national level, party members or the party organisation. It would seem important to differentiate between these concepts and I have done so as far as possible in my questions to TDs. Before outlining the Irish results however, I will briefly review findings on representational focus from other countries as referred to above.

Wahlke *et al.* divide representational foci into three categories; those related to the district (areal roles), those related to interests (pressure-group roles), and those related to party. They found three different types of areal roles -

district oriented, state oriented, and district-state oriented, and identified different functions that their legislators performed for their constituents, which they subdivided into errand-boy functions, communication functions and mentor functions (Wahlke *et al.*, 1963, 305). Of various interest groups, those related to business were most important for the US state legislators interviewed by Wahlke and his colleagues. These subjects were classified according to whether they were facilitators, resisters or neutrals in relation to their orientation towards pressure groups (Wahlke *et al.* 1963, 325). Their distinction in orientation to party roles between *party man* (who voted with his party) and *independent, maverick or nonpartisan,* are not particularly meaningful in the Irish case given the strong, stable, party loyalties described in Chapter 7.

For the Swedish case, Esaiasson and Holmberg (1996, 60) found that as regards representational focus:

> MPs are elected to represent various interests and ... their conduct is organised in accordance with their views of which interests are important to represent. These job definitions are stable not static; at any given time in the course of a career, a representative considers himself or herself a champion of a finite number of interests.

They identified four representational foci: territorial interests, functional interests, private individuals and the political party. The nation is assumed to be the dominant focus, and was not analysed in terms of its relative importance compared with other potential foci (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 62).[74] Therefore, when Swedish MPs were presented with nine categories (none of which was the nation), and asked to rate the importance of each, it was found that on average, Riksdag members saw themselves as a particular champion of three interests. Party was the most common,

[74] This is arguably an under-estimation of the potential for conflict between the national and local interest and these will be compared along with other foci in the Irish case.

followed by individual voters and their own district (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 63-64).

Two aspects of role are goals and attitudes, but a crucial question in relation to representational focus is to what extent various foci influence behaviour. Through an analysis of bills introduced, oral questions asked and the MPs' reports of formal and informal contacts with ministers and advocates of interests, Esaiasson and Holmberg found that for the Swedish case, the connection varied in strength depending on the focus concerned. An orientation towards the foci of wage earners and women were the most significant in predicting MP's behaviour (Esaiasson and Holmberg, 1996, 66-67).

For Norwegian MPs, party is an inevitable representational focus if they are to secure selection on behalf of their party. This is reflected in results of a 1985 survey reported by Matthews and Valen, where Norwegian MPs were asked "do you consider yourself, first and foremost, as a spokesperson for your party or your district?" Sixty per cent of members said their party, five per cent said their district, and 35 per cent said both (Matthews and Valen 1999, 154). Although party was the dominant focus, more than 70 per cent of MPs claimed to be spokespersons for specific interests, ideas or demands within the party (Matthews and Valen 1999, 154). In particular, over 50 per cent of respondents said that they spoke for a social or economic group, with women being the most commonly mentioned. About one third of MPs included their district or a locality as a focus pursued within the party, and about a quarter mentioned an ideal or policy position. More than 80 per cent of those interviewed believed that they were selected as a party candidate because they represented a geographical area or a social or economic group. Those from isolated and rural areas were more likely to be district oriented, as were MPs who were formerly lower status workers.

Finally, senior party members were more likely to be party oriented than new MPs (Matthews and Valen 1999, 155-156).

For Hong Kong, Cheek-Milby reports that the preferred representational focus of Legislative Council members depends on their method of selection (Cheek-Milby 1995, 200). One-third of directly elected members, and nearly 40 per cent of functional constituency members prioritise the interests of their constituency, even if this is in opposition to the view or interests of the Hong Kong people. Attitudes to interest groups in 1993 were also influenced by the means by which councillors were selected: directly elected members were most likely to be facilitators (71 per cent were classified in this category), compared with 20 per cent of appointed members, and 47 per cent of functional constituency members. This signified a more negative attitude to interest groups over time as they became more powerful in Hong Kong – five years before, in 1988, 71 per cent of appointed members had been facilitators (Cheek-Milby 1995, 214).

For the Spanish case, using 1997 data, Méndez-Lago and Martínez found that most MPs (42 per cent) claimed that to represent all Spaniards was their priority, while 28 per cent chose all the voters in their constituency as their preferred option, and just over 15 per cent said that they represented all voters of their party (Méndez-Lago and Martínez 1999, 8). Other options offered were the political party (chosen by about nine per cent), and a specific social group (selected by only about one per cent of respondents). Local or regional representation was shown to be more prevalent than party representation among Spanish MPs. Ninety per cent stated that 'representing the interests of the province/region' was their most important task. The second-most common choice was 'solving the problems of the country', chosen by about 89 per cent while 'defending the interests of the party' was only chosen by about 65 per cent (Méndez-Lago and Martínez 1999, 9). A large majority of MPs (nearly 91 per cent) claimed that voters

in their constituencies influenced their decisions, compared with about 82 per cent attributing influence to the party leaders, around 79 per cent influenced by party voters and only 23 per cent stated that their decisions were affected by interest groups (Méndez-Lago and Martínez 1999, 11). They found that party affiliation was an important variable in predicting representational focus.

Data collected between 1972 and 1990 in the Netherlands suggests that the option of 'all voters' was the most important focus for Dutch MPs in 1972 but that in both 1979 and 1990, this came second to an MP's own voters or party. When the nature of party representation was investigated further in 1990, it was found that 63 per cent of MPs prioritised the representation of voters of their particular party, compared with 32 per cent who mentioned all voters, and only five per cent who chose the members of their party. Representing a region was mentioned by a small group in 1972, but was not referred to in either 1979 or 1990. Representing specific views was more important (this accounted for six per cent out of 27 per cent who mentioned representational tasks in 1990) than representing a specific group, region or category (mentioned by 4 per cent out of 27 per cent) (Andeweg, 1996, 111). Andeweg suggests that the Dutch electoral system, which is based on a national list system, was the reason that regional representation was not significant for Dutch MPs (Andeweg 1996, 111).

Damgaard (1997, 82) found that Danish MPs were most likely to describe their party as the primary representational focus (47 per cent of respondents to a questionnaire chose this option) compared with 44 per cent who considered themselves as representatives of both district and party with 9 per cent giving priority to their district. He also found that interest groups were an important focus for Danish MPs (Damgaard 1997, 83).

For Norway, Heidar (1997, 101-102) constructs a scale ranging from 3 for (MPs who were district focused) to 8 (for those that were nationally focussed). According to this scale, 48 per cent were at a district oriented point on the scale, 36 per cent were at a mixed position while 17 per cent were at a national position of six to eight. However, Storting members were not directly asked to choose between the two options, and to some degree, the scale was designed so as to increase the likelihood of MPs being at a district-oriented position.

Through analysing questionnaire data for Belgium, de Winter (1997, 133-135) found that when asked to indicate up to three foci of representation out of 12, constituents was mentioned by 47 per cent followed by socio-economic categories referred to by 42 per cent. Two categories - national party voters and constituency party voters - were chosen as preferred foci by 34 per cent. Socio-demographic categories were mentioned by only 12 per cent.

The 1994 parallel study of MEPs and MNPs already referred to in Chapter 7 also explored representational focus. On average, compared with options such as lobbyists, public opinion and the media, MNPs were most likely to take ordinary citizens into account when taking decisions, followed by their party leader, and organised groups (Katz 1999, 68). They were also asked to rate (by ranking each between 1 and 7) the importance of representing all the people in their country, their party voters, the people in their constituency, their party and a specific group in society. On average, MPs rated all the people in the constituency highest (64.3 per cent ranked this either 6 or 7 where 7 was high). However, 'all people in the country', 'all the party voters,' and 'the national party' all received ratings of 6 and 7 from above 60 per cent of respondents. Irish TDs in this study rated the constituency as more important than the EU average – nearly 81 per cent of TDs rated it 6 or 7 in importance. This was in comparison with high ratings

from 61 per cent for 'all people in Ireland', 54 per cent for 'all party voters', 64 per cent for 'the national party' and 54 per cent for 'a specific group in society' (WZB Dataset 1997, 155-160). This last data provides initial confirmation for the hypothesis that the locality will be the most significant focus for Irish TDs.

These pieces of empirical research suggest that internationally, MPs' preferred representational focus varies, depending on the institutional context, and variables such as party affiliation. Overall, party representation is important for MPs, but this is representation of party voters, rather than members, or the party hierarchy. In addition, the extent to which region or geographical representation is important depends on the electoral system used. Interest groups and the representational of social groups (such as women) seem to be relatively unimportant representational foci. Much of this evidence is based on investigations of the goals and attitudes of MPs, and the extent to which these various representational foci might predict behaviour is rather limited. It can be expected that Ireland will conform to international patterns in some regards, for example the importance of voters as a representational focus. However, it is also likely that given the findings detailed above, regional or geographical representation will be rather more important for my TD sample than for MPs in many other jurisdictions. These hypotheses will now be tested in the next section, through an examination of my own Irish data.

## 8.3 Irish Representational Focus

Some questions from the interviews and surveys were designed specifically to explore the representational focus of Irish TDs. However, responses to questions related to goals and motivations also revealed additional insights into the different interests and groups that TDs seek to represent. They also indicate the extent to which representation of certain foci, rather than

personal ambitions, was a factor influencing TDs' entry into politics. This latter point is also interesting because it tests the extent to which TDs motivations can be explained by rational choice theories of politics based on self-interest, rather than by more altruistic or political goals.

The first direct information on representational focus comes from a question which was included in both the interviews and surveys where respondents were asked "which of these is most important to you? (i) To be a representative of the members of your party (ii) To be a representative of the voters who voted for you (iii) To be a representative of all voters." Three representative foci were being compared here: party members, the TD's own voters[75] and all voters. When constructing the question, the option 'all voters' was intended to be equivalent to the nation as a whole since I considered it a mistake to assume, as Esaiasson and Holmberg did, that the nation was unquestionably the dominant interest in the minds of MPs. However, some issues surrounding the interpretation of the wording of this option emerged and will be outlined presently.

An initial analysis of responses showed 'all voters' to be the most popular focus with an average of 65 per cent of TDs choosing this option (see Table 8.1). Although this is a substantial figure it is not as great as would be expected if Esaiasson and Holmberg's (1996, 62) claim were true that:

> the norm that national interests come first is so well-established in most European parliaments that scholars consider it meaningless to probe parliamentary representatives on this matter.

Almost one fifth of respondents chose their voters as the most important focus. The least popular focus was 'the members of the party,' indicating that the strong behavioural orientation to party noted in the last chapter is not based on loyalty to members. None of the survey respondents ranked this option first, although two of them who chose more than one option

[75] This might incorporate clienteles of the individual TD as well as party voters.

ranked both 'the members of the party' and 'all voters' as their preferred foci. Whether this response is likely to be based on the fact that they consider both equally in making decisions, or allocate their time equally between activities associated with the party and the nation, may become clearer from an analysis of the qualitative data that emerged in response to this question.

**TABLE 8.1 Which of three representational foci is most important?**

| Representational Focus | Interview % | Survey % | Both % |
|---|---|---|---|
| **To be a representative of the party members.** | 10 | 0 | 5.6 |
| **To be a representative of the voters who voted for him/her.** | 16 | 23 | 19.1 |
| **To be a representative of all voters.** | 60 | 72 | 65.2 |
| **More than 1 option selected.** | 6 | 5 | 5.6 |
| **None/No Response** | 8 | 0 | 4.5 |
| **Total** | 100 n=50 | 100 n=39 | 100 n=89 |

The extent to which variables of constituency type, gender, and party might influence choice of focus was also tested using difference of proportion tests. As can be seen from Table 8.2 below, the only variables found to be significant were constituency type and one party variable.

**Table 8.2: Choice of all voters as focus by various social and political variables**

| Variable | % | p |
|---|---|---|
| Men | 71.6 | |
| Women | 81.8 | 0.4866 |
| Urban | 62.2 | |
| Rural | 84.8 | **0.0258** |
| FF | 83.3 | 0.0852 |
| FG | 76.6 | 0.4436 |
| Lab | 54.5 | 0.2252 |
| PD | 100.0 | 0.0645 |
| Oth | 0.0 | **0.0002** |

TDs offered various different reasons and explanations for choosing all voters as their most important representational focus. An analysis of these qualitative responses suggested that some TDs did not interpret the choice 'all voters' as intended.

For example, this former Fine Gael minister who chose 'all voters' stated:

> It's very hard to distinguish the others sometimes. All voters. I think once the election is over you have to work on the basis that you are representing the whole community. There's no other way of working it.

Three of his Dáil colleagues, who also favoured representing all voters, claimed that it was impossible to know how, and whether, people vote which ruled out the possibility of representing only the voters that voted for them. A Fianna Fáil TD from Dublin argued:

> You are there to represent the constituency and obviously you would represent your own electorate and your own voters, but you wouldn't always know whether they ever voted for you or not.

A Labour party TD also from Dublin stated:

> I have a lot of people that I try to represent who actually don't vote.

From these last three quotes, it is unclear whether respondents understood 'all voters' to mean the nation as a whole or whether they interpreted it to mean 'all voters from their constituency.'

Some of their colleagues did however interpret the question as intended. For example a Fine Gael TD from Dublin stated:

> I do think it's vitally important that we do what's in the common good. That's without diminishing in any way the rights of constituents to make representations which is a major part of my job.

A former Fianna Fáil minister agreed when he responded:

> Represent all voters. You are familiar, you would be familiar as a party member, knowing what the party policies are in various areas so naturally you would be pursuing those but at the end of the day it's for the general good of everybody that you take decisions and represent people.

There was no apparent confusion surrounding the other options. A Labour party TD who chose the 'voters who voted for him' reacted to the question by stating:

> the interests of the voters who voted for me, and the interest of all voters probably would be very close, so I would say probably the voters who voted for me.

A third Dublin TD also claimed that he represented, above all, the voters who voted for him but qualified this somewhat:

> I would put the views of the party, and people would vote for me on that basis so they're very much intertwined.

Those who selected the option of the party members justified their stance on varying grounds. The most direct response came from a rural Fianna Fáil TD who stated:

> by representing your party, you also represent the voters who vote for you. Those who don't vote for you have to accept that they can't have the same pull as those who vote for you.

His Fianna Fáil colleague, also a rural backbencher was similarly pragmatic:

> Well I'd certainly like to represent all voters but one has to be practical here and realise that you're not going to please all of the people all of the time. Primarily I would say that I would represent the party interest, because the party interest would be my interest....You can't represent them all... That's the idea behind party... You have divergence of opinions, all shades of political opinions.

A former Fine Gael backbencher also chose party members, again on practical rather than ideological grounds:

> Unless you have a stream-lined disciplined party system and unless you understand that, and are a team-player, you really won't succeed. So in that context, the party, it's not that the party over-rides everything else, but to make things happen, you do it more successfully through a party than any other way.

However some TDs rejected all options on the basis that each of them was impossible to achieve. A young rural Fianna Fáil backbencher argued:

> How could you possibly even attempt to do any of the three, how would you represent all those who voted for you? If you get eight thousand votes, each of the eight thousand people who voted for you have a different idea about why they voted for you. Your own party, especially ours has such a diverse view on most things. ... You are going to have to make up your mind on sound judgement or whatever.

An overall assessment of responses to this question suggests that TDs' choice of focus is primarily based on pragmatism, rather than on norms or theories of representation. This corresponds to similar findings in Chapters 6 and 7. In Chapter 6 for example, it was found that TDs' views on democracy were not patterned according to a formalist – populist dimension but varied from issue to issue. In Chapter 7, the data suggested that TDs were strongly oriented to their party because of a desire for political stability, rather than a belief in the ideology behind the party or the issue of their accountability to the voters. The main point however emerging from responses to this question was a certain ambiguity in interpreting what 65 % of TDs meant when they chose the option of 'all voters.' Did this indicate for the most part a preference for the nation as a whole as a representational focus or did TDs mean to indicate the importance of the constituency as a whole? Since not all TDs who chose this response elaborated on their answer, the best way of investigating this issue further is to examine responses to a further closed question put to the interviewees where both options were clearly specified as foci.

This question took the form of a list of various representational foci presented to interviewees, and which they were asked to rank in order between one and six.[76] The options were as follows: "all people in Ireland (the nation as a whole)", "all voters who voted for your party nation-wide," "all those who voted for you in your constituency," "all the people in your constituency," "a specific group in society. Which one?" and "the members and activists of your party" (see Table 8.3). From this range of choices, 'the people of the constituency' was ranked as the favoured option by nearly 44 per cent of respondents, and nearly 80 per cent ranked it either first or second. The option of 'the nation as a whole' was the second-most popular option, selected as the most important focus by one third of respondents and

[76] This was one of the last questions in the interview guide so that I did not have the time to ask all TDs in person. I included it however in the supplementary questionnaire which I sent out on 17th May 2,000 and out of the 30 responses, ten were received by this means.

ranked as either one or two by 60 per cent of interviewees. By comparison, party members and activists were not seen as important, and neither were specific groups in society.

Responses to this question confirm that a number of TDs who chose 'all voters' in response to the previous question on representational focus might indeed have intended to indicate a preference for all voters in their constituency. 'All people in Ireland (the nation as a whole)' was most important for one third of respondents substantially less than what one might expect from the predictions of Esaiasson and Holmberg although it was ranked first or second by sixty per cent of interview respondents.

**TABLE 8.3 Interviewees ranking of representational focus between one (most important) and six (least important).**

| Response option | 1 % | 2 % | 3 % | 4 % | 5 % | 6 % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All people in Ireland (the nation as a whole) | 33.3 | 26.7 | 3.3 | 16.7 | 13.3 | 6.7 |
| All voters who voted for your party nation-wide | 3.3 | 6.7 | 30.0 | 30.0 | 16.7 | 13.3 |
| All those who voted for you in your constituency | 13.3 | 16.7 | 30.0 | 23.3 | 10.0 | 6.7 |
| All the people in your constituency | 43.3 | 33.3 | 6.7 | 10.0 | 6.7 | 0 |
| A specific group in society. | 6.7 | 6.7 | 23.3 | 6.7 | 16.7 | 40 |
| The members and activists of your party | 0 | 10.0 | 6.7 | 13.3 | 36.7 | 33.3 |
| Total | 99.9 n=30 | 100.1 n=30 | 100 n=30 | 100 n=30 | 100.1 n=30 | 100 n=30 |

Variables such as party, gender, and constituency type were not found to be correlated significantly with TDs' ranking, apart from the case of Fine Gael membership – TDs from this party were more likely to rank 'all the people in your constituency' as number one than TDs from other parties ($p=0.02$).

Survey respondents were asked a different question, where they were asked to rate the relative importance of representing the interests of the nation as a whole, the constituency/ local area and to promote a particular ideology or policy programme. Forty four per cent of respondents chose the representation of the constituency as their first priority, compared with 41 per cent who chose the representation of the interests of the nation, and 19 per cent who chose the promotion of a particular ideology or policy programme again indicating the popularity of constituency over national representation.

These figures support the hypothesis suggested at the beginning of the chapter, that Irish TDs were likely to be more strongly oriented to local or regional representation than MPs in other political systems. National representation was however more important than interest groups, party or policy representation. In this regard, Irish TDs conform to international patterns where the party organisation and interest groups have been shown to be less significant for MPs than other foci.

Although these direct questions on representational focus have provided a clear indication of the importance for Irish TDs of various groups and interests, it is also useful to confirm such findings by assessing data from other sections of the interview. This indicates the reliability of results obtained from previous measures, where TDs may have been more aware of the social desirability of ranking various foci above others. In addition, it is interesting to investigate whether representational foci were mentioned spontaneously in response to open-ended questions. I will therefore examine some interview data in relation to TDs' goals and motivations to assess the extent to which goals, such as the representation of the national interest or the constituency, were significant in influencing TDs to enter politics.

## 8.4 The Relationship Between Goals, Attitudes and Representational Focus.

One of the first open-ended questions that TDs were asked during their interview was "when you entered politics, what was the main thing you hoped to achieve?" Responses tended to relate to a particular representational focus, or occasionally even more than one focus. They were analysed qualitatively and coded into five categories: "Work in the interests of the nation,"[77] "Promote the interests of the local area," "Promote an ideology/ set of values,"[78] "Address specific areas of national policy" and "Other/no response."

As can be seen in Table 8.4, the importance of the locality as a representational focus is confirmed by examining TDs' motivations. Twenty six per cent mentioned promoting the interest of the local area as the principal goal that they sought to achieve. The second most popular goal was to promote an ideology or set of values which was mentioned by 24 per cent of respondents. That, together with the option of addressing specific areas of national policy, was mentioned by 42 per cent of respondents indicating that representational goals were not as significant as ideals or policy priorities in motivating TDs to enter politics.

**TABLE 8.4: What interviewees hoped to achieve when they entered politics**

| CATEGORY | % |
|---|---|
| Promote the interests of the local area | 26 |
| Promote an ideology/ set of values | 24 |
| Address specific areas of national policy | 18 |
| Work in the interests of the nation | 10 |
| Other/no response | 22 |
| Total | 100 n=50 |

[77] This was referred to in general terms. Anyone who referred to specific policy was classed in the code relating to specific areas of national policy.
[78] For example socialism, feminism, ecology, equality.

Again, the extent to which constituency type, gender or party might influence TDs' goals was tested using difference of proportion tests. It was found that rural TDs were significantly more likely than urban TDs to mention promotion of the interests of the local area ($p=0.0023$), as were Fianna Fáil members ($p<0.001$). Fine Gael TDs were significantly less likely than TDs of other parties to mention this goal ($p=0.04$). Women were significantly more likely to mention the promotion of an ideology or set of values ($p=0.04$), as were urban TDs ($p=0.002$) and Labour party TDs ($p=0.01$).

The extent to which TDs' motivations are consistent with their previous responses in relation to representational foci can be examined by comparing responses to this question with a previous question where TDs were asked to rank various representative foci in order of importance. It could be expected that TDs whose goal in entering politics was to work in the interests of the nation might be expected to have ranked the nation as their most important representational focus. Similarly, those who began their political career with the aim of promoting the interests of their local area would be anticipated to choose either 'constituency voters' or 'all the constituency' as their preferred focus. However, this was not the case (see Table 8.5). None of those who entered politics to work in the interests of the nation chose the nation as their preferred representational focus, and only a quarter of those who were motivated to enter political life by local considerations ranked the local area or their constituency voters as their priority in response to the representational focus question. In addition, as already reported, TDs from the Fine Gael party were significantly less likely than those of other parties to mention local promotion as a goal, yet significantly more likely to rank the constituency the most important focus.

**TABLE 8.5 TDs' goal on entering politics by their preferred representational focus.**

| Goal | Focus | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Nation | Local area/voters | Other | Total % | n |
| **Nation** | 0 | 80.0 | 20.0 | 100 | 5 |
| **Local area** | 33.3 | 25.0 | 41.7 | 100 | 12 |
| **Ideology** | 7.7 | 53.9 | 38.5 | 100.1 | 13 |
| **Policy** | 33.3 | 22.2 | 44.4 | 99.9 | 9 |
| **Total** | 20.5 | 41.0 | 38.5 | 100 | 39* |

* Those who were classified as no response or other in Table 8.3 were omitted for the purpose of this analysis.

This inconsistency might be explained by TDs' goals changing as they became more politically experienced. For example, one of the interviewees had held several high profile ministries, and this was reflected in the fact that he chose the nation as his preferred representational focus. However, his description of his entry into politics was as follows:

> I was convinced by friends and colleagues that there was a job of work to be done for the constituency... I felt that I wouldn't have the time but they convinced me that .. politics was a part-time job.... A year and a half after that I was offered a ministry... the big decision ... was would I take a ministry or would I not because if I did then it was full-time politics.

For others, the situation can be the reverse – ambitious, national level goals are found to be unachievable for various reasons. Another interviewee began his political career with the aim of working in the interests of the

nation but chose the constituency as his preferred representational focus. He stated:

> When I hear people say 'Well I entered public life because I wanted to change the world,' I smile to myself because I know what stupid idiots they must have been, because the people who intend to change the world ... have no experience.

I have highlighted in previous chapters examples of TDs providing contradictory answers to different questions. It is possible that the inconsistencies highlighted in the Table above might have come about because they were providing me with the answers that they considered that I wanted to hear for both questions, and their predictions of my preferred answer happened to be contradictory. Alternatively TDs' goals and attitudes might be as conflicting as the responses suggest. An exploration of TDs' explanations of their goals highlights the type of aspirations that were coded in each category, and gives further insight into likely reasons for the incompatibility in responses.

**(i) <u>Working in the Interests of the Nation</u>.**

One former junior Minister representing Fine Gael described his motivations as follows:

> I was interested in public affairs from a very young age ... I had a vague notion that I could do something for the country.

A first time Fianna Fáil TD was also placed in this group. He stated

> I want to take part in making things better for people and developing and being part of a country that is developing and introducing policies and legislation which will greatly enhance the citizens of this country.

Both of these responses were classified in the first category as working in the interest of the nation.

**(ii) Promoting the Interests of the Local Area.**

A backbench Fine Gael TDs from outside Dublin was classed in this second category as promoting the interests of the local area. He said:

> It's obviously to serve the local community and all. That might sound trite and corny but, I mean, a lot of people do have that kind of commitment to local issues.

A backbench Fianna Fáil TD gave examples of various local issues he had been involved in and then stated:

> I felt very strongly that national policies being pursued by the party didn't reflect the needs of a lot of rural areas, and that some of what was happening was doing as much damage to Dublin if not more than it was doing to Connemara or whatever.

A very similar point was expressed by a party colleague also from outside Dublin:

> I think that if there was one thing that I do succeed in, however long I am in the Dáil, that I will maintain the fabric of rural Ireland in some way.

A Dublin TD stated:

> it was logical to get a stronger mandate, to get a stronger platform to get greater credibility for the community activities that I was involved in.

Another Dublin TD representing Fianna Fáil made the same point:

> I wanted to make a contribution to developing my own community which was just a new community and growing rapidly.

**(iii) Promoting an Ideology/Set of Values.**

The wide range of ideological aspirations mentioned by TDs was one of the most interesting aspects of the responses to this question. Various different ideologies and aspirations were mentioned. One TD spoke about promoting environmentalism saying:

> I had a growing and abiding interest in various areas to do with wild-life conservation and global matters... I was very aware of the earth being a finite entity so to speak, and could see that there was ... growing consumption of finite resources and so forth, so I was looking for hints in political parties of this awareness, and I was very disappointed... the strongest way of bringing about change is to take votes away from those who have power.

A Fine Gael TD also mentioned ideology saying:

> the basic philosophy that fits in with my view of life and I felt the society should be administered and governed was the ...Christian Democratic values, which take the best of the liberal economic model, and the best of the social democratic model, and fuse it in a view of the world which is based on maximising opportunity for every-one, while at the same time rewarding those who work harder.

A party colleague gave a similarly ideological response:

> I was very interested in social justice. We were very keen on free universal education, free health schemes, proper social-welfare schemes, anti-poverty programmes, all that agenda. I suppose I started off as a Social Democrat, whatever I am now.

A Labour party TD described herself as a Socialist:

Essentially what I'm interested in and what I'm representing is the movement towards equality for all people regardless of colour, religion, sex, anything that they are, and we live in a very unequal society.

In fact, equality was mentioned by many TDs particularly those from the Labour party. A Dublin Labour TD stated:

> before I was elected my main concern was inequality in Irish society... that's still my prime motivation being in politics to improve the way we run our society.

Another Dublin Labour party TD made a similar comment:

> I suppose I believe in a more egalitarian society, and that would have been the fundamental.

A third TD in this category stated:

> my sort of abiding or kind of underlying motivation was the inequalities in Irish society, poverty in particular, doing, trying to resolve that issue.

The goals of feminism were mentioned by two of the female TDs interviewed, one of whom stated that her ambitions were:

> firstly to ensure that women's issues became political issues, and central issues... also the fact that I was feminist and proud of it, and felt that there was something that women should fight to uphold, you know men were allowed to be Socialist or whatever, but women were actually very intimidated regarding feminism, which is actually a philosophy.

An interesting feature of TDs in this category is that, as can be seen in Table 8.5, the preferred representational focus of the majority who were in this category, was either their voters in the constituency or the constituency as a whole, despite the fact that it could have been expected that they would select their party members or groups in society such as women or the working class. A possible explanation for this is that, similar to individuals mentioned earlier, their ideals were harder to achieve than originally envisaged, or over time they became more pragmatic, or broadened or changed their interests through political experience.

**(iv) Addressing Specific Areas of National Policy.**

This category contains TDs who stated that they had entered politics due to an interest in a particular policy area, or a number of political issues. Many of the policy areas or interests mentioned were related to their pre-election background, particularly geographical or occupational factors. These areas included sport, the rights of children, disabilities, and policy in relation to suicide. An area mentioned by two TDs was the area of legal reform, and justice issues.

A former Government minister from outside Dublin stated:

> My interests at the time related to law and legal policy ... because I was a solicitor.

A Fianna Fáil backbencher stated:

> there's a couple *(sic)* of issues that interest me: human rights issues interest me, public service reform interests me and justice issues abstracted from human rights issues.

Housing was mentioned by another TD whose previous occupation led to an interest in the housing issue:

> there was a major housing crisis in Dublin, so I certainly saw the housing then as being a major sort of combination of politics, architecture, and a sense of social justice.

Some TDs had multiple policy goals. A former Fine Gael minister stated:

> When I entered politics I wanted to bring about peace and reconciliation with the Unionists in Northern Ireland. I wanted to join Europe... I wanted to ensure that there was probity in public life ... and fourthly I wanted to make our country an economic success.

Northern Ireland policy was mentioned by four interviewees as an area which attracted them into politics. A former Fianna Fáil minister stated:

> I suppose the Northern Ireland issue would have been the one that attracted me most.... I would have seen Fianna Fáil as being the party most likely to solve the issue that was of most concern to me at the time, and that was ... the partition of the country.

His party colleague, a much younger Dublin TD, also mentioned Northern Ireland in this regard:

> Obviously being very interested in the Peace Process, well before I was elected ... the North would be very important to me.

**(v) <u>Goals and Representational Focus</u>.**

Before we proceed to examining a related question about TDs' motivations for entering politics, this section raised some hypotheses which can be tested. These are related to the relationship between certain social, economic or political variables and representational role orientations. It might be expected that TD's from the more ideologically based parties: the Green party, the Labour party and the Socialist party might be more likely to be motivated by ideology or policy priorities than Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael or Independent TDs. This is significant, because if this hypothesis is supported by the data, it suggests that the two larger parties are more likely to be motivated by representational foci, such as the nation or the locality, rather than the promotion of specific policy goals or ideologies. In addition, I tested the extent to which goals for entering politics were influenced by gender or constituency type.

Despite the small number of cases, some interesting initial observations can be made about the effect of party on political goals (see Table 8.6). Only Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil TDs mentioned working for the national interest as a goal, and Fianna Fáil TDs were most likely to refer to promoting the interests of the constituency as their goal. Members of the Labour party and

Others account for a large propertion of those whose focus is ideology. Finally there is a diversity in the focus of Fine Gael TDs. Although it is commonly claimed that there is very little difference between Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil TDs, this is not the case in terms of their stated priorities when they entered politics. Only about five per cent of Fine Gael respondents chose the promotion of the locality compared with almost 60 per cent of Fianna Fáil respondents.

**TABLE 8.6 Interviewees' goal by party**

| Party | Nation % | Locality % | Ideology % | Policy interest/ group % | Other/ NR % | Total % | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **FF** | 5.9 | 58.8 | 5.9 | 17.6 | 11.8 | 100 | 17 |
| **FG** | 21.1 | 5 .3 | 15.8 | 21.1 | 36.8 | 100.1* | 19 |
| **LAB** | 0 | 11.1 | 55.6 | 11.1 | 22.2 | 100 | 9 |
| **Others Ind.** | 0 | 20.0 | 60.0 | 20.0 | 0 | 100 | 5 |
| **All** | 10.0 | 26.0 | 24.0 | 18.0 | 22.0 | 100 | 50 |

* Adds to over 100 due to rounding to 1 decimal place

In terms of constituency type, it was found that 45 per cent of rural TDs were likely to have entered politics with the goal of promoting their locality, compared with about 13 per cent of urban TDs who were more ideologically focussed, (40 per cent of them mentioned this goal, which was not a priority for any of the rural TDs.) Women were more likely to be ideologically focussed than men, and were less likely than men to have entered politics with the goal of promoting the national or local interest. Although initially interesting, when correlations between representational goals and party, constituency and gender were tested, none of these relationships was statistically significant.

**(vi) Motivations for Entry into Politics.**

As well as being asked what they hoped to achieve when they entered politics, TDs were also asked what would you say were the motivations that led you to enter political life?" The responses were coded into categories of "Asked to run," "Inherited seat, Family involvement," To achieve certain values, improve society," "Involvement in Trade Unions, college politics," "Involved in the community, promote the constituency," and "Personal ambition, interested in politics." These codes can be divided loosely into three overarching categories : "Political Ambition or Socialisation" "Representational Focus," and "Political Ideals." Those who were asked to run, became involved in politics through personal ambition, or had prior involvement in some lower level of politics can all be classed as having motivations related to personal ambition or political socialisation. However, those in the categories that refer to achieving values, and promoting the constituency can be classified as having political ideals and representation respectively as their prime motivation.

Responses to this question are of interest for two principal reasons. Firstly, the extent to which TDs are consistent in their response to these questions related to goals and motivations can be assessed. This enables further judgements to be made in relation to the extent to which TDs present coherent composites of their goals and attitudes. Secondly, the relative importance of pursuing representational foci as a political goal, compared with TDs' consideration of their own career and ambitions, or their political ideals, can be assessed through a comparison of the proportion of respondents who mention each category.

As can be seen in Table 8.7, the most commonly mentioned motivation was personal ambition, and a general interest in politics mentioned by over 40 per cent of respondents.

**TABLE 8.7 Interviewees' motivation for entering politics**

| Category | % |
|---|---|
| Personal ambition, interest in politics | 42 |
| Involvement in community, promote the constituency Inherited seat, family involvement | 36 |
| Achieve certain values/improve society | 28 |
| Inherited seat, family involvement | 28 |
| Asked to run | 26 |
| Involvement in Trade Unions/College politics | 10 |
| Total* | 170 n=50 |

*As some TDs mentioned more than one motivation, the table sums to more than a hundred per cent.

For example, a former Minister identified his motivations as:

> I had no family background in politics ... I was very interested in current affairs, in public speaking, and wanted to be a career politican so in the same way as people want to be a cop or a fireman I just wanted to be a politician.

The second most common motivation, connected with the constituency or community, was mentioned by 36 per cent. As one of this group stated:

> I was a teacher...the teachers in rural areas tend to get involved in a whole lot of local and community activities that ... lead you to have a lot of contact with political people and decision makers and all that. I didn't have a burning ambition to be a politician at any level at all ... but some of the community stuff I was involved in... it seemed a way to promote that.

Another common theme was family background and socialisation. An example of this group is a Fine Gael TD who said:

> I had I suppose been interested in politics from an early age because my father was involved and I came from a very political household so it was difficult to avoid politics.

A more ideological motivation was mentioned by a TD who declared:

> I am a Socialist and the basic motivations is to change society very fundamentally from the structures of capitalism which dominate this country ... I always felt that parliament would be an important platform... for a movement, and to change society.

The 'achievement of certain values' category scored similarly to each of the options related to political socialisation, suggesting that TDs' motivations can be characterised by a mixture of promoting representational foci, their own personal ambition for a political career, and the achievement of political ideals.

However, of those who chose only one motivation, the achievement of certain values was mentioned most, followed by family involvement (an element of recruitment that was highlighted as particularly important for Ireland in Chapter 4). These figures indicate that most TDs were motivated by their socialisation and personal ambition to some degree, but for the majority of respondents, this was accompanied by an ideological or representational goal. The breakdown here suggests that a dichotomy exists not between political ambition and representation, or ambition and the achievement of ideals, but rather between those whose goals are based on representing their community or local area, and those who are more abstract in their motivation favouring ideals over specific foci.

In relation to the coherence of the data, there was a fairly high degree of similarity between responses to this question about motivations and the previous question related to goals on entry into politics. For example, 92 per cent of those who mentioned promoting the interests of the local area as a goal, also referred to promoting the constituency as a motivation. Ninety two per cent of those who stated that their aspiration was to pursue an

ideology or way of life also mentioned the achievement of certain values as a motivation. However, as these questions were situated together in the interview, TDs were aware of their response to the previous question, and were unlikely to consciously give a completely different response.

## 8.5 Conclusion

When questioned directly about representational foci, TDs were similar to representatives in Belgium and Norway in placing a high priority on geographical or local representation. They differed from systems such as Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden where party and national representation were most significant. Although recognising the importance of the nation as whole, this came second to the locality for most TDs. However, the nation and all voters were more important as foci for TDs than either party members, or party voters. In this regard, Irish findings are similar to Spanish ones outlined earlier, where local and national representation was more important than representing the political party or social groups. This is despite the fact that, as was shown in Chapter 7, TDs are strongly oriented to party discipline, and very seldom vote against party policy on the floor of the Dáil.

Andeweg suggests that district representation is insignificant in the Netherlands due to the electoral system which is based on a national list. Conversely, it is likely that MPs elected according to systems involving multiple local constituencies such as the Irish system are more locally focussed. Cheek-Milby confirms such a hypothesis for Hong Kong (1995, 196-2000) finding a significant relationship between method of election and representational focus for Legislative Council members. De Winter (1997, 135) suggests that foci in Belgium directly reflect the cleavage structure of the political system, of which centre-periphery is an important element.

Again, this is likely to apply to the Irish case as well: local and regional identity is very important in Ireland. For example, the national games (Gaelic football and hurling) are based on towns, villages, counties and provinces competing against each other. In addition, the interview data suggests that the lack of opportunity for individual TDs to contribute to national policy-making leads TDs to prioritise the local area where they feel they can make a difference. This will be further discussed in the concluding chapter.

More indirect measures of the relative importance of representational focus compared with other variables, suggest that many TDs were motivated by a separate goal: the promotion of particular policies and ideology. In addition, most TDs were influenced by their political socialisation, and personal ambition. This suggests that role orientations of TDs consist of a combination of goals and attitudes derived from varying sources - some institutional, some normative and others ideological. The promotion of representational foci appears to be just one among a number of these goals and attitudes characteristic of TDs. Having stated this, certain patterns in role orientations are also becoming apparent, and these will be further explored and identified through the derivation and classification of the typology in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER 9: A TYPOLOGY OF IRISH PARLIAMENTARIANS

## 9.1 Introduction

A typology, defined as a "nominal composite measure" (Babbie 1998, 189), can be a useful way of describing general patterns in data, as long as it is based on coherent theoretical or conceptual criteria. Typologies and ideal types are often used by researchers in reporting multiple case studies, including those involving data from political elites, and members of parliament. Such classifications are based on the assumption that although each individual is unique, there are particular aspects to each case that are of primary interest, which can be grouped and characterised. As de Vaus (2001, 252) comments, "Rather than just concentrating on traits, a typology attempts to build up an overall picture of a case taking a wide range of characteristics into account."

Typologies can either be theoretically or empirically derived. Theoretically or deductively derived types can also be termed ideal types: " a pure or theoretical type that is not necessarily found in that pure form in empirical reality." (de Vaus 2001, 226). Inductive typologies are those that are derived based on an examination of cases, in light of a particular question or questions. A typology is produced through examining cases along a range of dimensions, and identifying common clusters which are grouped, and described as being of a particular type (de Vaus 2001, 226). In summary, the main difference is that deductive typologies are identified prior to the data gathering, and their validity is tested from the data. Inductive typologies are derived from the data.

The advantage of deductively rather than inductively deriving a typology is that as King, Keohane and Verba (1994, 21) state: "any intelligent

scholar can come up with a "plausible" theory after the fact... the theory will fit the data nicely and still may be wildly wrong." This is particularly the case when there is not the possibility of using multiple coders which was the principal method used by Searing to ensure the validity of his inductively derived typology. He ensured that the themes he identified in his data were independently detected by colleagues both at the time of coding and three years later. As I was conducting the research as a solo project, such a validity test was impossible. In addition, one of Searing's types was measured using only one question. If he had deductively derived his typology he could have included additional questions in advance to detect the presence or absence of this type.

In this chapter, I will introduce a typology for the Irish case, which has been derived deductively based on theories of representation, comparative empirical research, and an initial reading of the interview transcripts. This typology has three types – national promoter, interest promoter, and constituency promoter. After classifying TDs according to this typology, it was found that most TDs were national promoters (about 60 per cent), with about 24 per cent of TDs either wholly or partly constituency promoters, and about 15 per cent classified as interest promoters. Qualitative evidence of TDs' goals and attitudes confirms the existence of each type among the interview subjects, and survey respondents, but this data also contains examples of TDs with attitudes and goals compatible with all three types or none of them. Various forms of confirmatory statistical analysis raise questions regarding the validity and reliability of the typology. Similar tests, assessing the extent to which role type might predict behaviour, demonstrate a very limited effect, with institutional factors much more influential in this regard. In the next section, I will identify some existing typologies which influenced the method and content of my own

typology. I will then outline this method, and discuss the findings produced by individual indicators, before outlining the classification of TDs within the overall typology. I will then describe the various tests carried out to assess its validity, and finally examine the extent to which TDs' classification within it might indicate behaviour.

## 9.2 Existing Typologies

### (i) Wahlke *et al.*

As referred to in Chapter 2, the most commonly cited typology is that of John C. Wahlke, Heinz Eulau and their collaborators, which they derived inductively from interviews with US State legislators. This can more accurately be described as a set of typologies, since they define four sets of roles that describe a legislator's orientation in different contexts: purposive roles, representational roles, areal roles, and pressure-group roles. Purposive roles relate to "behavior appropriate to the substantive goals or purposes of legislation and the legislative operation" (Wahlke *et al* 1962, 1). Representational roles relate to "the method or process of individual decision making deemed appropriate to pursuit of the substantive goals" (Wahlke *et al* 1962, 12). Both areal roles and pressure group roles are contained within what they termed the 'clientele-roles sector,' and deal with norms of behaviour governing dealings with the constituency and interest groups.

Types for purposive, representational, and areal roles were mainly derived from a question from their interviews with legislators, where they asked subjects what they felt was most important about their job, and whether their perception in this regard differed from that of the voters.[79] Each answer was broken up into content statements and each

[79] The exact wording was as follows: "Now a couple of questions about the job of being legislator: a. First of all, how would you describe the job of being a legislator – what are the most important things you should do here? b. Are there any important

item coded under one of five categories: a) characterisation of job, b) objectives of job, c) criteria of decision, d) lawmaking functions, and e) non-lawmaking functions. Purposive roles were mainly derived from data about characterisation of job, representational roles from data about criteria of decision, and areal roles from data about objectives of the job. The pressure group typology was derived through measuring the respondents' friendliness or hostility to pressure groups, and their level of knowledge of pressure group activity. Through this process, the authors identified five purposive roles (tribune, inventor, broker, ritualist, and opportunist) three representational roles (trustee, delegate and politico), three areal roles (district oriented, state oriented and district-state oriented), and three types of pressure-group roles (facilitators, resisters, and neutrals.)

I will briefly focus on the first two of these role sectors, because they demonstrate the difficulties in trying to separate law-making activities, representational activities, and attitudes of legislators to their local areas. I would argue that the separation of the roles into sectors undermines the explanatory power of the resulting typologies. In the first purposive role sector, the discrete types are defined as follows: a *ritualist* is a legislator more involved in parliamentary ritual than parliamentary goals, a *tribune* is most preoccupied with advocating or defending popular demands, the *inventor* concentrates on finding solutions to problems of governance, the *broker* focuses on the integration of various interests, while the *opportunist* is some-one who uses legislative office to conceal the fact that he or she is in fact playing other non-legislative roles (Wahlke *et al* 1962, 248-249). The classification procedure allows for respondents to be placed in more than one purposive category. Sixty six per cent of respondents were ritualists, 52 per cent were tribunes, 35 per cent were

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*differences* between what *you* think this job is and the way *your constituents* see it? (what are they?)

inventors and 32 per cent were brokers.[80] The authors argue that the orientation of ritualist is "unavoidable," which is somewhat questionable given that 34 per cent of their subjects avoid this category quite successfully, at least according to their own categorisation.

Classification of legislators in the representational role typology was primarily achieved through using the same questions (see footnote 1). Sixty three per cent of subjects were trustees, 22 per cent were politicos and 15 per cent delegates. For areal roles, again derived from responses to the same questions, district was the most popular orientation, followed by a combination of district and state, and finally state alone. Respondents were fairly evenly split between neutral, facilitator and resister in their attitudes to pressure groups.

By adopting the approach of separating legislators' different functions and relationships into separate typologies, each legislator is likely to be classed as representing at least four different types. Such a multiplicity of role orientations is likely to lead to role conflict for individuals. This is resolved according to Wahlke *et al* by each legislator selecting " the more pervasive or more intense over the less pervasive and less intense roles in orienting himself to action" (Wahlke *et al* 1962, 384). The authors argue that neutral roles are likely to yield to more clearly defined roles. Institutional factors such as the strength of a party in an area, and the nature of a constituency are also likely to affect the way in which competing roles interrelate.

The authors expect that role orientations should be systematically connected, so that for example inventors should be trustees, and tribunes delegates. However, when cross-tabulations of purposive and representational role orientations were conducted, relationships tended

[80] After identifying the opportunist type the authors do not investigate its prevalence.

to be in the predicted direction, but not always in great magnitude. For example, 30 per cent of tribunes were delegates, while 67 per cent of them were trustees (Wahlke *et al* 1962, 409). These two role orientations of tribune and trustee are based on very different norms of representation. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this is one drawback of dividing MPs' activities or relationships into different typologies. Such a large number of possible permutations and combinations of types decreases the leverage of the research[81]; it also allows legislators to be placed in incompatible categories without any explanation of how such roles can be reconciled, or what kind of beliefs and norms could underpin such inconsistency. In fact, because the authors have so many role types, they do not have enough cases to relate the different role orientations within a single multidimensional matrix (Wahlke *et al* 1962, 411).

In light of the above, an assumption behind my typology is that limiting the concept of representation to a simple variation on the representational style dimension, and categorising all other legislative orientations and functions in other categories is too narrow an interpretation. The typology that I introduce in this chapter will attempt to broadly involve all the relationships and functions of a TD. It will incorporate many of the findings of earlier chapters of the dissertation, particularly those dealing with representational style and focus.

**(ii) Andeweg**

For the Dutch case, Rudy Andeweg deductively derived a typology and then tested it empirically on data already referred to in Chapters 7 and 8 (from four surveys between 1968 and 1990). His starting point was that role analysis in parliamentary systems should combine two dimensions:

[81] For a discussion of maximising leverage in social science, see King, Keohane and Verba 1994, 29-30.

'representation' and 'executive-legislative relations' (Andeweg 1997, 110). Adapting Anthony King's model of 'executive – legislative relations' in *Legislative Studies Quarterly 1,* Andeweg identifies three parliamentary roles, each of which has different representative foci: 'parliamentarians' whose main focus is the people, 'partisans' whose main focus is the party, and 'advocates' whose focus is regional or sectional interests. He argues that rather than one replacing another over time, these types are likely to co-exist, but that each type is likely to have dominated for a particular period in Dutch politics.

Andeweg's data indicates that there was some degree of specialisation among Dutch MPs (Andeweg 1997, 120). However, he maintains that MPs are much more likely to switch between roles, and argues that Searing's insistence in *Westminster's World* on role specialisation (which I will discuss in the next sub-section) is mistaken. By asking MPs which of the three role orientations is most appropriate in three different contexts: (i) in general, (ii) in budget proceedings, and (iii) during inquiries, he found that the partisan role dominates in the first two categories, while the parliamentarian orientation (chosen by 73 per cent of his subjects) dominates during inquiries (Andeweg 1997, 123). Andeweg did not attempt to classify individuals into one of his three categories, partly because of a lack of data, but more significantly due to his belief that role switching rather than role specialisation is more likely in the Dutch case. The applicability of Andeweg's typology and methodology to my research is somewhat limited for various reasons. The first is that in order to maximise the explanatory power of my typology, I undertook to classify all my subjects as far as possible into one category or another. Unless this is attempted, suggestions as to the relationship between goals, attitudes and behaviour become dangerously tautological. In addition, Andeweg did not include a type whose priority was constituency representation as he argues that constituency is not an

important variable in Dutch politics.[82] For this latter reason, the typology derived by Donald Searing could be expected to be more applicable to Irish TDs, incorporating as it does the category of constituency worker.

**(iii) Searing**

Donald Searing's typology is more relevant to this research than the previous two because of the various similarities between the British and Irish political system, and also between his methodology and that used in this dissertation. Searing derived his types inductively from MPs' responses to five interview questions. The first asked MPs to describe the broadest and most significant aspects of their work.[83] The second asked them to rate the importance of their activity for society,[84] while the third asked them what they enjoyed most about their job[85]. The fourth question related to their future ambitions,[86] while the fifth explored the likelihood of them achieving their goals[87].

By analysing the responses to these questions, and using the transcripts from approximately half of his interviews, Searing derived four preference roles: policy advocates, ministerial aspirants, constituency members and parliament men. He also identified themes associated with each of these four types. Following from this, using the first three of the questions detailed above (see footnote 5), he and his colleagues tested

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[82] This is mainly due to the electoral system, which is a list system based at national level.

[83] This question was in full: Thinking for a moment about your role as a Member of Parliament, what are the most important duties and responsibilities involved?

[84] Thinking for a moment very broadly about British society, how do your duties and responsibilities fit in with the work of society as a whole? – How important is your work as an MP to the functioning of society as a whole?

[85] Thinking over your political activity, what do you find most personally satisfying about it? What would you miss most if you left politics?

[86] And finally your own plans? Are there any further positions in the House that you would like to seek sometime in the future?

[87] If yes to the previous question : What would you say are your chances of achieving [highest position mentioned]?

MPs for the policy advocate and constituency member types, assigning a maximum score of three and a minimum of zero for their response to each question, depending on whether the relevant themes for each type were mentioned or not. Based on these three questions, MPs were scored for these role types, with potential scores ranging between zero and nine. To solve the difficulty that only the third question (related to what MPs enjoyed most about their job) measured parliament man themes, an MP's score for this question was multiplied by three to render it comparable with the score for the other two types. Finally, MPs were scored for the ministerial aspirant type by coding their responses to questions four and five, and assigning them scores between zero and nine. MPs were classified according to the type for which they scored highest.

Forty one per cent of Searing's sample of MPs were categorised as policy advocates. These were then further divided into ideologues, generalists, and specialists.[88] Twenty five per cent were classified as ministerial aspirants, consisting of sub-groups of high flyers, mixed types and subalterns (Searing 1994, 83-120). A further 25 per cent were constituency members distinguished further between welfare officers, mixed types, or local promoters (Searing 1994, 122-160). Finally, parliament men constituted nine per cent of the sample, and were further divided into spectators, club men and status seekers.

Knut Heidar (1997, 103-106) applied this typology to the Norwegian Storting, replacing Searing's ministerial aspirant with a partisan type. Using survey data he found that 49 per cent of those surveyed did not fall into just one category. The most common type among those that were classifiable was that of partisan (15 per cent of respondents fell into this category), followed by constituency members (11 per cent), and

[88] These are fairly self explanatory but for more detail see Searing 1994, 38-80.

then policy advocates (8 per cent), with the least common type being that of parliament man (3 per cent).

The methodology Searing used in constructing this typology is a useful model, and elements of it were adopted in constructing my typology of TDs. However, I would argue that Searing used too few indicators for each type, particularly for the ministerial aspirant. It seems undesirable that an MP could be placed in a category, based on his or her response to only one question, and the reliability of such a measurement can be questioned. In addition, similar to the typologies of Wahlke *et al.*, Searing's further sub-division (based on qualitative analysis of the interview data) creates a large number of typological categories, containing a relatively small number of cases. Based on these criticisms, the Irish typology was derived from a higher number of indicators, and I decided that there should be no sub-division into further categories. Undoubtedly a typology of only three types cannot account for all the variation between cases. However, it constitutes an effort to capture broad patterns within aspects of TDs that are of particular interest (i.e. their representational roles.)

## 9.3 Indicators and Initial Findings

### (i) Indicators

Given time limits imposed by the interviewees, there was a limit to the number of questions that could be asked during the interviews. In the case of the survey, it was decided that in order to maximise the response rate, it should consist only of one sheet (these issues have already been discussed in Chapter 3). As the dissertation was designed to test various theories and concepts related to representation, some of the indicators for the typology were also used to test theories mentioned in earlier chapters. Responses to some of the questions used to classify TDs in the

typology have therefore already been reported in previous chapters (full lists of the questions are contained in Tables 9.1 and 9.2 below.)

**TABLE 9.1 Typology indicators for Interviewees**

| | |
|---|---|
| **1*** | What would you say were the motivations that led you to enter political life? |
| **2*** | When you entered politics what was the main thing you hoped to achieve? |
| **3** | Thinking about your broad role as TD, what *should* be the most important duties and responsibilities involved regardless of how important these tasks are in practice |
| **4** | Thinking over your political activity, what do you personally find most satisfying about it? What would you miss most if you left politics? |
| **5** | What do you find least appealing about your duties and responsibilities as a TD? |
| **6** | What do you consider your biggest achievement during your political career? |
| **7*** | Which of these is most important to you? *Choose 1.*<br>(i) to be a representative of the members of your party.<br>(ii) to be a representative of the voters who voted for you.<br>(iii) to be a representative of all voters. |
| **8*** | How important is it to you to represent the following groups of people? *Rank between 1 and 6*<br>(i) All people in Ireland (the nation as a whole)<br>(ii) All voters who voted for your party nation-wide<br>(iii) All those who voted for you in your constituency<br>(iv) All the people in your constituency<br>(v) A specific group in society. Which one?<br>(vi) the members and activists of your party |
| **9*** | What do you think is implied by the term representation? *Choose 1.*<br>(i)Acting as a trustee for the people, making decisions primarily based on one's own judgement on what is best for the nation as a whole.<br>(ii) As close a match as possible between representatives and the people in socio-economic terms.<br>(iii) Promoting the interests of the local constituency.<br>(iv) Reflecting the policy opinions of the local constituency. |
| **10** | Various typologies of members of parliament exist. One such typology differentiates between **parliamentarians**, **constituency workers,** and **policy advocates**.[89] If you had to categorise yourself in one of these categories which would you choose? |

[89] TDs were given the following definitions of each type: **parliamentarians** have the primary goal of pursuing the national interest, making decisions between competing interests and opinions based on their own judgement of what is best. They believe that this national interest should be put before local considerations. **Constituency workers** have the primary goal of protecting and promoting the interests of their constituents through individual casework and the allocation of resources to projects within their constituency. They have the attitude that TDs are elected with the principal objective of representing their local constituency and are therefore obliged to represent the interests of individual constituents and the geographical constituency as a whole at the national level. **Policy advocates** have the primary goal of achieving the policy objectives of sectoral interests within their constituency. They have the attitude that they are elected to represent their constituents on policy issues on the floor of the House and in Committees. They would tend to emphasise the people's perspectives on these issues rather than their own judgement.

* The responses to questions 1,2, 7, 8 and 9 have already been reported in previous chapters.[90]

Six indicators were used to classify the survey respondents, (see Table 9.2). The reasons for differences between these and the interview indicators will be discussed further in the next section. Before analysing TDs' responses to these questions as indicators for the typology, I will describe individual results to each question, as these highlight various aspects of TD's goals and attitudes that might not be apparent from an aggregate reporting of classifications within the typology.

**TABLE 9.2 Typology indicators for survey respondents**

| | |
|---|---|
| **1** | Thinking about your broad role as TD, what *should* be the most important duties and responsibilities involved regardless of how important these tasks are in practice |
| **2** | Thinking over your political activity, what do you personally find most satisfying about it What would you miss most if you left politics? |
| **3** | What do you find least appealing about your duties and responsibilities as a TD? |
| **4.*** | Which of these is most important to you? *Choose 1.*<br>(i) to be a representative of the members of your party.<br>(ii) to be a representative of the voters who voted for you.<br>(iii) to be a representative of all voters. |
| **5*** | Members of parliament have often been categorised as either trustees or delegates where trustees feel that their role is to judge each issue on its merits, in the light of their own judgement, regardless of the views of their constituents while delegates believe that their role is to represent the views and demands of their constituents regardless of whether they personally agree with these. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represent a TD who sees themselves entirely as a trustee and 10 represents a TD who sees themselves entirely as a delegate, where would you place yourself? * |
| **6*** | Which of these is most important to you? Please rank 1,2,3.<br>(i) To represent the interests of the nation as a whole<br>(ii) To represent your constituency/local area<br>(iii) To promote a particular ideology or policy programme |

* It should be noted that responses to questions 4, 5 and 6 have already been reported in previous chapters.

[90] As can be seen from Appendix 1, the questions did not follow this numbering in the

**(ii) TDs' most important duties and responsibilities**

As can be seen from Tables 9.1 and 9.2, both interviewed and surveyed TDs were asked what they considered to be their most important duties and responsibilities. The responses of interviewed TDs were divided into various categories, and the same categories were used to classify survey responses. Each TDs' response was coded into one or more categories, since most TDs mentioned more than one theme. The responses are detailed in Table 9.3, where it can be seen that legislating and influencing policy was by far the most important duty according to TDs, followed by representing their constituencies and promoting the national interest.

**TABLE 9.3 Most important duties and responsibilities identified by TDs.***

| Response categories | Total** |
|---|---|
| Legislating and influencing policy | 67.4 |
| Represent the constituency | 37.1 |
| Promote the national interest, plan for the nation's future | 28.1 |
| To be a link between the public and decision-makers, leading public opinion | 25.8 |
| Checking and monitoring government | 20.6 |
| Achieving ideals | 12.4 |
| Getting re-elected | 2.3 |
| Electing the government | 1.1 |
| Other | 4.5 |
| No Response | 2.3 |
| N | 89 |

* Q 3 of Table 9.1 & Q 1 of Table 9.2

** Most TDs mentioned more than one theme.

interview guide.

Many TDs mentioned both policy making and representing the constituency. For example one interviewed TDs stated :

> the dual role as a TD, legislating, contributing to policy either at committee level, or at party level, or in the House itself is the pre-eminent role as I see it, and constituency representation comes number two.

Six per cent of those TDs who responded that constituency representation was an important task explicitly stated that this was significant for them for re-election purposes, rather than as a personal preference. This perspective was presented by a TD who, in choosing both policy-making and constituency representation, remarked:

> You also have another function which is equally important for re-election purposes. TDs get re-elected by representing the view of their constituents aggressively, and be seen to be doing that by your constituents.

His colleague agreed:

> I wouldn't have been elected to the Dáil, were it not for the fact that two years prior to the election ... I spent four nights a week canvassing the streets of my constituency and meeting people.

**(iii) <u>Most Satisfying Elements of the Job.</u>**

When both interviewees and survey respondents were asked about what they found most satisfying about their job, the most commonly mentioned theme was creating and influencing policy, followed by helping individual constituents, or achieving for their constituency (see Table 9.4). Many TDs also mentioned more general career related themes, such as meeting people and the variety of their job. As one survey respondent stated:

> No other job I ever had has the variety of activity. There are no two days the same.

A colleague responded:

Being able to advise people. The friends one had made.

Others were less positive: a Dublin TD responded:

> Satisfaction is not a word I think of at the moment ... I'm working at a limit... technically my diary is booked on a series of overlapping events.

An older colleague was even more negative:

> Time in government. I don't think I'd miss anything about it, and I look forward to leaving politics.

It is also interesting to note that, although nearly 68 per cent regarded legislating and influencing policy as the most important duty of a TD, only about 49 per cent considered this to be the most satisfying element of their job. Roughly the same percentage of TDs who considered constituency work to be the most satisfying aspect of their job, considered it to be the most important duty of a TD. However, those who stated that they considered constituency representation as an important duty of a TD were no more likely than other TDs to report that constituency work was the task that gave them most satisfaction.

**TABLE 9.4 What TDs found most satisfying about their job**

| Category | Total* % |
|---|---|
| Policy Creation and Influence | 48.7 |
| Helping individuals/constituency representation | 39.3 |
| Communication and camaraderie | 19.1 |
| Sense of achievement & variety of work | 15.7 |
| Access to power and decision-makers | 13.5 |
| Being a Minister | 11.2 |
| Upholding democracy | 11.2 |
| Dáil Debates and questions | 6.8 |
| Nothing/ no response | 6.8 |
| Other | 1.1 |
| n | 89 |

*Many respondents mentioned more than one category.

**(iv) Least Satisfying Elements**

When asked what they enjoyed least about their job, the most common responses from TDs related to the long working hours, or the toll that being a full-time TD took on family life - themes mentioned by a quarter of respondents. The demands of constituents, and the burden of constituency work was mentioned by nearly a fifth of respondents, while media criticism, or 'media messing' as one respondent termed it, was another common response. Interviewees who mentioned national promoter activities as the most important element of their job were significantly more likely to mention constituency work as the least satisfying part of the job (correlation of 0.353, significant at the 0.05 level[91]). However, the responses to this questions tended to relate to aspects of the job that applied to all TDs: long hours, the media, boring

[91] A one-tailed test was used as I was testing a hypothesis - that those who valued national or legislative activities as most important were likely to find constituency work the least satisfying aspect, as it took time away from more valued tasks.

meetings, rather than particular aspects that might be enjoyed by one respondent and loathed by another.

**TABLE 9.5 What TDs found least satisfying about their job**

| Categories | Total* % |
|---|---|
| Long hours/ effect on family life | 25.8 |
| Demands of constituency work | 19.1 |
| Lack of private life, media attacks | 15.7 |
| Boring meetings and speeches | 13.5 |
| Lack of time for multiple tasks | 9.0 |
| Lack of influence, progress | 5.6 |
| Other / nothing/ no response | 19.1 |
| n | 89 |

* As for previous questions, some respondents mentioned more than one category.

**(v) Biggest Achievement**

Interviewee respondents were also asked about what they considered to have been the biggest achievement of their political career. Policy, legislative, or ministerial achievements were mentioned by 38 per cent of respondents, while 10 per cent referred to constituency achievements, and 10 per cent to the representation of groups or issues. Other achievements highlighted by a small number of respondents included committee work, and getting re-elected.

**(vi) Self-Classification**

Interviewees were asked whether they considered themselves to be parliamentarians, constituency workers or policy advocates (for definitions of these, see Footnote 89 ). As can be seen in Table 9.6, TDs were most likely to categorise themselves as parliamentarians, followed by constituency workers, with nearly one third considering themselves policy advocates.

Ten per cent responded by saying that they were a mixture of all three, arguing that the categories were not mutually exclusive, so that they had to be all three types simultaneously. As one respondent stated:

> I think if you are an effective politician you have to be a combination of all three, because they are all intertwined, they are all interdependent."

Fourteen per cent expressed role conflict stating that they would prefer to occupy one role but had to perform another, or all three instead. For example, one respondent stated:

> I would have to say my goal would be the first one [parliamentarian], but you obviously have to combine it with the others as well.

Another responded:

> the first with a bit of the third thrown in for survival ... It's a bit of all three really, but the focus would be on the first one with bits of the others, because you wouldn't survive [electorally] otherwise.

**TABLE 9.6 Interviewed TDs self-classification in typology**

| Type | % Total* |
|---|---|
| Parliamentarian | 62 |
| Constituency Worker | 44 |
| Policy Advocate | 32 |
| None/ No response | 12 |
| n | 50 |

* Many respondents claimed that they were either all three or fitted at least two categories.

This self-classification question was not used for survey respondents. Rather a different more indirect measure was used to assess which orientation TDs felt best applied to them. This was for a few reasons. The first was that the definitions of the previous typology were too long

and involved for a single sheet survey. Secondly, by the survey stage of the research I had relabelled the types, although the concepts behind each were the same. Thirdly, asking TDs which type they considered themselves to be had produced varying responses during the interviewees: some TDs answered by choosing the type that they actually felt they were, while others selected the role that they would aspire to be. The meaning behind responses had to be explored through an analysis of comments made by the interviewees when responding to the question, an impossible process for survey data.

The survey respondents were instead presented with a question asking them:

> Which of these is most important to you? *Please rank 1,2,3.* (i) To represent the interests of the nation as a whole (ii) To represent your constituency/local area (iii) To promote a particular ideology or policy programme?

As can be seen in Table 9.7, 'representing the interests of the local area/ constituency' was ranked number one by marginally more respondents than 'representing the interests of the nation.' Overall the constituency option was ranked either one or two by nearly three quarters of all respondents. In contrast 'promoting a particular ideology or policy programme' was ranked least important by over half of respondents indicating that, as for the interview respondents, TDs were least likely to consider themselves policy or ideology promoters.

However although one might expect a significant positive correlation between TDs prioritising the national interest in response to this question, and choosing activities such as legislating as the activity that provides them with most satisfaction, this was not the case. To the contrary, a significant but negative correlation was found (-.281 significant at the 0.05 level, one-tailed). For example, a respondent who

chose the national interest said that the most satisfying element of the job was "(the) ability to help individuals and small groups." Another who chose the national interest stated that most satisfaction came from "Helping all my constituents that approach me."

**TABLE 9.7 Survey respondents ranking of most important role**

| Option | Rank 1 | Rank 2 | Rank 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Constituency/ local area** | 43.6 | 30.8 | 7.7 |
| **Interests of nation** | 41.0 | 25.7 | 15.4 |
| **Ideology/policy programme** | 12.8 | 20.5 | 53.8 |
| **No response** | 2.6 | 23.1 | 23.1 |
| **Total** | 100 n=39 | 100.1 n=39 | 100 n=39 |

TDs' self classification, according to the two questions just described, will be compared with their classification within the typology later in the chapter. First, I will proceed to outline the method of allocation of TDs within the typology.

## 9.4 Classification and Measurement Issues

### (i) Definition of types

The scope of the dissertation was to investigate various theories and concepts of representation, so that to a large extent the approach was deductive, testing theories against empirical reality. As already discussed on page 222-223, the typology was also derived deductively based on existing empirical research, both comparative, and in the Irish context. The assumption behind the typology was that it was possible to identify three categories of TDs: those that concentrated on the national

interest, those whose priority was their constituency and a third group that emphasise a particular interest or ideology. A cluster of questions were included in both interviews and surveys as indicators for each type, and all TDs were tested for themes associated with each type using these questions (see Tables 9.8 and 9.9 for the themes and their expression within each question).

The three types were labelled – **national promoter, constituency promoter** and **interest promoter.** The characteristics of the three types can be defined as follows:

- national promoters regard the fact that they were successfully elected, as providing them with a mandate to act as they consider fit, until the following election where their mandate is then up for renewal. Their representational focus is the nation as a whole, their goal is to advance the interests of the whole country rather than any particular group, interest or area. They concentrate on tasks such as executive scrutiny, general legislation, committee work, and speaking on the floor of the house. Their ambitions are national, rather than local. They are likely to be party representatives (rather than Independents) and have been, or seek to be, a minister. Like interest promoters, they do have policy interests, but these tend to be diverse and wide-ranging, rather than in one single policy domain. Their goals tend to be directed towards the advancement of the whole country, rather than the promotion of the interests of a certain sub-group or sector of society.

- Interest promoters also see beyond the constituency to the national level. They may not describe themselves as delegates, but they are normatively attached to policy or ideological aims to advance the interests of a particular cause or group which is not constituency

based. They might however use their influence to help individuals or groups in their constituencies who are a sub-section of this broader group or interest in society. Their main representational focus would be certain sectors of society, either constituency policy groups or occupational or social groups at the national level. Their preferred tasks would be speaking on policy matters, undertaking committee work, and promoting the interests of certain groups in society through all their parliamentary duties.

- Constituency promoters are delegates to constituency or local interests. They see themselves as representatives of a locality or their constituency as a whole. Their preferred tasks are mixing with constituents, meeting lobby groups, and undertaking constituency work. They have little national policy focus seeing the national arena as merely another level at which to represent local needs, and concerns. They focus on the general advancement of an area, rather than particular social or economic groups within that area.

**(ii) Method of Measurement and Classification**

Now that the typology has been introduced, I will explain the method of classification of TDs within it. It is important to explain that certain restrictions limited the nature and number of indicators which could be used. Given that the purpose of the thesis was to test various theories of representation, a large number of questions were contained in the original interview guide. As time proceeded, it became clear that the number of questions would have to be reduced, and furthermore that some of them would have to be used to test more than one model or concept. As already mentioned, five of the interview indicators for the typology were used to test aspects of TDs' focus and style outlined in previous chapters. In addition, as I restricted myself to a single sheet survey in order to maximise the response rate, I was forced to limit the

number of indicators for the typology to six (the whole survey contained eleven questions.) It was necessary to consider whether it was possible to test for the typology among the survey respondents at all, given the limited number of questions included, and the nature of those questions. It is much more difficult to detect themes in the answers produced by survey type questions. Notwithstanding this, it was decided to proceed on an experimental basis, and indicators for each type were extracted from the survey questions. The interview data was always intended as the main data set for the dissertation with the survey data providing additional leverage through increasing the number of cases, and providing the opportunity to further confirm findings from the interviews. Therefore, the classification of interviewees and survey respondents within the typology followed slightly different rules, and will be reported separately.

Interviewed TDs were coded for each type using 10 questions from the interviews, some of which were closed, others of which were open-ended (see Table 9.1). Relevant themes for each type were associated with the six open ended questions ( see Table 9.8). If a particular theme for a type was central to a TD's response, he or she was assigned a score of three for that question, if the theme was present but not central he or she scored two, and if the theme was not referred to at all in an answer, a score of zero was assigned. For the closed questions, each potential response was assigned a score ranging between three and zero for each type depending on its perceived relevance to the themes associated with that type. Each interviewee was thereby assigned a score for each type, according to the cumulative total that they acquired as a result of this process. They were then assigned to the category for which they had achieved the highest score. The maximum possible score for a type was 30. A TD who had similar scores for two of the types (a difference of less than three points) was classified as a mixture of both.. A TD had to

score at least 12 points for one of the types, or he or she was deemed to be unclassifiable.[92]

**TABLE 9.8 Themes and scores for the three types for each question* (interviews)**

| Q | National Promoter | Interest Promoter | Constituency Promoter |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Wanting to improve the nation, get involved in government, achieve at the national level, protect democracy, mention general policy areas of particular interest | to achieve in particular policy areas which would advance certain groups/interests, advance an ideology, represent certain policy interests or sectors of society | Involvement in the local area, achieve for the constituency, local people |
| 2 | General policy advances at the national level improve the lot of the Irish people. | in areas of policy that affects/ benefits particular groups advance an ideology advance the interests of a particular group | promote interest of area, local people |
| 3 | national level achievement, ministerial achievements | policy advances benefiting certain groups, achieving for various interests | local, helping people |
| 4 | General legislation, executive scrutiny, contributing to all policy areas, representing the nation, advancing the nation | legislating, policy influence, achieve ideals, represent certain groups | represent the constituency, communicate with the local area |
| 5 | constituency work and pressures, lack of influence at the national level | lack of policy influence, constituency case-work, local pressures. | committee work, policy scrutiny, 2 if don't mention committee work |
| 6 | General policy-making, ministerial duties, speaking, upholding democracy, improving the country, policy advances achieved in various ministries. | policy work, ministerial office, accesses to power, achieving for certain groups | achieving for the area, helping people, case-work |
| 7 | All voters: 3 points. If all 3 chosen, 1 each. | 3 for party members. | 3 for (ii) |
| 8 | Only 1 score awarded: 3 if (i) is ranked 1, 2 if (i) ranked 2. | One score only: 3 for (ii), (vi) or (v), 2 if any of these 2. | 3 for (iv) or (iii) 1, 2 if either of these 2. |
| 9 | Trustee, 3 points. If ranked with 1 other option 2 points. | 3 for policy opinions. Ranked with 1 other option 2 points. | 3 for (iii). Ranked with (iv) 2 points. |
| 10 | Parliamentarian 3 points. 2 points if it's ranked with 1 other, 1 if all relevant. | 3 points for policy advocate, 2 points if mentioned with 1 other, 1 if all. | 3 points for constituency worker, 2 points if mentioned with other. 1 if all. |

[92] In many cases, an unclassifiable verdict resulted from missing data.

* The full text of the questions is in Table 9.1

For the survey data, a classification of respondents was completed using the six questions contained in Table 9.2. Again, relevant themes or responses for each type were identified, and these are listed in Table 9.9. As previously, respondents scored three when a theme was central to their answer, two if a theme was present but not central, and no score if the theme was absent. The maximum score for each type here was 18, and the minimum score for a respondent to be classified for a type was seven. The minimum required difference between the two highest type scores for a respondent to be classified as one type or another was two.

**TABLE 9.9 Survey themes and responses for each type**

| Q | National Promoter | Constituency Promoter | Interest promoter |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | Legislating, executive scrutiny, contributing to policy, representing the nation. | represent the constituency, communicate with the local area, achieve for constituents/ area. | legislating, policy influence, achieve ideals, representing certain interests, not local. |
| **2** | Policy-making, ministerial duties, speaking, upholding democracy | achieving for the area, helping people, case-work | policy work, ministerial office, achieving ideals/aims, representing groups/ areas |
| **3** | constituency work, pressure from locality, lack of influence. | national duties etc. | lack of policy influence, local pressures, failure to achieve policy aims/ ideals |
| **4** | 3 for all voters | 3 for voters | 3 for party members, 3 for all voters. |
| **5** | 3 for score of **1 or 2** on scale. 2 for score of **3 or 4**. 1 for score of **5.** | 3 for score of **10, 9** 2 for score of **8,7** . 1 for score of **6.** | 3 for score of **4** or **5**. 2 for score of **3** or **2**. 1 for score of **1**. |
| **6** | 3 for the nation as whole | 3 for local area | 3 for ideology, policy programme |

## 9.5: Role type Classification and Explanations

### (i) Classification of TDs

The result of the classification of the 50 interviewees, and 39 survey respondents can be seen in Table 9.10. By far the most common role orientation among both samples was that of national promoter, with nearly half of the sample falling into this category. Over 60 per cent are national promoters, once those who combine more than one category are included. Nearly a quarter of the sample were allocated to the constituency promoter category as a specialist, or in combination with another type, while the least common type was interest promoter, with only about a sixth of the sample falling into this category.

One of the more surprising aspects of the classification is the comparatively low level of constituency promoters, given the importance that a large number of TDs have placed upon constituency representation in previous chapters of the dissertation, and the fact that it was chosen as a role orientation by over forty per cent of interviewed respondents. It is however very similar to the level of constituency workers among Searing's respondents: about 25 per cent of his respondents were constituency workers (calculated from Searing 1996, 40; 85;124; 163).

Another striking element apparent in the Table is the lack of any pure interest promoters among survey respondents, and a total of only eight per cent who combine this with another role. This may be an artefact of the measurement difficulties outlined earlier, which will be tested further in the next section. National and constituency promoters are easier to detect in the brief answers elicited by a survey since, as highlighted in Chapter 8, the most obvious variation between TDs is the national/

constituency focus dichotomy. The more subtle interest promoter themes may be more difficult to detect in brief survey responses. It should be noted that Heidar (1997, 103-104) encountered similar difficulties in attempting to classify Norwegian representatives using survey data, finding that 49 per cent did not fall into one of the role types or were, as he terms them, 'no-role types.'

**TABLE 9.10 Classification of TDs within the typology**

| Role Type | Inter. % | Survey % | Both % |
|---|---|---|---|
| National promoter | 44.0 | 53.8 | 48.3 |
| Interest promoters | 12 | 0.0 | 6.7 |
| Constituency promoters | 16.0 | 12.8 | 14.6 |
| National & interest promoter | 6.0 | 7.7 | 6.7 |
| Constituency & interest promoter | 2.0 | 0.0 | 1.1 |
| National & constituency promoter | 6.0 | 10.2 | 7.9 |
| No allocation possible | 14.0 | 15.4 | 14.6 |
| Total | 100 n= 50 | 100 n=39 | 100 n=89 |

When TDs' self-allocations, according to the typology presented in the interviews, are compared with TDs' allocations according to my categorisation, it was found that there was a significant correlation between those who classified themselves as parliamentarians, and those who were categorised as national promoters (0.52 according to an inter-item correlation using SPSS 10.0). There was no significant correlation however between TDs who described themselves as constituency workers, and policy advocates, and those who were classified as constituency and interest promoters respectively.

This lack of correlation implies that TDs might prefer to consider themselves parliamentarians rather than constituency workers or policy

advocates even if they do not in fact display the accompanying goals or attitudes. This type can after all be considered the closest to the constitutionally prescribed role of a TD. It suggests that self allocation alone might not be the most appropriate indicator of role orientation given the inevitable subjectivity involved. In addition it indicates that national promoters are the most internally consistent in terms of their goals and attitudes.

**(ii) Explanation of role types**

Although it has been suggested that interpretation is difficult when typologies are used as dependent variables (Babbie 1998, 189), one might expect to find relationships between variables such as gender, constituency type, ministerial status, political party, and TDs' typology allocation. This was tested by correlating TDs' scores for each role type, with the socio-political variables listed above. Various relationships could be anticipated: for example, rural TDs might be predicted to have a higher score for the constituency promoter type than urban TDs. However, in fact, this did not prove to be the case.

Notwithstanding this, some significant relationships were found. TDs who had held ministerial or junior ministerial office at some point in their career were likely to achieve a lower score for constituency promoter than those who had never held such office. This makes substantive sense, given that TDs who had been Ministers were likely to find it much harder to return to the humdrum reality of constituency work, and retain any preference for such a constituency role. As one such TD stated:

> Once you've been a Minister, it's very hard to keep motivated on the constituency stuff.

In addition, those who had been backbenchers for their whole career would have had little opportunity for policy influence and would therefore be expected to concentrate on constituency promoter themes.

Being a Fianna Fáil TD was significantly, but negatively, correlated with interest promoter scores. Again, given Fianna Fáil's self–ascribed identity as the "national party," it makes sense that specific sectoral interests were not mentioned by many of its TDs. Conversely, being a Labour party TD, a TD from a small party, or an Independent TD was significantly correlated with a higher score for interest promoter than members of other parties, again corresponding quite well to the perceived agenda, or political basis of these smaller groups. No other party or ministerial effects were observed. Constituency type and gender correlations were also tested for effect on typology scores, but significant relationships were not observed.

## 9.6 Validation of the Typology

### (i) Typology of Interviewed TDs

In assessing the results of classifications within the typology, its validity and reliability must be tested. A typology should be valid, in other words, the indicators for each type must combine to measure the intended underlying construct. There are various statistical tests that can be carried out to validate a typology, and the extent to which classifications within it are likely to measure what was intended. These include inter-item correlation analysis and factor analysis (or Principal Components Analysis) which is a technique that can be used to assess the validity of empirical measures (Carmines and Zeller 1994, 50). For the typology to have the property of internal-consistency reliability, its

constituent items should inter-correlate with each other positively, consistently and significantly (Spector 1994, 234). A further reliability estimate can be obtained using *coefficient alpha,* which is a statistic varying between zero and one, "taking on these limits when the average inter-item correlations of a scale are zero and unity respectively" (Carmines and Zeller 1994, 30). In other words, the closer the alpha value is to one, the more reliable the scale. Alpha also increases with the addition of extra items to a scale, as long as this does not result in a reduction in the average inter-item correlation. As a general rule of thumb, for a scale to be deemed reliable, alpha should not fall below 0.7.

The reliability and validity of the typology indicators for the interviews were first investigated by conducting a Principal Components Analysis using SPSS 10.0. A three factor solution of 30 items was requested. These three factors accounted for 36 per cent of the variance in the sample. The first factor explained 15 per cent of the variance, followed by 12 per cent for the second factor, and nine per cent for the third. This result does not support the assumption that the typology measures three discrete underlying constructs and this initial impression is confirmed, once the factor loadings below are examined.

**Table 9.11: Component matrix of the interview indicators (3 components extracted)**

| Indicator* | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1n | 0.059 | **.433** | 0.08 |
| 2n | .147 | **.396** | **-.438** |
| 3n | **-.479** | **.466** | **.422** |
| 4n | -0.068 | **.509** | 0.082 |
| 5n | -2.12 | 0.068 | **.383** |
| 6n | -1.82 | **.459** | **-.325** |
| 7n | **-.467** | **.303** | -.200 |
| 8n | **-327** | **.626** | .182 |
| 9n | .270 | **.554** | **-.536** |
| 10n | **-.750** | .253 | .117 |
| 1i | **.528** | .167 | **.451** |
| 2i | **.320** | .180 | **.487** |
| 3i | **.699** | 0.072 | .239 |
| 4i | **.486** | 0.005 | **.335** |
| 5i | .146 | -0.026 | **.461** |
| 6i | **.394** | -0.086 | .307 |
| 7i | **.489** | 0.016 | 0.049 |
| 8i | **.675** | -.163 | -0.009 |
| 9i | -.193 | -.282 | **.527** |
| 10i | **.529** | -.218 | -.358 |
| 1c | **-.394** | -.266 | .100 |
| 2c | -.279 | **-.602** | -.241 |
| 3c | .125 | -.286 | **-.545** |
| 4c | -.214 | -.263 | 0.081 |
| 5c | .235 | -.116 | -.235 |
| 6c | -.190 | **-.402** | 0.064 |
| 7c | -0.093 | -.184 | **.310** |
| 8c | -.271 | **-.684** | -.150 |
| 9c | -.265 | **-.478** | .141 |
| 10c | **.510** | -0.002 | 0.018 |

* The number refers to the question number, n signifies the score for national promoter for that question, i =score for interest promoter for that question, c signifies the score for constituency promoter for that question.

The more significant loadings (above $\pm$ 0.3) are in bold. An examination of the loadings suggests that the first factor can be interpreted as an

interest promoter versus national promoter dimension, while the second set of loadings suggest a national versus constituency level factor. The third factor is difficult to interpret with some positive loadings for interest promoter, but a seemingly haphazard loadings of some of the indicators for the other types.

A second Principal Components Analysis was carried out, and a varimax rotation was requested. This did not generate a clearer solution. A possible further step suggested by these factor analysis results was to exclude indicators that did not load significantly or meaningfully on the three factors, and conduct further analysis. However such an approach was rejected on the basis that there would be little theoretical justification for such exclusions. There was no clear obvious theoretical explanation behind the lack of fit of certain indicators, so that such a strategy would involve the elimination of indicators simply on the basis that they did not stand up to statistical testing. In addition, it would reduce the number of indicators for each role type significantly and introduce inductivism into what had been a deliberately deductive process.

Inter-item correlations between the indicators for each type confirmed the initial analysis. The national promoter type indicators for the most part correlated positively with each other, with the exception of a few individual indicators that did not conform to the overall pattern. One action that could have been taken on foot of the correlations was to remove questions 4 (concerning the part of their job that TDs found most satisfying), and 9 (theories of representation) from the national promoter type measurement, as they did not correlate positively with many of the other indicators. When a reliability analysis of the indicators as a scale was conducted, the scale had an overall alpha value of .70 which rose to .74 if question 4 were removed and to .72 when

question 9 was removed.[93] As stated above, a decision was made not to start removing indicators on a *post hoc* basis.

There were, however, some theoretical explanations for the fact that questions 2 and 3 did not correlate significantly. The lack of correlation suggests that there was no pattern in what TDs hoped to achieve (questions 2), and what they felt were the most important duties and responsibilities of a TD (question 3) in terms of national promoter themes. In other words, there may be TDs who entered politics with the goal of achieving at a local level, and now consider national duties and responsibilities to be more important- or vice versa. On a qualitative analysis of the data, various individual TDs did indeed fit into this pattern. In response to what she hoped to achieve on entry into politics, one respondent stated:

> Initially I'd say it was residents... it was all the problems in terms of unfinished housing estates, inadequate facilities... I don't think I had a broader national view of the thing.

However when questioned about the most important duties and responsibilities of a TD she stated:

> once you become elected to parliament your duty should be, the main duty should be in relation to your parliamentary activities... understanding the legislation that goes through the house.

An analysis of inter item correlations for the interest promoter measures shows positive correlations for the most part. They do suggest that removal of 5 (concerning what TDs enjoy least about their job) and 9 (theories of representation) might increase the validity of the scale. Removal of question 5 was also suggested by a reliability analysis. The

[93] There were only 16 cases in this analysis as cases with missing data were excluded. This is undoubtedly a very small sample. However, it does serve to indicate the shortcomings of the 2 indicators in question.

overall alpha for the scale was .67, which improved to .69 when question 5 was removed.

Finally, the inter item correlation of the constituency promoter indicators produces a number of negative correlations. The overall alpha is disappointing at 0.342 and the removal of 4 items - 1, (motivations) 3 (most important duties), 5 (least satisfying part of the job), and 10 (self placement in typology) - would improve it only marginally. This suggests a difficulty with the constituency promoter type as measured here. Existing literature, and a day to day knowledge of Irish politics support the existence of such a type, but the tests already described suggest that either the measures are flawed, or that perhaps all TDs value constituency promoter themes at various times (perhaps merely for re-election purposes), but that there is no consistent pattern of TDs choosing this role predominantly over other orientations.

A few qualitative examples support this hypothesis. For example, in response to what he hoped to achieve, one respondent stated:

> I felt the area [locality] needed representation.

In response to what he felt should be the most important duties and responsibilities of a TD, he stated simply "legislative." What he enjoyed most was "the sense of achievement, you know, meeting with people," while his least favourite element of the job was clinics.

A colleague of his was equally diverse in his responses. In relation to what he hoped to achieve on entry into politics, he stated:

> There's a couple of issues that interest me, human rights issues interest me, public service reform interests me, and justice issues.

His view on the most important duties and responsibilities of a TD was:

> I'd like to have more time to focus on issues, particularly issues that constituents bring to me.

He said the most satisfying element of the job were:

> the small things. It is fighting with the planning officer over a small issue relating to planning. It shouldn't take up a parliamentarian's time, but at the end of the day you get a damn sight more satisfaction out of doing that, then you get out of making a speech to an empty chamber.

His least favourite part of the job was:

> the political side. I do not like the partisan politics.

This individual was unclassifiable within the typology.

**(ii) Typology For Surveyed TDs**

Similar statistical tests were conducted on the survey data and, as might be expected, the results indicated less reliable and valid measures than those for the interviewed TDs. When a principal components analysis was conducted, the three factors requested accounted for a total variance of only 47.8 per cent, with the first factor accounting for 19.3 per cent. In addition, the factors produced were difficult to interpret.

An examination of inter-item correlations for each type called the reliability of the indicators into question. Many of the national promoter indicators either correlated with each other negatively, or did not correlate significantly, and the overall alpha was -.31. The results for the other two types were similarly poor with an alpha score for the interest promoter scale of .33, and for the constituency promoter of .23.

This statistical analysis would suggest that there are difficulties surrounding classifications of TDs according to this typology, and that allocations made according to the indicators must be analysed with caution. The measures for national and interest promoters among the interview sample were more robust than those for the constituency promoter indicators, which did not perform well in statistical tests. This is despite the fact that it could be expected to be a preference role for at least a subset of TDs.

**(iii) Qualitative evidence in relation to role types**

A qualitative analysis of the data supports the hypothesis that there are TDs of each type among my cases, and this is illustrated by the three cases recorded in Table 9.12 below.

## TABLE 9.12 Examples of each role type among interviewed TDs

| Q | Type | Response |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | N[94] | I thought I could do something to improve the lot of the country. |
| | I[95] | My activity within the women' s movement made me realise that the biggest difficulties and obstacles we were encountering was because we didn't have women in politics and where decisions are made. |
| | C[96] | I came from a county that hadn't had a Fianna Fáil TD for x [number excluded] years prior to me. |
| 2 | N | I was interested in public affairs... and I was also in the role of Ireland outside the country so from that point of view I felt that a small country like us could have a role internationally as well... I had vague notion I could do something for the country. |
| | I | Firstly to ensure that women's issues became political issues and central issues and that took some time and also the fact that I was feminist and proud of it and felt that that was something that women should fight to uphold. |
| | C | To improve the lot of my constituents which I think I have done quite a bit of over the years. |
| 3 | N | the most important duty is to represent the people at the national level, trying to make some input into the common good at national level and that's the most important one. |
| | I | Legislation, reform and restructuring society towards equality and equal opportunity. |
| | C | To represent your constituents and to respond to their needs |
| 4 | N | To do at national level as being most satisfying, of secondary importance is the ability to try and improve the interests of my own area. |
| | I | The influence and power you have to be part of amending a piece of legislation or bringing forward an issue by right. |
| | C | In politics you set out with one aim namely to improve the lot of people and that's the only job satisfaction that's in it. |
| 5 | N | Well, what I find most frustrating is the inability to have more of an influence at national level. |
| | I | Attending boring branch meetings and some other functions that you attend because you are obliged to. |
| | C | I don't think that there is anything that I find I disapprove of. Your job is to represent, you take that work on when you go into it so you can't say that there is any particular area of it that you dislike. |

[94] Rural Fine Gael TD
[95] Urban Fine Gael TD
[96] Rural Fianna Fáil TD

| Q | Type | Response |
|---|---|---|
| 6 | N | Representing Ireland and developing an overseas aid programme and also representing at Ireland at the EU (then the EEC) and getting good results. |
| | I | Being a voice for women outside the Dáil and outside the system ... and in the perception of me particularly for women is that they have some-one who is speaking on their behalf. |
| | C | I suppose the biggest achievements would mainly be economic with regards to my own constituency, opening up the ...[names river]... waterway, the introduction of the new rural renewal scheme for ...[names his county]...would have been the two biggest by far. |

These examples suggest that the typology does have some applicability to TDs, and that the poor performance of the indicators might be that some interviewees and survey respondents were not so clear cut in terms of their role orientations. Further examples of inconsistencies include one respondent who stated that "shaping and leading public opinion, generally trying to do the right thing for the country" was the most important duty or responsibility of a TD.

When the same individual was asked what he found most satisfying about his political activity he responded:

> I suppose constituency work, while it's tedious and time consuming.... you do get some satisfaction out of being of practical help to the people who have voted you into office.

Immediately afterwards in response to a question in relation to his least favourite element of the job, he said:

> Probably the same thing that I find most appealing. The sort of constant pressure you are under from the people of your constituency to be omnipresent and ever available.

Similarly a survey respondent when asked about the most important duties related to the job responded:

> Ensuring that legislation is put in place representing the policies put to electorate.

His response in terms of what he found most satisfying was "helping people," yet in response to what he found least appealing he stated:

> the expectation that a TD should be available 18 hours per day, seven days per week.

These responses indicate that constituency work, and the constituency promoter role, invokes a contradictory response among some TDs, many of them simultaneously love and hate that aspect of their role, and this lack of consistency might contribute to explaining the lack of clustering with regard to the constituency promoter type.

Although the reliability of the scale has been challenged to some degree by the statistical analyses, the presence of convincing examples of each type encourages some further analysis of the implications that belonging to one of these types might have for behaviour, and whether any patterns among TDs of the same type are apparent. In any case, an assessment of the behaviour of TDs is important in increasing knowledge of what activities are involved in Irish representation, and how empirical reality corresponds to the constitutional theory that TDs should primarily be legislators and policy-makers. In the next section, various measures of TDs' behaviour will be used to investigate potential relationships between scores for these three role types, and their behaviour. Any results are of course tentative, but provide at the very least a potential guide to possible further research.

## 9.7 Relationship Between Role Types and Behaviour

Role analysis of the type outlined in this chapter has often been criticised for failing to connect role-related attitudes to behaviour (Searing 1996,12). However, as Searing argues, roles should not necessarily be dismissed, even if they fail to enable predictions to be made about decision-taking activities. Notwithstanding this, a typology would obviously have increased value and validity if those who were classified in one category behaved differently from those placed in the other two categories, and this behaviour conformed to what one would expect from an analysis of goals and attitudes.

Searing identified some connections between his role types and behaviour. His constituency members spent more time on constituency work than their colleagues (Searing 1994, 134-135). However, he finds that the behaviour of his policy advocates varies depending on sub-type (Searing 1994, 52; 69;). His ministerial aspirants also display certain expected behavioural traits such as policy specialisation (Searing 1994, 105). However, it is hardly surprising that there is a significant degree of connection between goals, attitudes and behaviour for Searing's types, since to a large degree he identifies predicted behaviour for each type inductively from his interviews. In contrast, the behavioural attributes I will test for were deductively derived before the commencement of my data collection.

So what should I expect to observe in terms of behaviour for these role types, if a relationship between goals, attitudes and behaviour exists? As outlined in the earlier definitions, national promoters might be expected to spend most of their time on parliamentary activities, and in particular legislation and executive scrutiny. At the same time, it is likely that they would allocate less time to constituency related activities, such as

responding to contacts from constituents, and attending local functions. Constituency promoters should display different behaviour – spending less time in the Dáil Chamber, and on committee work, and more time on constituency activity. Interest promoters are the most difficult to predict in terms of behaviour since, to some degree, the activities that they prioritise could be expected to depend on the interests or ideology that they promote. However, it might be expected that they would also spend a fair proportion of time in the Dáil chamber, and less time on constituency work.

I will explore the connections between role type and behaviour in the first instance, by examining the way that TDs themselves claimed to spend their time in the interviews and surveys.

**(i) Self Reported Time Allocation**

To explore connections between role orientations and behaviour, TDs were asked a question during the interviews and surveys about the amount of time that they spent on various activities. An option included in the interview, but not in the survey, related to time spent speaking in the Dáil Chamber which is not included for the sake of comparability. It was excluded from the survey as TDs spend a relatively small amount of time speaking, and time is primarily allocated based on party political factors. The category of time spent in the Dáil chamber was felt to cover speaking time adequately.

From the figures in Table 9.14, it can be seen that, on average, TDs claimed to spend about 56 hours a week on a combination of the selected activities, with most time (about 38 hours) being spent on constituency activities. The reported time on constituency work is less than the 49 hours per week that TDs surveyed by Wood and Young (1997, 221) claimed to spend on constituency work, but is on average more than the

time spent on constituency work by MPs in other countries. For example Wood and Young found in the same article that British MPs devoted 35 hours per week to their constituency. It must also be noted that Wood and Young focussed on Junior MPs and TDs.

To cite other research, German MPs have been found to spend one-third of their working hours on constituency work (Patzelt 1997, 60). Norwegian MPs between 1985-1989 were found to spend about 20 per cent of their time on constituency work (Matthews and Valen 1999, 61), while Australian representatives claim to spend approximately 45 hours per month on constituency work (Studlar and Mc Allister 1996, 78).

Irish TDs' overall time allocation can also be compared with that of Belgian MPs reported by De Winter (1997, 130-132). On average Belgian MPs spend more time in the plenary sessions of the chamber (8.3 hours weekly) than Irish TDs (4.4 hours), and significantly less time on constituency case-work (5.2 hours) than Irish TDs (8 hours in clinics and 17.5 hours following up letters and phone-calls). Belgian MPs also spend less time at constituency functions (8.1), than Irish TDs (10.6). Both sets of MPs spend a similar weekly total on committee work of about 6 hours. In terms of the extent to which Belgian MPs' role orientation was a predictor of behaviour, a small relationship was found[97] (five per cent) but party type of an MP was more important (27 per cent) followed by position in the legislature (15 per cent ) (De Winter 1997, 147-148).

When one links TDs' time allocation specifically with role types, in many cases time allocation is inconsistent with what one might expect, although some relationships conform to predictions. For example, as

[97] Percentages relate to the number of times a variable was retained in 26 regression analyses calculated as a percentage of the number of times it was considered theoretically relevant prior to the analysis (de Winter 1997, 147)

would be expected, national promoters spend more time than either of the other types on committee work, and spend less time in constituency clinics than constituency promoters. Those that were either pure constituency promoters, or constituency promoters combined with national promoters, spent more time responding to letter and phone calls from constituents than other types. Interest promoters spent a large amount of time on many of the activities listed. Those classified in this category spent the most time of all types in the Dáil Chamber, on party duties and in constituency clinics. It is difficult to detect a pattern in time allocation for interest promoters, which may be due to the fact that, as stated earlier, different interest promoters promote different interests. This corresponds to Searing's findings where his policy advocate sub-types - ideologues, generalists and specialists - were found to behave differently from each other (Searing 1994, 35-80). Norton (1997, 28-29) claims that committees are the domain of those who wish to influence policy, and it is therefore interesting to note that, of the three types in Ireland, interest promoters spend the least amount of time on committee work.

**TABLE 9.13 Time allocation of TDs (hours per week)**

| Activity | NP | CP | IP | NP/ CP | NP/ IP | None | All |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **In the Dáil chamber** | 4.1 | 2.3 | 7.1 | 4.4 | 8.1 | 3.8 | 4.4 |
| **Committee work** | 8.5 | 5.4 | 3.1 | 6.6 | 4.2 | 5.5 | 6.6 |
| **Fulfilling party duties** | 8.7 | 8.3 | 13.6 | 7.4 | 8.2 | 6.4 | 8.4 |
| **Attending clinics** | 7.9 | 6.9 | 9.9 | 9.9 | 6.8 | 8.9 | 8.0 |
| **Responding to constituents letters /calls** | 15.2 | 22.1 | 15.4 | 25.6 | 16.1 | 18.1 | 17.5 |
| **Attending constituency functions** | 9.2 | 13.2 | 13.5 | 12.7 | 7.9 | 12.4 | 10.6 |
| **Total** | 53.6 n=39 | 58.2 n=11 | 62.6 n=4 | 66.6 n=8 | 51.3 n=7 | 55.1 n=10 | 55.5 n=79 |

NP =national promoter, CP =Constituency promoter, IP = interest promoter

The relationship between time spent on various activities was examined further by obtaining correlations[98] (using SPSS 10.0), between interviewee and survey respondents time spent on each activity, their total score for each role type, and their score for each indicator for each type. For the interviewees, a high score for the national promoter type was found to be significantly (0.32) and positively correlated with time spent on committee work, and negatively correlated both with time spent responding to contacts from constituents (-0.37 significant at the 0.01 level, one-tailed), and time spent at constituency functions (- 0.39, again significant at the 0.01 level). A high overall score for constituency promoter was positively and significantly correlated with time spent at constituency functions (0.34), and significantly and negatively correlated with time spent in the Dáil chamber (-.28).

For survey respondents, there was a significant and negative correlation between time spent on committee work (-.33), and a high score for interest promotion. For national promoters among those surveyed, there was a significant and negative correlation with time spent responding to constituents (- 0.43).[99] Despite some correlations in the predicted direction, when it came to the analysis of overall scores, no overall pattern was discernible, to suggest that a high score for each type was associated with the equivalent behaviour for that type.

In looking at responses to individual indicators, the mentioning of national promoter themes by interviewees, in response to the questions about motivations for entering politics, was found to be significantly and positively correlated with time spent on committee work (0.33), and significantly and negatively correlated with time spent in constituency

[98] Unless explicitly stated otherwise, these correlations significant at the 0.05 level, one-tailed.

clinics (-0.28). Mentioning interest promoter themes in response to the same question was found to be significantly correlated with time spent in the Dáil chamber (0.34). Those that mentioned national promoter themes, in response to the question about the most satisfying elements of their job, were found to be significantly less likely to spend time attending constituency functions (-0.34). Those who chose a delegate theory of representation were found to be likely to spend more time on responding to letters from constituents.

However there were also relationships or correlations which were the opposite of those which would have been expected. For example, mentioning constituency promoter themes as the most satisfying part of the job was negatively correlated with responding to letters from constituents (-0.35), although mentioning constituency promoter in response to the same question was positively correlated with the same activity (0.28). In summary, there were some significant correlations that conformed to what was expected, but there was no overall pattern connecting goals and attitudes with related behaviour, even when this was behaviour as reported by the subjects themselves.

**(ii) Typical Day for TD**

A second time allocation sheet was sent out to 15 TDs - five national promoters, five constituency promoters and five interest promoters - and they were asked to outline a typical day, when the Dáil was in session and also when it was not sitting. Ten of the 15 replied – three national promoters, three constituency promoters and four interest promoters. The most striking element of the responses was how similar the typical days for each type were, with most respondents claiming to spend the majority of their day when the Dáil was in session in the chamber,

[99] All at the 0.05 level, 1-tailed since I was testing hypotheses regarding role type and time allocation.

researching in their office and attending party or committee meetings. They also all spent most of their day when the Dáil was not in session on constituency business. Again this suggest that role types do not influence behaviour as much as other factors. For example, as will be seen in the next sections, whether one is a party spokesperson or not is the main influence on speaking time, opposition TDs ask more parliamentary questions and so on.

An interest promoter's day outlined in Table 9.14 below. The respondent stated that this represented two days he had spent during the previous week. However, he also pointed out that not all the meetings and events are on every week.

**TABLE 9.14 Typical Day for an interest promoter***

| Time | Dáil in session | Dáil not sitting |
|---|---|---|
| 8.30 | Constituency meeting | Mail/ phone calls |
| 10 | Dáil – office, meet secretary Order of Business | Clinics |
| 11.30 | Party meeting | Knocking on doors |
| 1pm | Lunch | Lunch |
| 3 pm | PQs/ write speech/ | Meetings, letter, phone calls |
| 5 pm | Meet delegations | Meeting with party city council members |
| 7 pm | Private Members Time | City Council meeting |
| 8.30 | Adjournment | As above |
| 9 pm | Residents meeting | As above |
| 1pm/11pm | Day ends | Day ends |

* The times had to be modified somewhat to facilitate entry in a single table

**(iii) Dáil speaking time**

To get a more objective behavioural measurement, the overall scores for each type were also correlated with the total time each interviewed TD had spoken on the floor of the Dáil for the session 1999-2000 (Collins

and Coleman, 2000), but no significant correlations between any one type and total speaking time were found. This is perhaps unsurprising since high speaking records are primarily held by those occupying ministerial office or frontbench positions and are therefore a function of executive duties rather than parliamentary roles. However, when speaking times for each type were correlated with role type, including only government backbenchers and members of the opposition not on their party frontbench, there was still no significant correlations between role type and speaking time, either positive or negative.

**(iv)Parliamentary Questions**

Another objective behavioural measurement of TDs which is part of the public record is the number and nature of the parliamentary questions that TDs ask. Parliamentary questions are an important tool for MPs to hold the executive to account. All Cabinet ministers can be questioned, and a different minister is scheduled to answer questions on a designated day. These questions can be either oral or written, and tend to relate to a variety of topics - constituency-related, policy related, or internationally related. I decided to classify a certain quantity of parliamentary questions as either national promoter questions, constituency promoter questions, or interest promoter questions, and then compare the number of questions of each category that each TD asked with their score for each of the three types. Although I recognised that the analysis of further data would undoubtedly be time consuming, it was decided that such a process would add to the knowledge of TDs' behaviour, not alone for the sample but for those who had been neither interviewed nor surveyed.

Parliamentary questions for all 166 TDs rather than just the sample were categorised according to the three categories of national promoter, interest promoter and constituency promoter. This classification of both

groups, (sampled and not sampled), had the additional value of indicating the extent to which there might be differences between TDs sampled, and other TDs. Four weeks of parliamentary questions were selected as a quantity that would constitute both a manageable total, and also provide a valid and reliable behavioural measurement. Two weeks were chosen from different months of 1999 and 2000, the period in which the data collection took place. The weeks were selected according to advice from the Oireachtas officials who oversee the questions, based predominantly on criteria of typicality of the sample. The weeks analysed were 1-3 February 2000, 23-25 May 2000, 12-14 October 1999 and 7-9 December 1999.

Overall, 2,293 questions in total, both oral and written, were analysed which took a period of two months. A sample of questions, and their classification, is given below in Table 9.15 to illustrate the type of question categorised in each category. Questions were entered in the national promoter category, if they dealt with an issue of national policy, international affairs or executive scrutiny. Interest promoter questions tended to relate to the interests of a group or interest in society, while constituency promoter questions were those that related to an individual constituent or an issue specifically related to a TD's constituency.

TDs that were either interviewed or surveyed asked a total of 1,374 questions. The remaining TDs asked a total of 919 questions. It is unsurprising that the total of questions asked is higher for the sample. Ministers and Junior Ministers do not ask parliamentary questions, either written or oral.[100] Of the TDs that were either interviewed or surveyed by mail, only six were Cabinet Ministers or Ministers of State whereas 23 of the other TDs were either Ministers, or Ministers of State. Once

[100] An interesting follow up project would be to investigate the channels that these TDs use to obtain information, for example in relation to issues affecting individual constituents.

Ministers were excluded, the difference in the average number of questions asked by those sampled was insignificant: each asked 17 questions, compared with an average of 16 questions asked by those not contained in the sample. As can be seen below in Table 9.16, the only significant difference that was found between the two groups was that those sampled were significantly more likely to ask interest promoter questions, than those who were not sampled.

**TABLE 9.15 Sample of Question Classifications**

| QUESTION | CATEGORY |
|---|---|
| Mr. Howlin asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the information available to his Department regarding the level of activity of the organisation known as the real IRA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. (19715/99) | NP |
| Mr. J. Bruton asked the Taoiseach the status of the talks on a successor agreement to Partnership 2000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. (26213/99) | NP |
| Mr. Callely asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the number of bilateral meetings he had with his Foreign Minister colleagues at the United Nations General Assembly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. (19950/99) | NP |
| Mrs. B. Moynihan-Cronin asked the Minister for Defence the arrangement, if any, being taken to compensate members of the Defence Forces who may be required to work over the Millennium New Year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. (26183/99) | IP |
| Mr. Stagg asked the Minister for Public Enterprise when she will approve amendments to the CIE wages grades pension scheme in view of the fact that both the company and unions agreed to the amendments in 1999; and if she will make a statement on the matter. (14435/00) | IP |
| Mr. Creed asked the Minister for Finance if disabled passengers are entitled to a refund of vehicle registration tax on the purchase of a new car. (14063/00) | IP |
| Mr. Timmins asked the Minister for Education and Science the situation with regard to the repair of the heating system at a school (details supplied) in County Wicklow. (2497/00) | CP |
| Mr. Ring asked the Minister for the Marine and Natural Resources when an application for tonnage by a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be approved. (2484/00) | CP |
| Mr. Perry asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Development if he will review an appeal by a person (details | CP |

| | |
|---|---|
| supplied) in view of the fact an error was made on three tag number; and if he will make a statement on the matter. 2614/99 | |

**TABLE 9.16 Comparison of classification of questions of TDs sampled with those not sampled.**

| | NP qs % | IP qs % | CP qs % | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sample** | 47 | 21 | 32 | 100 n= 1,374 |
| **Non sample** | 52 | 15 | 34 | 100 n= 916 |

Note: NP = national promoter, IP = interest promoter, CP = constituency promoter

It is also of interest to compare the types of parliamentary questions asked by interviewed TDs with those asked by surveyed TDs, as an indication of whether differences might exist in the activities and interests of the two groups. Some divergences between the two groups can be noted. Surveyed TDs on average asked 15 per cent more constituency promoter questions, and 15 per cent fewer national promoter questions than interviewed TDs. The interest promoter total was the same for both groups. It could be inferred from this that TDs who preferred or found it more convenient to respond to a survey than participate in an interview were less nationally oriented than those who consented to an interview.

As might be expected, the number of parliamentary questions asked by all TDs was significantly, and negatively, co-related with being a Fianna Fáil TD (or government TD) and significantly and positively correlated with being either a Fine Gael or Labour party TD. Fianna Fáil TDs were likely to have a lower number of national promoter and interest promoter questions than the average backbench TD, while the converse was the

case for Labour party TDs, who were more likely than other parties to ask national or interest promoter questions. TDs from urban constituencies were more likely to ask interest promoter questions than rural TDs and less likely than their rural counterparts to ask constituency promoter questions.[101] Interestingly, none of the four backbench TDs who have kept the Government in power throughout the current Dála asked any parliamentary questions during the four weeks. This suggests that there is an alternative channel for those supporting the Government from the backbenches to use when they wish to obtain information from a Minister.

These correlations and observations, although interesting, are not directly related to the issue of whether typology scores predict behaviour. If there were to be a connection between role types and behaviour, one would expect to observe that, the higher a TD's score for a particular type was, the higher that individual's score for parliamentary questions classified in the same category would be. In other words, one would expect national promoters to ask more national promoter questions than average, and so on. On first examination, as can be seen in Table 9.17, although on average constituency promoters asked the most constituency promoter questions, and interest promoters asked the most interest promoter questions, there was very little variation in the types of questions asked, since all three types asked mostly national promoter questions.

The relationship was tested further by correlating the typology scores for each type, with the parliamentary questions score for each type among those interviewed. When those that asked no questions were excluded from the interview sample, a positive correlation between the number of constituency promoter questions, and the score for

[101] All these correlations are significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed.

constituency promoter type was found (0.35 at the 0.05 level, one tailed), but there were no significant relationships for either of the other types overall scores. There was no significant relationship found when the same exercise was carried out for the surveyed sample. The correlation between the score for constituency promoter among survey respondents, and the number of constituency promoter questions was positive. However, there was a negative correlation between score for interest promoters and national promoters among survey respondents, and the number of questions of each type although these were not statistically significant.

**Table 9.17: Parliamentary questions by role type**

| Role Type | National Promoter qs % | Interest promoters qs % | Constituency Promoter qs % | Ave total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Promoter N=35 | 52.4 | 19.0 | 28.6 | 21 |
| Interest promoter N=7 | 55.6 | 25.9 | 18.5 | 27 |
| Constituency promoter N=11 | 50.0 | 20.0 | 30.0 | 10 |

When the individual indicators for each type were correlated for each sample with the number of parliamentary questions of that type asked, some significant correlations were found. Those among the interviewees that mentioned national motivations for entering politics were more likely to ask national promoter questions (0.27 at the 0.05 level, 1-tailed). High national promoter scores for the two closed questions related to representational focus were significantly correlated with score for national promoter questions (0.38 and 0.35 respectively both one-tailed at the 0.05 level). Those that chose constituency

promoter themes in response to the questions about motivations for entering politics (0.30), and the most important duties and responsibilities of a TD (0.25) were more likely to ask constituency promoter questions, as were those who chose delegate theories of representation (0.33). There were no significant correlations for interest promoter indicators, and number of interest promoter questions (at the 0.05 level).

Therefore, similarly to the time allocation measure, some patterns between goals, attitudes and types of parliamentary questions were identifiable but did not hold for all types or all indicators.

## 9.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have identified three distinctive role types of Irish TD. When the typology was tested using my data, it was found that most TDs were national promoters, with about a quarter classified as constituency promoters. The third category (of interest promoter) was least prevalent in the sample. However, evidence suggests that such a type does exist among TDs, as proven by various examples from the interviews. It is somewhat surprising that there are not more constituency workers within the sample, given the amount of time TDs seem to spend on constituency work compared with MPs elsewhere and the emphasis placed on the constituency service aspect of a TD's role in most writing on the work of the Dáil. However, the level of constituency workers is quite similar to that found by Searing in his classification of British MPs.

The explanation for the lower than expected number of constituency workers may be connected with the fact that the constituency worker type stood up least well of the three types to statistical analysis, because

of a lack of clustering of its indicators. A qualitative analysis of TDs' attitudes to constituency work suggests that many TDs are quite ambivalent in how they regard this aspect of a TD's role. Many TDs state that their primary role should be legislating, but regard constituency work as the most satisfying aspect of their job. At the same time, they resent the amount of their time it occupies. With such mixed attitudes prevalent among many TDs, it is hardly surprising that a coherent constituency promoter clustering was not apparent from the data.

When the connection between role types and behaviour was investigated, no significant overall pattern was evident, and TDs of each type did not consistently behave as one might expect. This is largely due to the fact that, to a large degree, behaviour is influenced by institutional factors. Opposition TDs ask more parliamentary questions than Government TDs. Ministers and front-bench spokespersons speak more on the floor of the House, and concentrate on the policy area that they bear responsibility for. TDs vote for the most part along party lines while Private Members Bills are rarely successful.[102] Even when it came to TDs' self-reported time allocation, many TDs claimed that they had to perform more constituency work than the average because they were the only TD of their party in the constituency, or due to the fact that their constituency was less prosperous than those of TDs who, they claimed, spent less time on constituency work.

However, despite a lack of overall fit between goals, attitudes and behaviour, the typology is a useful way of differentiating between people for whom structures tend to constrain behaviour (forcing them to spend time on activities they do not enjoy) and those for whom

[102] These are one of the few opportunities for backbench or opposition TDs to introduce legislation or substantively influence policy.

institutional structures in the main facilitate their doing what they enjoy. As Damgaard (1997, 89) states:

> typologies of MPs roles are interesting because they may enhance the understanding of legislative behaviour through simplification of complicated matters... but the endeavour is presumably bound to be constrained by contextual factors.

Despite this, the analysis of Irish TDs achieved through the use of the typology demonstrates that Ireland may not be very different from other countries in the roles of its representatives. The high proportion of national promoters indicates that Irish TDs are not as locally focussed as previous research has suggested. In addition, conclusions of other researchers, such as Esaiasson and Holmberg, in relation to the activities and decisions of Swedish MPs, correspond quite closely to the findings for Irish TDs. They state:

> nearly all representatives act in one way or another as local promoters ...MPs become involved in a number of different areas for a number of different reasons... individual members themselves wish to influence the development of society in a broad sense (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 300).

Most Irish TDs are national promoters and showed a desire to influence the development of society, yet were involved in different tasks according to a variety of considerations (party membership, positions in parliament, constituency type). No matter what their role classification, most TDs spent a large proportion of their time on constituency work. This seems a significant difference between Ireland and most other countries including Sweden and Norway: Irish TDs, whether positively oriented towards this work or not, claim to spend more time dealing with individual constituents than MPs in other countries.

I will comment further on these findings and what they suggest about representation in Ireland and cross-nationally in the final chapter which follows.

# CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

## 10.1 Principal Findings

The central objective behind this dissertation has been to assess the validity and utility of existing theories, models and concepts of representation, in understanding the practical operation of representation in the Irish context. Representation has been defined in many different ways, and has been analysed as a concept, a process, and as a relationship. There have been attempts, as outlined in previous chapters, to apply normative theories and to test explanatory models. Commonly, researchers focus on one such model, theory, or approach, and apply it to one case. However, there is considerable value in using a multiplicity of approaches, and by comparing their relative performance, coming to an overall conclusion, not just about the particular case, but also about the various models and theories. Applying normative theories, explanatory models, and role theoretical approaches to understanding Dáil Éireann, provides an indication of their more general applicability.

An important element of my approach was to analyse Dáil Éireann as an institution whose defining feature was its status as a representative body, rather than a law-making body. This approach was vindicated by the emphasis placed by individual members of parliament on their representative status. Law-making is best viewed as an activity conducted by representatives, rather than as a parliamentary function which competes with representation. Various normative theories of representation exist, and debates still occur between those who advocate more substantive theories of democracy, and those who argue that more formalist models are inevitable. In assessing the extent to which normative theories help us to understand the operation of Irish representation (through an analysis of characteristics,

goals, attitudes and behaviour) of Irish TDs, it was found that these had very limited influence.

**(i) Microcosmic Models**

One of the first questions the dissertation was designed to address, was the extent to which Irish TDs are microcosmically representative of the population. On examining the composition of the Dáil over time, it was found that TDs are not, and have never been, representative of the people in socio-economic terms. Irish representation falls far short of the microcosmic or mirror representation valued by critics such as Anne Phillips, or Kathleen Lynch. In particular, Ireland's progress towards the goal of proportionate representation for women has been extremely slow. Currently (2001), Ireland lies in fifty-fifth position for women's representation in the world's liberal democracies, with a female membership of 21 out of 166, or just under 13 per cent. Since the foundation of the state, the biggest ever increase in the number of female TDs was around 4 per cent between 1989 and 1992. Over half of all women elected since the foundation of the state have been related to a former male TD.

Less unusual in international terms is the fact that TDs are far older than the population that they represent. The difference has become more marked over time - TDs in the first Dáil had an average age of 41 (about ten years older than the population), compared with an average age of 49 years in 1997 (an average of fifteen years difference from the population). Even when one takes account of the fact that an individual must be aged over 21 years to run for the Dáil, the average age of TDs elected over the past ten years remains older than the sector of the population aged between 21 and 65. Those aged over 65 year are significantly under-represented.

TDs have also been more highly educated than the population, since the foundation of the state- those elected in 1997 were five times more likely to

have a university degree than members of the public. TDs are however, less likely to be university educated than MPs in many other countries. Their occupational background is also in some ways distinctive, compared with their international counterparts. They conform to cross-national patterns, in being disproportionately from professional occupations, and also in the small number of them who were formerly manual workers. An unusually high proportion of TDs have come from commercial backgrounds, comprising such occupations as publicans, undertakers and grocers.

These findings demonstrate that the Irish representative system does not operate according to microcosmic concepts of representation. Following from this, another question the dissertation aimed to address was whether this matters in substantive terms. Most observers acknowledge that, at least symbolically, increased female representation in the Dáil would be desirable. There are, in addition, theorists who claim that traits such as gender and occupational background determine policy stances of political elites, and thereby the overall policy output of parliaments and governments. The veracity of such suggestions for the Irish case was tested in Chapter 5, through an analysis of the effects of socio-economic variables on TDs' policy stances. Again, the results were similar to cross-national findings: political party affiliation was a far more powerful predictor of policy stances than any socio-economic trait. There were some significant effects found for education, occupation, gender and age on individual policy stances using difference of proportion tests. However, after regression analysis, only gender and one occupational variable (coming from a farming background) had a significant effect, and this was only with regard to one issue.

These findings provide very little support for arguments in favour of a more proportionate representation of social and economic characteristics, on the basis that this would change policy outputs. However, proponents of such representation can refer to the symbolic value of such representation, as well

as critical mass theories, to maintain their claim that members of parliament should be more microcosmically representative of the public than they currently are.

**(ii) Policy Congruence**

Another form of linkage between elected representatives and those that they represent is policy congruence, which has been operationalised through various models. For such models to apply in the Irish case, a correspondence must be shown between the policy stances of TDs and those that they represent. This signifies one form of representative delegation which this dissertation set out to examine. Findings in this area must be interpreted with caution, due to the limitations of available public opinion data.

Nonetheless, a tentative conclusion based on an examination of TDs' views on six issues compared with those of the population is that the degree of policy congruence varies depending on the issue. In general, TDs from opposing parties hold more distinctive policy stances from colleagues of other parties than do supporters of different parties within the population. In particular, substantial differences on all six policy areas were identified between Labour party TDs, Independent TDs, TDs from the smaller parties[103] and their respective supporters. The largest difference (of 68 per cent) between TDs and the population was on the issue of immigration, with the public displaying a more negative attitude towards immigration than TDs. In contrast, TDs and the public were closest in their stance on abortion, with an observed percentage difference of less than 2 per cent. Overall, TDs of different parties are more polarised on issues than their party supporters, a finding similar to that of Esaiasson and Holmberg for the Swedish case. However, TDs' views were not structured along a left-right dimension. This lack of ideological patterning was apparent in many of the

[103] Here 'small parties' refers to the Green party, Sinn Féin and the Socialist party.

findings of the dissertation, including those in relation to TDs' views on democracy.

**(iii) Conceptions of Democracy**

Normative theories of democracy centre on the extent to which popular participation in politics is practical or desirable. Stances held by individuals in this regard are likely to influence the form of representation that they value, and for political elites, the extent to which they involve the public in decision-making. An objective of this research was to assess the extent to which TDs believe in either formalist or more populist conceptions of democracy. TDs' positions in relation to a formalist- populist democratic dimension was measured by evaluating their responses to five statements presented to them in the interviews and surveys, which represented varying degrees of popular participation in politics. Respondents' attitudes on these issues failed to cluster as expected, so that it was difficult to conclusively position them on the formalist-populist democratic scale as intended. However, the findings presented in chapter 6 suggest that TDs' attitudes to popular participation are dependent on the context and effects of that participation. For example, a majority of TDs believed that both the public and the elite should have increased power in the process for making constitutional amendments. Nearly all respondents believed that political leaders had a role in leading public opinion. A majority also agreed that the public did not have enough knowledge to adjudicate on everyday legislation, although it must be noted that several respondents qualified this by stating that they felt that TDs did not have sufficient knowledge either. Overall TDs can be described as more formalist than populist in their conception of democracy, a finding likely in turn to affect their position on another representational variable – representational style.

**(iv) Representational Style**

Representational style has been shown by many researchers in the field of legislative studies to be a useful concept. It enables in particular, an assessment of the extent to which processes of representation involve influence on the part of the represented or whether elected leaders view themselves as trustees and act as such. Since this variable was initially identified by Heinz Eulau and his colleagues, the concept of delegation has been expanded to involve party delegation, most often as part of the responsible party model. In this dissertation, the intention was to examine two dimensions of delegation – voter delegation and party delegation. In particular, I was interested in the extent to which TDs conformed to party discipline, their attitude to it and how they resolved conflicts with party policy.

TDs' responses during the interviews and surveys suggested that, for the most part, they view themselves as trustees. This representational role was chosen by 44 per cent of interviewees[104] and 53 per cent of those surveyed. In a choice between their own judgement and voters' views, 50 per cent of interviewed TD stated that their own view was more important where a conflict existed, compared with 12 per cent who chose the view of the voters, and 22 per cent who claimed that their final position would be based on a mixture of both. However, responses to this and other questions detailed in Chapter 7 do not support the existence in Ireland of the pure trustee conceived of by Edmund Burke, but rather a form of trusteeship whereby the views of the represented must be considered, before making decisions and developing policy views.

The same difficulties apply with the responsible party model in Ireland as elsewhere, but Irish TDs can for the most part be described as party delegates, at least in relation to their voting on the floor of the Dáil chamber.

[104] In the context of a 40 per cent no response rate referred to further in Chapter 7.

In addition, many (but by no means all) of them view party discipline as an important factor in ensuring governmental stability. TDs do not however blindly follow the party line, and have developed different ways of expressing dissatisfaction with party policy when this becomes an issue, either due to the constituency implications of a policy, or because it conflicts with their own personal morality. The overall conclusion must be nonetheless that the public have a very limited degree of influence over political decisions, in a context where TDs' own judgement, and their parties' policies are more significant in influencing policy stances and decision-making. Further insights into the relative importance of party and constituency for TDs were obtained in Chapter 8, through an examination of the representational foci and goals of TDs.

**(v) Representational focus and goals**

In this chapter, I was particularly interested in assessing TDs' attitude to their constituency, and constituency work relative to other foci. When the comparative importance of various representational foci for TDs was examined, it was found that the people of the constituency were the most important focus for most TDs (chosen as the preferred option by over 43 per cent of respondents), followed by the nation as a whole (selected by about a third). Interest groups and the representation of party members or voters were not regarded as important. The insignificance of party voters as a focus (chosen by only 3 per cent) further confirms that the assumptions of the responsible party model are not applicable to the Irish case. When the relative importance of various factors in influencing TDs' goals on entry into politics was examined, the achievement of particular policies (mentioned by 18 per cent), or a set of values (referred to by 24 per cent) were almost as important as achieving for the local area (mentioned by 26 per cent). This compared with only 10 per cent who claimed to have sought to further the national interest. TDs were however motivated by other non-representational factors such as a general interest in politics, (42 per cent

referred to this theme), or family involvement in politics, (28 per cent regarded this as a motivation). As a whole, the findings of this chapter suggest a combination of goals, motivations and attitudes for TDs which were not always consistent, and this was even more apparent when it came to testing the typology in Chapter 9.

**(vi) Types of TD**

A three-fold typology of TDs consisting of national promoter, interest promoter and constituency promoter had been deductively developed prior to the data collection stage of the research, and was tested during interviews with TDs, as well as surveys. Certain issues surrounding classification and measurement of the typology became apparent during the testing, and validation process. Nonetheless, most TDs were classified within it, and specific examples of each type were evident. Most TDs considered themselves to be of the type oriented to national concerns, and over 60 per cent of TDs were finally classified as national promoters, either alone or in combination with one of the other types. Somewhat surprisingly, only about a quarter of TDs were categorised as constituency promoters, a smaller figure than one would expect, given both TDs' self-classification and also previous Irish political research. The third category, that of interest promoter, was also shown to be applicable, even if only to a minority (about 15 per cent) of respondents. Labour party TDs and TDs from the smaller parties were more likely to belong to this category than TDs from the two major parties. TDs representing the Fianna Fáil party scored lowest for this type. Variables such as gender and constituency were found to have no significant effect on role type although, as could have been expected, TDs who had been Ministers or Minister of State at some stage in their careers scored lower on average for the constituency promoter type than permanent backbenchers.

It should be noted that validity and reliability tests indicated that classifications should be interpreted with caution, especially for the survey respondents. In particular, indicators for the constituency promoter type did not cluster as expected. One explanation supported by a qualitative examination of the data is that TDs' attitudes to constituency work and representation tend to be inconsistent and ambivalent. Many TDs, during the interviews and in the surveys, stated that they obtained enjoyment from constituency work, yet at other points in the interview or survey claimed to resent it. A significant number of them said that they had entered politics to achieve for their constituency while at the same time they judged legislation to be their most important role.

When it came to assessing the relationship between typological classification (based on goals and attitudes) and TDs' behaviour, it was found that institutional and political factors were likely to be more important than role orientation in predicting behaviour. Although some connections between typological classification and behaviour were identified, it did not prove possible to identify overall causal relationships between role scores and behaviour such as types of parliamentary questions asked, speaking time in the Dáil chamber and overall time allocation on various activities. For example, after an examination of over two thousand parliamentary questions, there was no overall correlation found between achieving a high score for a particular type, and asking more parliamentary questions of that type. In relation to one of central questions presented in Chapter 1, it was found that on average, TDs claimed to spend most of their time on constituency related work, regardless of role orientation, with party duties the next most significant activity in terms of time allocation. This can be explained at least in part by the fact that backbench TDs have a very limited opportunity to participate in legislation, and to a large degree TDs concentrate on areas where they can make a difference. Nonetheless the typological allocations demonstrate that most TDs would like more of a

national role. However, this does not preclude them from valuing constituency work as a way of obtaining job satisfaction.

The findings summarised in this chapter have ramifications for two particular areas – in the context of the practical operation of Irish politics and its study, and also in the academic field of political science. I will refer to the Irish dimension first, before moving to the discussion of implications for the field of political science, and in particular the further study of representation.

## 10.2 Implications for Irish Politics and Research

Certain representational theories, models and concepts have provided a useful framework to guide the analysis of beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of Irish TDs conducted in this dissertation. No single one of these theories, models or concepts, however, has provided a structure to allow a full understanding or explanation of the work of Irish TDs, and their attitudes to their job. Normative theories in particular have been shown to have limited applicability to the Irish representational system.

Each TD is motivated by a variety of goals and attitudes, which in most cases were characterised by sufficient internal consistency to be classified as one particular role type or combination of role types. However role conflict also exists primarily based on institutional factors, and what TDs believe constituents expect. In particular, TDs' behaviour is determined by institutional variables (party, constituency, position in parliament). However, each TD balances a variety of different considerations, of which his or her own moral sense or personal preference is only one element.

Such diversity is often neglected by academic and media commentators and even by TDs themselves who tend to portray a simplistic picture of TDs

being pulled in two directions: their principal constitutional role encompassing legislation, policy formulation and executive scrutiny, and the role that the public expect them to perform. Such sentiments were expressed by Deputy Seán Haughey during Dáil debates on the *Local Government Bill,* 2001:

> In their hearts and souls the electorate still wants Deputies to be available locally and to attend to local matters. Their legislative role, important as it is, is still seen as secondary (Dáil Debates, 13/5/2001).

According to this picture, the life of a TD primarily consists of resolving a trade off between national duties (as the proper role), and constituency duties (imposed by a demanding electorate.) Many arguments advocating Irish political reform are based on such an analysis, which the findings of this dissertation have undermined. It is worth highlighting the main strands of existing assumptions about Irish TDs, their duties and relationship with the electorate, and re-examining them in light of the findings of this research. In particular my results suggest that constituency work is often the only opportunity TDs have to make an impact or obtain any career satisfaction, in a context where the executive dominates the policy-making process. Existing assumptions which must be re-evaluated include:

- A majority of the electorate view constituency work, whether in the form of case-work or 'pork-barrelling,' as the most important duty of a TD, and vote on the basis of the candidate that has performed or is expected to perform best in this regard;
- Local work, and the time spent on it, is the main reason TDs are deprived of an opportunity to legislate, influence policy and scrutinise the executive;
- Most TDs would welcome the opportunity to have increased opportunities to perform such functions as legislation and executive

scrutiny. They do not enjoy constituency work and would prefer it to be a smaller element of their job;

- The Irish political system would be a more democratic and efficient system if all elected TDs were making a significant contribution to legislation and were spending less time on local work.

**(i) Expectations of the Electorate**

Limited survey evidence cited in previous chapters, the number of representations received by TDs, and anecdotal evidence from the interviews and surveys all suggest that voters do indeed value the constituency work conducted by their TDs more than legislation or policy formulation, (unless this is directly connected with the needs of the constituency and is perceived as such). When the interview subjects and survey respondents were asked what they felt was the most important task necessary to secure re-election, 13 per cent mentioned duties such as legislation, 'national' tasks and executive scrutiny, whereas 73 per cent mentioned constituency work and local representation.

Assuming for a moment that voters do indeed value constituency work above all other elements of a TD's role, is this based on the normative belief that representation should primarily be focussed at constituency level, or do other more concrete factors play a role? Previous research suggests that the poor performance of Irish administrative structures is partly to blame (Gallagher and Komito 1999, 221-225). Particular weaknesses identified have been housing, sanitation and the maintenance of roads.[105] This hypothesis was supported by a number of my interview subjects, one of whom, a first term rural TD, stated:

> A lot of the work you get is a matter of red tape and that [sic] really we shouldn't be dealing with it, if officials at various levels were more consumer friendly.... we wouldn't have half the work-load we have.

[105] For recent criticisms of the operation of the Local Authority system, see OECD, 2001 p.139

An improvement in the health care system would reduce the frequent representations TDs have to make (particularly in the form of parliamentary questions) in relation to hospital waiting lists. There is a danger that those who propose Dáil or electoral system reform as solutions to the perceived 'problem' of constituency work, are neglecting alternative solutions, such as an improvement in the efficiency of local government[106] in delivering services, in tandem with a concerted effort to deal with national health and housing difficulties.

Additionally, a recent investigation of the impact of electoral system reform found that the introduction of the most commonly cited alternative to the PR-STV system - the 'additional member' system that involves both single-seat constituencies and a proportional list system – would not reduce the demand for constituency work, but rather it would simply reduce the number of TDs who would be obliged to concentrate on it (Laver 1998a). The author of this study concludes that the main implication of the introduction of the AMS system would be to create two classes of deputies: constituency deputies and deputies elected from party lists. The outcome of this is obvious:

> party list deputies would be more dependent for their positions in public life on their party organisation, but would face much less pressure from the electoral system to take on heavy burdens of constituency work. (Laver 1998, vii).

Based on usual election results, it is likely that constituency TDs would in the main be of the Fianna Fáil party, while the smaller parties would be represented by individuals from the list. Such an outcome would be highly unsatisfactory, as the deputies most influential in legislation would not individually be accountable to the electorate, nor would they be most in tune with local opinion regarding policy issues.

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[106] The Local Government Bill 2000 is one attempt to address such issues. However, it remains to be seen whether it will significantly improve the operation of local government.

**(ii) Other duties undermined by constituency work?**

The justifications behind such proposals for reform is based directly upon the assumption that the principal reason that TDs do not contribute to policy, legislation and executive scrutiny is that they must spend a disproportionate amount of their time on constituency work. This is simply not the case. The Irish political system operates according to the Westminster model of executive dominance, whereby policy formulation and influence is concentrated in the executive. One only has to note the limited amount of Private Members' Bills that successfully pass through the Dáil to note the rarity of opposition or backbench TDs being given an opportunity to formulate policy. Even backbench Government TDs have a limited role and, as was shown in the voting figures in chapter 7, perform as 'lobby fodder.' They can use parliamentary party meetings and informal channels to attempt to influence their frontbench colleagues, but the secrecy and informality of any successes achieved limit their opportunities for credit claiming. During interviews, many TDs mentioned variables, such as the length of career and the nature of the constituency that a TD represents, as influences on their role. It was remarked that TDs at an early stage in their careers were more likely to perform constituency work to secure re-election than their longer established colleagues. Likewise, TDs representing more deprived constituencies were likely to feel that they had an obligation to perform more constituency work. As one interviewee said to me:

> One thing you didn't cover enough is the relevance of the socio-economic profile of the constituency to the type of work that you do.

These institutional features of the Irish system, and variables such as political position, undermine the role of TDs in the legislative and policy process. To identify constituency work as the main factor in this regard ignores not only other potential causes, but also the other less obvious aspects of the relationship between constituency work and legislation. During my interviews and in survey responses, some TDs (not exclusively

backbenchers) stated that their constituency work informed them of gaps and flaws in legislation which contributed to the quality of their performance in policy scrutiny. As one national promoter from Dublin stated:

> Given the constituency case-load we have to do, it makes you face to face confront the reality of life in Ireland in 1999.

It could be claimed that time spent on constituency work does, however, limit the opportunity of TDs to read and research in order to perform their scrutiny function more effectively, and indeed this was a theme mentioned by TDs in the interviews. Twenty six per cent of subjects stated during their interviews that they would like to have more time to spend on such activities. However a shortage of resources in this regard was also mentioned. The possibility of the provision of a research assistant for each TD is currently being considered by consultants employed to examine staffing resources in the Oireachtas (McGee 2001). Without a reform of Dáil structures to provide TDs with more opportunities to use their enhanced knowledge to influence policy, it is unlikely that either a reduction in constituency work, or an increase in research support, would result in more policy influence by opposition TDs, and backbench TDs in particular. This fact is recognised by TDs themselves as is indicated by the Fine Gael party in its September 2000 paper "A Democratic Revolution."

This paper identifies two central shortcomings of the Dáil in performing its functions- its lack of influence in the vetting and enacting of legislation and its failure to hold Government in all its aspects to account in the name of the people. (Bruton and Mitchell 2000, 3). Various factors are blamed for this failure including lack of resources, the nature of the Committee system and an over-use of the party whip in the Irish context. Significantly, there is little mention of the demands of localism as a factor in the under-performance of the Dáil, nor is a lack of interest on behalf of TDs in

performing their scrutiny and legislating functions suggested as a cause. Suggested remedies are concentrated instead on the procedures of the Oireachtas and the resources and powers given to its members.

**(iii)TDs as frustrated legislators**

Most proposals for Dáil reform rely on the assumption that amongst TDs there exists a thwarted ambition to be more involved in policy formulation and executive scrutiny. The findings of this dissertation tend to support this assertion, since about 60 per cent of TDs were categorised as national promoters within the typology. However, this can be qualified somewhat by the fact that of all TDs I sampled, 44 per cent most enjoyed legislative and policy-oriented tasks, while 48 per cent mentioned an enjoyment or sense of satisfaction from constituency work. Furthermore, only 31 per cent of the sample explicitly mentioned constituency work when asked about their least favourite element of the job. As one TD stated:

> It [a local project] gets me a lot of satisfaction, because at least I can see something concrete there that I was involved in. Whereas you could be reading speeches into the record of the House, and nobody reads them.

There appears to be a certain ambiguity amongst TDs in their attitude to constituency work. This is captured in the responses of one TD to separate questions about what tasks he would like perform more of, and what element of his work he would miss most:

> I would prefer to be able to concentrate on doing committee and legislative work." *And a few minutes later*: "I suppose to be honest what I'd miss most is the opposite of what I said, the contact with people and all the sort of social element of this.

Such findings suggest that removing constituency duties might not necessarily improve the levels of career satisfaction amongst most TDs.

**(iv) More policy makers means better democracy?**

Most of the previous assumptions rest on the view that it would be a positive development for the operation of Irish democracy, were more elected TDs to be fully engaged in scrutiny and legislation. As mentioned earlier, this is not likely to be what the public want, nor is it unambiguously what TDs themselves would prefer to do. Even ignoring these two points for a moment, it is not necessarily even the case that such developments would improve the 'democraticness' of the system. This is very much dependent on what conception of democracy one values.

Anyone, for example, who holds that representatives need to mirror the characteristics of the population for a system to be truly democratic, would not see any improvement in the democratic quality of a system, with more of a legislative and policy influence for all currently elected TDs. The similarity in background and characteristics of most TDs elected under the current system means that outcomes would not reflect the interests and opinions of under-represented groups, and indeed would not be radically different from those produced under the existing system. However, as I demonstrated in Chapter 5, it is difficult to prove that socio-economic variables influence policy stances. For example, the best predictor of a TD's stance on various policy issues was party membership, and socio-economic factors were found to have little influence. The fact that the majority of TDs in the Dáil (of the Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael parties) have similar attitudes to the policy issues examined, suggests that a broader role for TDs in legislating might fit better with the constitutionally laid out functions of Dáil Éireann. Nonetheless, it is unlikely to change the type of policies enacted.

This is particularly the case when one considers that TDs tend to value the trustee position over the delegate position, when questioned directly about the appropriate role of a representative. Most respondents selected the

trustee role as closest to their conception of representation although many TDs also placed value on the opinions of constituents. When it comes to behaviour however, and in particular when voting on issues in the Dáil, the overwhelming majority of TDs are party delegates, voting against the party whip very rarely. The data indicates that such loyalty is not based on an inherent belief that voters vote for party political policy packages, and therefore party policy must be promoted. Rather many TDs argue that that the current institutional arrangements of the Dáil would result in the frequent collapse of governments, were votes against the whip readily permitted. Therefore the consequence of TDs having the autonomy to vote freely would simply be the instability of frequent elections.

This belief in stability is also demonstrated by the fact that, when presented with varying measures of populist and elitist theories of democracy, the options selected by individual TDs tended to vary according to the issue at stake. For example, most TDs were opposed to the implications of the McKenna judgment, and all TDs agreed that they were required to lead public opinion on certain occasions. On the other hand, most TDs were against power being taken from the people in terms of changes to the rules on referendums, and many went so far as to favour an extension of the people's power in this regard.[107] In other words, TDs agree with populist theories to a certain point, until there is a potential for destabilisation of the system and then attitudes indicative of more elite theories are apparent.

The findings of this dissertation suggest that Dáil reform in order to increase the potential for TDs in policy-making is desirable, but that it is unlikely to please all TDs or the electorate. An important step in improving the efficacy of individual TDs might be to reduce the frequency of three-line whips, while at the same time differentiating between issues where this

[107] Whether this would currently be the view following the defeat of the Nice referendum in June 2001 is an interesting hypothetical question and is a reminder to researchers that the point in time when data are collected is likely to influence responses.

would mean the fall of a Government, and those which would not have such destabilising consequences. There are also broader implications of these findings, both for comparative research and for future academic projects, which I will now discuss.

## 10.3 Dáil Éireann as a comparative case

In a 1994 chapter about research into political representation, Jacques Thomassen (1994, 237) poses the question as to whether the poor performance of many models of political representation meant "failing democracy or failing models." He suggests that, because most studies of political representation aim to assess the extent to which the operation of a specific representative democracy conformed to normative ideals, they have little explanatory leverage. In his view, the best way for further research to proceed is to accept the fact that "different models can be applicable in different circumstances" (Thomassen 1994, 257). In addition, he states that there is a need for a recognition that the applicability of certain models depends on the constitutional setting. This dissertation is in many ways compatible with Thomassen's view, in applying a variety of models and approaches to the Irish case, which is unique in its institutional composition. Even if models do not apply elsewhere, they cannot be deemed obsolete everywhere unless a variety of cases with a range of institutional features are examined.

For example, it was confirmed that models such as microcosmic representation and policy congruence lack contemporary applicability in the Irish context, as well as in other systems previously studied. It might have been expected that such models would apply where the electoral system provides voters with the opportunity to select representatives, both on the basis of individual qualities and party background. However, this was shown not to be the case and, according to some criteria, Irish TDs are even

less representative than MPs elsewhere (for example women are more numerous in most European democracies than in Ireland). In addition, the influence of party affiliation in determining policy stances and votes among MPs is as apparent in Ireland as it is in systems such as the Dutch and Swedish, where local factors are less important. In fact, as highlighted in Chapter 7, the proportions of TDs ever voting against their party is even lower in Ireland than that in other countries. These findings suggest that the strength of political parties, and the composition of elites is not caused by the electoral system, nor the nature of the political institutions, but is rather a common feature of most democracies including Ireland. In addition, as researchers have found for many other countries, the assumptions of the responsible party model do not apply to the Irish case.

Many of the findings outlined in this dissertation show that Ireland is fairly typical in terms of the roles and behaviour of its representatives, and its overall operation of representation. The main findings for the Swedish case apply also to Ireland: that representation is run from above but that it does matter to some degree which particular persons are elected to pursue a party's programme (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996, 310). The conclusion drawn by Patzelt (1997 73) that German MPs "hold their office in a 'trustee' way, keeping the elements of responsiveness and of leadership well balanced" also applies in the Irish case, as was particularly shown in chapters 7 and 9 (if trustee is interpreted to relate to the relationship between representatives and the voters rather than their parties). If the second interpretation of trustee is incorporated, then Heidar's (1997, 106) conclusion for Norway that MPs are primarily trustees, is appropriate also for Ireland. This is similar to findings for the Belgian case, where MPs were found to adopt a trustee style towards the represented, but act as delegates towards their parties (de Winter 1997, 150).

In terms specifically of typologies of members of parliament, attempts have been made by various authors to apply either Wahlke et al's typology (see for example Cheek-Milby 1995, 185-228) or Searing's (for example Heidar 1997, 103-106). Findings suggest that some individual types are more adaptable than others, and that some reformulation is necessary for typologies to apply in more than one context. For example, Heidar omits Searing's ministerial aspirant and includes a category of partisan which Searing (1994, 486 note 16) deliberately excluded from his typology.

I devised my own typology for two reasons – first because I disagreed with the functional separation inherent in the typology of Wahlke and his colleagues, and secondly because both this typology and that of Searing contained far more types than necessary for the Irish case given its relatively small number of representatives. In addition, I considered that many of the sub-types were likely to lack applicability to the Irish case. For example, Wahlke and his colleagues' ritualist type seemed rather anachronistic (similar to Searing's parliament man), while their district- state dichotomy was irrelevant, due to Ireland's unitary status, and its different territorial organisation. As seen in Chapter 8, this proved to be the case. I believe that my typology manages to incorporate the more universal aspects of representatives' roles, without separating representation as a function from representation as a concept. I therefore consider that it might be applied to other contexts, particularly those where locality or constituency is a significant representative focus.

### 10.4: Methodology and future research

As well as the potential application of the typology to other cases, the depth and content of data received about role orientation, through use of the representational style and focus variables, suggest that these are fruitful conceptual tools for future research. Even if pure delegation is no longer

feasible in modern democracies, the extent to which representatives involve constituents in their decision making, and the interaction between this and party influence, provides a useful insight into the various components of decision-making and political action. Furthermore, my research suggests that studying less formal behaviour, such as political lobbying of ministers, and discussions at parliamentary party meetings, both in Ireland and other contexts can provide new insights as to how policy is developed and shaped.

As an overall project, the experience of producing this dissertation provides methodological guidelines for future research, and in particular for doctoral students. Although the interviews with TDs provided insightful data, it is difficult to obtain the amount of access needed to elites (at least in Ireland), to cover many topics or issues. Furthermore when interviewed TDs tended to focus very narrowly on their own individual experience, and to resist attempts to interpret their individual perspective in terms of patterns or generalisations.

An additional consideration, for doctoral students in particular, is resources. I would not recommend to PhD candidates that they undertake a project reliant on data from a large number of interviews, unless they have substantial financial resources at their disposal. Interview data is an invaluable way of gaining a further understanding of individuals, but may be better gathered by an established academic with a research grant at their disposal.

The main overall conclusion that I draw from this project is that Irish TDs and processes of representation are broadly similar to those, which operate in other systems. TDs are perhaps less politically ideological than MPs in other contexts, but hold strong loyalties principally to their party and also to their constituents. As one rural interviewee stated:

> Teachta Dála means messenger of the people, and that's really what we are. It's not just maybe small things but it's their whole future that we are messengers [sic]. We represent them. We represent everything. We represent every aspect of their living from health to taxation to their environment around them and so on.

Although somewhat rhetorical, this quote supports one of the principal assumptions behind this dissertation – that policy-making and legislating are not competing functions of representation, but are rather components of it. I would therefore suggest that future parliamentary researchers abandon existing functional approaches, and analyse parliaments and representation in a more holistic way. It is only through such a broad approach that the operation of representation and democracy can be fully understood, regardless of the political context.

## Appendix 1: Interview questions referred to in dissertation

### Information about entry into politics

1. What would you say were the motivations that led you to enter political life?
2. When you entered politics what was the main thing you hoped to achieve?

### Role as TD

3. Thinking about your broad role as TD, what *should* be the most important duties and responsibilities involved regardless of how important these tasks are in practice?
4. Thinking over your political activity, what do you personally find most satisfying about it? What would you miss most if you left politics?
5. What do you find least appealing about your duties and responsibilities as a TD?
6. What do you consider to have been your biggest achievement during your political career?
7. * Which of these is most important to you? *Rank 1 to 3.*
   (i) to be a representative of the members of your party.
   (ii) to be a representative of the voters of your party.
   (iii) to be a representative of all voters.
8. * How important is it to you to represent the following groups of people? *Rank between and 6.*
   (i) All people in Ireland (the nation as a whole)
   (ii) All voters who voted for your party nation-wide
   (iii) All those who voted for you in your constituency?
   (iv) All the people in your constituency
   (v) A specific group in society. Which one?
   (vi) the members and activists of your party
9. * What do you think is implied by the term representation? *Rank between 1 and 4.*
   (i) Acting as a trustee for the people, making decisions primarily based on one's own judgement on what is best for the nation as a whole.
   (ii) As close a match as possible between representatives and the people in socio-economic terms.
   (iii) Pursuing the interests of the local constituency
   (iv) Reflecting the policy opinions of the local constituency.

10. Various typologies of members of parliament exist. One such typology differentiates between **parliamentarians**, **constituency workers** and **policy advocates**.
    Parliamentarians have the primary goal of pursuing the national interest, making decisions between competing interests and opinions based on their

own judgement of what is best. They believe that this national interest should be put before local considerations.

Policy advocates have the primary goal of achieving the policy objectives of sectoral interests within their constituency. They have the attitude that they are elected to represent their constituents on policy issues on the floor of the House and in Committees. They would tend to emphasise the people's perspectives on these issues rather than their own judgement.

Constituency workers have the primary goal of protecting and promoting the interests of their constituents through individual case-work and the allocation of resources to projects within their constituency. They have the attitude that TDs are elected with the principal objective of representing their local constituency and are therefore obliged to represent the interests of individual constituents and the geographical constituency as a whole at the national level.

If you had to categorise yourself in one of these categories, which would you choose.

**11.** * When discussing policy options behind the closed doors of a parliamentary party meeting, which of these is a bigger influence on you? *Please only select one.*

| | |
|---|---|
| your own personal views | |
| the views of those who voted for you | |

**12.*** Was there ever an occasion where you felt very strongly about an issue and your position was contrary to the position mandated by the party whip? Yes / No *Please circle one.*

**13.** If yes to the above, how did you resolve this?

(i) Lobby for the modification of the policy behind party doors and then vote with the party no matter what the outcome
(ii) Lobby for the modification of the policy behind party doors and only vote with the party if you felt your input was reflected in the ultimate party position
(iii)Vote contrary to the party whip without lobbying the party leadership
(iv)Accept the party position without seeking a modification of party policy?
(v) Other (specify)

**15.*** How many hours a week approximately do you spend on these activities? If you prefer you can express each as a percentage of your working week but please then specify how many hours a week you work. Please include any travelling within each category e.g. travelling to clinics should be included in category (iv)

| | |
|---|---|
| **(i)** In the Dáil Chamber | |
| **(ii)** On Committee work : attending meetings and preparing for meetings. | |
| **(iii)** Fulfilling party duties : attending parliamentary party meetings and local constituency meetings | |
| **(iv)** Attending constituency clinics | |
| **(v)** Personally responding to letters and phone calls from constituents | |
| **(vi)** Attending functions in the constituency e.g. funerals, meetings, charity events | |
| **(vii)** Any other activity (please specify) | |
| **(viii)** Overall hours worked each week | |

**16.** Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Provision should be made for popular initiative to amend the Constitution. | | | | |
| Amendments to the Constitution that are deemed to be purely stylistic or technical should be permitted to be made by simple acts of the Oireachtas. | | | | |
| The Government should be allowed to fund the promotion of amendments to the Constitution, contrary to the ruling in the McKenna Judgement | | | | |
| The public do not have enough technical and specialist knowledge to adjudicate on everyday legislation. | | | | |
| It is the role of political leaders to lead public opinion on certain issues. | | | | |

**Policy stances**

**17.** To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ireland should join the PFP | | | | |
| Tougher action should be taken against criminals even if this means curtailing civil liberties | | | | |
| Taxes on the higher paid should be increased to improve services | | | | |
| The use of marijuana should be decriminalised | | | | |
| There are too many immigrants being let into this country | | | | |
| Trade Unions have too much power in Ireland | | | | |
| Job creation should be a priority even when this means some damage to the environment. | | | | |
| Women should be free to decide for themselves on abortion | | | | |

* Denotes question prioritised for follow-up survey to interviewees referred to on page 63.

## Appendix 2: Survey questions

**1.** Which of these is most important to you? *Tick one option*

| | |
|---|---|
| **(i)** to be a representative of the members of your party. | |
| **(ii)** to be a representative of the voters who voted for you. | |
| **(iii)** to be a representative of all voters. | |

**2.** Thinking about your broad role as TD, what *should* be the most important duties and responsibilities involved regardless of how important these tasks are in practice?

**3.** Thinking over your political activity, what do you personally find most satisfying about it? What would you miss most if you left politics?

**4.** What do you find least appealing about your duties and responsibilities as a TD?

**5.** Do you have a paid secretary/ assistant(s)? Y/N If yes, how many? How many hours per week approximately would your secretary(s)/assistant(s) spend on constituency work?

**6.** How many hours a week approximately do you spend on these activities? If you prefer you can express each as a percentage of your working week but please then specify how many hours a week you work. Please include any travelling within each category e.g. travelling to clinics should be included in category (iv)

| | |
|---|---|
| **(i)** In the Dáil Chamber | |
| **(ii)** On Committee work : attending meetings and preparing for meetings. | |
| **(iii)** Fulfilling party duties : attending parliamentary party meetings and local constituency meetings | |
| **(iv)** Attending constituency clinics | |
| **(v)** Personally responding to letters and phone calls from constituents | |
| **(vi)** Attending functions in the constituency e.g. funerals, meetings, charity events | |
| **(vii)** Any other activity (please specify) | |
| **(viii)** Overall hours worked each week | |

**7.** What is the most crucial activity you must perform to gain re-election?

**8.** Members of parliament have often been categorised as either trustees or delegates where **trustees** feel that their role is to judge each issue on its merits, in the light of their own judgement, regardless of the views of their constituents while **delegates** believe that their role is to represent the views and demands of their constituents regardless of whether they personally agree with these. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represent a TD who sees themselves entirely as a trustee and 10 represents a TD who sees themselves entirely as a delegate, where would you place yourself? *Please circle the appropriate number under the scale.*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Trustee** **Delegate**

**9.** Which of these is most important to you? *Please rank 1,2,3*

| | |
|---|---|
| To represent the interests of the nation as a whole | |
| To represent your constituency/local area | |
| To promote a particular ideology or policy programme | |

**10.** Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

| | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Provision should be made for popular initiative to amend the Constitution. | | | | |
| Amendments to the Constitution that are deemed to be purely stylistic or technical should be permitted to be made by simple acts of the Oireachtas. | | | | |
| The Government should be allowed to fund the promotion of amendments to the Constitution, contrary to the ruling in the McKenna Judgement | | | | |
| The public do not have enough technical and specialist knowledge to adjudicate on everyday legislation. | | | | |
| It is the role of political leaders to lead public opinion on certain issues. | | | | |
| For the Dáil to be truly representative, it should contain members of all the principal socio-economic groups e.g. farmers, women, travellers, the unemployed in similar proportions to their strength in Irish society | | | | |

**11.** To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

| | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rural areas are in general more underprivileged than urban areas | | | | |
| Ireland's membership of the PfP is a positive development | | | | |
| Tougher action should be taken against criminals even if this means curtailing civil liberties | | | | |
| Taxes on the higher paid should be increased to improve services | | | | |
| The use of marijuana should be decriminalised | | | | |
| There are too many immigrants being let into this country | | | | |
| Trade Unions have too much power in Ireland | | | | |
| Job creation should be a priority even when this means some damage to the environment. | | | | |
| Women should be free to decide for themselves on abortion | | | | |

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