

**We don't like (to) party:
Explaining the significance of Independents in Irish
political life**

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at University of Dublin, Trinity College, nor at any other University.

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work.

I agree that the library may lend of copy the thesis upon request.

Summary

The aim of this thesis is to explain the significant presence of Independents (non-party representatives) in the Irish political system. This topic was chosen because parties have a monopoly on parliamentary representation in almost all liberal democracies. Ireland is an exception to this pattern, as Independents have been elected to every session of parliament since the foundation of the modern Irish state. There have been very few academic analyses of Independents carried out in relation to any political system, and this study therefore makes a significant contribution to the political science discipline. Important contributions are also made to the specific areas of candidate emergence, campaign effects, voting behaviour, and electoral systems. This thesis sheds light on the background of Independent candidates and why they choose to run for office; it provides a detailed analysis of the effects of campaign activities; and it assesses the consequences of an electoral system that has been under-studied.

My two main units of analysis are Independent candidates and voters for such candidates. The data on candidates stems from both a survey of local election candidates and election statistics, while the data on voters is from a national election study.

Given the lack of published data on the role and nature of Independents, a typology of Independents is provided. This is devised from a qualitative analysis of candidates' campaigns from contemporary newspapers. The purpose of this categorisation is to account for the heterogeneous nature of Independent candidates, who tend to attract a vote contextual to the nature of their candidacy. As such, a typology of Independents goes some way to explaining why people vote for them.

To explain the significance of Independents, four main questions are asked: why individuals choose to run as Independents; what effect their campaigns

have; why people choose to vote for such candidates; and what role the electoral system plays in affecting the behaviour of both these candidates and voters alike. In explaining the motives of candidates, both the sociological and rational models are assessed. The influence of campaigns focuses on how they affect candidates' vote. Several theories of voting behaviour are used to determine why people vote for Independents, in particular the ideas of party identification and the sociological model. The role of the electoral system is considered by focussing on its mechanical and psychological effects.

The main findings are that although Independents are a heterogeneous category, there are still some general catch-all reasons accounting for their significance. Independents are not more expressive in their motives in running for office than party candidates, and their socio-economic background varies little from the latter. Independents also demonstrate evidence of a strategic nature, as the pattern of their emergence displays an element of rationality. Campaigns are important to Independents, more so than for party candidates, as they have a significant effect on the vote accrued at elections.

The vote for Independent candidates appears to be a product of a localistic political culture, but also has an element of a protest behind it. It is not the case that the electoral system creates this Independent vote, but it certainly facilitates its expression, as it establishes conditions that encourage the flourishing of a culture conducive to an Independent vote.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1. 1 Introduction

‘The most distinctive phenomenon on the Irish electoral landscape has been the Independent deputy’ (Coakley 2005: 28)

‘If there were no parties – in other words, if every member of parliament was an independent with no institutionalised links with other members – the result would be something close to chaos’ (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2005: 308).

The Sunday after the Irish general election of Thursday 24 May 2007, the headline of one of the major national newspapers read ‘The Kingmakers’;¹ underneath this the photographs of the five Independent² members of parliament (Teachtá Dála (TDs)) re-elected to the Dáil were published, along with details of the influence they were expected to wield on the formation of the new government. Ultimately, four of these Independents supported the Fianna Fáil–Green Party–Progressive Democrat coalition formed in June, each of them extracting significant levels of ‘pork’ in return for their vote in parliament. This was the fifth time in less than thirty years that Independent TDs had played a crucial role in the government formation process in Ireland; it is evident from this that they are important political actors, and yet there has been very little systematic study conducted of who these Independents are, and why they wield such a significant level of power.

The political systems where Independents usually are successful are those where party organisations are very weak or where party labels are prohibited (Norris 2006: 91). Examples of the former occur in some post-communist polities (for example, Kazakhstan and the Ukraine), while the latter are prevalent in the Arabian Gulf, where parties are seen as an unnecessary

¹ Kevin Rafter and Shane Coleman. 2007. ‘The Kingmakers.’ *The Sunday Tribune*, 27 May.

² Throughout this thesis the term ‘Independent’ is capitalised when referring to Independent politicians and to individuals who vote for Independent candidates. The latter is done to distinguish such voters from those who consider themselves independent-minded, that is, to distinguish between the use of the word ‘independent’ as a general adjective and as a noun signifying a particular political status. However, the term ‘independence’ that refers to the non-party status of candidates is not capitalised.

intermediary between the rulers and the ruled. However, almost all states falling into these two categories are not fully-fledged liberal democracies. In those states that can be considered such, ‘Independents usually have a minimal realistic chance of electoral success at national level without the official endorsement, financial assistance, and organisational resources that parties provide’ (ibid.). In recent years, there have been a few exceptions to this rule, as some Independents have been elected to national office in Australia, Canada, the US, and the UK. However, in addition to being just recent aberrations, the combined number of parliamentarians in all these jurisdictions amounts to barely more than a handful. Ireland is an exception to this general pattern, as Independents have not only been elected to every Dáil (national parliament) since the 1920s, but also significant numbers have done so.

Independent politicians are an eclectic breed, with candidates running under this label in Ireland ranging from former Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael government ministers, community activists looking to promote a localised issue, nominees of interest groups, to representatives of religious groups. These ‘non-party’ candidates, as they are officially labelled, are an amorphous collection that are classified under the catch-all title of ‘Independents’, with little analysis of the common characteristics, if any, that they share. Sharman rightly asks, what is it exactly that these candidates are independent of (Sharman 2002: 53)? Some are clearly aligned to political parties, even including the name of the party in their self-appointed title (examples being Independent Fianna Fáil and Independent Labour candidates); some are chosen to represent an interest group in electoral politics, with their actions being dependent on the wishes of the respective group. Consequently, while the adjective ‘independent’ implies a lack of bias, politicians who adopt this label are not necessarily either neutral or non-partisan. From their title to their characteristics to their impact, the field of study concerning Independents is quite limited and bare. The aim of this dissertation is to shed some light into this area, as it sets out to provide an understanding of the phenomenon of the Independent politician, which, more specifically, is concerned with accounting for the electoral success they have achieved in Ireland. This case was chosen

because their presence in this country has been ‘unusual...by most West European standards’ (Busteed 1990: 41), and they are ‘a phenomenon relatively unknown in the rest of Western Europe’ (Coakley 1987: 164). In contrast to some systems where the occasional Independent is elected, the success they have achieved in Ireland has been fairly consistent, rather than sporadic. This significant role Independents play in Irish politics is assessed by a focus on three main factors – why individuals run as Independent candidates, why people vote for them, and finally, the role an institutional variable, the electoral system, plays in their success.

What is an Independent? Usually this refers to someone who is neither a member of, nor affiliated with, a political party. The term is sometimes broadened to include members of minor parties; Mitchell (2001: 193), for example, includes in his categorisation of Independents TDs who are their parties’ sole parliamentary representatives. Independence can also be thought of as a qualitative term that assesses the extent to which individual MPs follow the directives of an affiliate organisation, be it a political party or an interest group. For example, there are many cases in the US of party mavericks with their own personal machine, who do and say what they want, largely independent of their party executive. These can be more independent in the qualitative sense than some Independents nominated to run by interest groups, who may be little more than mouthpieces of their respective organisations. In the ideological sense, Independent need not imply the holding of either a centrist or neutralist position; it simply means that an individual’s political stance stemmed from their own original thought, and was not forced on them by an external group, such as a political party.

In light of the many potential difficulties that could arise when attempting to undertake a qualitative analysis of the independence of politicians, the working definition used throughout this dissertation is King-Hall’s minimalist version: ‘a person independent of the party machines’ (1952: 54)³, that is, someone not affiliated with a political party. This is also the

³ Marsh et al. use a similar typology, as they define Independents as ‘simply electoral candidates who are not associated with any particular party’ (2008: 49).

definition used by the electoral authorities in Ireland, since they refer to such candidates as ‘non-party’, rather than Independents.⁴ This somewhat broad definition means that four types of Independents are included within the framework of this research. The first, and dominant type is the ‘pure’ Independent, who is not affiliated with any party; second is the ‘gene pool’ Independent, so called because of their history of association with a party; third is the nominee of an interest group; while fourth is the representative of either a locally-based or micro-party that does not compete on the national scene, and has not been included on the official state register of parties. Throughout this dissertation, unless otherwise stated, the term Independent refers to these four different types of candidates.

Why focus on Independents? To begin with, parties dominate political life in the western world to the extent that democracy is said to be ‘unthinkable’ (Schattschneider 1977: 1) or ‘unworkable’ (Aldrich 1995: 3) without them. Indeed, membership of a party is essential for election in almost all liberal democracies (Webb 2002a: 4, quoted in Farrell and McAllister 2006: 106). I say almost all, because since the early 1990s, Independent candidates have been elected to a number of national parliaments, including the British House of Commons (for just the second time since 1950), to the US Congress (for the first time since 1947), to the Australian House of Representatives, to the Japanese Diet, and to the Canadian House of Commons. These successes of Independents are usually greeted with a mixture of surprise and bewilderment, because such candidacies are believed to be a relic of a forgotten past when parties were reviled and independence represented the Burkean ideal of parliamentary representation (see Cox 1987: 21). These electoral triumphs have led to a renewed interest in Independents, but given the limited number of successful Independent candidacies, there has not been any major study to date analysing their significance.⁵

⁴ When electoral legislation regarding the labelling of candidates was introduced in the 1960s it resulted in a lengthy debate in parliament on whether to use the term ‘Independent’ or ‘Non-party’ to describe Independent candidates, see as an example the Dáil debates on the 1962 Electoral Bill: *Dáil debates* 200 481–509, 27 February 1963; *Dáil debates* 201: 522–526, 27 March 1963.

⁵ Exceptions include Collet (1999), Avlon (2004), Costar and Curtin (2004).

Ireland, however, is somewhat of an exception, as Independents have been elected to every session of parliament since independence was achieved in 1922. They sometimes attract as much as 10 percent of the national vote, and when examined on a constituency-by-constituency basis, their support can rise to as high as 30 percent of the valid vote in some districts. In 2002 Independents won over 15 percent of the first preference vote in 11 constituencies. In addition to their considerable electoral performance, Independents have also had an important effect on government formation. From 1922 to 2002, 40 percent of governments formed in Ireland were minority administrations, all of which were dependent on the support of Independent parliamentarians. Such a significant role is a challenge to the aforementioned dominance of parties, warranting an explanation for their success. Given this indication that Ireland is the outstanding case in the liberal democratic world where Independents have had a significant presence, and it is the most suitable arena within which to study this type of politician. Because this significance deviates from the comparative trends in most other liberal democracies (Busteed 1990: 4), the phenomenon of the Independent in Irish political life, about which no systematic study has yet been completed (Mitchell 2001: 199), demands academic attention, and it is therefore the focus of this thesis.

1.2 Why study Independents?

As already mentioned, with the exception of a few works (see Chubb 1957; Collett 1999; Costar and Curtin 2004), Independents have not been studied to date in any great detail, predominantly because the vast majority of them are very minor political actors who win very few votes in any liberal democracy. In a volume on a similar type of minor actor, namely those standing for small parties, three reasons were listed as to why small parties have been the focus of very little research. These were (Müller-Rommel 1991: 2–3):

1. They are politically unimportant because of the size of their vote.
2. In surveys, there are too few cases of small party voters to be of any statistical significance.

3. They have a low impact on government policy.

It is true that these reasons are justifiable for not conducting a study of Independents in most political systems. However, the experience of Independent politicians in Ireland counters each of these factors. First, Independents do receive a sizeable proportion of first preferences, which nationally was almost 10 percent in 2002. This explains Sinnott's claim that it is 'essential, given their (Independents) size, particularly at certain periods, to take them into account in assessing trends in voting choice' (1995: 65). Second, there were 200 cases of Independent voters in the 2002 Irish National Election Study, an adequate number for statistical analysis; and third, Independents have a considerable impact on government policy, as they have exacted an influence on certain policies from the minority administrations that have been dependent on their support for survival. Evidently, Independents can be important political actors, as indicated by the following headlines taken from contemporary newspapers across a range of years:

'The future of the government is in the hands of six Independents'
(*The Irish Times*, 4 June 1951).

'Independents hold key to power' (*Irish Independent*, 9 June 1951).

'Independents and others to hold balance in Dáil' (*The Irish Times*, 13 June 1981).

'Government falls as Independents revolt against Budget measures'
(*The Irish Times*, 28 January 1982).

'Haughey's fate rests on Gregory vote' (*The Irish Times*, 10 March 1987).

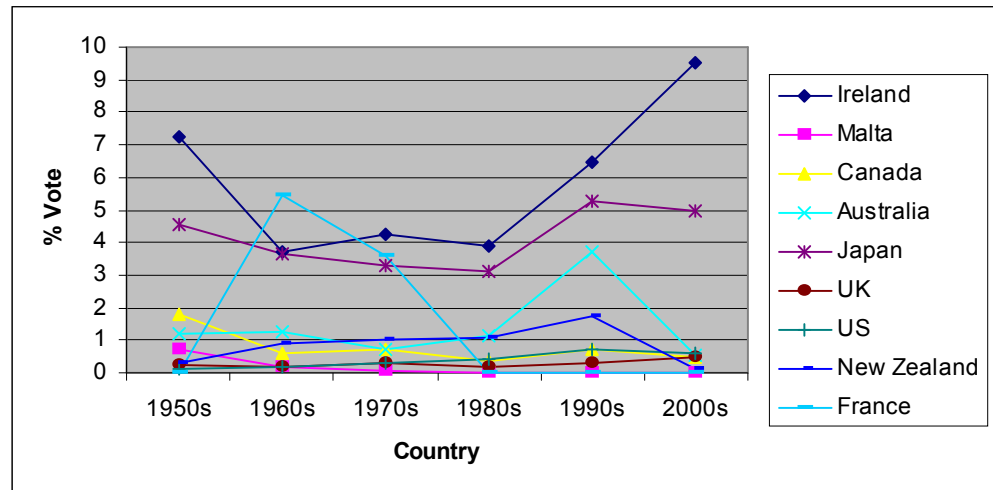
'The Government...will remain in office only so long as it keeps Independents happy' (*The Irish Times*, 12 December 1998).

'No sure bets any more as smaller parties, Independents hold balance' (*The Irish Times*, 13 November 1999).

Because of this prominence over an extended time-frame, and because almost all Independent candidates win so few votes in all other liberal democracies, we need to understand why this is not the case in Ireland, why some candidates can win a seat to parliament, and then decide who gets to form

a government, as was the case for an Independent TD, Tony Gregory, in both 1982 and 1987⁶. A look at the strength of support for Independents in Ireland in contrast to other liberal democracies highlights the importance of this phenomenon.

Figure 1.1 Comparative vote for Independents, 1950s–2000s⁷



Source: www.electionworld.org; Dieter Nohlen. 2001. *Elections in Asia and the Pacific: A Data Handbook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Dieter Nohlen. 2005. *Elections in the Americas: A Data Handbook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; <http://www.maltadata.com>

As can be seen in figure 1.1, Independent candidates have received a negligible vote since World War II in most of the countries listed. The only two cases where they have consistently polled a respectable figure are Japan and Ireland. However, the vote accruing to Independents in Japan is mainly to candidates affiliated to the Liberal Democratic Party (hence their being known as LDIs (Liberal Democratic Independents)), and is not an authentic

⁶ *The Sunday Tribune* vividly described Gregory's position in 1987: 'It was eyeball to eyeball and Gregory blinked' (quoted in Farrell 1987: 144).

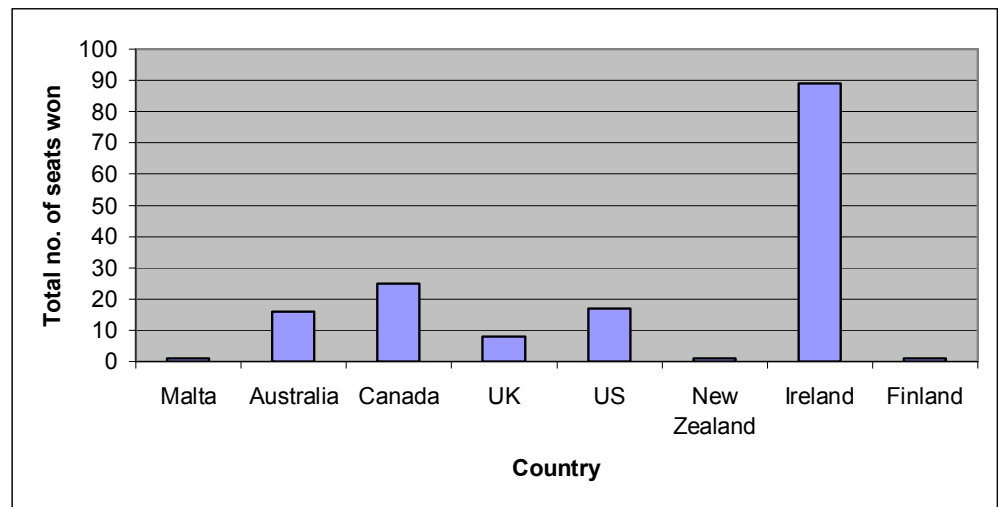
⁷ This figure only includes liberal democracies using electoral systems that permit candidates to run as Independents. It does not include states using list electoral systems (most of mainland Europe), because Independent candidacies are not permitted in such countries. Although individuals outside of parties can form their own personalised list to contest elections, it is very difficult to distinguish between the lists of genuine minor parties and those of individuals for two main reasons: (1) it can be quite difficult to get the breakdown of support for such minor party lists, because they are often combined into an 'others' column in published election returns; (2) this would be a very time-consuming operation that would require a qualitative analysis of every single list that contested every general election in all west European democracies since the 1950s, a task that would be greatly hampered by language differences.

Independent vote. This leaves Ireland as the only case where there has been a consistent vote for genuine Independents in the post-war era. If we look at the total number of seats won by Independents over the same time period, this further strengthens the significance of the Irish case (see figure 1.2 below). Excluding the case of Japan for the aforementioned reasons, there have been fifty percent more Independents elected to the Dáil since 1945 than the combined total in the remaining liberal democracies during the same time period, a figure made all the more striking by the relative small size of the Irish parliament (ranging from 144 to 166 members).⁸ A note here is required about France, which is not included in figure 1.2 because of the ambiguous nature of its *non-inscrit* deputies. *Non-inscrit* means not attached (to any party group), and there have been approximately 200 of these candidates elected to the French National Assembly since World War II.⁹ However, this does not necessarily mean that such deputies are Independents (very rarely, if ever, do they use this term). In the French Assembly, a party needs to win 20 seats to acquire official party status, and any parties that do not reach this number are included in the *non-inscrit* category. In addition, party groupings are often formed post-election; this means that although some candidates may look like an Independent to the untrained eye at an election, their true partisan colours are revealed when parliament meets. For example, when the various parliamentary groups coalesced on the left and right after the 2007 election, six deputies remained outside these coalitions, and are known as the *non-inscrit*; however, these six deputies all belong to three different parties, and none of them is a genuine Independent. Consequently, *non-inscrit* is largely just an administrative term that does not imply independence.

Figure 1.2. Seats won by Independents in national parliaments, 1945–2005

⁸ 89 seats were won by Independents in Ireland, in contrast to 63 won in the other western democracies.

⁹ Source: <http://francepolitique.free.fr>



Source: www.electionworld.org; Dieter Nohlen. 2001. *Elections in Asia and the Pacific: A Data Handbook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Dieter Nohlen. 2005. *Elections in the Americas: A Data Handbook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; <http://www.maltadata.com>

The substantial numbers of Independents elected to office in Ireland have been a contributory factor in the role they have wielded upon government formation. This influence has motivated a lot of discussion concerning the democratic validity about the power individual TDs have been able to exert as ‘kingmakers’, especially in relation to their influence on distributive policy, as ‘pork’ tends to be the common currency used to ‘buy’ their support (FitzGerald 2000; FitzGerald 2003: 63). In addition, Independents’ influential position is sometimes deemed detrimental to democratic stability (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2005: 308), because minority governments can be held to ransom by pivotal Independent TDs. An example of this was a period of eighteen months between 1981 and 1982 when two governments fell, because both of them were unstable minority administrations dependent on the support of Independents.

An additional normative factor is related to the necessity of parties for parliamentary democracy (Aldrich 1995: 3). Parties fulfil a number of important roles that Independents cannot realise, including the aggregation of interests, the structuring of preferences, the provision of a ‘brand name’ to make the voting decision easier for voters, the provision of a linkage between the ruling and the ruled, and the recruitment and socialisation of the political elite (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2005: 308). In addition, parties help prevent

the instability that can result from cyclical majority rule (Aldrich 1995: 39–41; Brennan and Lomasky 1993: 81-86), and overcome the problem of collective action that could result in low voter participation by mobilising the electorate (Aldrich 1995: 24). The case of Papua New Guinea (where Independents were the largest political grouping after both the 1992 and 1997 elections (Reilly 2002: 706)) highlights what can happen when Independents are the dominant political grouping in a democracy, as it has resulted in a very unstable system, where every government since independence has been defeated by a no-confidence vote (Reilly 2002: 707).

Moving beyond the functions of parties, Dalton follows the approach of Easton that sees political support as a multi-level dimension, that is, political support for one level affects support for another. Because parties are so intertwined with democracy, a loss in support for the former may have disastrous consequences for the latter, as it may result in ‘eventual revolution, civil war, or loss of democracy’ (Dalton 1999: 59 quoted in Holmberg 2003: 289–290). Because a vote for an Independent can reasonably be interpreted as a vote against a party, it is important to understand what motivates such a decision, especially if the support for alternatives to party politics increases across democracies, which has been a trend in Europe since the 1990s (Jordan 1999: 10).

There are a number of other factors justifying a dissertation devoted to Independents. The overarching role of parties in contemporary western democracies has created a surge of dissent, fuelling a new wave of support for alternative organisations since the 1970s (Merkl 1988: 562). Despite their increasing prevalence, research into these groups still lags far behind their ‘real-world’ significance. To date, studies of alternative organisations have looked at the ‘new radical right’ parties (Givens 2005; Kitschelt 1995; Norris 2005); Green movements (Müller-Rommel 1989; Poguntke 1993), and a number of alternative organisations ranging from single-issue to community organisations (Jordan and Ridley 1999; Lawson and Merkl 1988). Few of these studies have touched on the alternative political grouping that outlasted all these transient movements, dominated political life before parties, and is the

still more common form of alternative representation: the Independent member. It is the aim of this dissertation to fill this lacuna by focussing on the case where Independents have achieved their greatest levels of success and significance in the twentieth century: Ireland.

The Independent politician is also a rather distinctive figure, often seen as an idiosyncratic maverick in a world where parties are the norm. However, this is a relatively new departure, because until the nineteenth century Independents were the norm. In pre-twentieth century democracies, parliamentary life was about ‘personal representation’ and the independence of MPs (Duverger 1959: 256). The latter was an element heralded as one of the valued traits of deputies, which meant that being an Independent was an important status symbol (Cox 1987: 21). The modern party has only been around for one hundred years or so (Merkl 1988: 562), mainly because parties were historically much reviled, as it was believed that they distorted the link between government and the people. Indeed, the term party originates from the Latin verb *partire*, which means to divide, and it was for these very reasons that parties were despised: they were seen to promote sectional interests to the detriment of the nation’s welfare (Ignazi 1996: 279).¹⁰ This stemmed from their factional tendencies, sentiment that was echoed by many political philosophers, including Madison in *The Federalist* (Number 10) (2003: 51-59). As Belloni and Beller note, ‘party spirit was viewed as the antithesis of public spirit’ (1978: 4). In such a climate, the ‘private’ member of parliament – an Independent – was lauded (Beales 1967: 3), because being independent was more than just a label – it was heralded as the highest state of being for any true democrat; it implied that a politician could make a decision based on his own personal judgement, free of pressure from any external influence, such as parties or interest groups. Keith et al. (1992: 5–7) list a variety of references to the esteem in which Independents were held up until the twentieth century; for one, they were seen as altruistic individuals who put the welfare of the state

¹⁰ This explains why even in the twentieth century a lot of nationalist parties prefer to avoid using the term party in their name to emphasise their desire to represent the nation rather than that of a section; examples include Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Sinn Féin in Ireland; Forza Italia and Alleanza Nazionale in Italy; Rassemblement pour la République in France, and so on.

before that of the party. For example, writing about the Irish electoral system in the 1950s, Ross (1959: 18) claimed that ‘Independent deputies enrich the political life of the country, and help to keep it from the stagnation that is so dangerous to the well-being of a democracy’. As a result, Independents were the dominant type of politician in all democracies until the emergence of the modern political party in the nineteenth century, when the individual actors concerned realised that they could achieve more politically by working in unison, which proved to be the foundations upon which the modern political party was born. Once it was accepted that parties were not detrimental to society, they took a stranglehold upon political power in all western democracies, resulting in the rapid decline of the Independent politician. With the emergence of the complexities associated with modern government, it became an accepted premise that parliamentary democracy could not survive without parties. The esteem with which Independents were held took a severe nosedive as a result; they were seen as irresponsible fence-sitters who avoided the key political decisions that had to be made. In many contemporary political systems they are now equated with a similar type of fictional Independent – ‘the neutrals’ in Dante’s *Inferno* who were the most hated creatures in hell because they refused to take a side in the battle between Lucifer and God (Alighieri 1946).

To consolidate their dominance of political life, parties introduced list electoral systems across the European continent, ensuring the elimination of the Independent, as only parties were permitted to field candidates at such elections. It was only under candidate-centred electoral systems (predominantly single-member plurality) that Independent candidates persisted, primarily in Anglo-American democracies, but even then the vast majority of these were fringe candidates who received very few votes. The Independent is thus an unusual type of politician who goes against the grain of party omnipotence, and is deserving of academic attention.

A final reason to study Independents is related to the electoral system in operation in Ireland, Proportional Representation by the Single transferable Vote (PR-STV). Electoral laws and their consequences is an expanding area of

research in political science, especially as state-builders often try to ‘engineer’ certain outcomes (examples being government stability or proportionality of seat–vote relationships) via the electoral system. One consequence of PR-STV frequently attested to in the literature, although never validated, is that it results in the election of Independent candidates to parliament (see Chubb 1957: 132; Carty 1981: 63; Strom 1991: 103). Some have argued that such an outcome is not helpful for the stability of parliamentary democracy because this can result in a minority government dependent on the support of Independents (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2005: 362). Since the relationship between PR-STV and Independents is sometimes used by those critical of the said electoral system, it is important to test the validity of this assumption, especially when this argument is being used in real-world cases.¹¹

1.3 Structure: theories and approaches

To explain the significance of Independents, this thesis focuses on three main questions: why individuals choose to run as Independent candidates; why people choose to vote for these Independents; and the nature of the relationship between the success of Independents and the electoral system. Because this thesis is essentially divided into three key sections, there are three corresponding branches of theory guiding the research. The first section (chapters 4–5), which looks at candidates, draws on a large volume of literature devoted to the effectiveness of election campaigns, and a smaller body that examines the motives of candidates. Before local campaigns were the subject of rigorous research it was believed that they had little effect on the electoral outcome and were simply a ritual that parties and candidates had to partake in (Denver and Hands 1997: 36). However, an increasing number of studies looking at this area since the 1980s have challenged this premise, finding that the level and intensity of campaigning do have an effect on the vote candidates accrue (Denver and Hands 1997: 276–304; Seyd and Whiteley 1992: 174–200; Whiteley, Seyd and Richardson 1994: 189–218). This dissertation adopts the

¹¹ See the debates on the proposed adoption of STV in British Columbia, Canada @www.bcstv.ca

methodologies of such studies, and assumes the rationalist approach that candidates would not invest so much time in campaigning if it did not (or at least if they did not expect it to) have a positive end-product.

Assessing the nature of candidate motivations falls under the sub-discipline of 'candidate emergence'. Within this field, actors' incentives can generally be grouped into two categories: instrumental, which is concerned with those who have a deliberate goal in mind that is linked to the electoral outcome; and expressive, where candidates' utility derives solely from their running for office, and is independent of the outcome. The nature of Independents' incentives vis-à-vis party candidates are examined to see if there are differences between them, with the aim of testing the assumption that Independents are more expressive-oriented, because they generally have a significantly lower chance of winning a seat than party candidates.

In addition to this dichotomy, two other models of candidate emergence are assessed. The first is the sociological model, which looks at whether candidates' socio-economic background affected their decision to run for office. The second is the rational choice model, which borrows from Schlesinger's ambition theory (1966), a theory of office-seeking that says politicians' behaviour is a response to their aspirations, which themselves are dependent upon the opportunities available in office. This theory is used to determine whether Independents are strategic in their decision to run for election.

The section on Independent voters (chapter 6) uses a number of theories from the field of voting behaviour. The importance of the three main models of voting behaviour are all assessed—namely the party identification model, the sociological model, and the rational choice model. Although Independent candidates are a heterogeneous category that might be expected to attract a diverse vote from a cross-section of society, it is important to evaluate whether there are any specific reasons explaining the vote for Independents. Specifically, two of the main theories of voting used in the Irish context that are explored here are the ideas of 'friends-and-neighbours' voting (see Carty 1981: 121) and candidate-centred voting (Laver 2005: 191–193). The first theory is

concerned with localism and postulates that all other things being equal, voters are more likely to support a candidate they either know or live close to, rather than a candidate who is neither a friend nor a neighbour. The second theory is related to personalism, the idea that voting behaviour is based on the personal qualities of the individual candidates, rather than their party affiliation or ideology (see Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987). One of the main reasons why Independents are not successful in most liberal democracies is due to the importance of party in the voting process. In an arena where localism and personalism are to the fore, Independents are at less of a disadvantage and can compete on a more even keel with party candidates. These theories are used to determine whether voters who are of a localistic and personalistic orientation are more likely to vote for Independents than those who do not share these characteristics.

In the chapters on candidates and voters, as well as comparing Independents to party candidates, the differences between different types of Independents are also analysed. This is necessary because Independents are a heterogeneous category; consequently treating them as a unitary group might not reveal any significant patterns, whereas focussing on specific types of Independents might provide a better explanation for their overall significance. Further details on the types of Independents analysed is provided in chapter 3.

The final section (chapter 7), examining the relationship between the success of Independents and the electoral system, assesses the relevance of the theory of rational choice institutionalism, which postulates that the nature of the electoral system affects the behaviour of both voters and candidates alike. As stated in the last section, it is frequently attested in the literature that the distinctive electoral system is a major contributory factor to the significant presence Independents occupy in Ireland (Carty 1981: 62; Chubb 1957: 132; Sinnott 2005: 120; Strom 1991: 103). A number of reasons accounting for this theory have been put forward, including the candidate-centred nature of the electoral system (Sinnott 2005: 120), which fosters the aforementioned cultural feature of personalism; the particularistic, brokerage-style competition between candidates that it encourages (Katz 1984: 137); and the presence of multi-

member constituencies (Gallagher 1976: 59), which affords minor candidates a greater opportunity to win a seat than in single-member districts. Electoral systems have two main effects: mechanical and psychological; the first refers to whether candidates and/or parties receive a proportion of seats that equates with their vote; the second is concerned with the reaction of voters to the mechanical effects—if voters perceive that their desired party and/or candidate has little chance of winning a seat because of the electoral system, voters may be inclined to transfer their vote to a better-placed candidate. The importance of both of these effects in relation to the three aforementioned factors that help Independents is examined in this dissertation.

1.4 Research design

When assessing what explains the significance of Independents, there are a number of difficulties in attempting to employ a cross-country comparison when this variable exceeds a negligible value in only one case. This is because to find evidence of some significant factors we would need to either inductively or deductively find variables that could be used to explain the significance of Independents and which were only present in the aforementioned single case and absent in all the other cases. It is extremely unlikely that we would find variables exclusive to one single case (PR-STV is perhaps the closest example, but even then that is still used in a number of other systems).

Consequently, there would be many problems with a research design based on a cross-country comparison. As such, it is better to use what Ragin calls a comparatively oriented case study (Ragin 1987: 4). This involves the comparative analysis of a variable within one case, which is feasible when there is a far greater level of variation within the single case than between the other existing cases. The aim of this dissertation is therefore first to establish the significance of Independents, and then to explain what accounts for their significance in some sectors of society as compared to their lack of significance in other sectors, focusing on the case of Ireland. The adoption of this form of research design means for example that in the analysis of voting behaviour, we have a sample of 2,000 with 200 occurrences of the phenomenon (Independent

voters), as opposed to 20-odd cases with only one occurrence of the phenomenon if a cross-country comparison was employed. Despite the election of Independents to a number of national parliaments since the 1990s, the numbers involved (both in terms of the successful Independents, and the voters for such candidates) have been too few to warrant any credible cross-national analysis. Such a study would be affected by the limited number of degrees of freedom, which necessitates that the number of variables should not exceed the number of cases (Ragin 1987: 10).

One of the major advantages of a case study is that it treats the case as a whole, ensuring that the interactions between the parts of the whole are analysed within the context of the case, not as a general pattern of relationships across a number of countries (Ragin 1987: ix–x). It may well be the case that Independents are not comparable across countries. Unlike national parties that can fall into transnational categories such as those that sit in the European Parliament, Independents are very much a contextual category, and vary in their nature from individual to individual and from region to region, inhibiting the validity of a cross-national study. Given the contextual and idiosyncratic nature of Independent candidates described above, a case study is probably the only suitable method to examine Independents; as such, the Irish case needs to be examined holistically (*ibid.*). Finally, a case study can also be used to make theoretical inferences, especially in an under-researched area (Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster 2000: 5). Because there has not been any systematic theory yet devised to account for the significance of Independents, one of the advantages of this case study is that it can be used to infer a theory that accounts for the success of Independents, which can then be tested in other countries where they have achieved parliamentary representation.

Focussing on one country need not just be a case study, as it is misleading to think that comparative research has to use comparable data from at least two societies (Ragin 1987: 4). The comparative approach to this dissertation involves examining the differences between both party and Independent candidates and voters, as well as between Independent candidates and voters themselves, to determine what accounts for the latter's significance.

For example, within this study the attitudes of 505 election candidates and 2,100 voters are analysed. In addition, the performance of Independents across general elections is explored in a comparative fashion to determine the influence of the electoral system.

1.5 Structure and Methodology

The research question has a number of elements, each of which is explored in a separate chapter. There are two primary reasons why Independents have a significant presence in Irish political life. The first is because ambitious individuals run as Independent candidates, and the second, related, reason is because voters cast a preference for them. Working in tandem with these two factors is the distinctive electoral system that encourages both candidates and voters alike. It is these three factors that are looked at in this dissertation to account for the significance of Independents.

Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant literature that looks at these different fields of political science. It outlines what has been written on the general topics of candidate emergence, campaigning, voting behaviour, and electoral systems, as well as what has been written specifically in relation to how these factors could possibly explain the significance of Independents. The review details how this dissertation builds on the current research, and how it fills an important lacuna.

Rather than being akin to a party grouping, Independents are a heterogeneous category. This has the implication that the incentives to vote for an Independent are likely to vary greatly and are very much dependent on the nature of the respective candidacy; for example, it is reasonable to expect that a left-wing Independent would attract a left-wing vote, a right-wing Independent a right-wing vote, and so on. Before analysing the motives of Independent voters and candidates, it is therefore necessary to examine the nature of Independent candidacies to determine the types of Independents that have contested Irish elections. Within this context, because there has heretofore been no study of who or what Independents are, it is also necessary to trace their electoral fortunes in recent times. Exploring their background follows the path

of historical interpretation, the goal of which is to explain historical outcomes in a chronological manner, and to provide some historical generalisations (Ragin 1987: 35). Although such a path is rather descriptive, where the knowledge of a subject area is lacking it is important to provide such detail before embarking on inferences in later chapters. For example, it is the only tool that can be used to justify a proposed categorisation of Independent candidates. This historical interpretation is the subject of chapter 3.

The methodology used to examine the incentives of Independent candidates in chapters 4 and 5 is a mail survey. This was the preferred option, because the target population was the body of approximately 2,000 candidates from the 2004 local elections. In addition, because the aim was simply to gain details of their campaign activities, rather than the candidates' opinions, the analysis was not hampered by the lack of in-depth face-to-face interviews. Further details on the process of data collection are provided in chapter 4. That chapter examines the incentives motivating individuals to run for election as Independent candidates. It contrasts them with party candidates to determine if there are any distinctive motives impelling Independents to run. Chapter 5 explores the nature of candidates' campaigns, with the dual purpose of determining if there are differences between the activities of Independents and party candidates, and what effect this has on the vote they accrue at an election.

Chapter 6 examines why voters choose to cast a preference for Independent candidates. The data used for analysis is from the Irish National Election Study carried out in 2002. Chapter 7 explores the relationship between the electoral system and the success of Independents by focussing on the type of political competition it promotes, the nature of the transferable vote, and the presence of multi-member constituencies.

Given the largely quantitative nature of the analysis, a variety of statistical techniques are employed to test my hypotheses. These include difference of proportion tests, factor analysis, ordinary least squares regression, and logistic regression. How these methodologies are used is described in further detail in the following chapters. The final chapter summarises the findings and assesses their consequences for Irish and comparative politics. A

number of suggestions are also made for future research to test the theories beyond the Irish context.

Chapter 2. Literature Review.

2.1 Introduction

There is very little written specifically on Independents, which usually occurs for two reasons: either such politicians garner little electoral support, to render them inconsequential, or where they do receive a significant number of votes, it is difficult to gain information about them. There have been a number of case studies conducted on Independents in Australia (Bean and Papadakis 1995; Costar and Curtin 2004; Papadakis and Bean 1995), Canada (Brotten 2002), the US (Avlon 2004; Collet 1999), and Russia (Moser 1999), but to date the only piece on Independents in Ireland was a brief descriptive article written by Chubb in the 1950s (1957). An additional limitation is that a lot of these studies have been quite descriptive, and also have not delved too deep into the topic.

It is somewhat surprising that there has not been more written on Independents in the Irish context, because as Gallagher notes, there are more Independents in the Irish parliament than in the rest of Europe combined (2003: 103). Most of what is written about Independents is the subject of an occasional sentence in a general text on Irish politics, including Coakley's review of minor parties (1990), Chubb's aforementioned brief account of Independent TDs (1957), Gallagher's analysis of electoral support for political groupings (1976), Carty's assessment of parish-pump politics (1981), and the various volumes of the *How Ireland Voted* series (Gallagher and Laver 1993; Gallagher and Sinnott 1990; Gallagher, Marsh and Mitchell 2003; Laver, Mair and Sinnott 1987; Marsh and Mitchell 1999). Outside of Ireland, most of the works on Independents have been American-based.

A review of the literature confined to works written specifically on Independents would be very short, given the relatively few in existence. In addition, many of them are either descriptive pieces (see Avlon 2004), or they look at Independents in the context of minor or 'third' parties (see Aars and Ringkjøb 2005; Bean and Papadakis 1995; Copus 2007; Copus and Bottom 2007; Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus 1996: 81–125; Sifry 2003). The problem with the latter studies on minor parties is that it is difficult to isolate the

authors' specific conclusions in relation to Independents. Consequently, the approach of this literature review is to examine the studies that deal with the general area covered in each chapter, while also referring to the way in which the texts on Independents have sought to answer the relevant questions.

There is evidently a major gap in the literature on research into Independents. Because this dissertation explores a number of factors that may account for the presence of Independents, there is a wide range of literature to consult in relation to each of these factors. These include the fields of political participation, election campaigns, voting behaviour and electoral systems. Although the vast majority of these studies make very little direct reference to Independents, they are all essential to understanding the significance of Independents, specifically in relation to theories that apply to all politicians, regardless of their party status (or lack of). This literature review focuses on five main areas – defining an Independent, why candidates run for office, the effectiveness of their campaigns, why voters support candidates, and the influence of the electoral system on Independents' performance.

2.2 Defining an Independent

When undertaking a literature review for this topic, the first area of conflict that arises is defining what constitutes an Independent. In the everyday sense of the word, independence has a number of meanings including 'not depending on others for the formation of opinions or guidance of conduct; thinking or acting, or disposed to think or act, for oneself' (Oxford English Dictionary@www.oed.com). In other words, an Independent is someone who stands alone in both mind and act, and does not represent any affiliate groups. However, both within the literature and the political world, there is no agreed definition of what constitutes an Independent politician. Nevertheless, the various attempts can be positioned on a spectrum, where at one end lies the isolationist form of independence that implies no ties to any individual or body, and at the other end lie the Independent partisans who are independent in name only, clearly aligning themselves with a party. Along this spectrum, between

these two poles, lie the various definitions of Independents, and in this section, I shall indicate the definition of most practical use for this dissertation.

The term ‘Independent’ used to mean a great many things. In eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain this included: ‘economic independence, representation of a more or less “open” constituency; unwillingness to receive favours from ministers; unwillingness to accept office’ (Beales 1967: 10). Hill also claims that while in eighteenth century Britain the term referred to one who was independent of government, by the following century ‘Independent’ had evolved to mean one independent of parties (1970: 397–8 fn.). At the same time, and also rather confusingly, Beales states that it was possible to consistently support a party, even to enter government with it, and yet still be considered an Independent (1967: 10); this was why Mitchell claimed that so few of the Independents could really be considered neutral (in Hill 1970: 397–8 fn.). Peter Andren, an Independent MP in Australia, believes that such neutrality is key to an Independent status, as he claims that ‘the only way to tell a true Independent is whether or not he directs preferences’ (Andren 2003: 26). Under the Alternative Vote system in practice in Australia, voters have to cast a preference for all of the parties or all of the candidates. Consequently, candidates often direct their supporters who to cast their lower preferences for, as is the case in Ireland. Andren, however, refused to do, as he felt any such partisan leanings would compromise his independence. If this strict neutralist or non-aligned definition was used to distinguish Independents in Ireland, it might exclude a considerable number of such actors from our analysis.

A more recent attempt to categorise Independents in the UK was conducted by Copus and Bottom, who identified three types of Independents involved in local politics (Copus 2007; Copus and Bottom 2007). These consist of: the ‘fully independent’, who has no organisation behind him or her; the ‘revealed party-independent’ who uses a party label in the title of his or her candidacy (Independent Fianna Fáil in Ireland would be such an example); and the ‘conjoined independent’, who belongs to a loose alliance of Independents. The latter would be akin to the grouping of Independent TDs who worked together in the 29th Dáil (2002–2007), even appointing their own whip. In the context of

the US, Dennis' study of Independent leaners identified four aspects of political independence (1988a, 1988b): 'political autonomy' refers to those who see independence as a positive aspect; 'antiparty' implies independence as a consequence of a negative attitude towards parties; 'partisan neutrality' means neutrality between the parties; and 'partisan variability' refers to those who are independent because they are constantly switching between parties and do not see themselves as loyal party voters. Broten found that of the 163 Independent MPs elected to the Canadian parliament between 1867 and 2002, 57 percent were only 'semi-independent', maintaining a 'loose association' with the established parties (2002: 18). Given the ambiguous nature of the 'Independent' label highlighted by these authors it is best to avoid a qualitative definition, because it is very difficult both to measure and identify independence within political actors.

A striking feature throughout the relevant literature is that most scholars choose to avoid embroiling themselves in the conundrum of defining an Independent. It was indicated in the last chapter that being an Independent in politics does not necessarily imply all, or indeed any, of the attributes associated with the conventional use of the term as an adjective. The compromise reached in chapter 1 was to define Independents as non-party candidates, a sweeping term similar to a description Moss used in the 1930s: 'a catch-all for those who do not choose to avail themselves of existing designations' (1933: 39). The problem with the label 'non-party' is that it does not clarify the distinction between an Independent and a party (especially a minor one), which is the purpose of this section. This exercise is especially necessary in the Irish context, where it is difficult to identify the genuine Independents, because, as Chubb demonstrates, an Independent need not necessarily call themselves an Independent, they may run an election campaign on someone else's resources, they may be a 'virtual camp-follower of one of the parties', or they may have been selected to run for election by a partisan interest group (1957: 131–2). This problem is further exacerbated by the absence of party labels from ballot papers up until the 1963 Electoral Act.

As a result, defining an Independent does not simply involve identifying all those who run under the 'Independent' label, because candidates running under minor party labels can also be included as Independents where it can be shown that these parties are little more than the personalised political machines of individual candidates. Chubb's definition of an Independent as a candidate who has neither the resources of a party behind them at election time, nor takes a party whip in the Dáil (1957: 132) is too broad; it would result in the inclusion of candidates of loose party groupings as Independents (for example, possibly Clann na Talmhan, a farmers' party founded in the 1940s, which did not have a party whip, and had a decentralised organisation). For others, Independents represent a catch-all residual category that includes all those not running on behalf of one of the established parties; this explains the rationale behind Mitchell's decision (2001: 193) to include the solitary parliamentary representatives of parties in his categorisation of Independents. Sharman, who defines an Independent as 'someone who is not associated with a political party', correctly points out that the key to defining an Independent boils down to establishing the main characteristics of a party; those lacking such characteristics can be categorised as Independents (2002: 55).

While there is no problem in differentiating between a major party and an Independent, the predicament lies with minor parties whose definition is not so clear-cut. Pedersen's seminal study of minor parties defined a party as 'an organisation – however loosely or strongly organised – which either presents or nominates candidates for public elections, or which, at least, has the declared intention to do so' (Pedersen 1982: 5). The difficulty with this definition¹² is that there are a lot of examples of Independent candidates standing for election who were nominated by organisations, ranging from county farming associations to selection conventions of Unionist organisations. Interest group nominees are by no means 'pure' Independents, but neither are they representatives of minor parties. However, they satisfy Pedersen's requirements regarding what constitutes a party; such ambiguity explains why Sinnott

¹² As Pedersen says (1982: 5), this definition is not unusual and is typical of most party definitions. For example, see Downs (1957: 25), and Sartori (1976: 64).

asserted that ‘the category of ‘independents’ is a residual and shifting one, its size depending on how much substance one attributes to ephemeral party labels’ (1995: 64).

A simple method of determining what constitutes a party is to use the legal definition, but this in itself poses difficulties. For a start, as mentioned above, before the 1963 Electoral Act there was no official registry of parties, and party affiliations were not stated on the ballot paper. This leaves the process of identifying Independent candidates open to interpretation in deciding whether some groups are genuine parties, nominees of interest groups, or merely personalised organisations of Independents. These ambiguities were not cleared up with the introduction of an official register of parties, since the requirements to qualify as a party allow some Independents and interest groups to attain party status. For example, any group with one TD and a set of written rules that provide for an annual conference and an executive can register as a party,¹³ thus virtually implying that any Independent TD with a mobilised support group can form their own party label.

Aldrich (1995: 19), Burke (quoted in Ware 1996: 5), Downs (1957: 24–5), Epstein (1980: 9), Key (1964: 163–5), and Ware (1996: 5) have all defined parties, but there is no universal agreement on what are the key characteristics that define a party. Some refer to the composition of a body of like-minded individuals (Burke), while others stress the desire to hold office (Aldrich). For reasons of space, this section does not delve too deeply into a normative discussion on the attributes of a party. I do not propose to outdo all other scholars of political parties by providing a new and better definition, largely in recognition of the difficulties in providing a perfect example. Rather, the methods used to distinguish between Independents and parties in the next chapter will be a case-by-case qualitative analysis of all the groups contesting Irish elections whose status as a party has been disputed. Any group that exhibits the key characteristics of a party (which are borrowed from LaPalombara and Weiner’s definition of a party (1966: 6), and are outlined in chapter 3) is excluded from this thesis (on the grounds of it being a party),

¹³ See Electoral (Amendment) Act 2001, Section 11.

while the candidates of any group that do not possess all of these characteristics are embraced within the framework of this study as an Independent. Consequently, as stated in the introductory chapter, the minimalist definition is adopted here: Independents are non-party politicians.

2.3 Candidate emergence

The nature of the candidates who decide to run as an Independent has, not surprisingly, an important bearing on their electoral impact. In devising a theory of third party voting (that also includes Independents), Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus (1996: 139) refer to the importance of ‘attractive third party alternatives’. They define ‘political prestige’ as the crucial feature of attraction (1996: 140), which they narrowly define as the holding of gubernatorial or congressional office. This ignores the prestige that potential candidates can accrue from other walks of life. For example, Jesse Ventura, a third party candidate, was elected as governor of Minnesota in 1998 despite his lack of political prestige; he had, however, achieved prestige both as a radio talk-show host and as a professional wrestler, which were major factors in his securing election.

Because the nature of the candidates running as Independents is so crucial to their success, it is therefore important to examine what incentives exist to encourage any type of would-be candidate to run for office. Amongst the public, there are many potential candidates (whom Fowler and McClure call the ‘unseen candidates’ (1989: 1)), yet for a variety of reasons only a few decide to run. This area of research is known as ‘candidate emergence’, which is a fusion of several sub-fields of political science, most notably political participation and political recruitment. The choice of words is deliberate, as it suggests that potential candidates exist everywhere, but that they emerge only in certain situations and contexts (Kazee 1994b: 165).

There is not an extensive literature devoted to this topic; the majority of the relevant studies have looked at the context of candidates’ challenge for office, as well as their political background. For example, Prinz (1993: 38) notes how Kazee looked at a challenger’s decision to run despite adversarial

circumstances. Indeed, it is strange that there is so much focus on why voters choose one of the few candidates available, yet very little study of why the candidates are whittled down to these few in the first place (Fowler in Williams and Lascher 1993: 71). With the exception of Schlesinger (1966), personal motivation has been under-researched because understanding ambition on a systematic basis is quite a difficult task (Norris and Lovenduski 1995: 167). As the latter say, if there is a relationship between ambition and success, ambition will rise with every level in one's career; for example, those in ministerial office will by implication be more ambitious than those in local government. The quandary is that studies have found that there is little variance in the ambition held by politicians (ibid.).

A variety of incentives exist that motivate individuals to run for office. For example, some may run to garner publicity for an issue, others may be motivated by ideological purposes, while some candidates may simply be 'naked narcissists', running to satisfy their ego, and to achieve a celebrity status (Hannon 2004: 11–18). These numerous factors can be grouped under three predominant approaches: psychological, sociological, and economic or rational (Parry, Moyser and Day 1992: 9).

(i) Psychological model

Pioneered by Lasswell in the 1920s, the psychological model predicts that politicians have a distinctive personality that causes them to seek office. Lasswell labelled such personalities a 'political type', describing them as 'power seekers, searching out the power institutions of the society . . . and devoting themselves to the capture and use of government (in Fox and Lawless 2005: 20)' (see also Laswell 1948). Barber took this a step further, when his study of legislators in Connecticut categorised politicians into four types based on their levels of activity and desire to continue in office (Barber 1965). *Spectators* enjoy the excitement of office, but actually do little (ibid.: 23–66). *Advertisers* are active, young, upwardly mobiles, who enjoy the contacts the post brings in their ambition to move on up in the world (ibid.: 67–115). *Reluctants* are passive elderly people, who do not really want the office, but

perform the job out of a sense of duty (ibid.: 116–162). Last are the *lawmakers*, the active members who make government work, and who plan to make a career out of politics (ibid.: 163–211). The theme stressed by such studies is that candidates have a personality conducive to political office, and that one developed early in childhood determines the nature of an individual's future political behaviour. This was a model adopted by Berrington, who assessed the importance of personality in a number of works (1974, 1989). The psychological model is particularly stressed in political biographies, but the problem with examining personality as an independent variable is that it is an ill-defined concept, is extremely difficult to measure, and studies of this topic usually cannot be replicated. For example, Barber's study was limited to just twenty-seven legislators, which is hardly a large enough sample on which to claim scientificity. Personality also tends to underplay the importance of context; for example, what is often more important is being in the right place at the right time (Prinz 1993: 22). Thus, while biographies of Hitler often explain his ascent from failed artist to Chancellor of Germany in terms of his psychological desire for power (see Kershaw 1998: xxi–xxviii), he might never have risen to prominence in a different context, for example, if Weimar Germany had been a stable democracy, or perhaps if the Wall Street Crash of 1929 had never occurred. These underlined problems in measuring personality do not necessarily mean it is not a relevant factor, rather that it is difficult to study in a systematic manner. Partly because of these difficulties, the psychological model has declined in importance since the 1970s, as the focus of research shifted towards the sociological approach and rational choice-based theories.

(ii) Sociological model

While candidates are unlikely to state that their decision to run for office was a function of their occupation, class, or even age, it is often the case that such social factors determine what type of individuals put themselves forward for election (Matthews (1954) quoted in Kazee 1994: 7). Put simply, this sociological model claims that political participation is highly dependent on

one's socio-economic background (Verba and Nie 1992: 10). One of the earliest proponents of this model, Milbraith, highlighted this with his claim 'higher socio-economic status is positively associated with increased likelihood of participation in many different political acts' (1965: 16). His line of reasoning was that those with higher socio-economic status are more likely to have civic attitudes, which are conducive to political participation (Verba and Nie 1992: 10). By implication, those from higher classes are more likely to run for office.

Milbraith listed a whole series of hypotheses concerning the relationship between socio-economic status and political participation (1965). For example, the middle and upper classes are more likely to participate in politics than the lower classes (1965: 116); the greater one's income, the greater one's level of political participation (1965: 120); those more educated are more likely to participate in politics, as are professional persons (1965: 122–123). Various analyses of the social background of candidates have confirmed the strong relationship between levels of socialisation and participation. An example of this is the consensus in the literature that education is one of the best predictors of activism, largely because it increases one's level of knowledge and interest in politics (Norris and Lovenduski 1995: 113). Another relationship of interest is that individuals in 'brokerage occupations' such as teaching or real estate are more likely to run for office, because of the advantages their job brings in pursuing a political career (Jacob in Norris and Lovenduski 1995: 110).

Exposure to politics in the main agent of socialisation, the family, can also impel participation (Prinz 1993: 23), and indeed the Irish scene is littered with examples of politicians who followed in the footsteps of their family predecessors; amongst liberal democracies, only Japan has had more second-generation politicians than Ireland.¹⁴ To sum up, the typical mainstream candidate in Western Europe tends to be middle-class, middle-aged, male,

¹⁴ See Michihiro Ishibashi and Steven R. Reed. 1992. 'Hereditary Seats: Second Generation Dietmen and Democracy in Japan', *Asian Survey* 32: 366–379.

white, and have completed third-level education. Individuals exhibiting these characteristics are more likely to run for office, *ceteris paribus*. The problem with this model is that it still does not get us that far, because only a very small proportion of people with these characteristics actually have political ambitions.

(iii) Economic/rational model

Like most branches of political science, the area of candidate emergence has been analysed using the rational choice approach. First developed for political science by Downs in his *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957), this model claims that individuals' main aim is to maximise their utility, and that their actions can be understood as a means to achieve this satisfaction. The first application of this model to candidates' motivations was Schlesinger's ambition theory (1966). The central tenet of his argument was neatly summed up in the opening line to his book *Ambition and Politics*: 'Ambition lies at the heart of politics. Politics thrive on the hope of preferment and the drive for office' (1966: 1). Essentially, ambition theory says that politicians' behaviour is a response to their aspirations, which are dependent upon the opportunities available in office, that is, the opportunity structures. Because Schlesinger saw ambition as a given amongst candidates, their desire for office is therefore dependent upon such opportunities, and not on their innate ambition. Using an example from the Irish context, there may be ambitious potential Labour candidates in the rural constituency of Mayo, but because Labour has not won a seat there since 1927, the structure of opportunities means that aspirant left-wing activists do not seek the party nomination.

The importance of opportunity was also stressed by Barber, who suggested that a potential candidate needs to ask him/herself at least three questions (Barber 1965: 11):

1. Do I want it? (A candidate's motivation: do I want to get involved in politics?).
2. Can I do it? (A candidate's resources: skills, money, time, etc.).

3. Do they want me? (A candidate's opportunity: 'they' can be the party or local populace).

Motivation is pretty much comparable to ambition, while resources are similar to the sociological model, because such assets are usually a product of one's socio-economic status. Opportunity is what Fowler and McClure called the electoral context (1989: 26), which is concerned with the characteristics of the constituency, for example, whether an incumbent is running, the district magnitude of the constituency, and the social background of its electorate. These traits are similar to Schlesinger's opportunity structures. Context is another important condition of candidacy that is often not appreciated (Kazee 1994: 9–21). For example, individuals would not consider running as Independents in most European democracies, since they usually have no chance of victory and tend to be viewed as joke candidates.

In effect, ambition theory is a theory of office-seeking (Hibbing 1993: 22), and this is the root of its greatest weakness. First of all, it does not actually address why candidates run in the first place (i.e. candidate emergence), which is largely dependent on their 'nascent political ambition', their potential interest in office-holding, before they actually decide to run (Fox and Lawless 2005). Instead, ambition theory simply asks, given a set of opportunity structures available to office-holders, can it be predicted whether a candidate will seek further office? Since most of the literature on candidate behaviour since the 1970s has focussed on ambition theory, there has been no major empirical research on why candidates first decide to run for office, apart from a few studies on why candidates decide to run for Congress (ibid.: 642).

In addition, Schlesinger does not analyse where the ambition, which he takes as a constant, stems from. Is his assumption that it is a constant also accurate? Further, his idea of opportunity structures stems from the notion of open and closed seats in single-seat constituencies, where the former is identified by the absence of an incumbent, and the latter by the presence of one. This is not really applicable to the multi-seat constituencies of Ireland, where even if all incumbents run, this usually does not deter would-be candidates from running. Because ambition theory is concerned with the actions of office-

holders, it is also not very applicable to a study of Independents, since most of them do not already hold office. Besides this, a theory on a structure of opportunities is more relevant in the US where there is a raft of offices for would-be candidates to contest. The ladder to congressional office usually contains many rungs, whereas in Ireland there is normally just one requisite rung to climb before running for national office, a local council or borough seat.

While Schlesinger's ambition theory is therefore not directly applicable to a study of why Independents run for office in Ireland, the formulation it took as a 'calculus of candidacy' can be utilised somewhat to explain candidate emergence. This was a formal rational choice model that predicted individuals would run for office when it is in their rational interests to do so. Black first defined this calculus in the form $U = pB - C$, where

U =utility derived from running for office;

p =probability of winning a seat;

B =benefits arising from winning a seat;

C =costs derived in running for office (Black 1972).

Rational individuals will therefore choose to run for office when $pB > C$, that is, when their utility has a positive value.

None of these three models reviewed offers conclusive evidence concerning why individuals choose to run for office. In addition, because most of them were devised in the American context, it could be argued that it is difficult to apply them to Irish politicians, especially Independents. While this is especially the case with the psychological model, the veracity of which is difficult to determine in any context, theories from the sociological and rational models can be extracted both to assist an explanation of Independents' significance and to determine their validity in the European context. For example, Aldrich has already expanded the rational choice argument to Black's calculus of candidacy in order to determine the rationality of running as an Independent rather than a party candidate (1995: 52). He stated that such a decision is only rational if $U_I > U_P$ (where U_I = the utility gained from running as an Independent, and U_P = the utility from running for a party). Although

Aldrich believed that the costs of running (C) are lower for Independents, this is outweighed by the smaller probability of victory (p), meaning that ‘affiliation with a major party is close to a necessary condition for access to elective office’ (ibid.). Of course, it must be borne in mind here that Aldrich is referring to the United States, whereas in Ireland the probability of an Independent winning a seat (p) is much higher, and the costs of running for office (C) are even lower. This example indicates how the models can be applied to formulate a theoretical understanding of why individuals choose to run as Independents.

The literature on the motives to run as an Independent is quite scarce on this specific matter for two reasons. First, because there are very few, if any, important Independent political actors in most western democracies, and second, because there is a widespread agreement that the main reason for running is to achieve some kind of goal(s), most political scientists have assumed that the best means of attaining such goals is to run for a political party. An example of this belief is the following quote from an Australian academic: ‘Politics just is the game played out by rival parties, and anyone who tries to play politics in some way entirely independent of parties consigns herself to irrelevance’ (Brennan in Costar and Curtin 2004: 7). A former Independent TD agreed with such sentiment, when he explained his decision to forsake his non-aligned status by joining Fine Gael in 2004. ‘I have come to realise I can be more effective in a party...I have seen limitations as an independent...there is [*sic*] limits on the clout we can have’ (Brennock 2004).¹⁵

While the question of ‘why Independents?’ has largely been ignored, the question of ‘why parties?’ has not. Since the latter implies ‘why not independents?’, we can use some of the ideas from such research to work intuitively backwards to explain ‘why Independents?’ The rational choice approach to this question has been to indicate that individual actors maximise their utility by forming a party, rather than by running as an Independent. Aldrich highlighted this argument when he showed how individuals acting independently achieve inferior outcomes (1995: 30–31), an example of the

¹⁵ Also taken from interview with the same TD, Liam Twomey, on RTÉ Radio 1’s *News at One*, 22 September 2004.

problem of collective action, where individually pursued rational decisions lead to Pareto inferior results (Aldrich 1995: 32). In addition, parties enable individual politicians to overcome the problem of social choice, whereby a government composed entirely of Independents, with just a local electorate to appeal to and lacking a common national policy programme, would not know what policies to enact on behalf of the nation (Aldrich 1995: 34–6).

As well as being motivated to form parties, there are a number of reasons why candidates would choose to run for pre-existing parties (see Aldrich 1995: 48–50). Parties provide a brand name, which is a useful means of attracting votes. They provide economies of scale, whereby campaigning by fellow party candidates boosts the profile of the party, and hence of each candidate. Parties offer a political career within the organisation, and also provide an entry to government for ambitious candidates. A final reason is that parties are a social organisation and provide a sense of camaraderie.

In light of such reasoning, why then do some choose to adopt the independent path? Is it because they believe their utility will be higher as an Independent, or are they simply irrational actors? Collet maintained that there is no rational reason for Independents to run in the US, because they have very little chance of winning a seat in single-member districts. Hence the subtitle of his dissertation on Independent candidates in the US: ‘Can they be serious?’ (Collet 1999). The applicability of the calculus of candidacy to an individual’s decision to run Independent is discussed in chapter 4, which focuses on the emergence of Independents. Before we move on, it is worth noting that in practice the choice does not boil down to party or Independent status for most would-be candidates. This only arises for a few exceptional cases, whereas the vast majority of them either cannot gain a party nomination, or do not want to run for a party. For such candidates, the choice is Independent or nothing, not Independent or party.

2.4 Campaign effects

One striking feature of the electoral performance of Independents is that while some candidates receive a sizeable proportion of the vote, a considerable

number receive a minuscule handful. When conversing with some Independent politicians on a casual basis, one factor frequently referred to that accounts for this difference is the intensity of their election campaigns.

Many studies of campaigns argue that the nature of the effort involved has changed a great deal (see Farrell and Schmitt-Beck (2002b: 9)). In the 'premodern' era, campaigning was short-term and decentralised; local party branches organised their own independent campaigns with little direction from party headquarters. From the 1950s on, this style changed as campaigning 'modernised'; long-term campaigns centralised from national headquarters became the norm, with the importance of the localised element greatly reduced. Further changes in electioneering since the 1990s have given rise to what some have called 'postmodern' (Norris 2002) or (in a rather sardonic manner) 'post-Fordist' (Denver and Hands 2002) campaigning; this entails a permanent campaign which, although decentralised, is strictly controlled from the centre. Other features include a greater reliance on polling techniques such as focus groups, and the separate targeting of niche voters rather than the mass market. These studies place an emphasis on the declining role of local campaigns, which is evident in Britain, for example, where 52 percent of electors were canvassed by at least one party in 1951, and 22 percent attended at least one meeting, whereas in 1987 only 6 percent were canvassed and only 3 percent attended a meeting (Kavanagh 1992: 81–2).

Up until the early 1980s, most academics saw local campaigns as having little influence in determining the outcome of elections (Denver and Hands 1997: 36). Campaigns were seen as little more than mere rituals, undertaken as a force of habit, and sometimes simply due to enthusiasm for campaigning on the part of the grass-roots members. While the national campaign, generally focussed on the party leader, is far more important, even here it was argued the most impact it could have was to mobilise potential supporters; consequently, attempts at converting voters were deemed futile. An example of this is Lazarsfeld's classic study of Erie County, which found that a campaign's main influence was reinforcement not conversion, because those who read most of the communication's output were those who had their

political predispositions most firmly entrenched, whereas those most open to conversion were the least likely to pay heed to the campaign (in Norris et al. 1999: 4). Rose comes to a similar conclusion, but via a different path (1967: 195). He lists a number of reasons limiting the effectiveness of campaigning, including voter apathy and the inelasticity of the demand for parties; these lead him to agree with Lazarsfeld that campaigning tends to reinforce, rather than change, attitudes (ibid.). However, Rose claims that this is largely due to the ‘imperfectly and intermittently irrational’ campaign tactics of the candidates (ibid.); he thus leaves the loophole that were rational campaign strategies pursued, they could have an influence on voting behaviour.

There has been a sea-change in these beliefs since the late 1980s, as the increasing volume of literature on campaigning has shown that it does have a significant effect on the vote candidates accrue (see Denver and Hands 1997; Farrell and Schmitt-Beck 2002a; Johnston 1987). The decline of party identification has freed up hitherto frozen electorates, and the increasing number of floating voters gives local campaigns an opportunity to persuade, and not simply to mobilise, voters (Denver and Hands 1997: 51–2).

A variety of methods have been used to determine the effects these campaigns have had upon voters. Numerous studies, using expenditure returns as a measure of campaigning, have shown its influence upon turnout and vote direction (see Benoit and Marsh 2003a; Johnston 1987; Pattie, Johnston and Fieldhouse 1995). Others have found that local party member activity can increase the turnout of their supporters (see Gallagher and Marsh 2002: 135–139; Seyd and Whiteley 1992: 181–200). Some American studies have examined the impact of important campaign events such as party conventions and television debates on the respective party votes. There have also been surveys of candidates and election agents on the nature and extent of campaign activities (see Denver and Hands 1997; Denver and Hands 2002). In addition, some have analysed election study data to determine whether contacting voters influenced the choice of party and/or candidate on polling day (Johnston and Pattie 2003; Marsh 2004a). The common pattern is that all these studies concluded that local campaigning does matter.

In relation to Ireland, for much of the post-war period, election outcomes were regarded by parties as either ‘foregone conclusion[s]’, where the national campaign had little effect, or were dependent on local campaigns (Mair 1987b: 110–111). Irish voters appeared fairly stable in their preferences, deciding their vote largely on the record of the outgoing government. Consequently the parties saw little point in wasting their limited resources on a forlorn attempt to persuade voters to change their mind at the ballot box (Mair 1987b: 111). There was little to no long-term planning put into campaigns, with most strategies devised after the calling of an election (Farrell 1994: 221). As a result, campaigns were pretty much non-descript affairs that did not seek to capture the imagination of the Irish voter. For example, Fianna Fáil did not issue any formal election manifesto between 1948 and 1973, while Labour lacked a central organisation to co-ordinate local campaigns before 1969, as did Fine Gael before the 1980s (Mair 1987b: 112). Mair also refers to a revealing internal Labour memo from the 1965 election that notes the lack of effort invested by the party in the campaign: the national headquarters had only one telephone in operation, which was constantly engaged; no election posters were produced; and key marginal constituencies were not afforded any extra attention (ibid.).

In terms of the nature of electioneering, Irish campaigns tended to buck the comparative models, as the focus was never solely on the national campaigns, but also on the contests within each electoral constituency, both between and within parties. Campaigning was very much a decentralised affair, with very little national co-ordination; all focus was on the individual constituency campaigns. It can be said that Irish elections have modernised greatly since the 1970s (see Farrell 2004; Marsh 2004a), a trend marked by the increasing reliance of the large parties on focus group research, opinion polls and political spin (all of which indicate the emergence of postmodern campaigning). However, as the various campaign experiences of candidates, described in the *How Ireland Voted* series since 1989, demonstrate, both premodern and modern campaigning is still very much an important part of electioneering Irish-style. Knocking on doors with teams of volunteers,

distributing leaflets in shopping centres, and speaking to after-church gatherings are *de rigueur* election conduct for all candidates, from government ministers to Independents.

There are various reasons why electioneering in Ireland retains a decentralised nature (a particular feature of premodern campaigns). One factor is the use of a candidate-centred electoral system with multi-member districts, PR-STV, as this fosters an emphasis on local campaigning (Norris 2002: 136). Comparisons can be drawn with Japan where campaigns under the similar Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) system were synonymous with the prominence of local electioneering. An oft-mentioned reason is that each election, rather than being one national contest to choose a government, is in fact an aggregate of hundreds of constituency and sub-constituency elections.

Where candidate-centred politics is prevalent, local campaigning tends to be important, as the respective candidates cannot be reliant on a party label to win a seat. Until recently in Western Europe, electioneering was party-centred, which meant that only the national campaign mattered. However, a widespread decline in the levels of party attachment has resulted in the growing significance of candidate-centred politics. Large proportions of voters no longer identify with a party, finding it difficult to distinguish between various types of the latter in an era of catch-all parties. Where the choice exists, they are now deciding their vote to a greater extent on the nature of either the local candidates (or the party leader). Because candidates contest local constituencies, this has ultimately brought about a renewed emphasis on the importance of local campaigns.

In relation to Independents, although there is hearsay knowledge of the strength of the political machines of some Independent TDs, there is no actual analysis of the nature and intensity of campaign activities carried out by Independents. Because it is claimed that premodern electioneering is still a feature of Irish campaigns, I expect to find this to be the case for Independents. Although Benoit and Marsh (2003a, 2003b) found that spending more money during a campaign is correlated with gaining more votes (including for Independents), it is difficult to have any clear expectation regarding the

influence of campaigning on Independents' electoral performance. Nevertheless, the declining levels of partisan attachment, and the relative lack of importance of policies and ideologies in affecting voters' decisions on polling day (see next section), combined with Independents' lack of a partisan label, would suggest that such candidates are reliant on their campaign to deliver a vote. For these reasons, both the strength and the importance of Independents' campaigns might go some way to explaining why they have a significant presence in Irish politics.

2.5 Voting for an Independent

The literature on voting behaviour in Ireland has highlighted a number of patterns. Although Whyte's conclusion that social class does not matter (1974) – 'politics without social bases' – (a premise supported by Carty (1981: 74)) has been shown to be somewhat of an oversimplification (see Laver 2005; Laver, Sinnott and Marsh 1987; Sinnott 1995: 181–8), the significance of class is still very limited, coming nowhere near the comparative influence it has had on voting behaviour in other European democracies. Issues, the importance of which is usually emphasised by the media and the election campaigns of the parties, are not a salient factor in affecting voters' decisions (Laver 2005: 207–8). There is not a great deal of divergence in the policy preferences of electors from across the spectrum (Sinnott 1995: 160–167), which has the consequence that the parties do not differ much in the policy programmes they offer to the electorate. This convergence was most evident during the 2007 general election campaign, when none of the left-wing parties proposed tax increases; in fact, Labour pledged to cut the lower rate of income tax, while Sinn Féin dropped their policy of opposition to the low rate of corporation tax.

Another debate in the literature has revolved around the extent to which voting behaviour is guided by party or candidate (see Laver 2005: 191–3; Mair 1987a: 67; Marsh 2007). The latter concerns the 'personal vote', which Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina define as 'that portion of a candidate's electoral support which originates in his or her personal qualities, qualifications, activities, and record' (1987: 9). Although voters in opinion polls indicate the prevalence of

candidate over party (for example, in 2002 Laver calculated that 40 percent of voters were ‘dyed-in-the-wool’ candidate supporters, in contrast to 37 percent who were party voters (2005: 192–3)), Sinnott claimed this is probably exaggerated (1995: 196). He went so far as state that, on the basis of opinion poll evidence, ‘considerations of party policy, party leadership and governmental leadership are the priorities of a majority of voters’ (Sinnott 1995: 196). Analysis of aggregate voting patterns appears to vindicate Sinnott’s assertion, as evidenced by the historically high rates of intra-party transfer solidarity, especially amongst both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael voters (Mair 1987a: 70; Sinnott 1995: 199–216).¹⁶

Whatever one’s conclusions about the primacy of party over candidate, or vice versa, it certainly appears that, relatively speaking, candidate is a significant factor in Irish electoral behaviour. What is important to comprehend is that there is not necessarily a conflict between candidate and party, where only one side can emerge triumphant. As Mair indicated, voters do not have to forsake one incentive in favour of the other, as parties usually accommodate both loyalties by picking candidates from different regions of a constituency (Mair 1987b: 106). This explains why Marsh called Irish voting ‘party-wrapped but candidate-centred’ (2000). The rise of candidate-centred politics has also been written about in other political systems in the context of the declining rates of attachment to parties. This has been especially the case in the US (see Wattenberg 1991), but it has also been noted in France (Charlot and Charlot 1992: 141) and Finland (Esaiasson 1992: 205). While Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina claim that the personal vote has led to increasingly independent politicians (1987: 15), there has been little analysis of whether a consequence of candidate-centred voting is the presence of actual Independents, something which is explored in the following paragraphs. Overall, these features of Irish electoral behaviour suggest a voter who is not overly concerned with either issues or policies, does not vote on the basis of their class, and believes the nature of the candidate is just as important as the name of their respective party. In such a climate, candidates who cannot offer a national policy programme,

¹⁶ When voters cast their preferences solely for the candidate(s) of their preferred party.

cannot be in a position to wholly represent the interests of a class, and who lack a partisan label, can still have an opportunity to attract votes. In other words, the electoral success achieved by Independents may be due to these particular features of Irish voting behaviour.

(i) Personalism and Localism

While there are few publications specifically explaining voting for Independent candidates, the texts on general voting patterns in Ireland usually do include a few lines on Independents, with three themes repeatedly re-iterated; these are three strands of Irish political culture, namely personalism, localism, and brokerage or clientelism, although many of the claims concerning their influence tend to be unsubstantiated. Personalism is identified by Schmitt as a characteristic where people are valued for who they are and who they know, not what they are (Schmitt 1973: 55). This materialises in political behaviour as an orientation towards individual candidates, rather than parties, which combined with individualism (Gallagher 1982: 16) produces a culture whereby constituents seek out individual politicians for assistance rather than approaching the state bureaucracy. Localism is defined as where the local area and its concomitant issues are valued above other areas because the individual identifies him/herself by his/her local area, and its inhabitants prefer dealing with locals. The combined influences of personalism, individualism, and localism produce a culture of brokerage or clientelism. This involves politicians being valued for services they can ‘broker’ for their constituents. Brokerage is a benign feature, where politicians can only provide something for the voter that the latter was entitled to in the first place; no reciprocal favour is demanded (Gallagher and Komito 2005: 252–253). Clientelism is regularly associated with corruption, and describes a situation where politicians use their influence to supply a service that the voter was not entitled to, in return for which the latter provides a vote on election day (ibid.). The civil service is the intermediary through which politicians attempt to procure services, an action that Chubb famously described as ‘going about persecuting civil servants’ (1963). While there is disagreement in the literature over whether the patronage

politicians provide is real (Bax 1976: 49) or imaginary (Sacks 1976: 7–8), this is not the place to get into a debate concerning its existence. The important thing is that Irish voters do place a high value on the ability of politicians to broker for services for their constituency (Chubb 1957: 143).

Returning to the association between these cultural features and Independents, in the early years of the state Mansergh noted that the electoral appeal of Independents tended to be largely of a personal nature (1934: 290), while Moss wrote that an Independent candidate was elected in Wicklow because ‘he obtained many valuable concessions for the community’ (1933: 133). Carty later echoed this theme with his emphasis on the importance of ‘local loyalties and personal ties’ in explaining Independents’ support (1981: 58), while Busted claimed that their ‘persistence and significance’ was due to the continuing importance of locality and personality (1989: 41). Carty also argues that parties are little more than a grouping of parochial politicians, because every TD has their own personal network, to which voters are loyal, rather than the party (1981: 141). Taking this argument one step further, this implies that all TDs are virtual Independents, much as Katz stated (1980: 108); this explains why someone from outside the party fold can succeed in politics. However, it does not explain why some TDs who leave their party to run as an Independent tend to suffer a dramatic vote collapse; this would indicate that voters are also loyal to the party.

This theme of the importance of localism continues into the twenty-first century as Gallagher notes that the vast majority of the successful Independent candidates in 2002 were ‘local promoters’ who attracted votes because of a platform that emphasised an ability to prioritise constituency interests in contrast to other TDs who must toe a party line (2003: 102). Likewise, Fitzgerald points to a strong demand amongst the electorate to have candidates representing their locality (2003: 67), which he claims led to the emergence of single-issue or ‘pork-barrel’ Independents who were elected to lobby for the allocation of public resources to their locality.

The comparative studies on Independents in other jurisdictions re-iterate the importance of localistic and personalistic factors as a source of support for

Independents. A broad study by Anckar on voter alignments in small island states stated that two of the reasons why four of the islands under review have no political parties are, first, 'island voters are occupied with local things' (2000: 263), and second, due to the strength of personalism in small islands (2000: 262).¹⁷ Similarly, in Australia Sharman stated that successful Independents 'must have a strong engagement with a local community and a high local profile' (2002: 64), a theme also emphasised by Costar and Curtin, who referred to the focus of successful Independents on local policies (2002: 9, 18). Two of the four reasons offered by Singleton to explain why Independents attract votes in Australia were because of a prominent standing in the local community, and due to a strong personal following built up while a party politician (1996: 67–8) (the other reasons were as a protest against the party establishment, and as a representative of one or more issues). Broten claims that the initial success of Independents in Canada in the party system's formative years was due to the presence of local notables (2002: 16). Gallo put the success of Independents in some parts of Russia down to their ability to exploit a centre-regional conflict by appealing to local interests (2004). Similarly, localism, personalism and clientelism are all significant features of Japanese political culture (Curtis 1992), although the link between them and the success of Independents in that system has not been established.

The relationship between these cultural features and Independents was extrapolated by Chubb; he noted that a politician does not have to be a party man to satisfy localistic and party demands (1957: 132); in an environment where such features of political culture are exceptionally strong, an Independent who panders to these demands has a reasonable chance of electoral success, *ceteris paribus*. The flaw to these claims is that brokerage is a feature of many political systems, and yet Independents are not. For example, as Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina show, politicians in the UK and US engage in high levels of constituency service, which the authors claim is due to the presence of the single-member districts (1987: 219); they also refer to the high

¹⁷ Although Ireland was not included in this study, it qualifies as a small island state according to his definition in relation to population and its geographical status as an island.

levels of brokerage in New Zealand, Canada, and India. Again, as was shown in chapter 1, Independents have had a minimal electoral presence in all of these countries. Duverger indirectly suggested that small constituencies may offer an advantage to Independents because they bring to an election ‘a personal character and bring to the fore the individuality of the candidate; party ties are loosened and the independence of deputies is quite marked’ (1959: 298). In such circumstances, Independents fare better in small as compared to large constituencies, because in the latter ‘personality is at a discount’ (ibid.), with candidates more dependent on the attractiveness of their party label for support. However, if this was the case, then we would expect to find Independents in Malta, where personalism and localism work in conjunction with an apparently favourable electoral system, PR-STV.

Despite the importance of personalism, localism and brokerage in Irish politics, no one has carefully determined whether the significant presence of Independents is a consequence of their prevalence. This is important because if it is believed that too many Independents in parliament are a detriment to the stability of democracy, assessing the importance of brokerage could help to curb their influence. For example, the ability to provide brokerage could be taken away from parliamentarians, and devolved to local government officials.

Carty did test this relationship on a preliminary basis with his hypothesis that Independents will receive more votes in areas where traditional peasant values, associated with localism and personalism, are stronger (Carty 1981: 58–60). He found that the evidence does not wholeheartedly support this hypothesis (1981: 59); support for Independents outside Ulster was lower in the rural regions of Leinster, Munster, and Connaught, and they have been more successful in urban areas, although he did not offer any conclusions as to what this says about the support base of Independents (ibid.). The problem with Carty’s methodology is that the provinces are too large and too diverse a case for valid analysis. Sinnott is also guilty of drawing conclusions from analysis of provincial voting patterns. He claims that Connacht-Ulster (used because it was an electoral constituency for the European Parliament) has a long tradition of support for Independents, whereas they have fared very poorly in Munster

(Sinnott 1995: 260). This masks the success Independents have experienced in Ulster, but the relatively few votes they have attracted in Connacht; in relation to Munster, it also ignores the significant support for Independents in Cork city (the main city in Munster). The problem with making assertions on a geographical basis for Independents is that because they do not run in every constituency at every election, support for them can only be expressed where a candidate emerges. It may thus be the case that the vote for Independents was quite low in Munster because few Independents ran outside the city of Cork; an analysis of individual-level voting would be a far more satisfactory methodology.

(ii) Anti-party sentiment

One possible source of support for Independents could stem from their non-partisanship. It can be reasonably hypothesised that voters disillusioned with parties may be inclined to switch their allegiance to Independents as an expression of their protest (Allen and Brox 2005: 630–633; Owen and Dennis 1996; Schneider 1984: 100 quoted in Keith et al. 1992: 57;). Anti-party sentiment is a growing branch of the political science literature – a special issue of the *European Journal of Political Research* was devoted to this topic in 1996 – but most of the focus has either been on causes of such sentiment (Gidengil et al. 2001; Torcal, Gunther and Montero 2002) or how it fuels support for protest or anti-party parties (see Bardi 1996; Belanger 2004; Poguntke 1996; Scarrow 1996). Scarrow and Poguntke claimed that anti-party sentiment has been on the increase due to changing relations between parties and society, which has led to a demystification of parties, resulting in people questioning whether they are needed in modern individualistic society (1996: 259). For example, the President of Germany ignited such a debate on the relevance of parties in his country when he discussed *Parteienverdrossenheit* (Disaffection from parties) in a speech given in 1992 (Scarrow 1996: 309–311). One needs to also distinguish between extremist and populist anti-party sentiment, where the former is a rejection of party as an institution, and the latter represents a criticism of specific parties (Mudde 1996: 267). Daalder

claimed that the various writings on the 'crisis of party' can be divided into four categories: the 'denial of party', the 'selective rejection of party', the 'selective rejection of party systems', and the 'redundancy of party' (2002). In attempting to measure the presence of anti-party sentiment, Webb claimed that there are significant levels of anti-party sentiment in most liberal democracies (2002c: 439). In the context of the UK, Webb identified five possible indicators of anti-party sentiment: disaffection with parties, decreasing partisan affinity, falling electoral turnout, increasing electoral volatility, and declining party membership levels (2002b: 18–23). While he is correct to state that some of these indicators suggest a decline in partisan orientation, it is difficult to draw the conclusion they are really evidence of increasing anti-partisan affection. Applying these measures to the Irish context, partisan affinity (Sinnott 1995: 150), party membership, and turnout are all decreasing in Ireland, while disaffection with parties appears to be increasing. In spite of this evidence, there are no openly anti-party movements in existence.

Despite the latter, there has always been a latent level of anti-party sentiment in Irish politics. To begin with, there is no reference to parties in the 1937 Constitution, and party labels were not included on the electoral ballot until 1963, which FitzGerald (2003: 75) claims was 'partly a reflection of a utopian and totally unrealistic belief by the founders of our State that we could avoid the emergence of party politics here'. The dominant party (or movement) when Ireland gained independence, Sinn Féin, was suspicious of the notion of parties, since it implied a fragmentation of the people. The party viewed society 'in essentially monist terms' (that it is one unitary organic being), and wanted all differences resolved within the 'national movement', rather than in a divisive party system (Gallagher 1993: 1). Across the political spectrum there was a strong sense of antipathy to the notion of party, because it 'prostituted national to the sectional', and 'techniques of compromise inherent in party politics proved repulsive to a particular type of temperament' (Lee 1989: 87). This motivated the authors of the 1922 Free State Constitution to attempt to halt the development of political parties (Moss 1933: 13). They were so convinced that proportional representation would fragment party politics, the

authors adopted as an aim the ending of party politics in the Dáil, to be replaced with rule by non-party experts (Lee 1989: 82). This suspicion of the nature of parties was a major factor in the explicit rejection of the use of this term by the main parties in the fledgling state. For example Sinn Féin means ‘ourselves’, Fianna Fáil ‘warriors of destiny’ and Fine Gael ‘tribe of Gaels’, titles that imply a unitary, rather than a fragmental nature (see Coakley 1980). Mair notes how ‘the Irish political leadership has always...[been] keen to dissociate itself from the notion of party’ (1987a: 26), because it was believed that this divided the nation, echoing the sentiment of Madison in *The Federalist* (2003: 51–59). The founder of Fianna Fáil, Éamon de Valera, was always quick to stress that his organisation was more a movement, rather than a party (Mair 1987a: 178), and Mair claims that while this aversion to party generally declined in Europe, in Ireland it proved ‘more pervasive and more persistent through time’ (1987a: 26). For example, Clann na Talmhan, a farmers’ party that emerged in the 1940s ‘was always eager to dissociate itself from the politics of party and to deny a partisan purpose’ (Mair 1987a: 26; see also Gallagher 1985: 105–107), and Mair (1987a: 26) refers to a speech quoted in Garvin (1977: 181) by the party leader that talked about the party’s determination to ‘drive from power the politicians’. Echoing anti-party sentiment that was reminiscent of other more openly fascist movements, the leader of the Blueshirts in the 1930s (and first leader of Fine Gael), Eoin O’Duffy, declared that ‘party politics has served its period of usefulness’ (Rumpf and Hepburn 1977: 130).

In the literature on Irish politics, a possible link between the success of Independents and anti-party sentiment has not really been explored. Marsh and Mitchell (1999: 174) did allude to it somewhat with their finding that disenchantment with the party system (largely over the issues of the honesty and integrity of politicians) motivated support for Independents in 1997. If those casting a first preference vote for Independents were truly anti-party, they would distribute their lower preferences on the ballot to other Independents. However, Gallagher found that Independents have the lowest rate of transfer

solidarity,¹⁸ at just 24 percent, in stark contrast to the comparative figure of 82 percent for Fianna Fáil (Gallagher 1978: 3). From these results, it is difficult to argue that those voting for Independents are ‘pure Independents’ who reject the system of party politics. Instead, Wattenberg’s argument in relation to the decline in support for parties in America can be adapted to the Irish case. He asserted that just because voters label themselves Independents does not mean that they are rejecting parties, it may just mean that they are independent of parties, therefore not anti-party (Wattenberg 1981: 945). Wattenberg found that even though cynicism is increasing towards parties, it has not materialised into negativity; indeed, he found no relationship between strength of party identification and levels of trust in government parties (Wattenberg 1981: 949). Following this line of reasoning, it could be argued that the supporters of Independents exhibit apathy, rather than antipathy to parties, although this hypothesis has yet to be validated.

The link between support for Independents and anti-party sentiment has been established in the comparative literature, notably in the context of Australia (Costar and Curtin 2004: 33, 82; Sharman 2002: 58), the US (Allen and Brox 2005: 630–633; Collet 1999; Owen and Dennis 1996; Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus 1996 (the subtitle of their work is ‘citizen response to major party failure’)), and Japan (Le Blanc 2004: 4–5). In Australia, the major source of antipathy towards parties stems from their increasingly centralised structure, where backbench MPs have little input into, or influence over, party policy (Sharman 2002: 64–5). This results in an inability to satisfy local concerns, which Independents tap into. In the US, the convergence of the parties towards the median voter, and the perceived decline in parties’ efficacy, has been associated with the rise in Independent voters, and specifically, support for former Independent presidential candidate, Ross Perot (Owen and Dennis 1996) (as well as for third party candidate Ralph Nader in 2000 (Allen and Brox 2005)). Similarly in Japan, Independents are elected on the back of a protest vote against the conservative establishment (Le Blanc 2004: 4). In the

¹⁸ Defined as the proportion of an Independent candidate’s vote that is transferred to another Independent on the elimination or election of the former. This rate only takes into account the cases where there was an Independent candidate available to receive transfers.

UK, Jordan has noted the link between party atrophy and the rise of non-party activities. Describing the decline of parties as ‘instruments of public participation’ (1999: 6), he refers to people being increasingly drawn to non-party politics, particularly issue-based concerns. While some of these groups do contest elections, a lot of them refrain from doing so, usually because they receive very few votes. Jordan fails to explain this, and he somewhat overstates the extent to which parties are in decline and non-party actors are on the rise; parties continue to win at least 99 percent of the seats at parliamentary elections in the UK, with only one or two Independent candidates managing to win a seat.

Given their non-party status, it is important to examine the nature of the relationship between anti-party sentiment and Independents. Because three-quarters of Independent votes transfer to parties, and because some Independent candidates do express a preference for particular parties, this might lead us to expect that in some cases there is not a very strong link between these variables. On the other hand, the comparative evidence would suggest the contrary. Regardless of the validity of either claim, this relationship is something that needs to be established. If it is found that Independents are the recipients of an anti-party protest vote, this might explain why neo-populist parties have not emerged to any extent in Ireland, as compared to mainland Europe.

2.6 The electoral system

Whenever Independents in Ireland are casually referred to in the paragraph of an academic work, a sentence explaining their significance on the electoral system is usually included. Because PR-STV is seen to encourage, if not facilitate, candidate-centred competition, this seems a reasonable assumption to make. In addition, the lack of cases where PR-STV is practised limits the evidence available that could be used to determine the significance of the relationship. The more academic works that state the causality of PR-STV, the more it becomes an accepted ‘fact’, without ever having been empirically scrutinised.

There are many examples of the widespread assumption concerning the causal relationship between PR-STV and Independents. Strom says that ‘to a large extent the survival of these independents is a function of the Irish PR-STV electoral system, (which has reinforced the localism of Irish party politics)’ (1991: 103); Carty notes that ‘the single transferable vote can lead to the proliferation of independent candidates’ (1981: 23); Coakley claims that ‘the most distinctive consequence of Ireland’s version of proportional representation is the presence in parliament of a large number of independent or non-aligned deputies’ (1987: 164); Chubb says that ‘the Independent member in Dáil Éireann owes his existence to the operation of proportional representation’ (1957: 132). Gallagher, Laver and Mair have been more reluctant to attribute direct influence to the electoral system, merely stating that ‘it has been argued’ that PR-STV results in Independents (which they highlight as a negative consequence, owing to the disproportional power Independents can wield over a minority government), with Gallagher following a similar line of argument, declaring that the persistence of Independents ‘may be attributed partly to the electoral system’ (2005a: 523).

The reasons given to support these arguments tend to fall into a number of common categories, which are summarised by Sinnott: the candidate-centred nature that focuses on individuals over parties, the facilitation of particularistic-style competition, and the presence of multi-member districts (2005: 120). The first feature ensures that candidates without a party label are at less of a disadvantage than under party-centred systems such as a proportional representation (PR)-list system. For example, under PR-STV they are in a position to attract transfers, which some have hypothesised is advantageous for Independents (Busteed 1990: 58–9). Chubb argues that the transferable system encourages party dissidents to run, because their supporters can vote for both the dissident and the latter’s former party (1957: 138), a similar line of reasoning to Lakeman who says that PR-STV therefore offers the voter more choice than systems such as SMP that discourage dissidents (Lakeman 1991: 53). The second factor highlighted by Sinnott means that because competition is not centred on ideologies or national policies, candidates such as

Independents focussed on local issues have an opportunity to attract support. The final feature concerns the 'PR' element of PR-STV; multi-member constituencies ensure that a reasonable level of proportionality can be achieved, where candidates and/or parties receive a quotient of seats that approximates to the proportion of votes they attract. In addition, because the proportionality of the electoral outcome is usually positively correlated to an increasing district magnitude, we expect Independents to be more successful in larger constituencies, a hypothesis that Gallagher does not find evidence of (1975: 507); he does point out though, that smaller constituency size may not affect the index of proportionality for Independents, simply because the original district magnitude was not large enough in the first place to produce purely proportional results (Gallagher 1975: 507).

None of the above authors state why Independents have had very little success in Malta, which in addition to a tradition of brokerage, has also used the PR-STV electoral system since 1921. Sharman attributes the lack of Independents in Tasmania to the introduction of PR-STV before the development of the party system. This meant that when parties emerged they adapted to the personalistic style of competition promoted by PR-STV by picking local notables on the party ticket; in this way he claims there is no need to elect Independents, because everyone is a quasi-Independent (2002: 61). While Papadakis and Bean set out to explore the relationship between Independents and the various electoral systems (including PR-STV) in Australia, they say very little on the exact relationship between the two (1995). Similarly, although Farrell and McAllister's work on PR-STV in Australia is very extensive, they do not delve into an analysis of whether the system has facilitated Independents (2006).

Other academics refer to the particularistic style of competition that allows personalism and localism to foster (see Carey and Shugart 1995; Carty 1981: 121; Chubb 1957: 132; Katz 1984: 137; Lakeman 1974: 261; Lee 1989: 83). The argument is that PR-STV engenders a strong element of intra-party competition, forcing candidates to develop a personal vote and devote excessive attention to localist, particularistic concerns to distinguish themselves

from their party running mates. Since it is believed that localism and personalism encourage people to vote for Independents (see section 2.4), PR-STV's ability to foster these two cultural characteristics points to it as a determinant feature in explaining the presence of Independents. However, not all are in agreement concerning the nature of this relationship, as Farrell, Mackerras and McAllister assert that PR-STV is not responsible for the presence of localism and particularism, and any claims made in support of a positive relationship between the culture and Independents are 'disingenuous' (1996: 25). They claim that Irish political culture is 'endemically localist', such as in Italy, which does not have PR-STV (ibid.). The prevalence of these cultural features in nineteenth century Ireland before the nationwide introduction of PR-STV in 1922 seems to verify the argument of Farrell, Mackerras and McAllister. Indeed, the latter go so far as to claim that the relationship works in the opposite direction: it was because voting habits were candidate-centred in the first place that PR-STV was the version of PR adopted in Ireland and other Anglo-American states (ibid.: 26).

Focussing first on the specific assertions made concerning the effects of PR-STV, it is important to remember that a lot of the assumptions about PR-STV are based on studies of one country (Ireland), resulting in the influence of PR-STV sometimes being misunderstood (Farrell and McAllister 2006: 58). A notable example highlighted by Farrell and McAllister is the presence of clientelism, a feature of Irish political culture that involves the presence of a patron-client relationship between politicians and voters, where the former satisfy the particularistic demands of the latter, in return for which support in the form of a vote is expected on polling day (ibid.). Farrell and McAllister disagree with those who claim that the pervasiveness of clientelism is due to PR-STV, indicating that it was a feature of Irish political culture long before the introduction of PR-STV in 1920 (ibid.). Following the logic of Farrell and McAllister, some of the conclusions from the literature need to be examined with a sceptical attitude, especially if they are not based on any empirical evidence.

The main flaw with most of the claims made concerning the relationship between PR-STV and Independents is that while they are all very plausible in theory, such claims may not hold up when subjected to empirical testing. Probably the main reason why such testing has not been undertaken is given by Mitchell who says that theories concerning the consequences of PR-STV ‘cannot be tested with any real confidence’ because it is used to elect only two national parliaments (2001: 197–8) (see also Gallagher 1991: 2). He concludes that the more accurate premise is not that PR-STV necessarily results in Independents getting elected, but that ‘it is easier to elect independents under PR-STV than most other leading electoral systems’ (ibid.)

Mitchell is correct in his line of reasoning that the limited number of cases where PR-STV is operable renders it difficult to design a model where the relationship between the electoral system and Independent success can be validly tested. For instance, any argument that PR-STV does necessarily result in Independent MPs can be defeated by simply pointing to the only other lower house of parliament using this system, the Maltese, where support for Independent candidates is minuscule, and no Independent has been elected since the island gained independence in 1964. Consequently, the research design used in this dissertation is to focus on the case of Ireland to examine both the mechanical and psychological effects of the electoral system on both Independents and those voting for them.

The literature appears quite adamant that PR-STV is a candidate-centred system that can be expected to fragment parties and encourage candidate-centred behaviour by both voters and candidates alike. Most of the authors appear fairly convinced that PR-STV consequently is a major factor in the presence of Independent candidates, as they can thrive in a personalistic political culture. However, besides being based on the evidence of one case, such claims also ignore the importance of other factors outside of the electoral system. While the literature has indicated the existence of a significant relationship, this has not been adequately tested, which is the focus of chapter 7.

2.7 Conclusion

From this review of the literature, we have a number of expectations as to what accounts for the significance of Independents. In relation to the emergence of Independent candidates, if the latter share the attributes of a typical candidate found in the studies outlined, we might expect that such individuals do tend to have a university education, perhaps work in 'brokerage occupations', and are middle-class, middle-aged, and male. However, at the same time, we might also expect that because Independents are not party candidates, and because they are generally political outsiders (that is, not part of the establishment), they may not necessarily follow the comparative pattern of candidate emergence. Given their heterogeneous nature, Independents may be more likely to represent a cross-section of society. In terms of the incentives motivating candidates to run for office, we might expect that Independents will be more expressive in their aims than party candidates, who will be more instrumental. This expectation stems from the belief that the latter have a greater chance of winning a seat than Independents, and if elected to office, party deputies can achieve more policy influence than Independents.

Given both the candidate-centred and premodern nature of campaigning in Irish politics, I expect these features to be a central aspect of Independents' campaigns. Because recent studies have found local campaigning to matter, I also expect to find evidence of this relationship. This is especially the case for Independents, who are compelled to campaign harder than party candidates because they cannot rely on a party label to deliver a particular vote. With the literature stressing the importance of localism and personalism both in Irish politics and as a factor behind an Independent vote in other political systems, we should expect these features to be similarly important influences motivating Independent support in Ireland. Anti-party sentiment has been shown to motivate a vote for Independent candidates in other countries, and it has a history of expression in Irish politics. While the contribution it makes to the Independent presence has been largely unexplored in Ireland, the evidence from transfer patterns results in a level of uncertainty concerning its impact.

Finally, most of the literature seems very convinced regarding the influence of the electoral system. PR-STV appears to support the aforementioned culture of localism and personalism that facilitates an Independent vote. However, the major caveat is that most of the claims concerning the significance of PR-STV have gone untested, and they are based on the observation of its operation in a single political system. Consequently, although we probably still expect to find that PR-STV has a positive effect on Independents in the Irish system, it will be difficult to tell if this means that the relationship applies to other systems where PR-STV is practised. The combination of factors explaining the significance of Independents assessed in this chapter means that in all likelihood it is not just PR-STV in isolation that determines their success. I expect to find that a number of variables are important, and perhaps it is their interaction, rather than any in isolation, that explains the successes achieved by Independents in Ireland.

Chapter 3. Independents in Irish political life, 1922–2002

3.1 Introduction

As stated in the opening chapter, Independents have been a recurrent feature of Irish political life since the founding of the state in 1922. Along with the Labour Party, they are the only group to contest every single general (Dáil) election to date. They are sometimes labelled in the media as a group akin to a party, and in the early years of the new state were sometimes regarded as ‘a distinct party group’ (Chubb 1957: 134), even being referred to as the ‘Independent Party’ in parliament.¹⁹ However, it is erroneous to claim that they are a homogeneous grouping, which the Ceann Comhairle (Speaker of the Dáil) acknowledged in 1966, asserting ‘each Independent is a unit in himself’ (*Dáil Debates* 203: 1614, 25 June 1963). The term ‘Independents’ refers to an amorphous collection of candidates who stand for election without a party label, which for many Independents is often the only characteristic they have in common. This was acknowledged by former Independent TD, Frank Sherwin, in 1963, when he noted ‘There is the difference between chalk and cheese between Independents. There are Independent Ratepayers, Independent Tenants’ Representatives. They may be out for each other’s blood’ (*Dáil Debates* 201: 522, 27 March 1963). These differences are important because the vote such Independents attract may be quite contextual, and can be dependent on the ideological nature of their candidacies. For example, Independents in the border region of Donegal attracted a Protestant vote until the 1950s, but from the 1970s on they attracted a nationalist, republican vote. This was not because of a sudden change in the ideological orientation of Independent voters, but was due to a change in the type of Independent candidate. Consequently, before analysing Independent candidates and their voters in later chapters, we need to first examine the diversity that occurs within the spectrum of the candidacy itself. The aim of this chapter is to

¹⁹ See reference by Patrick Hogan (Labour Party TD) (*Dáil Debates* 34: 334, 2 April 1930) and his party colleague, William Davin, (*Dáil Debates* 34: 364, 2 April 1930), who quoted an editorial from *The Irish Times* that also used the phrase ‘Independent Party’ (see Anonymous. 1930. ‘Morals of Defeat’, *The Irish Times*, 29 March).

identify the types of Independents that have contested general elections since 1922, and to ‘fit’ them into a comparative model, since the main reason why Independents have not been studied to date is because they are deviants, who fall outside theories and models on voter and candidate behaviour. In addition, the electoral performance of Independents as an aggregate total and as separate categories is also identified and analysed. This has the aim of establishing and dissecting the topic of interest, indicating that it is neither a monolithic nor indefinable phenomenon. The primary method used in this chapter is historical interpretation, the aim of which is to account for significant historical outcomes by piecing evidence together in a chronological manner, and offering limited generalisations that are sensitive to context (Ragin 1987: 35). Although most of this chapter is limited to historical detail, this is necessary and justified where the stock of knowledge on a subject is limited (see King, Keohane, and Verba 1994: 15). Since the topic of Independents has been under-researched (Mitchell 2001: 199), the following descriptive sections are required before undertaking inference in the later chapters.

3.2 Distinguishing between an Independent and a party

Independents were defined in chapters 1 and 2 as non-party candidates. Identifying who does not belong to a party requires a definition of a party; it was already stated in chapter 2 that LaPalombara and Weiner’s definition is used in the context of this thesis, largely because it was quite extensive, including six key features (1966: 6). These necessitate that the organisation must:

- Demonstrate continuity in organisation, where the life of the party is not dependent on the political life of the leader;
- Have a ‘manifest and...permanent organisation at the local level’;
- Have an aspiration to attain power in office;
- Have an explicit desire for votes;
- Not be the personalised machine of a dominant individual in the group;
- Run more than one candidate (unless this candidate is not the party leader).

The aim of this section is to use this definition to clarify which groups from Irish electoral history are counted as parties, and which have their candidates counted as Independents. This exercise is especially necessary in the Irish context as there is much confusion in the literature over which candidates are Independents, resulting in disagreements between texts concerning the number of votes and seats won by Independents. This confusion tends to arise because (1) candidates' party affiliation was not stated on electoral ballot papers until 1963, and (2) some Independents campaign under quasi-party titles.

A case-by-case method of qualitative analysis is employed to determine the genuine Independents using the above definition. This was determined by an analysis of the contemporary newspapers from each of the election periods. While nominees of interest groups are not strictly Independents in the neutralist sense, it would be unfair to exclude them for a number of reasons. It is very difficult to find a politician who is 'independent' in the sense that they have never been committed to a partisan cause, never adopted partisan views, or never had the express support of an interest group behind their candidacy. In addition, conflicting reports sometimes appear in the media concerning the 'independent' nature of a candidacy. A notable example is the farming candidates prevalent in the 1940s and 1950s. For the same election, some such candidates were described as either 'Independent Farmers', representatives of a local farmers' association, or even as members of a fragmented farmers' party, Clann na Talmhan. This highlights the difficulty, if not impossibility, of clarifying a strict delineation between Independents and representatives of interest groups. Consequently, both these types of candidate are included within the framework of this study, as the topic of interest for this dissertation is non-party candidates. At the same time, where a non-party candidate is the official nominee of an interest group is duly noted.

A third type of non-party candidate is a representative of micro-parties. These are small organisations that have aspirations for party status, but fail to meet the required criteria to qualify for the official register of parties. Similar to interest group representatives, this category does not consist of 'pure'

Independents (the first type of non-party candidate identified in chapter 1), but it may include candidates who qualify as Independents, with the exception that they call their personal organisation a 'party' (Mitchell 2001: 193). Distinguishing between these movements and genuine parties requires a qualitative analysis using LaPalombara and Weiner's aforementioned definition (1966: 6). Any group that fulfils all of these six criteria is considered a genuine party, and is not included within the framework of this research. Any group that has a party name, but fails to meet the required definition, is deemed a micro-party and is included within this study alongside 'pure' Independents, interest group representatives, and 'gene pool' Independents (the third type of non-party candidate). The micro-parties that are examined are those whose status as a party has been open to debate (see Coakley 1990); the next section analyses all of these movements, justifying their inclusion or exclusion from analysis.

There are obvious flaws in the chosen criteria of what defines an Independent, as some may argue that interest group and micro-party candidates are not genuine Independents. However, as stated already, it is very difficult to define what exactly a genuine Independent is, especially in the qualitative sense. Such a definition would in all likelihood be quite subjective; it is far more effective to pick a clearer measure that, although it may not fall in line with everyone's understanding of an Independent, is far more transparent and consistent, and would lead to someone else including the same candidates if similar criteria were adopted. Naturally, as with any definition, there will still be an element of subjectivity, but it is hoped that this has been minimised to an acceptable level.

Before concluding, it is worth noting one type of Independent that is excluded from this study: those sitting in parliament as Independents, but who were elected as party candidates. For the purposes of this thesis, only politicians who actually contest elections as Independents are considered genuine non-party candidates.

(i) Groups whose candidates are included as Independents:

This section details those groups failing to meet the criteria to qualify as parties, and whose candidates are included as Independents. The elections contested by these groups are referred to in parentheses after each group's title.

(1) The following organisations are simply ad hoc electoral machines of interest groups, and cannot be defined as parties.

Ratepayers' Association (1922–'23, 1957);

Town Tenants' Association (1923–'27);

Workers' Farming Association (1923) (they also ran only one candidate);

Blind Men's Party (June 1927);

Unpurchased Tenants' Association (1923) (they also ran only one candidate);

Evicted Tenants' Association (1923) (they also ran only one candidate);

Irish Housewives' Association (1957);

Army Wives' Association (1989).

(2) The following groups ran only one candidate, which means they cannot be considered as more than the personalised machine of the candidate:

Irish Workers' League (1951–'54, 1961);

Irish Workers' Party (1965–'69);

National Action (1954).

(3) Although these groups ran several candidates, they cannot be included as parties since the contemporary newspapers described them as Independent Business or 'Commercial' candidates, with most of them, especially in Cork, conducting independent campaigns.²⁰

Business and Professional Group (1922);

Cork Progressive Association (1923).

²⁰ See reports on the Business and Professional Group in *The Irish Times*, 18 June 1922, and other dates.

(4) Although these groups may have run more than one candidate, they were little more than the personalised machines of a dominant individual that wound up on his/her departure from the association.

‘Irish Worker’ League (September 1927–’32). This was a personalised group of a radical left-wing candidate, centred on his newspaper, the *Irish Worker* (Coakley 1990: 285);

Monetary Reform (1943–’48);

Christian Democratic Party (1961, 1973);

Independent Fianna Fáil (1973–2006). This was a personalised machine centred on a political dynasty.

(ii) Groups qualifying as parties:

The following groups qualify as parties, as they fulfil all of the required criteria, and are excluded from the framework of this dissertation.

Business Men’s Party (1923);

Dublin Trades Council (1923);

Young Ireland (1954);

National Progressive Democratic Party (1961);

Socialist Party (1981);

Socialist Labour Party (1981);

Democratic Socialist Party (November 1982–’89).

3.3 Support for Independents

Having made the distinction between Independents and minor parties in the previous section, table 3.1 displays the definitive results for Independents at general elections from 1922 to 2002, which have not been collated before into a unitary dataset.

**Table 3.1. Numbers and proportions of candidates running as
Independents and numbers and proportions of votes and seats won by
Independent candidates at general elections 1922-2002**

Year	Total Votes	% Total Votes	No. of Seats	% Total Seats	No. of Candidates	% Total Candidates
1922	65,797	11.1	9	7.0	21	7.6
1923	96,877	9.4	15	9.8	63	16.8
1927 (June)	158,004	14.0	16	10.5	57	15.2
1927 (Sept.)	106,224	8.1	13	8.5	33	12.6
1932	140,298	10.5	14	9.2	34	12.2
1933	68,882	5.0	9	5.9	13	5.3
1937	129,704	9.7	8	5.8	33	13.0
1938	59,461	4.7	7	5.1	9	4.2
1943	120,403	8.0	11	8.0	37	10.4
1944	104,708	8.5	11	8.0	20	8.0
1948	109,089	8.3	12	8.2	30	7.4
1951	118,714	9.6	14	9.5	28	9.5
1954	75,896	5.7	5	3.4	20	6.6
1957	80,402	6.6	9	6.1	24	8.3
1961	67,372	5.8	6	4.2	26	8.7
1965	26,460	2.1	2	1.4	20	7.1
1969	42,230	3.2	1	0.7	27	7.3
1973	38,082	3.0	2	1.4	27	8.1
1977	87,527	5.5	4	2.7	52	13.9
1981	106,632	6.2	6	3.6	53	13.2
1982 (Feb.)	50,713	2.9	4	2.4	58	15.9
1982 (Nov.)	42,451	2.5	3	1.8	48	13.2
1987	72,217	4.0	3	1.8	85	18.2
1989	57,982	3.9	4	2.4	49	13.2
1992	99,243	6.0	5	3.0	103	21.4
1997	124,490	6.9	6	3.6	104	21.5
2002	176,304	9.5	13	7.8	95	20.5

Source: The data for this table, and for all other tables and figures in this chapter (unless otherwise stated), come from various issues of *Election results and transfer of votes for Dáil and bye-elections*. Dublin: Stationery Office, and Brian M. Walker. 1993. *Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland 1918-1992*. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy.

To gain a clearer picture of the information from the above table, Independents' vote, seat and candidate share is displayed in the following three figures.

Figure 3.1. % Votes won by Independents at general elections 1922–2002

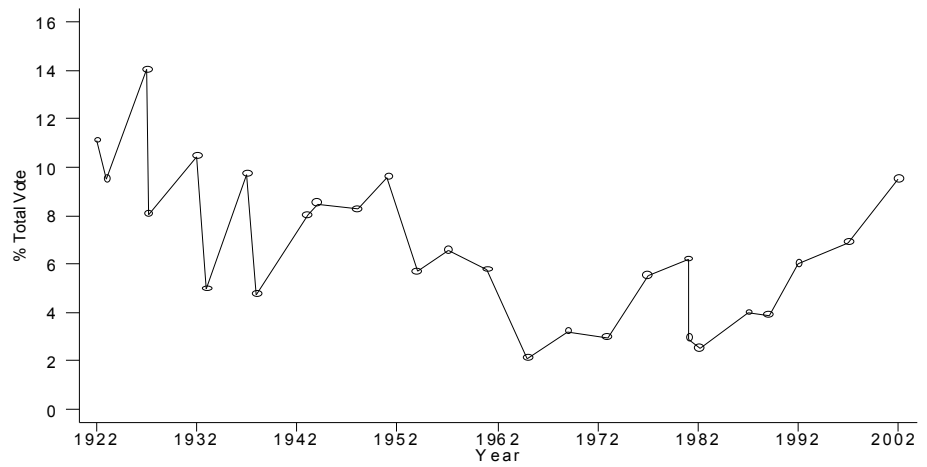
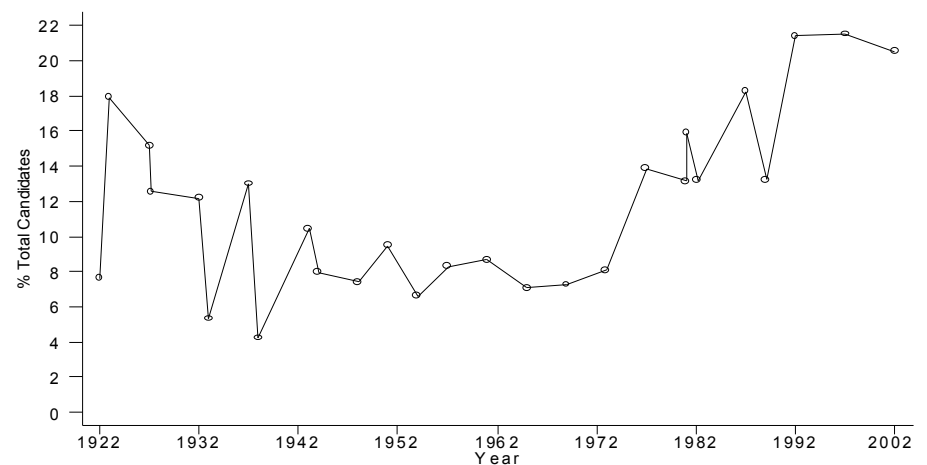


Figure 3.2. % Seats won by Independents at general elections 1922–2002

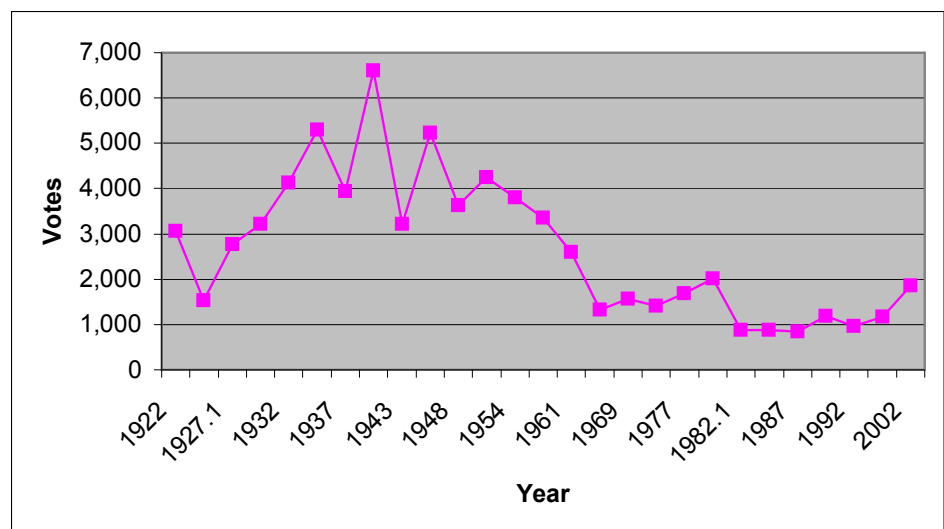


Figure 3.3. % Candidates running as Independents at general elections 1922–2002



The first observable trend is the fluctuating electoral performance of Independents. Their share of the votes and seats is represented by a banana-shaped curve, having prospered in the early years of the state, suffered a trough of decline in the mid-1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and recovered again from the 1980s on. One reason for the rising levels of support for Independents has been the increasing number of Independent candidates contesting elections since the 1970s. This trend has masked the overall decline in the mean vote per candidate (see figure 3.4), which has remained pretty stable since the near-terminal decline of Independents in the 1960s (only one Independent was elected in 1969, and over the four elections from 1965 to 1977 only two new Independent TDs were elected, both of whom had previously been party candidates and were products of internal party divides).

Figure 3.4. Mean 1st preference vote won per Independent candidate, 1922–2002



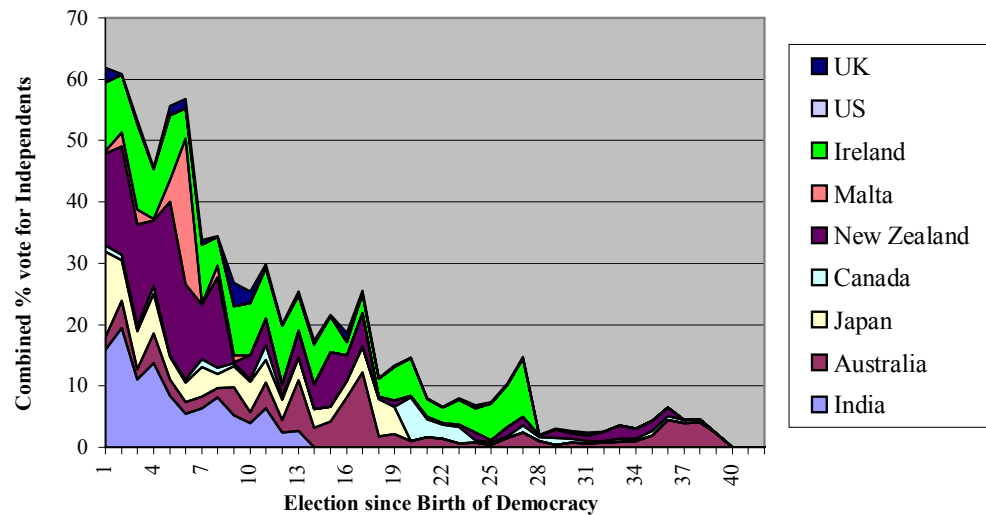
Given their early success, Manning called the 1920s ‘the decade of the Independent’, as there were nine, 13, 16, and 13 Independents elected to the Dáil at the four respective elections in that decade (Manning 1972: 85). However, it is slightly unfair to isolate just the 1920s, since Independents won over 8 percent of the national poll on average from the 1930s until the 1951 election, constituting a ‘powerful bloc in Irish politics for the first 40 years of the state’s existence’ (Gallagher 1976: 58). What is clear from figure 3.4 are

the vote-winning abilities of the early crop of Independents, which peaked in the 1940s, when 34 of the 87 Independent candidates won seats at the three elections during the decade, a quite substantial proportion. The success of Independents at elections in the early years of a new party system was not an experience unique to Ireland. Because it takes time for a party system to settle on an established pattern of competition, for parties to establish identities, and for voters to forge concrete attachments to parties, the infant period of most party systems witnesses volatile electoral behaviour, a pattern that suits non-partisans such as Independents. This is the line of argument adopted by Broten for the election of Independents in the early years of the Canadian party system (Broten 2002: 16). In addition, voters, following a Madisonian line of thought, do not fully trust the intentions of political parties, perceiving them as distorting influences in the link between citizens and their government.²¹ Once the political climate settles down, and voters have decided which party best suits their interests, the parties usually gain a stranglehold on the political system and Independents fall by the wayside. Figure 3.5, which gives a breakdown of the vote for Independents in other Anglo-American political systems (and Japan) since the introduction of free democratic elections, offers a tentative verification of this thesis. Beginning with the first free election in each system, this figure details the combined vote for Independents across these elections. The results appear to suggest that the vote for Independents is inversely related to the age of the party system.²²

²¹ See Hamilton, Madison, and Jay (2003: 51–59) for a discussion of the problems of factions.

²² Japan was included because until 1993 it used the Single Non-Transferable Vote electoral system, which is similar to PR-STV.

Figure 3.5. Vote for Independents according to age of party system



Source: Source: www.electionworld.org; Dieter Nohlen. 2001. *Elections in Asia and the Pacific: A Data Handbook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Dieter Nohlen. 2005. *Elections in the Americas: A Data Handbook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; <http://www.maldata.com>

This trend appeared to be on the verge of happening in the Irish party system in the 1930s. After the volatility of the 1920s, when nine different parties contested elections, electoral politics settled down in the following decade, as both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael broadened their support bases, and a bipolar party system evolved. This appeared to squeeze out Independents, as the number of Independent candidates fell from a high of 67 in 1923 to nine in 1938. The number of Independent TDs also declined in these years, from 15 to seven, as did their vote share, falling from just under 10 percent to 5 percent. However, Independents did not disappear, and bucked the comparative trend by recovering in the 1940s, winning ten, 11, 12, and 14 seats in the four elections between 1943 and 1951 (to a Dáil reduced in capacity from the 1920s), and even securing a ministerial seat in the 1948–51 inter-party government.

3.4 Factors explaining Independent trends

(i) Independents 1920s–1940s

One noticeable trend from figure 3.1 on the vote for Independents in the early years of the state is the continuous swings in their vote, veering from 11

percent in 1922 to 10 percent in 1923 to 14 percent in June 1927 to 8 percent in September that year, and so on. This pattern of a series of ups and downs continued until 1944, when for the first time Independents managed to increase their vote at consecutive elections. A number of reasons can be hypothesised to account for this topsy-turvy performance. To begin with, because Independents do not have a core identity (that is, they lack a party label), it is difficult for voters to forge a concrete attachment to them. Consequently, unlike parties, Independents do not have a core support level they can rely on, and their vote is often very much a floating vote from electors wishing to register a temporary protest with the political parties, which may explain why it is prone to such swings.

A straightforward reason accounting for the variation in the Independent vote during this period may be related to the number of Independent candidates. Any type of candidate who stands for election is always going to attract a certain number of votes, no matter how minuscule; a change in the number of candidates is therefore likely to affect a change in the vote. The figures from table 3.1 appear to provide some evidence for this hypothesis, since the 42 percent decline in the number of Independent candidates was matched by a 33 percent fall in their total votes across the two 1927 elections; similarly, a 62 percent decline in the number of Independent candidates from 1932 to 1933 was accompanied by a 51 percent fall in their vote. A simple correlation between the number of candidates and vote share for Independents for the period 1927–1944 confirms the strength of this relationship, since it produces a score of $r=0.93$ ($p<0.001$). What is interesting is that a correlation between votes and candidates for all elections from 1927 to 2002 produces a far lower correlation coefficient of $r=0.39$. The difference between this score and the value for the 1927–1944 period indicates that the number of candidates did affect the overall vote for Independents during the early years when there was no established Independent vote, but its significance declined once a certain pattern of Independent voting emerged.

During this same period, there was something of a cyclical pattern about Independents' electoral performance. At an election after a long Dáil,

Independents usually fared quite well, increasing their vote (and usually their seat) share at every such election within this time-frame. This resulted in difficulties for the main parties in forming a stable government, leading to an early election where Independents lacked the resources to compete, and may also have been punished by an electorate that favoured a stable government. This in turn led to the major parties making gains at such elections, forming a stable government, and hence a long Dáil. This led back to a rise in support for Independents, which re-iterated the cycle.²³ Table 3.1 confirms this pattern of events, where Independents prospered at the June 1927 election, fell back at the next election three months later, experienced gains in 1932 and losses in 1933, a pattern that continued until the 1943 election.

Apart from the volatility of this infant stage, there are other factors that account for the prominence of Independents in the early years of the state. Because the new state and party system were still evolving, it was not surprising that there was a large number of unattached deputies who had yet to find their niche (Busteed 1990: 40). The new party system, founded on a division over the Anglo-Irish Treaty that had established the new state, did not cater for all interests, ranging from agrarian to business to Protestant communities, who nominated Independent candidates to represent their views. Both Manning (1972: 85–6) and Chubb (1957: 133) point to the newly adopted electoral system (PR-STV) as a causal factor in the initial success of Independents. They claim the presence of PR, especially the introduction of the multi-seat constituency, encouraged candidates to run and that an over-estimation of its inclusivity (largely based on an ignorance of the workings of the new system) led to ‘an optimistic rush of Independent candidates’ in the early elections (Chubb 1957: 133). However, PR-STV did not prove to be the Pandora’s Box that the parties had feared, and once this was realised, the number of Independent candidates fell to just over 30 in the 1930s, around which figure the average number of candidates hovered until the late 1970s. The causal influence of PR-STV is examined in more detail in later chapters.

²³ This is adopted from a model used on the Labour Party by Gallagher (1982: 155–156).

Another explanation for the success of Independents in the early decades of the state is a lack of aversion to these candidates, which deviates from the comparative trend, where Independents are often perceived as eccentrics preaching irresponsible politics (Sharman 2002: 53). Independents were accepted as important contributors to political life in the newly established Irish state, since they could provide an independence of thought and sound judgment in a parliament that was composed of inexperienced politicians, who had little practice in the running of a country. An article from *The Irish Times* in 1937 echoed these positive attitudes towards Independents:

There is one strong reason why the competent Independent should be preferred to the equally competent party nominee...Parliamentary records show that Independent deputies have contributed much more than their share to the interest and the constructive value of Dáil debates. Their influence on legislation has consequently been far in excess of their numerical strength. More than once they have succeeded in “leavening the loaf” of discussion, which otherwise would have been flat, stale and lacking in nutriment...the value of deputies who are free from castigations by party whips may be even greater than it has been in the past (Politicus, *The Irish Times*, 24 June 1937).

Independents were also acceptable because they were a part of the political establishment. Many of them were from the upper echelons of society, largely the business and unionist communities, and the majority of them were ideologically conservative, with almost all the Independent TDs openly supporting Cumann na nGaedheal (in part a reflection of their opposition to Fianna Fáil (Chubb 1957: 134)). When this wave of pro-establishment Independents gradually disappeared in the late 1950s, the vote for Independents declined. They were replaced by a new breed of anti-establishment Independents, who initially fared poorly in elections. However, once they had established a source of support to tap into, this generation carved out an electoral base for Independents in the late 1970s that was far different to the support of the 1920s–1950s period, as they were predominantly left-wing ideological Independents, who openly expressed a dislike for the major parties.

(ii) Independents 1950s–1970s

Apart from a blip in the 1930s, the number of Independents elected to the Dáil remained fairly constant from the 1920s until the mid-1950s. After the poor election showing of 1954 when they lost nine seats (largely because eight Independent TDs joined or rejoined parties in the 1951–1954 period (Chubb 1957:133)), Independents recovered somewhat in 1957 to win nine seats, but this redemption proved only temporary, and they fell into long-term decline in the 1960s, not making a significant recovery until the 1990s.

If the 1920s was the decade of the Independent, then the 1960s and 1970s were the decades of the two-and-a-half parties, as Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and Labour consolidated their dominance of political life to such an extent that they won all bar one of the seats at the 1969 election. Manning claimed the decline of Independents was due to the evolution of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael as catch-all parties, and the renewed shift of Labour to the left to capture a far-left vote, which was often a source of support for Independents (1972: 86). The latter argument certainly makes a credible point, since the return of Labour to the centre, following its merger with Democratic Left in 1999, has been expounded as a factor in the recent rise of left-wing Independents (Sinnott 2002).

One major reason for the declining fortunes of Independents may have been changes in the electoral rules in the 1950s and 1960s, a premise to which Garvin subscribes (Garvin 1972: 367). Beginning in the 1950s, the large-seat constituencies disappeared, as 3-seat constituencies became ever more commonplace. In theory, the latter magnitude is not favourable to Independents, since the quota of votes needed to guarantee a seat is 25 percent, a substantial challenge for a candidate lacking the attraction of a party label (Chubb 1957: 138). Sacks buys this theory, and claims that the loss of seats for Independent Unionists in the late 1950s and early 1960s was largely due to the creation of 3-seat constituencies in the border constituencies of Donegal and Cavan (where they had previously held seats), which made the electoral quota larger than the number of Protestants in those constituencies (Sacks 1976: 535–6). While this may well account for the decline in the number of Independent TDs, it does not explain why their vote fell (Carty 1981: 60). Carty says the

reasoning behind such an argument is that once voters realised Independents had less chance of victory, they were less inclined to vote for them (ibid.), which in itself is not a conclusive argument, as it is usually argued that strategic voting is not expected to occur under PR-STV (Bartholdi and Orlin 1991). Gallagher also plays down the influence of boundary changes (known as redistricting in the US), stating that the only possible effect this had on the declining fortunes of Independents was by 'adversely affecting their ability to win votes rather than by making it harder for them to win seats from a given number of votes' (1975: 506). Other reasons expounded to explain the fall of Independents in this period include the increasing expense of election campaigns, the inclusion of party labels on the ballot paper, and the change in the media, where the decline in the number of local newspapers and the increasing importance of television made it difficult for Independents to have a 'competitive presence' (Carty 1981: 61). The latter argument overestimated the impact of television on Irish elections, as the continued importance of premodern campaigning meant that local mediums, particularly newspapers and radio stations, were still crucial channels of communication for candidates. Since one did not need extensive resources to access these channels, Independents were not at a disadvantage (in comparison to television, for example).

(iii) Independents 1970s –

The final trend of interest is the rise in the number of Independent candidates since the late 1970s, as indicated clearly in figure 3.4. Until 1977, this number had not risen above 30 since the 1943 election, averaging 26 per election, less than 8 percent of the national average number of candidates. However, in 1977 this figure took a significant leap as 52 Independents ran for election, almost 14 percent of the national total. This figure remained relatively steady until it increased again in 1987 to 85, from which point it has continued to rise, apart from the snap election called in 1989, to a level of around 100 candidates and one-fifth of the national total. There is no clear answer as to what caused this rise in Independent activity. In terms of eligibility to run, there was no major

easing of restrictions (which were not severe in the first place), although the required deposit remained fixed at £100, meaning it actually declined in real terms.²⁴ A premise that the public simply became more politically active and were more willing to contest elections does not stand up in light of the declining membership rates for political parties and interest groups (Laver and Marsh 1999: 160). Another reason may be that the type of Independents changed and a new-style candidate emerged, a factor alluded to by Garret FitzGerald, a government minister in the 1970s and Taoiseach in the 1980s.²⁵ A categorisation of Independent candidates, described later in this chapter, indicates that a new type did emerge in the late 1970s – that of community Independents, mobilised on local issues. They tended to win seats outside Dublin (an Independent candidate elected in Dublin in 2002 was the first new Independent TD from the city since 1981), which could be because localism has a stronger presence outside of the capital.

In line with the increasing number of candidates, the number of Independents elected to the Dáil has been steadily increasing since the late 1980s, to the point that 2002 was their best electoral performance since 1951. A number of reasons have been put forward for the resurgence in the Independent vote, but a key factor has been the ‘pork-barrel’ arrangements negotiated by individual Independent TDs with minority administrations. These involve Independents supporting a minority government in the Dáil, in return for which some of the formers’ policy demands for their respective constituencies are met. Two prime examples of such arrangements were the aforementioned ‘Gregory Deal’ of 1982, and the individual deals brokered with the ‘Gang of

²⁴ The deposit was trebled in 1997 to £300, but concurrently was made easier for candidates to retain, requiring just one-quarter of the quota. Following a court case in 2001 by an individual who claimed that the deposit restricted his ability to run as an Independent, the deposit was deemed unconstitutional and was replaced by the requirement of 30 signatures, which has to be verified by public officials, and which was claimed to be a more expensive and time-consuming process than the £300 deposit (Gallagher 2003: 88-89). This may explain why the number of Independent candidates did not increase radically in 2002 as had been predicted (see Michael Clifford. 2002. ‘If you want it done properly...’. *The Sunday Tribune*, 17 March), but actually fell from its 1997 figure. These rules were again amended for the 2007 election, where Independents have the option of supplying 30 signatures of registered constituency voters, or paying a €500 deposit.

²⁵ Comments made by Garret FitzGerald at a seminar held by Centre for Contemporary Irish History, Trinity College Dublin, 24 January 2007.

Four' Independents in 1997. The first was a written 30-page document detailing between £150 million and £250 million worth of provisions promised to the Independent TD Tony Gregory for his various pet projects (for details of what this involved see Brennan 1982a; 1982b). The second involved unwritten arrangements with four Independents (initially three). As well as securing funding for their constituencies, they also gained weekly access to the government chief whip. This was more than just a token meeting, as the Independents exerted their influence on two major pieces of legislation, namely an abortion referendum, and the proposed ban on the holding of multiple elective offices (known as the 'dual mandate') (for details of these arrangements see O'Connor 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; O'Regan 2000).

While approximately 40 percent of all governments have been dependent upon the support of Independent TDs (see table 3.2), the latter have not always been able to extract 'pork' from the ruling parties. The quid pro quo deals struck in the 1980s were the first example of their kind since the 1940s, the last period of sustained electoral success for Independents. The influence wielded by Independent TDs on the minority government formed in 1997 was a major factor in the doubling of the number of Independents elected in 2002, as many of the successful candidates had campaigned on their ability to procure such a deal for their own respective constituency.

**Table 3.2. Governments dependent upon the support of Independents,
1922–2002²⁶**

Government (Taoisigh)	Years
William T. Cosgrave	1927–30
William T. Cosgrave	1930–2
John A. Costello	1948–51
Éamon de Valera	1951–4
John A. Costello	1954–7
Seán Lemass	1961–5
Garret FitzGerald	1981–2
Charles J. Haughey	1982
Charles J. Haughey	1987–89
Bertie Ahern	1997–2002

Source: *The Irish Times*; John Coakley and Michael Gallagher (eds.). 2005. *Politics in the Republic of Ireland*. London: Routledge in association with PSAI Press.

3.5 Categorisation of Independents (1)

Having looked at the overall trends for Independents, a more in-depth examination of Independent candidates is required. The aim of the following sections is to first isolate, then assess and analyse, the different types of Independents, which will provide a framework to establish the electoral appeal of Independents in later chapters. This is necessary, because Independents cannot be researched without appreciating the diversity of the candidates. It is a difficult task because Independents are quite a heterogeneous grouping, within which there is as much diversity as occurs between the parties, a diversity that motivated Busted to state that ‘Independents are by definition almost impossible to categorise’ (1990: 40), Coakley to claim that ‘classifying deputies as independents is not always easy’ (2003: 515), and Cooney to assert that Independents are ‘unclassifiable representatives of Irish individualism’ (1981). As a result, it is impossible to achieve universal agreement for a categorisation of approximately 1,000 candidates. However, the traits

²⁶ Dependent is defined here as when a proposed government needs the votes of Independent TD(s) to win the vote of investiture in the Dáil.

associated with each category are defined, and a justification for the inclusion of the various types of Independents is also provided. The aim is to provide something as close as possible to what can be described as an objective analysis. While it is accepted that not everyone will agree with the chosen categorisation of some Independents, a perfect categorisation is not possible; nevertheless, the methodology was employed in a consistent manner. The four different types of Independents included in this study were already noted in chapter 1: pure Independents, interest group Independents, gene pool Independents, and representative of micro-parties. The aim of this section is to build on this categorisation to identify more specific types of Independent candidates. The format of much of the rest of the chapter replicates that of Coakley's study of minor parties (1990). Since the aim of his research was to provide some 'thick-descriptive' analysis on an under-researched minor political actor, it is a useful framework to adopt for a similar study of another type of minor political actor: Independents.

Independents can be categorised on several levels: electoral, organisational, and ideological; this chapter examines just the ideological, but on three sub-levels. The ideal method to typologise Independents would be to survey them all, and based on their responses, divide them into specific categories. This method was used for a survey of Independent candidates at the 2004 local elections (see chapters 1 and 5), but it would be impossible to undertake this method for all 29 general elections for reasons of cost, time and other practical factors, the most obvious of which is that most of the candidates from the 1950s and earlier have unfortunately passed away. Another method could be to analyse survey data of voters to identify if Independent candidates appealed to a specific type of voter, but this is not feasible because prior to 2007 there was only one election study to date carried out in Ireland.

Given the lack of survey data, I chose to analyse the nature of Independents' campaigns by perusing contemporary newspapers from the time of the various general elections. Irish newspapers provide a particularly rich dataset of information on candidates' campaigns, as they describe the campaigns, report on candidates' speeches from political rallies, and often list

personal particulars about the nature of the candidate, examples being their occupation or political ideology. The main source used was *The Irish Times*, and where information was lacking on Independent candidates in that newspaper, *The Irish Press* and *Irish Independent* were consulted. While including local newspapers would have also facilitated this research, this would have involved reading the many provincial papers for each of the twenty-nine elections; for reasons of time, this was not an option. The method of research applied was to read and analyse the newspapers for two months before the day of election and for one month after. Applied to 29 elections this amounted to a reading of 87 months of newspapers – over seven years' worth of coverage. Every piece of information on Independents was recorded, and was combined with additional information on Independents gleaned from the secondary literature and parliamentary debates. Having compiled a mass of information, the data were analysed to identify various categories of Independents. This was not done blindly, since I was already aware of various categories of Independents, largely gained from personal observation of the Irish political scene.

Despite the lack of research to date on Independents, there have been a number of attempts to categorise the different types of Independents. In the solitary study to date solely on Independents in Ireland, Chubb identified four categories of Independents: Independent Farmers, Business candidates, party dissidents, and 'political oddities', which was largely a residual category (1957: 134–5). Gallagher described seven types of Independents: Independent Business, ex-Unionists, one-person crusades, 'friends of the worker', Independents with affinities to a major party, party dissidents, and 'friends and neighbours' Independents, who attract a vote based on their record of constituency service (1985: 119). In the 1990s, Sinnott identified the emergence of another category, that of left-wing ideological Independents (1995: 65), along with two additional types for European Parliament elections: 'interest group' independents and 'political tendency' independents (Sinnott 1995: 260). Coakley classified four types of Independents: remnants of the old Unionist and Nationalist parties, party dissidents, those defending particular

interests, and a catch-all category that mainly includes locally-minded Independents (2003: 515). Finally, FitzGerald said in the 1980s and 1990s a new type of Independent candidate emerged, one focussed on local issues, who is 'locally-focused rather than issue-focused' (FitzGerald 2003: 63).

Because Independents do not have a party label per se, they often adopt a descriptive label or else are christened with one by the media; this usually reflects the nature of the candidates' ideological appeal. Examples include Independent Farmers, who stand on an agricultural platform and naturally appeal to the farming vote, and Independent Unionists who stood on a Unionist platform. Categorising these Independents is relatively straightforward as it simply involves examining the contemporary press to determine what label they stood under. However, not all Independent candidates have such a clear descriptive title, with many of them just labelled non-party candidates. To categorise these candidates a 'thick-descriptive' analysis of their campaigns and their candidacies was necessary, which sometimes proved difficult, because Independents are not allotted as much coverage in the media as party candidates.

After scanning the newspapers since 1922, six clear categories of Independents based on their ideological appeal were identified. These are: remnants of former parties, corporatist Independents, ideological Independents, community Independents, temperamental Independents, and micro-parties. Within each of these, a further level of seven sub-categories of Independents can be identified, details of which are provided in table 3.3 below. The remnants of former parties category includes both Independent Unionists and Independent Nationalists; corporatist Independents includes Independent Farmers and Independent Business candidates; and ideological Independents consists of left-wing Independents, Independent Republicans, and single-issue Independents. To aid replication, these Independent categories were identified as follows:

Independent Unionists: this includes only those who identified themselves as such during the campaign.

Independent Nationalists: this includes only those who had previously run for the Irish Parliamentary Party.

Independent Farmers: this includes all those who identified themselves as such during the campaign, or were nominated by a particular farming association.

Independent Business: this includes all those who identified themselves as such during the campaign, or were standing on behalf of a group promoting business interests.

Left-wing Independents: this includes all those who had previously been members of left-wing parties and are no longer classified as Temperamental Independents, those who ran on behalf of a left-wing movement, those who ran on an 'Independent Labour' ticket (but not including those who had run for Labour at a preceding election), and those who ran on an openly socialist ticket.

Independent Republicans: this includes all those who identified themselves as such during the campaign.

Single-issue Independents: this includes all those who stressed in their campaign the promotion of one single issue.

Community Independents: this includes all those who identified themselves as such, those who campaigned on issues solely of interest to the local constituency (and did not fall under any other category of Independent), and the residuals, for whom no information on their campaign was available.

Temperamental Independents: this includes all those who had run as a party candidate at a preceding election, and all those who had a history of association with a party.

Micro-parties: this includes all Independents running under a quasi-party label, where the respective 'party' failed to acquire official status.

Table 3.3. Typology of Independents, 1922–2002

<i>1. Remnants of former parties</i>
Independent Unionists
Independent Nationalists
<i>2. Corporatist Independents</i>
Independent Farmers
Independent Business
<i>3. Ideological Independents</i>
Left-wing Independents
Independent Republicans
Single-issue Independents
<i>4. Community Independents</i>
<i>5. Temperamental Independents</i>
<i>6. Micro-parties</i>

These categories may not be ideological all of the time, with temperamental Independents and micro-parties the main two examples of deviation. The former includes politicians who became Independents after falling out with a party. Their motivations could be ideological, but very often this category includes aggrieved individuals who failed to gain a party nomination to run for election, or who were expelled from the party for one reason or another. These Independents sometimes flit between parties, which explains their title.²⁷

The category of micro-parties includes personal vehicle movements, who may be ideological, but sometimes the party label is adopted just to provide added legitimacy to an individual's candidacy. Adapting these categories to the aforementioned four types of Independents referred to within the framework of this dissertation, both the remnants of former parties and temperamental Independents are gene pool Independents, corporatist Independents and ideological Independents are the representatives of interest groups, micro-parties is self-explanatory, while community Independents fall under the description of 'pure' Independents.

²⁷ Party dissidents were christened with this label by Nicolson in the context of the UK (quoted in Bulmer-Thomas 1953: 269).

The following sections analyse each of the different families of Independents separately. It describes who these candidates were and the nature and strength of support they received, both as a distinct group and in relation to the national level of support for Independents.

3.6. Remnants of former parties

(i) Independent Nationalists

As stated earlier, the new party system did not cater for all interests, especially the supporters of the two dominant parties pre-1916 (the year of the Easter rising, which put the revolutionary Sinn Féin to the forefront of the political scene), the Unionist Party and the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) (Manning 1972: 85). Because some of these voters felt isolated in the new state, Independents ran to represent these ‘lost’ constituencies, being known as Independent Nationalists (or sometimes simply ‘Old IPP’ candidates) and Independent Unionists. Such remnants of old parties were labelled ‘Forlorn Independents’ in the UK context (Nicolson in Bulmer-Thomas 1953: 269).

Independent Nationalists are easily identified, since most of them were former IPP MPs in the House of Commons, and they also stressed their prior affiliation with the IPP during their election campaigns. These Independents defined themselves as constitutional nationalists, and were opposed to the alleged extreme socialism, republicanism and violence of the revolutionary movement that had fought the 1919–1921 war of independence. Because nationalism was the defining ideology of the new state, isolated nationalists were few in number, as opposed to the sizeable communities of ostracised unionist voters. This explains why only four Independent Nationalists ran for office, with three of them elected, Captain William Redmond in Waterford, James Dillon in Monaghan, and James Coburn in Louth.²⁸ Redmond was an archetypal example of an Independent Nationalist. Winner of the only IPP seat outside of Ulster in the 1918 election when Sinn Féin won a huge majority of

²⁸ Redmond was a son of the last leader of the IPP, while Dillon’s father had been the previous leader. Their vote can be interpreted as a personal vote of loyalty to two important figures of constitutional nationalism. Alfred Byrne, a former IPP MP, also held a seat in the Dáil, but is included in the category of community Independents.

seats, he explicitly continued the IPP tradition in the newly established Dublin parliament (O'Day 2004). As a nationalist, Redmond was in favour of the reunification of the island, but only by peaceful means; he condemned the violence of the two Sinn Féin splinters, once referring to the Department of External Affairs as the government's agent of propaganda (ibid.). With the consolidation of the fledgling democracy, and as memories of the early twentieth century political scene faded, Independents such as Redmond could not expect to retain a sizeable 'Old Irish Parliamentary Party' vote. To preserve their political base, the three TDs all joined Cumann na nGaedheal/Fine Gael in the 1930s,²⁹ a move that spelled the end of the Independent Nationalist candidate.

(ii) Independent Unionists

Following the partition of Ireland, Protestants constituted a significant minority in the Free State (9 percent of the total population). While many of them felt obliged to withdraw from political life in the new state that they saw as anathema to their interests,³⁰ some Protestants did desire political representation. Where sizeable Protestant communities existed, (primarily in Dublin boroughs, the border counties, and some areas in Cork) they held selection conventions, usually at Orange Order halls, to nominate Independent Unionist candidates.

Their title derives from the label these Independents adopted for themselves at elections. Aside from a functional aim to represent their religious community, Independent Unionists did not have any significantly distinctive campaign platforms. One exception to this was the agricultural policies promoted by the Unionist candidates in the three Ulster counties (who were usually large farmholders in these areas); such was the centrality of agriculture

²⁹ Redmond did not move straight from the Independent ranks to Cumann na nGaedheal. He initially formed a new party, the National League, in 1926, that dissolved in 1930. A year later Redmond joined Cumann na nGaedheal (O'Day 2004).

³⁰ The Irish Unionist Alliance called on Southern Unionists to abstain from the election of 1922, claiming 'it would be idle to suppose that a Unionist could at the moment secure a hearing for his views at any election in Southern Ireland' (*The Irish Times*, 26 May 1922).

to their platform some of these candidates campaigned under the title of 'Independent Unionist and Farmer'.

Because the Protestant community tended to be relatively affluent, Independent Unionists favoured conservative economic politics, which explains why they usually supported the free market-oriented Cumann na nGaedheal and later Fine Gael in the Dáil. However, Independent Unionists did not agree with all of the social policies implemented by the aforementioned party when in power, many of which had a strong Catholic tinge and did not cater for the interests of the Protestant population (a prime example being the ban on marital divorce, introduced in 1925).

FitzGerald argues that these candidates could be more aptly described as Independent Protestants rather than Independent Unionists.³¹ The basis of his argument is that Unionism died quickly in the Free State, which was somewhat remarkable given the strength of southern Unionism before partition; consequently, the Independents selected at conventions were chosen to represent Protestant, rather than Unionist, interests. Such nomenclature is based on sound logic, but given the candidates' preference for the Independent Unionist label, this is how they are they described in the context of this research.

³¹ Comments made by Garret FitzGerald at Contemporary Issues in Irish History seminar, 24 January 2007.

Table 3.4. Support for Independent Nationalists and Independent Unionists at Dáil elections, 1922–2002

Independent Nationalists					Independent Unionists			
Year	No. of Candidates	Candidates elected	No. of Votes	% of Total Ind. Votes	No. of Candidates	Candidates elected	No. of Votes	% of Total Ind. Votes
1922	—	—	—	—	4*	4*	—	—
1923	2	1	7,629	7.9	10*	6	20,950	21.6
1927.1	—	—	—	—	9	7	35,068	22.2
1927.2	—	—	—	—	7*	7	26,940	25.3
1932	2	1	9,441	6.7	7*	5	28,490	20.3
1933	1	1	7,282	10.6	7*	5	29,086	42.3
1937	—	—	—	—	3	2	20,862	16.0
1938	—	—	—	—	2	2	14,221	23.9
1943	—	—	—	—	3	1	13,980	11.7
1944	—	—	—	—	2	0	8,538	8.2
1948	—	—	—	—	3	1	15,002	13.8
1951	—	—	—	—	3	1	16,124	13.6
1954	—	—	—	—	3	1	15,151	20.0
1957	—	—	—	—	3	1	13,766	17.1
1961	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1965	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1969	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1973	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1977	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1981	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1982.1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1982.2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1987	—	—	—	—	2	0	830	1.1
1989	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1992	—	—	—	—	2	0	2,155	2.2
1997	—	—	—	—	1	0	1,657	1.4
2002	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

* Four candidates were returned unopposed (without an election) to the Dublin University constituency in 1922, and three from 1923 to 1933 inclusive.

Note: The Independent Unionist category includes those candidates who ran on a joint Independent Unionist and Independent Farmer platform.

A classic example of an Independent Unionist was Bryan Ricco Cooper, an army officer who was heavily involved in the Unionist campaign to oppose the third Home Rule Bill (which had the aim of granting a limited form of autonomy to Ireland) in the 1912–1914 period, having been elected as a Unionist MP for Dublin in 1910. Following partition, he adopted a constructive

attitude towards the new state, and was held in high regard by his fellow TDs; one government minister labelled him his 'moderator of undue rigidity' (Kelly 2004). Cooper urged southern Unionists to take part in the political process, lest their interests be ignored in the new government (he himself joined Cumann na nGaedheal in 1927); Cooper's pleas met with some success as he was returned at every election until his death in 1930.

Initially, a significant number of Independent Unionists ran, beginning with 10 in 1923, and holding at a figure between seven and nine until 1937. During this period, they won on average over 29,000 votes, attracting 27 percent of the overall Independent vote. A significant decline began in 1937, from which point on, no more than three Independent Unionists ran at one election. Their vote followed suit, averaging just over 14,000 votes from 1938 until 1961. One reason accounting for the decline in candidates was the transferral of the three University of Dublin seats (which were always filled by Independent Unionists) to the Seanad, under the 1937 constitution. However, the small size of the university electorate means that this does not fully account for the vote drop.

A likely reason is that by the mid-1930s, the new democracy was well-established, and the Protestant fears of persecution within a sectarian state had not materialised. This, combined with a fall in the Protestant population, reduced the numbers of ostracised Protestants. As they were gradually absorbed into the political life of the new state, they saw little need for their own representatives, with most of them transferring their allegiance to Cumann na nGaedheal (King 2000: 89), which attracted two Independent Unionist TDs into its ranks, in 1927 and 1937.³²

These trends differed in the border counties, where it took a little longer for the absorption of Protestants to occur, probably because of their proximity to the Northern state. Because the Protestant communities were much larger in this region, where religious affiliation was a cornerstone of one's identity,

³² Apart from the constituency of Cork East, where Fine Gael directly absorbed the personal vote of one of these former Independent Unionist TDs, a correlation between the Fine Gael and Independent Unionist vote does not reveal significant results, since the Fine Gael vote also declined considerably over this period.

Protestants were not likely to shed their Unionist status as easily as those in the leafy suburbs of Cork or Dublin. Indeed, from 1937 on, all the Independent Unionist candidates (bar two minor figures in the 1980s) were from the three border counties, each of which was represented by a prominent Unionist until the late 1950s; Donegal by James Sproule Myles and William Sheldon, Cavan by John Cole and his son, and Monaghan by Alexander Haslett and his son. Chubb put this persistence down to a different social make-up in the region, claiming ‘a class of small, conservative, highly independent farmers (some of them Protestant) dominates and the parties have never satisfied or attracted the support of some of its members’ (1957: 136), which would explain why some of these candidates adopted the aforementioned mantra of ‘Independent Unionist and Farmer’. The independent status of border Protestants was confirmed by the findings of other research of a ‘consistently strong relationship’ between support for Independents and the number of non-Catholics in an area from 1927 to 1957 (Gallagher 1976: 59) (see also King 2000: 90; Sacks 1976: 153–160). In addition, as table 3.5 shows, the vote for Independents in the border constituencies was sizeably larger than the comparative vote in the other constituencies until the decline of the Independent Unionist candidate in the 1960s.

Table 3.5. Vote for Independents in border constituencies, 1923–1965

Year	Border counties	Other Constituencies	All Constituencies
1923	18.3	8.1	9.5
1927.1	29.7	12.2	14.0
1927.2	24.5	6.2	8.0
1932	28.5	8.5	10.5
1933	18.6	3.5	5.0
1937	20.5	8.3	9.7
1938	16.0	3.2	4.7
1943	28.6	5.3	8.0
1944	28.8	5.8	8.5
1948	27.2	6.2	8.3
1951	28.8	7.4	9.6
1954	17.2	4.4	5.7
1957	14.2	5.7	6.6
1961	3.5	6.0	5.8
1965	0	2.4	2.1

It is difficult to explain this decline, since the major reason it occurred was because no candidates emerged. Instead, we need to ask why did the candidates disappear? Both Gallagher (1976: 62) and Sacks (1976: 535–36) claim that an important factor was the 1961 Electoral (Amendment) Act, which saw Cavan and Donegal East, Independent Unionists’ strongest areas of support, each losing a seat. Prior to the constituency alterations there were enough Protestants to elect a TD in Donegal and almost enough in Cavan. The increase in the electoral quota severely dented Independent Unionists’ chances of winning a seat, since they needed to attract a wider vote, from beyond the Protestant community, something a Unionist candidate would find difficult in a nationalist-dominated political system. Most of these Independents’ former supporters drifted to Fine Gael (Gallagher 1976: 62–63), which sometimes appeared more sympathetic to Protestants, and was not as overtly nationalist as Fianna Fáil.

3.7. Corporatist Independents

There have been two types of corporatist Independents: Independent Business candidates and Independent Farmers. The term corporatist is used because these Independents are representative of professional and industrial sectors, with the aim of exercising influence over the political system.

Table 3.6. Support for Independent Business and Independent Farmers, 1922–2002

Year	Independent Business				Independent Farmers*			
	No. of Candidates	Candidates elected	No. of Votes	% of Total Ind. Votes	No. of Candidates	Candidates elected	No. of Votes	% of Total Ind. Votes
1922	6	1	16,155	22.7	—	—	—	—
1923	10	2	11,409	11.8	2	0	1,370	1.4
1927.1	5	1	13,263	8.4	7	1	21,110	13.4
1927.2	3	2	9,230	8.7	2	2	9,998	9.4
1932	4	1	12,802	9.1	5	2	20,549	14.6
1933	1	1	8,916	12.9	—	—	—	—
1937	—	—	—	—	6	1	19,106	14.7
1938	—	—	—	—	1	1	6,525	11.0
1943	1	0	881	0.7	8	4	26,406	21.9
1944	—	—	—	—	6	4	33,174	31.7
1948	—	—	—	—	4	2	14,520	13.3
1951	—	—	—	—	3	2	17,666	14.9
1954	—	—	—	—	6	1	22,091	28.5
1957	—	—	—	—	1	0	4,712	5.9
1961	—	—	—	—	2	1	9,700	14.4
1965	—	—	—	—	1	1	5,147	19.5
1969	—	—	—	—	1	0	2,425	5.7
1973	—	—	—	—	1	0	1,773	4.7
1977	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1981	—	—	—	—	1	0	3,728	5.8

*Note: This table includes candidates running on an agrarian-only platform, and does not include the 'Independent Unionist and Farmer' candidates, who are grouped with the Independent Unionist family. For details of the latter's vote, refer to table 3.4.

(i) Independent Business

Independent Business candidates were predominantly concerned about the future of the economy in the precarious new state. This title is adopted because

it was the label these Independents used to identify themselves during the election campaign.³³ It also refers to candidates who ran under micro-party labels, including the Cork Progressive Association, and the Business and Professional Group, but not the Business Men's Party, which satisfies the criteria to qualify as a genuine micro-party outlined in an earlier section of this chapter. Fearing the protectionist policies of anti-Treaty Republicans (and later Fianna Fáil), the Business candidates openly supported Cumann na nGaedheal's right-wing free-market policies, which involved cuts in taxation and expenditure. Sometimes they formed a party, as the Dublin Chamber of Commerce did for the 1923 election with the Business Men's Party; but more generally they tended to run individual campaigns as Independents. These candidates were wealthy businessmen, such as Richard Beamish, chairman of the Beamish brewery in Cork, and James Xavier Murphy, former governor of the Bank of Ireland, in Dublin. They attracted significant support from the Protestant community, especially in the wealthy boroughs of Dublin and Cork, but the candidates were not all of ex-Unionist stock, as some of them publicly expressed a desire for a united Ireland.³⁴

Despite their ideological leanings, these candidates ironically saw themselves as being above the squabbles of partisan politics, and claimed to be simply concerned with establishing a sound economy. For example, James X. Murphy's campaign slogan in 1927 was, 'Drop Politics for a while and get on with the work' (*The Irish Times*, 10 September 1927). His campaign platform was symptomatic of the policies that Independent Business candidates appealed to. One of the main issues he was interested in as a defender of conservative economics was keeping taxation rates low. He claimed that he was not campaigning against the government, and that he was mainly focussed on bringing his business expertise into the Dáil and/or government; one idea he did propose was the floating of a ten million pound loan. Following this theme, Murphy's election slogan was 'Get the rut out of politics. Infuse new blood into

³³ Some business candidates also called themselves 'Independent Progressives', and they are included within this family of Independents.

³⁴ See *The Irish Times*, 8 August 1923.

the Dáil'.³⁵ It is not clear how altruistic were the aims of the Independent Business candidates, but in the 1920s there were justified fears over how a group of former revolutionaries, most of whose leaders were dead or in jail, and with little or no political experience, would be able to properly manage the finances of a fledgling state. As a result, one of the main broadsheets, *The Irish Times* (which also had a unionist leaning that may be another factor why it supported these candidates), strongly encouraged voters to back the business candidates to bring some much-needed expertise into the Dáil, noting that 'the constructive criticism of the independent members, who include men of great experience not only in parliamentary, but also in financial and economic affairs, will be of much assistance to Ministers' (*The Irish Times*, 1 September 1923).

However, once it was clear that neither the country nor the economy were going to collapse in ruin, and once the business candidates' dreams of non-partisan, meritocratic political competition were well and truly shattered by the 1930s, they flitted out of the political scene, with most of their supporters drifting to Cumann na nGaedheal. Apart from the temperamental Independent, William Dwyer, in the 1940s, this type of candidate did not re-appear on the political scene again. These Independents were an ad hoc interest group who might have prospered had political competition taken on a vocational pattern, but the emergence of two large catch-all parties negated this possibility.

(ii) Independent Farmers

Despite the importance of agriculture in Ireland, there has never been a major farmers' party representing all agricultural interests. Instead, various short-lived organisations have appeared on behalf of sectional farming interests, and while they did sometimes form parties, such as the Farmers' Party in 1922, these were often little more than loose collections of Independent Farmers, united in an ad hoc electoral group to maximise their profile. One such organisation was the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' Association (NFRA), which Manning

³⁵ See *The Irish Times*, 14 September 1927.

describes as ‘more a loose federation of local groups than a developed national organisation’ (2000: 61).³⁶

Independent farming candidates were usually selected at conventions organised by local farmers’ unions; for example, in 1954 the Cork County Farmers’ Association ran a candidate in each of the four rural Cork constituencies. At times there was no clear line of demarcation between Independent Farmers and farmers’ party candidates; for example, in the 1940s several Clann na Talmhan TDs (a farmers’ party), when elected, acted as, and called themselves, Independents.³⁷ This ambiguity has created some confusion in the literature, so all candidates running any sort of Independent Farmer campaign are included, a subjective but necessary decision, since there is no clear defining condition for what constitutes an Independent farming candidate. By implication, this also includes representatives of farming associations, such as Frank MacDermot, who won a seat for the NFRA in 1932.³⁸

Independent farmers were not a cohesive bunch, as they represented a diversity of interests within the agrarian community. For example, unions of small farmers nominated ‘Protectionist Farmer’ candidates in the 1920s to campaign for tariffs to protect Irish farmers from cheaper foreign imports, while larger farmers, favouring free trade policies, were also represented by Independent Farmer candidates, especially in the 1920s, when they united to form the pro-government Farmers’ Party. One of the more prominent types of Independent farming candidates was the aforementioned ‘Independent Farmer and Unionist’, who ran on a joint platform of representing farming and unionist interests. They were predominantly large landowners, running in the border counties of Cavan, Donegal, and Monaghan, where a significant number of Protestants resided to offer the candidates a reasonable chance of winning a seat.

Examining the geographical spread of the vote for Independent Farmers, it is not surprising that their vote was confined to rural areas; no such

³⁶ Established in the 1920s, the NFRA later evolved into the National Centre Party in 1933.

³⁷ Examples include William Sheldon in Donegal East and Florence Wyherley in Cork East.

³⁸ This despite his lack of knowledge about farming, which led to his acquiring the nickname ‘the Paris farmer’ (Manning 2000: 61).

candidates ran in urban areas where they knew there would be little support for farming candidates. The majority of these Independents tended to come from the poorer areas of the western seaboard, where farm holdings were much smaller than their counterparts on the east coast. Over 56 percent of Independent farming candidates outside the border counties (n=46) (where such candidates also attracted a unionist vote) ran in constituencies in Kerry, Cork, Limerick, Clare, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim (counties all located in the western peripheries). The wealthier farmers from the areas with more fertile and productive land did not deem it necessary to run their own candidates, since their livelihoods were not under threat, and anyway, Fine Gael pretty much represented their interests in the Dáil, since it was traditionally well-known as a party of large farmers (Gallagher and Marsh 2002: 62, 70).

With the decline in the importance of agriculture, and the rise to prominence of a powerful farmers' interest group (the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA)), the support, and the need, for Independent Farmers waned. They regularly gained between one-quarter and one-third of the Independent vote from the 1920s to the 1960s, but since then they have been virtually non-existent, with one sole exception (who was also a Member of the European Parliament).

3.8 Ideological Independents

(i) Left-wing Independents

Left-wing Independents are defined as those whose policy platforms are dominated by issues where they adopt a classically left-wing position. This includes favouring greater redistribution of wealth via an equitable taxation system, nationalisation of important industries, and generally high levels of state intervention in society, including increased expenditure on services by the government. For these Independents, their ideological stance is a defining feature of their political life, and they usually identify with left-wing parties, either by working in co-operation with them, or by having previously been a member. Left-wing Independents are identified in a number of ways, either by the nature of their policies, by self-identification, the campaigns they get

involved in, or by their attitudes towards the contemporary political parties. An archetypal example of this category of Independent is Tony Gregory, a TD since 1982. Representing a disadvantaged area in Dublin's inner city, he had previously been a member of two far-left parties, Official Sinn Féin and the Irish Republican Socialist Party, but was later active in a community organisation, the North Centre City Community Action Project (NCCCCAP) (of which he was a secretary) (Curtin and Varley 1995: 397–399). Gregory's left-wing orientation was clear from the outset,³⁹ and was most evident in the details of the 'Gregory Deal', an arrangement that he negotiated in 1982 with Charles Haughey (leader of Fianna Fáil) in return for his supporting Haughey's nomination as Taoiseach. The particulars of the eponymous 'deal' included the building of 440 public authority houses, the setting up of an Inner City Development Authority, the nationalisation of a large paper mill, and the provision of back-to-work schemes for the unemployed (Brennan 1982a, 1982b; Curtin and Varley 1995: 397–399; Joyce and Murtagh 1983: 60–63).

The weakness of the left in Irish politics, which runs counter to the European experience (Mair and Weeks 2005: 136), was reflected in the traditionally low numbers of left-wing Independent candidates contesting Dáil elections. Originally, most left-wing Independents tended to be Labour party members who disagreed with the party's non-confrontational conservative approach in the Dáil arena (these can also be considered 'challenging' Independents – a term borrowed from the literature on new parties (Rochon 1985) that describes individuals who challenge what they perceive as a betrayal of principles by an established party; for more on this, see section 3.12 below), or campaigners for interest groups, such as the Town Tenants' Associations. The Labour Party was continually open to divisions, many of which tended to stem from a clash of personalities (Mitchell 1974: 183–191), be it between Jim Larkin and William O'Brien from the 1920s to the 1940s or Noël Browne and Brendan Corish in the 1970s. Larkin formed the communistic 'Irish Worker' League in 1924, but it never evolved into a party (O'Connor 2002: 77), being

³⁹ Gregory himself said 'I think it is fairly clear that my vote is the left-wing vote' (*The Irish Times*, 19 February 1987).

little more than a personal vehicle movement of Larkin, who was elected under this label in September 1927.⁴⁰ Once differences were settled in Labour in the 1950s (following Larkin's retirement), the strength of support for left-wing Independents largely dissipated, and apart from support for the mercurial Browne, remained minuscule until another row erupted in Labour in the 1970s, this time over coalition strategy. While this did result in another batch of Labour dissidents running as Independents, the main change in the 1980s was the emergence of a new type of left-wing Independent – that of a socialist community candidate. These 'challenging Independents' were often nominated by local community action groups, and tended to focus their campaign on social issues, of which Gregory was a prime example (see Curtin and Varley 1995: 397–399). One reason accounting for the presence of these Independents may be the waning of a conservative political culture, which led to the emergence of what Garvin called a 'new left' in the 1980s (Garvin 1987: 4), that included a new urban intellectual Labour Party, a Marxist Workers' Party, and left-wing Independents. In addition, the subsequent decline of the Workers' Party, and the absorption of Democratic Left into the increasingly centrist Labour Party created a vacuum on the left of the political spectrum, which in a Downsian fashion left-wing Independents have rushed to fill.

⁴⁰ A seat he lost soon after following his declaration of bankruptcy.

Table 3.7. Support for Left-wing Independents and Independent Republicans, 1922–2002

Left-wing Independents					Independent Republicans			
Year	No. of Candidates	Candidates elected	No. of Votes	% of Total Ind. Votes	No. of Candidates	Candidates elected	No. of Votes	% of Total Ind. Votes
1922	—	—	—	—	1	1	15,087	22.9
1923	5	1	9,075	9.4	1	1	2,923	3.0
1927.1	6	1	12,661	8.0	2	1	1,492	0.9
1927.2	6	1	16,716	15.7	1	0	164	0.2
1932	2	0	6,350	4.5	—	—	—	—
1933	3	1	9,126	13.2	—	—	—	—
1937	3	2	14,988	11.6	7	—	12,096	9.3
1938	2	0	9,930	16.7	—	—	—	—
1943	7	1	13,053	11.0	4	0	7,787	6.5
1944	2	1	3,613	3.5	2	1	7,975	7.6
1948	—	—	—	—	1	1	4,757	4.4
1951	1	0	295	1.5	1	0	3,637	3.1
1954	3	0	3,323	4.3	2	2	8,925	11.8
1957	3	2	9,071	11.3	4	1	11,406	14.2
1961	3	2	3,267	4.8	1	0	1,814	2.7
1965	2	0	183	0.7	1	0	1,649	6.2
1969	3	0	2,259	5.3	—	—	—	—
1973	2	0	1,879	4.9	4	0	4,178	11.0
1977	4	2	3,482	4.0	3*	1	15,840	18.1
1981	6	1	12,115	19.0	10*§	1	22,650	35.5
1982.1	8	3	14,691	29.0	6*	1	15,872	31.3
1982.2	5	2	9,992	23.5	3*	1	10,935	25.8
1987	6	1	13,183	18.3	1*	1	7,720	10.7
1989	8	2	17,017	29.3	1*	1	6,961	12.0
1992	9	2	14,369	14.5	1*	1	5,248	5.3
1997	9	1	21,835	17.5	3*	1	12,551	10.1
2002	8	2	24,691	14.0	3*	1	10,489	6.0

Note: this category does not include party rebels from the Labour Party who ran as Independent Labour candidates. These are included in the ‘temperamental Independent’ family.

*These figures include the Independent Fianna Fáil candidates, who could also have been categorised as temperamental Independents, or personal vehicle candidates of the Blaneyite organisation.

§ Does not include the nine H-Block candidates.

(ii) Independent Republicans

Independent Republicans’ main ideological preoccupation is with partition of the island, as they prioritise, above all other issues, the unification of Ireland,

which they perceive as the natural order of things. There have been several different types of these candidates. In the early years of the state, they consisted of pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty republicans who did not wish to align with either of the Sinn Féin fragments for a variety of reasons. Darrell Figgis was the most prominent pro-Treaty republican⁴¹, winning over 15,000 votes (29 percent of the constituency poll), when standing on the single issue of the Treaty in 1922. The anti-Treaty republicans were those who grew disillusioned with the abstention from the Dáil by anti-Treaty Sinn Féin, and ran as Independents before joining Fianna Fáil; Daniel Corkery and Dan Breen being two such examples. With the realisation that the Free State was here to stay, this category faded from the scene until 1937, when seven Independent Republicans ran, winning over 12,000 votes between them.

It is noticeable that up until the 'Arms Crisis'⁴² of 1970, the vast majority of Independent Republican candidates (over 75 percent) ran in areas where nationalist sentiment still ran high, predominantly the border areas and the traditionally republican midlands region centred on the counties of Roscommon, Longford, and Westmeath. As the main focus of their campaigns were republican issues, the main source of support for these Independents was naturally from republican sympathisers, who were also usually ideologically left-wing (in modern Irish political history socialism and republicanism have often been common bedfellows⁴³). While many of these Independent Republicans did procure significant vote returns, the only two elected were both temperamental Independents, which reflected the electorate's lack of major concern about the 'national question'.

⁴¹ Although the category of republicans tended to include anti-Treatyites, the label 'Independent Republican' was used by Figgis himself.

⁴² A political crisis that resulted in two government ministers being sacked from the cabinet and tried in court for allegedly attempting to illegally import arms into the state for use by the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland. For a detailed look at this period, see Justin O'Brien. 2000. *The Arms Trial*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

⁴³ For example, James Connolly, one of the signatories of the 1916 proclamation of independence, was also one of the founders of the modern labour movement. In addition, Sinn Féin, the political wing of the provisional IRA, is a self-proclaimed socialist party that openly espoused Marxist principles before it began to seriously contest elections to the Dáil after the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Another party that preaches both republicanism and socialism is the Irish Republican Socialist Party.

Independent Republicans did not rise to prominence again until the aforementioned Arms Crisis. One of the sacked government ministers, Neil Blaney, founded an organisation, 'Independent Fianna Fáil', which aimed to fulfil the original Fianna Fáil objective of a united Ireland. Six other Fianna Fáil members ran as Independents, but Blaney was the only one of these candidates to win a seat. Between them, the seven candidates won almost 20,000 votes in 1973, 55 percent of the total Independent vote. If the 4,000 votes for other Independent Republican candidates are included, in total they received two-thirds of the support for Independents, which signifies the importance of the protest element to this vote.

Blaney and the political dynasty to which he belonged has probably been the most high-profile of Independent Republicans.⁴⁴ Contrary to Disraeli's advice,⁴⁵ Blaney chose to place ideological principles before loyalty to his party, which (amongst other things) led to his being sacked from cabinet, and ultimately being expelled from Fianna Fáil. Most of Blaney's political machine followed him into the political wilderness as an Independent, helping to ensure his return to office at every subsequent election until his death in 1995. Like other Independent Republicans, Blaney believed that partition was the source of most of Ireland's ills, and that the country could not develop until this (perceived) obstacle had been overcome. Consequently, this was the central plank of all his election campaign platforms, a pattern continued by his brother, Harry Blaney, who succeeded him in office. This was most evident in 1997 when Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats sought to form a minority coalition administration, but were dependent on the vote of Harry Blaney in the Dáil (along with that of two other Independents). Before Blaney promised to support the nomination of Bertie Ahern as Taoiseach, he sought an assurance that a republican policy would be pursued vis-à-vis Northern Ireland (Mitchell 1999: 258), and Ahern kept him briefed on these matters throughout his term in office to ensure Blaney's support in parliament.

⁴⁴ Blaney's father, brother, and nephew were also TDs, holding a seat in their constituency for 80 years, with two brief interruptions.

⁴⁵ Benjamin Disraeli (former British prime minister) is reputed to have once said 'Damn your principles. Stick with your party!' (Comfort 1995: 442).

The H-Block protests of 1981 stirred up a wave of republican discontent, which motivated another raft of Independents. The National H-Block Committee ran nine candidates that year, all of them republican prisoners, with four on hunger strike. These are not included as Independents because they ran on a common platform under a national organisation that was orchestrated by two parties, Sinn Féin and the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP). However, other genuinely ‘Independent’ Republicans who campaigned on the issue of the hunger strikers, but were to all intents and purposes, independent of a political party, are included. These candidates won over 22,000 votes, over one-third of the total vote cast for non-party candidates in 1981. This proved to be the high point of Independent republicanism, which abated following the end of the H-Block protests, and the decision by Sinn Féin and the IRSP to contest Dáil elections. From the mid-1980s on, apart from a few solitary figures, the sole Independent Republican candidates were members of the Blaneyite organisation. This was merged into the Fianna Fáil fold in 2006, which combined with the development of the peace process in Northern Ireland, suggests the end of the Independent Republican.

(iii) National single-issue Independents

The final sub-category of ideological Independents are those standing on national single issues. As the title suggests, these candidates run their campaign on a national single issue, ranging from the legalisation of cannabis to rights for travellers. Some, such as the pro-life candidates in 1992, may have the backing of a national organisation, while others may be what Gallagher called ‘one-person crusades’ (1985: 119). These Independents are a relatively recent phenomenon, with only a few such candidates running before the late 1970s. As table 3.8 shows, before 2002 they had little to no electoral success, winning no seats, and not amassing substantial numbers of votes.

Table 3.8. Support for National Single-issue Independents at Dáil elections, 1922–2002

Year	Number of Candidates	Candidates elected	Number of Votes	% of Total Independent Votes
1932	1	0	3,194	2.3
1933	—	—	—	—
1937	1	0	6,535	5.0
1938	—	—	—	—
1943	—	—	—	—
1944	—	—	—	—
1948	—	—	—	—
1951	—	—	—	—
1954	—	—	—	—
1957	—	—	—	—
1961	—	—	—	—
1965	—	—	—	—
1969	—	—	—	—
1973	1	0	121	0.3
1977	6	0	7,709	8.8
1981	2	0	1,300	2.0
1982.1	5	0	1,944	3.8
1982.2	2	0	921	2.2
1987	27	0	8,966	12.4
1989	8	0	7,922	13.7
1992	25	0	20,759	20.9
1997	10	0	5,385	4.3
2002	39	2	39,232	22.3

Sometimes these candidates are organised in groups, hoping that a collective campaign will increase the awareness of the issue they are trying to highlight. Examples of this include the aforementioned pro-life candidates in 1992 (who were picked at selection conventions) and the ‘Independent Health Alliance’ in 2002. The latter was a group of eight Independent candidates mobilised on the issue of the health service, one of whom managed to win a seat. To date, this was the most successful election for national single-issue Independents, as the perceived failings in the health services resulted in a large

number of candidates (approximately sixteen) running to highlight this issue, winning almost 40,000 votes and two seats.

One of the most high-profile of the national single-issue Independents has been Dana Rosemary Scallon, a well-known singer and chat show host on a Catholic television station in the United States. She ran on the issue of 'family values' and was especially vociferous in her opposition to abortion. Running for the presidency in 1997, she won over 13 percent of the vote (beating the Labour Party candidate into third place), and was elected to the European Parliament in 1999. She came into conflict with the Catholic Church hierarchy in 2002 when she opposed an abortion referendum that had the backing of the bishops. This cost her some electoral support, because when she contested her first general election in 2002, Scallon's first-preference vote was less than 4 percent. It may also have been the case that despite the strong tradition of Catholicism in Ireland, religion plays little role in affecting how Irish voters decide at first-order elections, a theory which is supported by the poor electoral performance of the pro-life candidates in 1992 (when only one of the 22 retained her deposit).

An issue that has gained prevalence across Europe since the 1990s has been that of immigration, which has helped to fuel the rise of new radical right parties. While this did become an issue in Ireland in the late 1990s, it did not spawn similar success for anti-immigration groups. Áine Ní Chonail has been the most high-profile anti-immigration figure, having founded the Immigration Control Platform (ICP) in 1997, but she attracted fewer than 1 percent of the constituency vote at the election held in the same year, and just over 2 percent in 2002, when a fellow ICP candidate got less than 1 percent of the vote. These poor vote returns occurred despite immigration being an electoral issue in the two constituencies contested in 2002. What this means is that the Irish electorate is generally not overly keen on single-issue candidates (with the exception of some 'health Independents' in 2002), and that even though voters were concerned about immigration, they preferred their candidates to adopt a wider policy programme. Therefore, while the number of national single-issue candidates has increased in recent years (comprising one-fifth of all

Independents in 2002), they are not a major electoral threat to the parties, which is confirmed by their average vote return of 440 votes in 2002.

3.9 Community Independents

Community Independents' title derives from their candidacy being entirely focussed on representing their local community, with little interest in the national political arena, unless as a forum to promote their locality. This category includes candidates running a campaign centred on a single local issue (who may or may not have been selected by an ad hoc electoral interest group), as well as peripheral candidates who received a minuscule vote, and about whom there is not enough information to classify the nature of their candidacy. The latter group usually just highlight some pressing local issues, which they do not address in-depth, since they realise they have virtually zero chance of being elected. Community Independents with a history of association with a party are included in this category provided they do not continue to identify their candidacies according to such an association (this would include those running on an 'Independent Labour' ticket for example), and provided they are contesting at least their second election as an Independent since leaving the party (but not their first – in which case they are categorised as temperamental Independents).

For community Independents, the boundaries to their political world usually begin and end at their respective constituencies' borders. Their campaigns usually highlight the disparities between their local area and the centre, emphasising the claim that government resources, be it jobs, infrastructure, or investment, are disproportionately distributed in favour of the latter. These candidates tend not to have any ideological platform, nor are they concerned with national policy issues; if elected to the Dáil, they rarely speak, vote, or attend parliamentary sessions.⁴⁶ A prime example of a community Independent was Joseph Sheridan, who ran under the slogan 'Vote for Joe, the

⁴⁶ An example of such a candidate, Thomas Burke, spoke on just two occasions during his 14 years in the Dáil (1937–1951). Source: search of online historical parliamentary debates @ www.historical-debates.oireachtas.ie (10 April 2007).

man you know' (Anonymous 2000), which neatly encapsulates the localistic and personalistic foci of such a candidates' campaign.

Gallagher aptly describes these candidates as 'friends and neighbours' Independents, as they rely almost wholly on the strength of their local profile to attract votes (1985: 119). For example, one such Independent, Alfie Byrne, was known as the 'shaking hands of Dublin' (see for example *Dáil Debates* 379: 272, 16 March 1988). It is important to state that almost every candidate who contests an election in Ireland, be it party or Independent, exhibits some of these attributes; what distinguishes this type of Independent candidate is that these are their sole, or at least most distinguishing, attributes.

Tom Foxe was a notable example of a community Independent. Selected to run by an interest group mobilised over the proposed closure of a hospital in its locality, he was twice elected to the Dáil, in 1989 and 1992. His *raison d'être* as a parliamentarian was to secure the retention of the service for his community, which he succeeded in doing, as a minority coalition needed his support to form a government in 1989. The localistic mindset of community Independents was emphasised by a response Foxe gave when reporters questioned what role he could play in national politics, given that the issue he stood on was purely a local matter. 'Not at all', he replied, 'the whole county's concerned about it' (Gallagher 1990: 78).

As table 3.9 below indicates, community Independents have consistently been by far the most successful type of Independent candidate, winning on average 25,700 votes and 31 percent of the overall Independent vote at each election. This is not surprising, since they are the very epitome of what it implies to be an Independent, appealing to the cultural features that support the persistence of Independents, chiefly localism, particularism, and personalism (see chapter 6). Because they are 'catch-all' candidates, they are likely to persist in political life for as long as Independents themselves persist.

Along with temperamental Independents, community Independents are also the most common comparative type of Independent. This is largely because the salience of local interests explains the competitiveness of Independents, and where such interests are important, Independents have been

relatively successful, sometimes even winning a seat. Examples of this category of Independent elected to parliament in recent times have occurred in countries including Russia (Gallo 2004), Australia (Costar and Curtin 2004), and the UK.

Table 3.9. Support for Community Independents, 1922–2002

Year	No. of Candidates	Candidates elected	Number of Votes	% of Total Ind. Votes
1922	9	4	32,297	49.1
1923	24	3	30,556	31.5
1927.1	17	3	46,780	29.6
1927.2	8	1	27,972	26.3
1932	5	1	25,762	18.4
1933	1	1	14,472	21.0
1937	7	3	31,348	24.2
1938	4	3	23,500	39.5
1943	14	2	35,719	29.7
1944	7	2	24,600	23.5
1948	14	4	41,129	37.7
1951	13	5	48,042	40.5
1954	10	2	24,731	32.6
1957	9	3	24,309	30.2
1961	19	2	41,246	61.2
1965	15	1	17,024	64.3
1969	17	1	23,857	56.5
1973	5	1	7,966	20.9
1977	33	1	39,476	45.1
1981	21	1	10,572	16.6
1982.1	33	0	18,206	35.9
1982.2	32	0	13,192	31.1
1987	45	0	25,030	34.7
1989	30	1	16,899	29.1
1992	49	1	35,438	35.7
1997	68	1	39,566	31.8
2002	61	4	41,841	24.1

3.10 Temperamental Independents

Despite having one of the most tightly disciplined party systems in Europe, there have always been dissidents, who for one reason or another, do not toe the

party line, and run as Independents.⁴⁷ A temperamental Independent is defined here as any politician who left a party and stood for election as an Independent. This category caters for the second type of Independent identified in chapter 1: gene pool Independents. For clarity's sake, this includes only the dissident's first time running as an Independent, unless the candidate explicitly stresses their prior party affiliations during their campaign. The justification for this decision is that when contesting their first elections as Independents, such candidates are reliant upon the support they built up while in the party. This dependence dissipates over time, when the candidates fall into another category of Independent, depending on their appeal.⁴⁸ The sole exception to this rule is Neil Blaney, who despite campaigning under the 'Independent Fianna Fáil' label, had his own personal machine, and was clearly identifiable as an Independent Republican. The rationale behind this categorisation is that it was this machine and Blaney's republican stance that was the main source of his support, rather than his previous affiliation to Fianna Fáil.

⁴⁷ While some do not include these because they are not 'pure' Independents (see Costar and Curtin 2004: 13), it has been shown above that 'independent' is an ambiguous qualitative term that could include both party and Independent candidates, so temperamental Independents are included in this study.

⁴⁸ This method is necessary, since it would otherwise be impossible to establish how long a temperamental Independent retains this label. For example, it would not really be satisfactory to define Blaney as a temperamental Independent in 1995, 25 years after leaving Fianna Fáil.

Table 3.10. Support for Temperamental Independents at Dáil elections, 1922–2002

Year	Number of Candidates	Candidates elected	Number of Votes	% of Total Independent Votes
1923	3	1	5,908	6.1
1927.1	9	2	23,646	15.0
1927.2	6	0	14,372	13.5
1932	9	4	33,710	24.0
1933	—	—	—	—
1937	9	0	24,769	19.1
1938	1	1	5,285	8.9
1943	4	2	18,198	15.1
1944	3	2	16,952	16.2
1948	6	3	18,985	17.4
1951	7	6	32,950	27.8
1954	—	—	—	—
1957	2	2	9,228	11.5
1961	3	2	10,213	15.2
1965	2	0	2,457	9.3
1969	6	0	13,689	32.4
1973	9	1	21,382	56.1
1977	6	2	20,374	23.3
1981	4	1	13,464	21.1
1982.1	—	—	—	—
1982.2	2	0	3,695	8.7
1987	6	1	16,488	22.8
1989	1	0	2,217	3.8
1992	13	1	20,766	20.9
1997	13	3	43,496	34.9
2002	16	5	57,147	32.4

Note: this table includes Labour Party dissidents, who could also have been included in the Left-wing Independent family.

One factor explaining the presence of dissidents is the candidate selection system within parties (which Sharman cites as a factor in the renewed emergence of Independents in Australia (2002: 58)); a centralised process can result in cases of grievance amongst local members whose favoured candidate is not selected, sometimes resulting in the latter's breaking ranks and running

as an Independent. Table 3.10 indicates that the numbers of dissidents running has increased at elections since the 1990s, which coincides with an increased level of centralisation within the parties (see Weeks 2007b); however it is not possible at this stage to determine the exact nature of the relationship between these two variables. Examining the electoral record of party TDs who run as dissidents at a succeeding election from 1948 to 1982, Mair found that their total vote fell by one-third, leading him to the conclusion ‘there is not much life outside party’ (Mair 1987a: 67). However, a more thorough analysis of all the 44 dissident TDs who ran as temperamental Independents between 1922 and 2002 throws doubt on Mair’s claim, since 20 (46 percent) held their seats, a not inconsiderable achievement considering the stiff opposition from the party establishment. In addition, as table 3.11 indicates, their success varies according to party origin. Only three of the 10 Fianna Fáil dissidents (30 percent), and three of the 12 Fine Gael TDs (25 percent) held their seats, while their vote also fell considerably, with Fianna Fáil TDs losing 40 percent and Fine Gael TDs over 50 percent of their party vote. While 60 percent of Labour dissidents held their seats, their vote fell by half. However, dissidents from small parties performed much better, with over 75 percent of them retaining their seats as Independents, while their average vote declined by just 5 percent.

**Table 3.11. Performance of Party TDs as
Temperamental Independents at succeeding elections, 1922–2002**

Party	N	Vote as party candidate	Vote as Ind. candidate	% Vote as party TD	% Vote as Ind. candidate	Change in Vote (%)	% Holding seat as Ind.
Fianna Fáil	10	6,999	3,934	20.1	11.9	–40.8	30
Fine Gael	12	6,473	3,695	16.4	9.3	–43.3	25
Labour	10	6,616	4,388	19.8	10.2	–48.5	60
Minor Parties	13	4,433	4,248	13.5	12.8	–5.2	77
Total	45	6,032	4,063	17.1	11.1	–35.1	45

One might imagine that non-incumbent dissidents⁴⁹ might fare even worse than dissident TDs. This is because Ireland has very high incumbency rates, with over 80 percent of TDs from 1927 to 1997 who contested a succeeding Dáil election re-elected (Gallagher 2000: 94). The evidence in table 3.11 and 3.12 indicates that incumbency does provide temperamental Independents with a distinct advantage, as twice as many incumbent dissidents won a seat compared to non-incumbent dissidents. However, non-incumbents retain more of their vote (with a mean decline of 1 percent), in contrast to incumbents who lose on average one-third of their vote.

Table 3.12. Performance of Party non-incumbents as Temperamental Independents at succeeding elections, 1922–2002

Party	N	Vote as party candidate	Vote as Independent candidate	% Vote as party candidate	% Vote as Independent candidate	Change in Vote (%)	% Winning seat as Independent
Fianna Fáil	6	4,193	2,871	13.0	9.3	–28.5	16.7
Fine Gael	8	2,817	3,437	6.7	9.3	38.8	25.0
Labour	6	3,716	2,817	6.3	5.8	–7.9	16.7
Minor Parties	13	3,075	2,724	7.9	7.8	–1.3	30.8
Total	33	3,352	2,940	8.2	8.1	–1.3	24.2

It is not clear why some temperamental Independents perform better than others at elections. One credible factor might be length in office, since this would give TDs time to establish a substantial personal vote, which would not instantly decline when they ran as Independents. A simple correlation between time in office and dissidents' vote as Independents dispels this theory with a low correlation coefficient of $r=0.33$ ($n=45$), which means that there is not a strong relationship between the length of a TD's Dáil career and their propensity to win a seat as a Independent.

Once the temperamental Independents lose the appeal of a party label, the crucial factor determining their ability to retain their support as an

⁴⁹ Non-incumbent dissidents are defined as party members (who are not TDs) who have a publicised break with the party prior to the election, and run as an Independent, in part to air their grievances.

Independent is the strength of their personal vote. Defined in section 2.5 by Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina (1987: 9), they claim that this portion of a candidate's vote is very small in most jurisdictions, especially outside the United States, which might explain why the vote of party MPs tends to plummet in most political systems when they run as an Independent candidate.

In Ireland, however, there are many references in the literature to the strength of the personal vote (see chapter 2). Sinnott refers to a dual choice existing under PR-STV, which means that both party and personal factors play a role in the voters' decisions (Sinnott 1995: 171). Marsh similarly refers to a 'balance between the two elements', namely of party and personal vote (Marsh 2000: 117). The change in vote columns in tables 3.11 and 3.12 confirms these claims, as the vote of temperamental Independents declines by less than 50 percent, implying their personal vote is not only sizeable, but is larger than the party vote. It is also interesting to note that the size of the personal vote is inversely related to the size of the party, which is not unexpected, since minor party voters usually have less attachment to their parties (as these tend to be temporary, rather than permanent, organisations), implying the minor party candidates have to eke out a strong personal vote.

As mentioned above, temperamental Independents are the most common comparative type of Independent. These tend to consist of renegade MPs who part ways with their party while in office (usually because of their involvement in a scandal), sitting out the remainder of the parliamentary session as Independents, following which they generally fail to retain their seat. Since 1990, examples of these dissidents have arisen in the UK, the US, Japan, Canada, and Australia, as well as most former Eastern Bloc countries.⁵⁰ A noteworthy example here are the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) rebels in Japan who voted against government plans to privatise the postal system in 2006, and decided to run as Independents, rather than joining the new parties that some dissidents formed, so as to preserve their ties with the local LDP organisation. The LDP then decided to run their own Independents with tacit

⁵⁰ For example, at the dissolution of the Canadian federal parliament in 2004, nine of the 150 outgoing MPs were Independents, all of whom were temperamental Independents.

LDP backing against these rebels in the single-seat constituencies, rather than running official party candidates who might suffer because of the negative publicity surrounding the privatisation issue.

3.11 Micro-Parties

The final category of Independents to consider is candidates standing under a micro-party label. This includes representatives of both permanent interest groups (those existing outside of an election period) and personal vehicle parties. These were already identified as not necessarily ‘pure’ Independents, but are included within the framework of this research because their affiliate organisations do not fulfil the criteria to qualify as parties; in effect, they are also non-party candidates.

The organisations included within this category are all those from section 3.2 that did not meet the five criteria that defined parties. In addition, seven other ‘non-party’ groups are included. These are an army interest group, the City Workers’ Housing Association, the Irish Women’s Citizens’ Association (all from the 1920s), Cine Gael from the 1950s, the Women’s Progressive Association from the 1970s, the Ecology Party from the 1980s, and the Transcendental Meditation group from the 1990s. The latter was the precursor to the Natural Law Party that contested the 1997 election. The green movement are included because although they had a party title, official party status had not been granted for the 1982 elections, for which the movement was largely just a collection of independent environmental organisations (Coakley 1990: 291).

Table 3.13. Support for Micro-parties at Dáil elections, 1922–2002

Year	Number of Candidates	Candidates elected	Number of Votes	% of Total Independent Votes
1922	1	0	2,258	7.9
1923	6	0	7,057	7.3
1927.1	4	0	3,984	2.5
1927.2	1	0	832	0.8
1932	—	—	—	—
1933	—	—	—	—
1937	—	—	—	—
1938	—	—	—	—
1943	1	1	4,379	9.2
1944	1	1	9,856	22.0
1948	2	1	14,696	13.5
1951	—	—	—	—
1954	2	0	1,675	2.2
1957	5	0	7,910	9.8
1961	1	0	1,132	2.7
1965	—	—	—	—
1969	—	—	—	—
1973	2	0	783	2.1
1977	1	0	646	1.4
1981	—	—	—	—
1982.1	—	—	—	—
1982.2	7	0	3,716	8.8
1987	—	—	—	—
1989	3	0	6,966	12.0
1992	4	0	508	0.5
1997	—	—	—	—
2002	—	—	—	—

Some of these micro-parties were semi-permanent organisations, while others were largely just what have been called the personal vehicle parties of dominant individuals. The latter type of movement was usually founded by the said personality, who moulded the organisation around their policy preferences. (S)he was usually the sole elected (or nominated) representative of the ‘party’, and their interest in maintaining the movement usually determined the latter’s

lifespan. The Monetary Reform Association (MRA) was a classic example of a personal vehicle party. It was established and dominated by Oliver J. Flanagan, the party's sole TD. Although it held selection conventions to officially ratify his candidacy, and although branches of the organisation existed outside of his local constituency, there was never any doubt that he was the personification of the organisation, especially considering the huge vote he attracted (over 30 percent of the constituency vote in 1948). Having supported a Fine Gael-led minority government as an Independent in the 1940s, he brought the MRA with him when he decided to join the Fine Gael party in 1953, spelling its termination.

The Monetary Reform Association was the only one of these micro-parties to secure parliamentary representation. This is not surprising, because if any of them were capable of winning a seat, they would most likely have qualified as full parties. Apart from Flanagan's organisation, and the Army Wives' Association in 1989, these groups have never attracted too many votes. One common characteristic they all share is that they tend to be fleeting organisations that barely survive one election, largely because of their poor electoral fortunes.

3.12 Categorisation of Independents (2)

While the previous section described the different types of Independents, it is useful to attempt to incorporate Independents into a comparative framework, which is the aim of this section. Two methods of classification from the literature on minor and new parties have been adopted for Independents. Both borrow from Coakley's method of categorising minor parties (1990), with the first classification using Lipset and Rokkan's cleavage-based model of party competition, and the second adopting two typologies of new parties, devised by Rochon (1985) and Lucardie (2000).

(i) Classification by cleavage

The dominant theory on the nature of political competition has been Lipset and Rokkan's cleavage model (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Although to date this theory has been applied to parties, it focuses on the nature of political, rather than party, competition. They argue that voter alignments on certain key socio-economic cleavages explain the existence of contemporary parties and party systems. This model can be adapted for Independents, since voter alignments on certain dimensions explain the existence of certain types of Independents.

The four key cleavages identified were between (1) owners and workers, (2) industrial and agrarian interests, (3) church and state, and (4) between the centre and periphery (*ibid.*). With these four cleavages, it is possible for eight different types of Independents to exist, each representing one side of the respective divisions, but as is shown below, not all cleavages are applicable to the Irish case. The first cleavage resulted in left-wing and right-wing Independents; examples of the latter include some single-issue Independents (for example, those running on the issue of immigration). The second cleavage has been represented by those defending agrarian interests (Independent Farmers), and industrial interests (Independent Business candidates). The third cleavage has been dominated by Independents representing Christian interests, most notably the pro-life candidates.⁵¹ The fourth cleavage has resulted in two dimensions of competition: the first is the dominant cleavage over Ireland's relationship with Britain, which is represented by Independent Nationalists and Republicans on the side of the periphery and by Independent Unionists defending the interests of the centre; the second dimension is the internal conflict between the centre and communities from the peripheries, which resulted in community Independents. The latter dimension involves a conflict between the dominant metropolitan centre of Dublin and the rest of the country, but also within urban areas such as Dublin, between those from disadvantaged peripheries (such as inner-city communities) and the more affluent centre.

⁵¹ There has been the occasional anti-clerical Independent, but this tended not to constitute the main focus of their candidacy.

(ii) Classification by orientation to party system

One further method of classifying the ideological appeal of Independents is to examine their position vis-à-vis the parties in the party system. For example, are the Independents anti-party and do they aspire to a revolutionary political system free of the influence of parties? Again, there is no comparative classification of Independent candidates, but a categorisation which can be useful is that of new and/or minor parties, since they are similar to Independents in several respects (see Weeks 2007a). Four suitable types of new and/or minor parties have been identified in the relevant literature: ‘mobilisers’ (or ‘prophets’), ‘challengers’ (or ‘purifiers’), ‘prolocutors’, and ‘personal vehicles’ (see Rochon 1985; Coakley 1990; Lucardie 2000).⁵² Because these labels are devised according to attitudes in relation to the contemporary parties and party system, they can be adapted for Independents, based on which four categories can be devised:

- Mobilising Independents: they mobilise on a new political cleavage or adopt a new position on an existing cleavage;
- Challenging Independents: they try to correct parties that have betrayed their principles, by competing on an established cleavage;
- Prolocutor Independents: they represent interests that they feel have been neglected by the political parties;
- Personal Vehicle Independents: they represent the interests of an individual.

Having identified the two comparative frameworks within which to analyse the ten categories of Independents, table 3.14 classifies Independents according to these frameworks. Obviously not every candidate falls neatly into these categories and there is some element of overlap, but the typology chosen represents the dominant element of a candidate’s platform, and is the best descriptor of what their campaign is most concerned with.

⁵² Harmel and Robertson (1985: 517) also distinguished between contender and promoter parties, where the former believe they can be electorally successful, while the latter recognise their limited chances of success, and have their primary aim as promoting their cause.

Table 3.14 Categorisation of Independents

Independent Type	Mobilising	Challenging	Personal vehicle	Prolocutor
Left-wing		Left-wing Ind		
Right-Wing				
Agrarian				Ind Farmer
Industrial				Ind Business
Nationalist		Ind Republican		Ind Nationalist
Unionist				Ind Unionist
Christian interests				Single-issue Ind
Peripheral				Community Ind/ Single-issue Ind
Others	Single-issue Ind		Temperamental Ind/Micro-party	Single-issue Ind

Some single-issue Independents are defined as mobilising because they either compete on a new cleavage (such as the green candidates, the precursor to the Green Party) or adopt a new position on a cleavage or issue that the parties are reluctant to address, an example being the pro-life candidates. The challengers include the majority of left-wing Independents and Independent Republicans. The former felt that the traditional left-wing parties (predominantly the Labour Party) had betrayed their original commitments to the working classes, while the latter also perceived a betrayal, but in relation to the parties' policies on the 'national question' (see Rafter 1993). The personal vehicle Independents consist of the temperamental Independents who ran to pursue their own interests. The most significant pattern from this table is that most Independents are largely prolocutors, running to cater for a variety of interests which they feel the political parties have ignored or abandoned. This category includes Independent Business, Nationalist, Unionist and Farmer candidates, as well as single-issue and community Independents. The 'others' category refers to Independents who do not compete on any of the traditional cleavages, which includes single-issue candidates, temperamental Independents, and those from micro-parties. As evident from table 3.14, some Independent categories fit into more than one cell, but this is because there is a degree of heterogeneity even

within the families of Independents, depending on the policy platform of the respective candidate.

Having categorised Independents, table 3.15 examines the electoral support for the various families of Independents. In terms of electoral performance, peripheral Independents have, not surprisingly, been the dominant type of Independent to date, receiving approximately 30 percent of all first preference votes cast for Independents. This popularity is because most Independents tend to campaign on primarily local issues, and is also perhaps testament to the strong presence of localism as a feature of Irish political culture (a hypothesis that is tested in chapter 6) (Chubb 1957: 132; Gallagher 1976: 58). After peripheral Independents, the next more successful families are, respectively, left-wing Independents, agrarian Independents, and Independent nationalists. It is worth noting that while seven families of Independents existed in the early years of the state, this number has since declined to just five, as agrarian, unionist, and industrial Independents have faded from the political scene.

Table 3.15. Number of votes won by families of Independents at Dáil elections, 1922–2002

Year	Left-wing	Right-wing	Agrarian	Industrial	Nationalist	Unionist	Agrarian/Unionist	Peripheral	Others	Total
1922	0	645	0	16,155	15,087	0	0	32,297	0	64,184
1923	9,075	4,251	1,370	11,409	10,552	13,776	7,174	30,457	8,714	96,778
1927(Jun)	12,661	3,984	21,110	13,263	1,492	22,946	12,122	46,780	23,646	158,004
1927(Sep)	16,716	832	9,998	9,230	164	13,961	12,979	27,972	14,372	106,224
1932	6,350	3,194	20,549	12,802	9,441	15,834	12,656	25,762	33,710	140,298
1933	9,126	0	0	8,916	7,282	10,784	18,302	14,472	0	68,882
1937	14,988	6,535	19,106	0	12,096	8,090	12,772	31,348	24,769	129,704
1938	9,930	0	6,525	0	0	7,846	6,375	23,500	5,285	59,461
1943	13,053	4,379	26,406	881	7,787	3,595	10,385	34,472	18,198	119,156
1944	3,613	9,856	33,174	0	7,975	2,904	5,634	24,600	16,952	104,708
1948	0	14,696	14,520	0	4,757	4,200	10,802	41,129	18,985	109,089
1951	295	0	17,666	0	3,637	4,981	11,143	48,042	32,950	118,714
				Christian interests						
1954	3,323	1,675	22,091		8,925	4,704	10,447	24,731	0	75,896
1957	11,496	7,910	4,712		11,406	4,161	9,605	21,884	9,228	80,402
1961	8,623	1,132	9,700	0	1,814	0	0	35,890	10,213	67,372
1965	1,798	0	5,147	0	1,649	0	0	15,409	2,457	26,460
1969	3,715	0	2,425	0	0	0	0	22,401	13,689	42,230
1973	1,879	783	1,773	0	4,178	0	0	7,966	21,503	38,082
1977	4,909	3,003	0	0	15,840	0	0	35,046	28,729	87,527
1981	12,115	2,395	3,728	0	65,453	0	0	8,177	14,764	106,632
1982(Feb)	14,691	3,615	0	0	15,872	0	0	14,591	1,944	50,713
1982(Nov)	9,992	1,718	0	0	10,935	0	0	11,474	8,332	42,451
1987	13,183	1,341	0	86	7,720	830	0	23,689	25,368	72,217
1989	17,017	1,612	0	159	6,961	0	0	20,474	11,759	57,982
1992	17,166	3,551	0	20,492	5,248	2,155	0	29,090	21,541	99,243
1997	22,504	2,485	0	206	12,551	1,657	0	36,412	46,120	121,935
2002	75,338	0	0	2,904	10,489	0	0	45,376	42,557	176,664
Total	313,556	79,592	220,000	23,847	259,311	122,424	140,396	733,441	456,254	2,421,008

Note: the total number of votes for industrial Independents was 72,656.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter has classified the approximately 1,000 Independent candidates who contested general elections between 1922 and 2002 into workable categories. It has been found that Independents are a very heterogeneous category, ranging from representatives of the Protestant community to

defenders of pro-life interests, from socialist Independents to right-wing business candidates. The ideological nature of Independents has proven very flexible, having gone from generally being pro-establishment in the early years of the state to an anti-establishment position since the 1970s. One trend that has been persistent however, is that Independents mobilise on issues that parties are perceived to be unable to adequately deal with, whether it is the representation of Protestants in the 1920s, or the provision of adequate health facilities in the early twenty-first century. This seems to indicate some level of Downsian rationale behind the motivations of Independent candidates, a theme that is explored in greater detail in the next chapter; it is worth stating here that this runs contrary to the image portrayed of Independents in other systems as irrational, expressive actors (see Collet 1999 (the subtitle of his dissertation is *Can they be serious?*); Sifry 2003 (his work is entitled *Spoiling for a Fight*)).

It was found that there are six general types of Independent families: remnants of former parties, corporatist Independents, ideological Independents, community Independents, temperamental Independents, and micro-parties. While not all of these are 'pure' Independents in the classical sense (if such a type of politician ever existed), they correspond to the three other types of Independents identified for inclusion in this dissertation: gene pool Independents, interest group representatives, and micro or localised parties. Within these families exist ten categories of Independents: Independent Unionists, Independent Nationalists, Independent Farmers, Independent Business candidates, left-wing Independents, Independent Republicans, single-issue Independents, community Independents, temperamental Independents, and micro-parties. These categories have not experienced consistent levels of success since 1922, but have tended to ebb and flow in line with the fortunes of the parties. As the resolution of the national question was put to one side in the years following independence, both Independent Unionists and Independent Nationalists gradually disappeared. The two types of corporatist Independents have also followed suit, while Independent Republicans could be on a similar path following the merging of the Blaneyite organisation into Fianna Fáil. This leaves five categories of Independents still contesting elections, with left-wing

Independents and community Independents the more prevalent. It is noticeable that these all have a far more localised orientation than the other Independent categories. The aforementioned Independent families that have disappeared tended to be more nationally policy-driven than the current crop. One of the probable reasons for this is that it was not clear in the early years of the party system whether the parties would be able to adequately pursue policies that were in the best interest of the nation. In addition, politics was perhaps not as localised during this time, as was evident by the greater number of TDs who resided outside of their constituency, as compared to recent generations of politicians (Garvin 1972: 361).

A classification of Independents need not just be confined to descriptive contextual titles. Borrowing a schema adopted for new parties, the different Independent categories were grouped into a comparative framework that identified four types of Independents: mobilisers, challengers, prolocutors, and personal vehicles. In addition, Independents also correspond to some of Lipset and Rokkan's socio-economic cleavages. This is an important finding, because Irish politics is often accused of lacking social bases (Whyte 1974). Looking at the comparative framework, most categories of Independents are of the prolocutor type, with the aim of representing interests ignored by the parties. The most prevalent represented are regionalist, left-wing, and nationalist Independents.

The separate analyses of the Independent families suggest that there is a large number of reasons why individuals choose to vote for Independents, each varying according to the nature of the candidate. However, understanding why a local electorate voted for a particular Independent candidate does not add much to the comparative literature on voting behaviour. We need to find out whether there are any general reasons beyond the candidate-specific factors that explain why people vote for Independents. This is the focus of chapter 6.

Finally, it is clear that while some Independent candidates attract a lot of votes (for example, the aforementioned Oliver Flanagan), many attract very few (an example being the pro-life candidates). It is not exactly clear why this diversity exists, but it is the aim of both chapters 5 and 6 to determine what

affects the Independent vote. Because the nature of the Independent candidates has changed over the decades, this has meant that the nature of the motivations to vote for Independents has also changed. As a result the vote for Independents is very much contextual, and depends on the policy platforms of the respective Independent candidates. To appreciate the existence of the demand, namely a vote for the latter, requires an analysis of the supply, that is, the candidates themselves, and why they choose to run for office. This is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 4. The road less travelled: Why do Independent candidates run?

4.1 Introduction

Answering the question of why Independents have a significant presence in Irish politics necessitates a focus on two main aspects: the supply of Independent candidates, and the demand for them as expressed in voting patterns. In chapter 6 we will look at the demand side of the relationship by exploring the reasons why Independents attract significant levels of support at Irish elections. In this chapter we explore the supply side because, quite obviously, for Independents to attract electoral support there needs to be a supply of such candidates to vote for in the first place. A number of factors explaining the motivation of Independent candidates to contest elections are examined, and they are compared to the incentives of party candidates to determine if there are any discernible differences between the two categories. The overall aim of the chapter is not just to understand why individuals decide to run for office as Independents, but also to determine whether their background has any role to play; the aim of the latter task is to discover whether there is anything particular about these individuals that makes them want to run for office.

Appreciating the motives of Independent candidates is important, because *ceteris paribus*, the more Independents there are, the more support they receive, and by implication, the greater their presence and significance appears. For example, Independents received almost 10 percent of the first preference vote at the 2002 Irish general election, whereas they won just less than 1 percent of votes across the United Kingdom in 2005. However, Independents ran in only 179 of the 646 constituencies in the UK, whereas 95 Independents ran in 38 of the 42 electoral constituencies in Ireland. Consequently, while voters in over 90 percent of constituencies in Ireland had the option of voting for an Independent, in only 28 percent of constituencies in the UK were voters given the same opportunity. If proportionally as many Independents had contested the British elections, and if the average share of votes per candidate held constant, this would have amounted to over 6.5 percent of the national

vote. It is quite obvious that the considerable number of Independent candidates is therefore an important factor in explaining their significance. Hence, we need to understand why there is a significant supply of such candidates to vote for in the first place. This chapter explores the reasons for this phenomenon.

4.2 Why not Independent?

In chapter 2, it was shown how Aldrich expanded the rational choice argument to Black's calculus of candidacy (1972), arguing that it is rational for an individual to run as a party candidate rather than as an Independent only if the utility gained from running as an Independent exceeded that of running for a party. Since most would tend to agree that the potential utility gained from running as a party candidate is higher than as an Independent, why then do some choose independence over party status? The applicability of the calculus of candidacy to an individual's decision to run as an Independent is debated later in this chapter. Before moving on, it is worth reiterating the point made in chapter 2 that the vast majority of would-be candidates do not have a free choice between party or Independent status. For those ultimately running as an Independent, their choice is Independent or nothing, not Independent or party. Since most Independents achieve little electoral success, it can reasonably be assumed that the option of 'nothing' is more appealing, given the time and effort required to run for office. The aim of this chapter is therefore to determine why some individuals choose the life of an Independent rather than nothing, and whether they possess certain characteristics that distinguish them from those who choose the 'nothing' option.

4.3 Data

To determine why Independents decide to run, a survey of Independent and party candidates was conducted immediately after the 2004 local elections. In addition, respondents were also asked to return a sample of their election literature, which was used to determine the nature of their candidacies (see below).

Rather than replicating Denver and Hand's methods of surveying election agents, I chose to survey the candidates themselves. This was largely because the focus of my study is Independent candidates, who tend not to have a full-time election agent, especially at local elections, and it is usually just the candidates themselves who have the best knowledge of their campaign details. A four-page questionnaire with 35 questions was sent by post to each of the 297 Independent candidates, and to 556 of the 1,665 party candidates (see back of thesis). Independents received a slightly different version that had an extra five questions pertaining specifically to their Independent status. Since there can be a difference in behaviour between urban and rural candidates, 353 surveys were sent to party candidates for county councils, and 203 for those running in city councils. This was done to enable a comparison between the two groups in further studies of campaigning emanating from this thesis that looked at party candidates. Ensuring the inclusion of a reasonable number of both city and county candidates was necessary for the controlling of particular effects that might be unique to a particular locale.

The quantity to survey from each party was based on their number of candidates as a proportion of total candidacies in city and county councils. This was done to ensure a reasonable weighting of responses so that one party would be not overly represented in the final dataset. Since all Independents were targeted, this explains why Independents would probably need to be weighted down in an inclusive study on campaigning that looked at all candidates.

The party respondents were chosen at random from a list of their party's candidates within the two separate forms of councils. Details of the numbers of questionnaires sent and returned according to party affiliation are detailed below in table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Distribution and survey response rate

Party	Surveyed	Respondents	% Response rate
Fianna Fáil	183	95	51.9
Fine Gael	150	94	62.7
Labour	72	48	66.7
PDs	43	26	62.8
Greens	49	24	49.0
Sinn Féin	40	24	60.0
Independent	297	179	60.3
Others	19	14	73.7
Total	853	504	59.1

Source: 2004 candidate survey.

The questionnaire was posted one week after the elections, and was followed up by a reminder postcard three weeks later to those who had not yet returned it. Two weeks later, the questionnaire was re-sent to all respondents yet to reply. This labour-intensive procedure produced a very satisfactory final response rate of 59 percent (see table 4.1), which exceeds that achieved by Denver and Hands (1997) (53 percent), and Gilland (2003) (47 percent) in similar studies. The response rate is of particular importance when making inferences from surveys. A low response rate means that there is an increased probability of the sample data being not randomly selected; that is, those who did respond may not be reflective of the random sample originally drawn. Consequently, the random sampling error can increase, resulting in unreliable findings. Such biases are less likely to occur in a candidate survey because of the low levels of heterogeneity amongst same party candidates (as opposed to voters), reducing the variance in the sample. In any case, the reasonable response rates means that unreliable findings are less likely to occur, especially considering the rates being larger to other candidate surveys. Replicating the methodology of Denver and Hands (1997: 322–323), the representativeness of the responses can be checked against a few variables, notably party vote and turnout. As table 4.2 below indicates, the figures for the constituencies with

respondents are quite similar to the national mean, which indicates that the campaigns covered by the sample survey are very representative of all campaigns.

Table 4.2. Representativeness of response constituencies

	Fianna Fáil respondents	Fine Gael respondents	Independent respondents
<i>Fianna Fáil vote share</i>	32.1	31.6	30.9
<i>Fine Gael vote share</i>	28.8	29.8	27.4
<i>Independents' vote share</i>	12.1	11.6	15.0
<i>Turnout</i>	59.7	59.4	59.9

Source: 2004 candidate survey.

Overall, the candidate survey is an important contribution to the political science literature, as it is the first known detailed study of actual local campaigning (as opposed to expenditure effects) under the PR-STV electoral system. The questionnaire as detailed at the back of the thesis indicates the richness and detail of the data acquired from the survey that can be used for further studies beyond this dissertation. Questions on a wide variety of aspects of campaigning were asked, details of which are provided in both this and the next chapter. When combined with the expenditure returns that were acquired from candidate and city councils, this dataset gives an added importance to this study, as it is the first known comprehensive national analysis of grass-roots campaigning in the Irish political system

4.4 Local government in Ireland

Given the aforementioned importance of context to candidate emergence, it is necessary to describe the arena within which these candidates sought electoral office. Ireland has a highly centralised form of government, with relatively little power resting with the local authorities, especially since 1977 when the capacity to collect property rates was abolished (Collins and Quinlivan 2005:

391). This weak position of local government is evident by the fact that it was not until 1999 that its status was recognised in the Constitution.

Local elections are a suitable base from which to study Independents, because the latter generally have a greater tradition and history of success in local, in contrast to national, elections. This is because in some countries party politics sometimes do not permeate through to the local council scene. For example, in France, Independents were quite prevalent on local councils until the 1960s, but they are now confined to rural areas (Mabileau et al. 1989: 31–32). Similarly in the UK, up until the 1960s parties were a rarity at local elections in large parts of rural Britain (Rallings and Thrasher 1997: 85). Indeed, Rallings and Thrasher claim this was what made local democracy special in some people's eyes 'as it involved individuals appealing to an electorate directly without party politics intervening' (1997: 141). As late as 1980, 16 percent of local councils in the UK were predominantly Independent (defined as where they held more than 60 percent of the seats) (Rallings and Thrasher 1997: 26), and it is estimated that there are still more than 2,000 Independent councillors in England and Wales in 2005.⁵³

This pattern of success holds in Ireland (see table 4.3 below), where Independents' share of the national vote regularly reaches double figures. Indeed, after the 1999 elections, they held 18 percent of chair and vice-chair positions in city and county councils (O'Shea 2000: 150). These notable electoral performances, combined with the greater number of seats available than at general elections, means that Independents are far more prevalent at local level, therefore generating a larger sample size for analysis. For example, 297 Independents ran at the 2004 local elections, of whom 86 were successful, in contrast to the 13 of 95 Independents who won seats at the 2002 general election (albeit still respectable figures in the context of national elections). One reason for the significant numbers of Independents elected at local level is because of the relatively low number of votes required to win a seat. This stems from the small size of the constituencies (with an average population of 15,000 electors per local electoral area) and a district magnitude larger in value than at

⁵³ Source: <http://www.geocities.com/indgroupuk/indlinks.html>; accessed 1 May 2005.

general elections.⁵⁴ These two factors combined mean that the electoral quota needed to win a seat at a local elections is much lower than at general elections, averaging around 1,000 votes, which means that a well-known local figure can succeed without the need for a party label, or extensive resources (Gallagher 1989: 32); this encourages more Independents to contest the election, again increasing the size of the sample. The only requirement in 2004 to run as an Independent was the signatures of 20 registered voters from the constituency in which the candidate planned to run.

Although there may be a few differences in the incentives facing voters⁵⁵ and candidates⁵⁶ at second-order as compared to first-order elections, the findings from this study of local elections are still applicable to general elections. The same party system operates at both local and national level, with the only major differences in the votes accrued by the parties at these elections being that the parties in government tend to receive fewer votes at local elections, at which Independents tend to perform slightly better. The same electoral system operates at both levels, and many of the candidates elected to local councils go on to contest, or at least aspire to contest, a general election. Consequently, the local level represents a lower tier of the national level, rather than as a different system. In addition, although Independents usually win more votes at local elections, the difference in the vote they receive at the latter as compared to general elections is not near to what it is in other countries (see table 4.3). All of these factors imply that a focus on the local level does not introduce a structural bias that prevent us from making conclusions beyond the limitations of this study.

⁵⁴ The mean district magnitude at the 2002 general election was four, with a range of three to five; at the 2004 local elections it was 4.9, with a range of three to seven.

⁵⁵ The main difference being that the formation of a government, which usually acts as an incentive to strategic voting, does not arise at second-order elections.

⁵⁶ Many candidates do not contest local elections simply to sit on the council; for some it is a stepping stone to holding a national office. Because local councils do not have much authority, there are few direct incentives for those who wish to wield power and shape policy; however there are indirect incentives for such individuals if they see local elections as a necessary hurdle to clear before contesting national elections.

Table 4.3. Seats and Votes of Independents at local elections, 1980–2005

Year	No. of seats	% Seats	% Votes
1985	75	8.5	10.3
1991	85	9.6	12.0
1999	71	8.0	12.3
2004	86	9.7	12.3

Source: issues of *Irish Political Studies*, 1986–2006; issues of Department of the Environment and Local Government. *Local Elections*. Dublin: Stationery Office, 1985–2004.

Ultimately, Independents won 86 of the 883 seats on offer, with some significant gains achieved in specific councils. These included Limerick City Council, where Independents won 6 out of 17 seats, Roscommon (5 out of 26), Offaly (5 out of 21), and South Tipperary (6 out of 26). These successes meant that 2004 was a suitable election ground on which to examine the campaigns and electoral performances of Independent candidates.

4.5 Party Dissidents

Before tackling the reasons why Independents choose to run, the category of party dissidents needs to be examined. One of the major reasons why Independents have not been the subject of comparative research is because the few successful Independents in other political systems tend to be defectors from parties, who are not seen as ‘pure’ Independents in the literature (Costar and Curtin 2004: 13). If it is the case that Independents are running simply because they failed to acquire a party nomination, it would lessen the value of a study on the significance of non-party politics.

Because the ultimate choice of candidature rests with a party, rather than with the aspirant individual, there are often many cases of disgruntled party members who sought, but failed to acquire, a nomination from their party. There are also instances of former party incumbents who have been expelled or resigned from their party, usually for either a misdemeanour, or a disagreement with the direction of the party’s agenda. Because a party candidacy is out of

the question for such politicians, if they really desire office, then running as an Independent is their next best rational step.⁵⁷

This has proven to be the case for former party MPs across many political jurisdictions, with examples occurring in the UK, US, Australia, France, and Canada, to name but a few.⁵⁸ For such MPs, being consigned to the Independent benches is comparable to a term in exile, since it is not a position they wish to occupy, a sentiment usually expressed via their disenchantment at the powerlessness of their position. For example, soon after James Dillon was forced to resign from Fine Gael to become an Independent in 1942, he declared, 'I am a party man and I make no concealment of the fact that it irks me to be outside party. I think Independent deputies in a deliberative assembly can do very little good' (Manning 2000:184). Noel Browne, who joined the Independent ranks in 1951 after resigning as Minister for Health, expressed similar sentiment, 'It was clear that an Independent was helpless to make the fundamental changes in state policies needed in the Republic' (Browne 1987: 221), while John O'Connell, who ran as an Independent after failing to secure a Labour Party nomination (despite being a TD for 16 years), recalls that 'as an Independent I had no chance in hell of making (those) ideas reality. If I was to change anything, I had to join a political party' (O'Connell 1989: 164).

These TDs were not Independent by choice, and it was no surprise that they all rejoined parties shortly after becoming Independent. If all Independents in Ireland were simply unselected party nominees, this would lessen the interest of the topic for a number of reasons. First, running as an Independent could be interpreted as a rational decision for such candidates. Second, how genuinely 'independent' are such candidates? Third, it would mean a one-line answer could be given to the question posed by this chapter: Independents run simply

⁵⁷ Unless, of course, they join another party or form their own new one. However, the latter is not a very common occurrence, with the most recent example of the latter in Irish politics being Des O'Malley, who founded the Progressive Democrats in 1985 after he was expelled from Fianna Fáil.

⁵⁸ A comparable case of interest occurs in Japan. There, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), because of stiff intra-party competition and a fear of unselected candidates running as Independents, sometimes does not select official candidates for a constituency. Those who desire the nomination can run as an Independent LDP candidate, with those who win a seat acquiring the nomination post-hoc to the election (for more details see Reed 2003).

because they failed to secure a party nomination. These candidates might certainly warrant a study, but not because of their independent status.

In light of this, one of the more important questions in the survey was therefore whether Independent candidates had sought a nomination from a party in 2004, or if they were previously members of a party. Of the 179 respondents, only 16 Independents said they had sought such a nomination (see table 4.4), which means that over 90 percent are genuine Independents who ran for reasons other than a failure to secure a party nomination.

Table 4.4. Political party from which Independents sought nomination in 2004⁵⁹

Party	N	%
Fianna Fáil	7	3.9
Fine Gael	7	3.9
Labour	2	1.1
Green	1	0.6
None	162	90.5
Total	179	100

Source: The data for this table, and for all tables and figures from this point on (unless otherwise stated), are from the 2004 candidate survey.

An interesting finding is that almost half of Independents (48 percent) said they used to be members of a party. However, since some of these candidates had left their respective parties as far back as 1970,⁶⁰ it would be inaccurate to include them in the same category as those who left a party just prior to the 2004 elections. Therefore, table 4.5, which contains details of prior party affiliations of Independents, refers only to those candidates who left a party since 1994 (ten years prior to the local election) – an ample period of time for the effects of prior party affiliation to lapse. Even then, we are left with a considerable number of party dissidents, comprising over one-third of Independents.

⁵⁹ The total sums to 17, because one candidate said he sought a nomination from both Fine Gael and Labour.

⁶⁰ This group consists primarily of those who left Fianna Fáil at the time of the Arms Crisis, over a clash of ideologies regarding party policy towards Northern Ireland.

Table 4.5. Previous Party Membership of Independents⁶¹

Party	N	%
Fianna Fáil	30	16.8
Fine Gael	19	10.6
Labour	10	5.6
Green	1	0.6
PDs	1	0.6
Sinn Féin	5	2.8
Others	3	1.7
None	112	62.6
Total	179	100

Having established for the most part that Independents are not simply failed party candidates, the rest of the chapter can be devoted to comprehending why they run for office.

4.6 Categories of analysis

As the previous chapter established, Independents are not a homogeneous group, and it would be fallacious to treat them as a unitary category for the purposes of analysis. The last chapter identified ten types of Independent candidates; while it would have been ideal to analyse separately why each type run, this was not possible with a sample size of 180 Independents. In addition, some of these categories, such as remnants of former parties, no longer exist. As a result the focus of this chapter is on the three predominant families of Independents that have contested recent elections (as established in chapter 3): community Independents, temperamental Independents (i.e. party dissidents), and ideological Independents. Because Independent Republicans (one of the three categories falling under the ideological Independent label) were absent from my sample, the term Policy Independents was devised to distinguish this from the former family; for the purposes of this and later chapters, it includes both left-wing Independents, and single-issue Independents. The Independent

⁶¹ Figures add up to 69, because one candidate had previously been a member of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour.

candidates were sub-divided into these categories using several questions from the survey that asked them to describe the nature of their candidacy.⁶² Temperamental Independents were identified by questions asking them if they had sought a nomination from a party for the 2004 local elections, or if they had been a member of a party since 1995. The same definitions of community Independents, single-issue Independents, and left-wing Independents that was used in chapter 3 is replicated here (as it is throughout the rest of the thesis), with policy Independents being a fusion of the latter two categories. Community and policy Independents were categorised based on the self-descriptive title (a considerable number called themselves ‘community Independents’) they gave to their candidacy in both the survey and in their election literature.⁶³ Policy Independents were identified based on those who appeared to be running to highlight a single issue, those whose campaigns promoted particular policies (rather than just seeking to improve the local area), or those pursuing a socialist agenda (left-wing Independents). To aid the classification of the Independents, an internet search (including an online search of local newspapers) of their names was conducted, and any other relevant literature was consulted, including Donnelly (1999) and Kerrigan (2005). The 180 Independents were thus divided into three approximately equal groups, details of which are in table 4.6 below. The following section examines the incentives motivating these candidates to run for office, to see if they differ from those of party candidates, and to see if there are differences between the categories of Independents themselves.

⁶² QV, candidate survey: ‘There are many different types of Independents. Which of the following best describes you?’

⁶³ Where a clash arises regarding candidates who fall under both the categories of community Independents and temperamental Independents, they are included in the latter.

Table 4.6. Division of Candidates

Type	N	%
Party candidates	325	64.4
Policy Independent	56	11.1
Community Independent	57	11.3
Temperamental Independent	67	13.3
Total	505	100

4.7 Reasons for running: Instrumental vs. Expressive incentives

To understand why individuals choose to run as Independent candidates, the direct route of asking them is the first obvious method. There can sometimes be a problem with this form of methodology in a questionnaire, because rather than giving an open, honest answer, respondents may be more inclined to state a reason that portrays them in a favourable light. In addition, open-ended questions often result in idiosyncratic responses that can be difficult to group, and where candidates state a number of factors (as is often the case), it is impossible to know the individual contribution of each factor. To overcome this problem, respondents were given nine possible reasons for running, and asked to rank how important each of these were on a scale of 1 to 10 in motivating their decision to run for office (where 1 was ‘not at all important’, and 10 ‘extremely important’). They were also given the opportunity to add their own reasons, an option that only 53 of the 505 respondents chose, indicating the validity of the motivations listed.⁶⁴

When assessing Independents’ incentives, three types of this candidate exist: those for whom the outcome is the crucial matter (i.e. winning a seat), those for whom the campaign is key (e.g. highlighting an issue of concern), and those who are joke candidates, that is, those who do not mount a serious campaign, and have no chance of winning a seat. Examples of the latter in 2004

⁶⁴ Q1, candidate survey: ‘Thinking back to the time you decided to run as a local election candidate, why did you choose to run for election? How important were the following reasons in motivating your decision to run for election? Can you please rank how important each of these reasons were on a scale of 1–10 where 1 means “not at all important” and 10 means “extremely important”’.

included a candidate who admitted that he ran out of ‘devilment’ because he wanted ‘to destroy a rival candidate of the same name’,⁶⁵ and whose campaign platform called for a full investigation into the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 (O’Brien 2004b). Despite this, an important assumption of this chapter is that most candidates seek to maximise their vote, regardless of their chances of victory. For example, an Independent candidate first elected in 2002, Liam Twomey, admitted that he ‘had little or no chance of getting elected...but we knew to do it right would mean I would have to canvass as much as possible’ (Fleming et al. 2003: 84). The joke candidates referred to above are rare exceptions.

Canon categorised political amateurs (i.e. those who had never held political office before) in the US Congress in a similar fashion, based on those who are: ambitious (they desire a career), policy-motivated (they either want to bring an issue before the public – what he calls policy advocacy – or are policy seeking; that is, they want to shape policy), and hopeless (those swept into office by the tide, who weren’t expected to win) (Canon 1990: xv). By and large, this chapter focuses on the first two categories, as the third usually receive very few votes, and they tend to act as statistical outliers that can affect the reliability of the analysis.

Throughout this chapter, those concerned with the outcome are labelled instrumental candidates, while those with the campaign are labelled expressive. Milbraith’s work on political participation proposed this dichotomy, and his definition of the two categories neatly encapsulates their essence. ‘Expressive political action focuses on symbol manipulation; mere engagement in the behaviour is satisfying or drive-reducing. Instrumental action, in contrast, is oriented primarily toward manipulating and changing things’ (Milbraith 1965:12). For Milbraith, the key differentiation is the motivation of the individuals. ‘A person who behaves political[ly] to satisfy expressive needs seems to consume the experience of engaging in the action’ (ibid.), whereas for instrumental actors, ‘although participation in the action may be immediately

⁶⁵ Source: 2004 candidate survey.

satisfying to the actor, mere participation is not sufficient reward to produce the action; rather reaching the goal is the source of drive reduction' (ibid.).⁶⁶

Instrumental incentives are based on the rational choice theme that individuals only participate when a cost-benefit analysis determines it is in their interest to do so. Such candidates run because they stand to gain from a positive outcome, that is, if they win a seat. Expressive incentives represent a counter-reaction to this model that emphasises the self-gratification that comes from the act of participation, regardless of the outcome. Based on this dichotomy, the aforementioned reasons for running were classified into instrumental and expressive categories as follows.⁶⁷

*Instrumental incentives:*⁶⁸

- To win a seat
- To represent one's local area
- Asked to run by a group or organisation
- To continue family representation in political life
- To achieve certain policy goals

Expressive incentives:

- To highlight an important issue
- Interested in politics
- To achieve certain values important for society

The incentives were categorised based on the above definitions provided by Milbraith of instrumental and expressive action. An explanation of each

⁶⁶ It is recognised that there can be a slight problem with this classification in relation to a possible overlap between the two categories. For example, even though participating in a campaign may provide expressive rewards, it can also be an instrumental act that is designed to achieve a particular outcome. To overcome this, whichever appears to be the stronger appeal defines the incentive.

⁶⁷ It is worth stating that Fowler's warning must be borne in mind that losers usually emphasise the 'thrill of the game' as a major reason to run, while winners underestimate the role of parties and external events, and are pretty much self-congratulatory (Fowler and McClure 1993: 94).

⁶⁸ One important instrumental factor not included is to win a seat for a party; this decision is taken on the grounds that this incentive applies only to party candidates.

incentive, and a justification for its grouping under the two respective categories is provided in the next section. It might be expected that Independents, with less of chance of both winning a seat and realising goals even if they are elected, are more motivated to run out of expressive incentives than party candidates. The following section tests the validity of this hypothesis.

(i) Instrumental incentives

Possibly the foremost instrumental incentive is to win a seat, as this represents the purest form of self-ambition. Independents were less ambitious than their party candidates, as just under 70 percent said this was an important⁶⁹ motive in running, in contrast to 81 percent of party candidates, a difference between the two figures that was significant at the $p < .001$ level (see table 4.7). There were no significant differences in the proportions of the three types of Independents ranking this as an important factor.

Table 4.7. To win a seat

Group	Not at all Important					Extremely Important					N
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Party	5	1	2	1	6	4	7	13	11	50	292
Independents	8	3	1	1	14	5	5	6	5	55	133
–Policy Inds	2	2	0	0	21	2	5	9	9	49	43
–Community Inds	15	0	0	0	13	8	3	5	3	55	40
–Temp Inds	6	6	2	2	8	4	6	6	2	59	51

Note 1: In this and other similar tables, the first reported chi-square refers to the rows concerning party and all Independent candidates; the second chi-square refers to the rows dealing with the three Independent categories.

(Party and Independents) Pearson's chi-square=21.41 ($p=0.011$)

(Independent categories) Pearson's chi-square=19.96 ($p=0.335$)

Note 2: In this and other similar tables, the figures given in the columns headed 1 to 10 denote the proportions ranking the importance of the respective incentive on a particular score. For example, 50 percent of party candidates ranked 'to win a seat' a score of 10 on the scale of importance.

⁶⁹ In this, and in all future uses of the term, 'important', unless otherwise stated, refers to scores of seven or greater on the scale of importance.

‘All politics is local’ said Tip O’Neill, and at council elections, it is even more local than elsewhere. Localism is an undeniable feature of Irish politics, and most politicians, even party leaders, cannot afford to ignore its demands. It is not surprising then that 89 percent of Independents cited representing their local area as an important factor in their decision to run, equal to the proportion of party candidates who did so (see table 4.8). Over 70 percent of Independents ranked this of utmost importance (with the maximum score of 10), in contrast to the lesser equivalent figure of 58 percent of party candidates (a difference significant at the $p<.01$ level). Confirming the localistic nature of community Independents (as outlined in chapter 3), 79 percent of them gave this incentive the maximum score, significantly more than the 61 percent of policy Independents who did so (at a level $p<0.1$).

Table 4.8. To represent local area

Group	Not at all Important					Extremely Important					N
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Party	3	0	2	1	1	3	5	13	13	58	295
Independents	5	0	1	3	2	1	5	7	7	70	155
– Policy Inds	2	0	2	4	4	0	8	8	10	61	49
– Community Inds	2	0	0	4	0	0	4	11	0	79	47
– Temp Inds	10	0	0	2	2	2	3	2	8	72	60

(Party and Independents) Pearson’s chi-square=20.49 ($p=0.015$)

(Independent categories) Pearson’s chi-square=21.63 ($p=0.156$)

When an organisation, for example an interest group or local community association, wishes to highlight its concern or grievance over an issue, it sometimes runs a candidate to promote its cause, or one runs to facilitate the group’s representation. While some protest movements may have no personal interest to promote (Ridley 1999: 2), the vast majority in Ireland do have an element of Not In My Back Yard syndrome, examples in 2004 being the Naas Planning Alliance (opposed to haphazard building developments in their area) or the various anti-incinerator groups campaigning against the proposed construction of waste incinerators in their locality. What distinguishes these

groups in Ireland from those in other political systems is that first, they are willing to enter the political process by fielding election candidates, and second, these candidates sometimes win a seat.⁷⁰

Parties are usually very reluctant to select such candidates, as they fear that the individual might be beholden to the group rather than the party. For similar reasons, interest groups are wary that a party candidate normally tends to place the interests of the party before that of any group. Remaining extra-party can also be a tactical choice, since the interest group can then mobilise support across party and socio-economic divisions, as well as ensuring that their candidates are seen to be outside the political establishment, a necessary position since the latter are usually the focal point of their criticisms (Ridley 1999: 4). The result is that such groups tend to nominate Independent candidates. One example is the Roscommon Hospital Action Committee, which ran three Independents in 2004, continuing a policy of contesting every general and local election since 1985 (Curtin and Varley 1995: 390–392). Over 39 percent of Independents said being asked to run by a group or organisation was an important factor in their decision to run (see table 4.9 below), in contrast to the considerably lower figure (which admittedly is quite a high figure in itself) of 25 percent of party candidates (significant at $p < .01$ level). Reflecting the issue-oriented nature of policy Independents, 43 percent of them ranked this as an important incentive in their decision to run, in contrast to just 26 percent of community Independents.

⁷⁰ There are of course exceptions to this rule in other countries, with the victory of Independent Kidderminster Hospital and Health Concern candidate Richard Taylor in the UK general elections of 2001 and 2005 one of the more prominent examples.

Table 4.9. Asked to run by a group/organisation

Group	Not at all Important					Extremely Important					N
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Party	46	9	6	3	6	4	6	5	4	10	234
Independents	39	5	3	2	9	3	5	8	5	21	117
–Policy Inds	36	2	0	0	10	2	7	14	2	26	42
–Community Inds	41	6	3	3	15	0	6	3	9	15	34
–Temp Inds	43	7	5	2	5	5	2	5	5	21	42

(Party and Independents) Pearson's chi-square=15.64 (p=0.075)

(Independent categories) Pearson's chi-square=15.60 (p=0.621)

While for many politicians, their private instrumental incentive may be to win a seat, publicly they tend to declare more altruistic motives, of which one of the more common is to achieve policy objectives. The aforementioned Noël Browne was an example of a policy-oriented Independent, whose main incentive in entering political life was to improve the state of the health services. While equal numbers of party and Independent candidates cited this as an important factor in running for office (79 percent), 54 percent of Independents gave it the maximum score on a scale of importance, compared to just 36 percent of party candidates who did so (a difference significant at $p<.001$ level) (see table 4.10). Temperamental Independents were the more likely to rank this as important, which may suggest that their main reason for parting ways with a party was policy-related.

Table 4.10. To achieve certain policy goals

Group	Not at all Important					Extremely Important					N
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Party	4	0	2	2	8	5	10	20	12	36	274
Independents	6	1	2	2	6	4	7	8	11	54	129
– Policy Inds	11	0	4	2	9	2	9	6	9	49	47
– Community Inds	0	3	0	0	9	6	9	9	12	52	33
– Temp Inds	6	0	2	2	2	4	4	8	12	60	50

(Party and Independents) Pearson's chi-square=18.68 (p=0.028)

(Independent categories) Pearson's chi-square=13.97 (p=0.731)

Political family dynasties, sometimes present in other liberal democracies (examples being the Kennedy and Bush families in the US), have been to a much greater extent a recurring feature of Irish political life. The notion of a family ‘holding onto a seat’ may seem something of a paradox in a democracy, where it is the public who have the power of election, yet there are countless examples of seats being ‘passed on’ from generation to generation, as local electorates remain loyal to a family name. Such candidates may not necessarily run just to retain a seat within their family, but a history of political activity by previous generations stirs up interest and creates an incentive for them to run.

It is easier for an Independent to maintain such familial representation, since they do not need to seek a party nomination. 23 percent of Independents ranked this an important incentive in running, compared to 16 percent of party candidates (albeit a difference not significant at a $p < .05$ level) (see table 4.11). Almost twice as many temperamental Independents (26 percent) as community Independents (13 percent) ranked this an important incentive, which may be due to a failure of a party to ratify the nomination of a second or third-generation politician.

Table 4.11. To continue family representation in political life

Group	Not at all Important						Extremely Important					N
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Party	66	4	4	2	4	3	2	4	3	8	250	
Independents	64	6	4	0	1	3	4	2	4	13	106	
– Policy Inds	68	5	0	0	3	3	5	3	3	11	38	
– Community Inds	73	3	7	0	0	0	3	0	3	10	30	
– Temp Inds	54	8	5	0	0	5	3	3	5	18	39	

(Party and Ind) Pearson’s chi-square=8.25 ($p=0.605$)

(Independent categories) Pearson’s chi-square=10.08 ($p=0.863$)

(ii) Expressive incentives

For expressive actors, the action is more important than the outcome. An example of such an incentive is running a campaign to highlight an issue. For such candidates, while winning a seat would undoubtedly benefit their cause,

their aim is not directly linked to the result of the election. Such candidates participate to express their feelings on a matter; for example, if an individual is aggrieved over an issue, running at an election can be a convenient, relatively low-cost method of gaining publicity, which might otherwise be difficult and expensive to achieve. Sometimes candidates are representatives of organisations (such as the aforementioned candidates running on behalf of interest groups), or often they are running on their own initiative. Parties tend to avoid such candidates, because they usually run on a single issue, and tend to place this before the interests of the party. Individuals aggrieved over an issue therefore normally have to run as an Independent, and this is often the main reason why such candidates run. The survey evidence backs this up, as 77 percent of Independents said this was an important factor in their decision to run, compared to just 47 percent of party candidates (a difference significant at the $p < .0001$ level) (see table 4.12). Indeed, 55 percent of Independents gave this incentive the maximum score of ten on the scale of importance, in contrast to just 21 percent of their party counterparts (a difference significant at the $p < .0001$ level). In other words, those most concerned with highlighting an issue were more likely to run as an Independent (58 percent) than for a party (42 percent) ($n=130$), a quite significant finding in itself (at a $p < .01$ level) (although this does not imply that such individuals had the choice of either an Independent or party status; rather the Independent ranks have more issue-oriented candidates). Approximately equal proportions in all three categories of Independents ranked this an important factor.

Table 4.12. To highlight an important issue

Group	Not at all Important					Extremely Important					N
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Party	19	4	5	5	10	8	10	12	6	21	254
Independents	11	2	2	2	7	2	4	11	8	55	133
– Policy Inds	11	0	0	2	7	0	0	9	11	60	45
– Community Inds	5	3	3	3	11	3	3	11	5	55	38
– Temp Inds	14	2	2	0	4	2	8	12	6	51	51

(Party and Independents) Pearson's chi-square=54.95 (p=0.000)

(Independent categories) Pearson's chi-square=13.29 (p=0.774)

Another expressive incentive is that some individuals are, in Aristotelian terms, 'political animals'. Their interest in politics leads them to desire a candidacy, and if they cannot find a suitable party (or if no party finds them suitable), they can run as an Independent. Kavanagh found that many candidates in the UK enjoyed the experience of campaigning, and that it was a rewarding act in itself, as they liked the face-to-face contact with the public, and the sense of pride gained from performing a civic duty (1970: 94–5). For such candidates, it is the excitement generated by the campaign that impels them to run, with the outcome being of secondary importance. 74 percent of Independents cited their interest in politics as an important incentive in running (see table 4.13), which was significantly less than the 88 percent of party candidates who did so (at the $p<.0001$ level), although still a high level in itself. It is extremely doubtful that this was these candidates' sole, or indeed primary, motive to run. However, it is expected that those who contest elections exhibit high levels of interest in politics, and it is also a non-controversial incentive to select in a survey, in contrast to more personal ambition-related factors. An interesting pattern is the considerably larger number of temperamental Independents (60 percent) than policy Independents (37 percent) (significant at a $p<.05$ level) and community Independents (44 percent) who ranked this the maximum score on the scale of importance.

Table 4.13. Interested in politics

Group	Not at all Important					Extremely Important					N
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Party	1	0	2	3	2	4	8	17	14	48	294
Independents	7	1	1	4	8	6	7	7	11	48	143
– Policy Inds	7	2	2	4	9	9	11	7	13	37	46
– Community Inds	5	0	2	5	12	10	5	12	5	44	41
– Temp Inds	9	0	0	4	4	0	5	5	14	60	57

(Party and Independents) Pearson's chi-square=18.68 (p=0.03)

(Independent categories) Pearson's chi-square=13.97 (p=0.73)

The final expressive incentive 'to achieve certain values important for society' might well sound instrumental, since it is concerned with achieving an outcome. However, it is the kind of loose aspiration that might impel candidates to run for office, but which is unlikely to be realised even if they won a seat. It is a general, all-encompassing incentive that is often cited as a motive by those participating in campaigns (for example, it was mentioned by both Independent TDs who were interviewed to assist the designing of the survey).⁷¹ This type of incentive implies that individuals are motivated by principles or ideals, and in an age when politicians are criticised for lacking these attributes, this is the kind of politically correct incentive that candidates like to espouse. For these reasons, it is more expressive than instrumental, since being seen to demand these values is often more important than achieving an outcome concerning these values. It is therefore no surprise that 80 percent of Independents and 84 percent of party candidates cited this as an important factor in their decision to run for office (see table 4.14). However, once again reflecting the expressive nature of Independents' motivations, on average 60 percent of the three categories ranked this the maximum score of importance, in contrast to just 44 percent of party candidates, a difference significant at a $p<.001$ level. A previously common type of Independent that ran out of such motives was the Independent Unionists, who sought to represent their co-religionists, due to a sense of alienation in a Catholic-dominated state where

⁷¹ Source: Interview with Liam Twomey TD, 11 March 2004; interview with Finian McGrath TD, 20 March 2004.

they felt their interests were being ignored by the nationalist-oriented party system.

Table 4.14. To achieve certain values important for society

Group	Not at all Important					Extremely Important					N
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Party	6	1	1	1	5	3	9	15	15	44	268
Independents	8	2	1	2	3	4	4	8	8	61	132
– Policy Inds	9	5	0	0	5	2	0	9	9	61	44
– Community Inds	5	0	2	0	2	7	5	10	5	64	42
– Temp Inds	11	2	0	4	2	2	6	6	9	58	47

(Party and Independents) Pearson's chi-square =17.98 (p=0.04)

(Independent categories) Pearson's chi-square=14.92 (p=0.67)

(iii) The failure of parties

One final potential incentive is that individuals run as Independents because of a perceived failure of political parties as modes of participation. Jordan mentions this failure in the context of the UK with his reference to a conventional wisdom that 'political parties are no longer important instruments of public participation' (1999: 6). He claims that people aggrieved about an issue realise that they have a greater chance of their concerns being dealt with by an interest group, whose *raison d'être* is to promote their cause, than by a party that does not wish to identify with particular interests (Jordan 1999: 10). This is further accentuated by the emergence of centrist, catch-all mainstream parties reluctant to embrace any form of single-issue or narrow agenda-based politics, for fear of isolating the critical median voter. Indeed, these developments motivated Lawson and Merkl's *When Parties Fail* (1988), which looked at the rise of alternative movements in response to the perceived failure of parties. Chubb noted a similar theme in Ireland where local farmers' associations fielded Independent candidates because of a perceived failure of the parties to cater for their interests (1957: 134). The emergence of Independent and minor party candidates in anger at the ossification of a party system is not unique to Ireland. The two-party duopoly in the US and the UK has spawned a raft of Independent candidates who desire a political alternative.

While they may not be as successful as their Irish counterparts, they do share similarities in the motives underlining their emergence (see Collet 1999: 1999: 99–100; Owen and Dennis 1996).⁷²

While in many countries individuals wishing to highlight a cause are increasingly likely to be drawn to interest groups rather than parties, in Ireland they tend to take the next step of participation by entering the electoral process. For example, Ridley and Jordan's study features case-studies of 12 different single-issue protest campaigns in Britain, of which only two fielded candidates at an election,⁷³ neither of which came close to winning a seat (Ridley and Jordan 1999).

Dissatisfaction with parties can be either a direct expressive incentive to run (to register one's disenchantment with parties) or an indirect motive (as discussed above) fuelled by a desire to pursue another incentive, such as promoting a cause. A perusal of some biographies of Independent candidates provides evidence of such disaffection with the party system (see Sherwin 2007 *passim*: the subtitle of his book is *Independent and Unrepentant*; Browne 1987 *passim*: the title of his book is *Against the Tide*). These two specific biographies portray the respective authors' lives as an Independent as one battling against the establishment, which the contemporary parties represented (for example, see Sherwin 2007: 66–73). To detect anti-party sentiment on the part of the 2004 local election candidates, there were two possible indicators. First, the survey respondents were asked to state how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'It doesn't really matter which political party is in power, in the end things go on much the same'. Although this is not the best direct measure of anti-party sentiment, this formula of words was adopted because it is the standard measure of anti-party sentiment used in election studies (see the Comparative Study of Election Studies @www.cses.org; Holmberg 2003)⁷⁴. The results in table 4.15 below show that 51 percent of

⁷² For a detailed study of such minor candidates in the US, see Sifry (2003) and Avlon (2004).

⁷³ These were the Pro-Life Alliance, which ran 53 candidates in 1997, and James Goldsmith's Referendum Party, which ran 547 candidates at the same election.

⁷⁴ In any case, there is no accepted measure of anti-party sentiment in the literature, and attempting to do so has been described as a 'decidedly problematic undertaking' (Webb 1995: 303).

Independents agreed with this statement, which not surprisingly was much larger than the comparable proportion of party candidates (17 percent) expressing such sentiment.

Table 4.15. Response to Expression of Anti-Party sentiment

Group	Strongly Agree		Strongly Disagree		N
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	
Party	3	13	43	41	321
Independents	20	31	37	12	177
– Policy Inds	26	24	34	16	62
– Community Inds	15	32	41	12	66
– Temp Inds	18	39	35	8	49

(Party and Independents) Pearson's chi-square=82.51 (p=0.000)

(Independent categories) Pearson's chi-square=11.31 (p=0.08)

The second indicator was whether candidates expressed anti-party sentiment in their election literature. To be included, this had to take the form of a grievance with political parties in general, and not just specific parties, since party candidates (especially the opposition) sometimes vent their dissatisfaction with governing parties, which is not actually directed towards the party system per se. In 2004, when respondents were returning their completed questionnaires, they were requested to include a sample of their election literature for analysis, and these samples were then coded according to the nature of their text. Not surprisingly, no party candidate criticised the concept of political parties, which explains their absence from table 4.16. Fewer than a quarter of Independents made negative comments about parties in their literature, examples of which are:

‘It is time to give party politics the boot’;

‘Any local Cllr, or TD, who is a member of a party, cannot fully represent you properly’;

‘Can you trust the political parties anymore?’;

‘Once again the Political Parties, and their Public Representatives, have failed our Community’;

‘Vote No. 1 Joe Bloggs.’⁷⁵ Your local alternative to party politics’;

‘The political parties have no answer to the situation (regarding problems in society) and are often the worst example to those in deprived circumstances’.

It is noticeable in table 4.16 below that of the three categories of Independents, temperamental Independents expressed the lowest levels of anti-party sentiment, which is probably a function of their previous affiliation with political parties. From the evidence of table 4.15, it appears that Independents do have high levels of anti-party sentiment (about 50 percent), yet they are more reluctant to express such attitudes, as only half of this proportion did so on their election literature. It may be that they do not feel the electorate agree with such sentiments, since the party system shows no sign of crumbling. However, such Independents may be interested to read that in 2002 as many as 49 percent of the electorate agreed with the statement of anti-party sentiment from table 4.14 above.⁷⁶

**Table 4.16. Proportion of Independents expressing
Anti-Party sentiment on election literature**

Group	Anti-party sentiment (%)	N
Independents	24	91
– Policy Inds	24	29
– Comm Inds	29	34
– Temp Inds	18	28

Pearson’s chi-square=1.42 (p=0.491)

Source: Analysis of candidate literature from 2004.

What have we learned from the analysis of instrumental and expressive categories? Independents were far more likely than party candidates to run to highlight an issue and to achieve certain values important for society. Somewhat surprisingly, some instrumental incentives were of greater importance to Independents than party candidates. The former were significantly more likely than the latter to list ‘to represent local area’, ‘to achieve certain policy goals’, and ‘asked to run by a group/organisations’ as

⁷⁵ The candidate’s anonymity has been preserved here.

⁷⁶ Calculated from INES survey 2002; for more details see chapter 6.

important factors in their decision to run for office, although party candidates rated 'to win a seat' as more important. While this may suggest that Independents are not any less instrumental than their party counterparts, it must be borne in mind that perhaps party candidates are less likely to give high ratings to incentives that do not imply acts of loyalty to the party. For example, it is highly likely that 'to win a seat for the party' would have attracted high ratings from party candidates. Independents, in contrast, without ties or bonds to intermediary organisations, can be more forthright in their answers, since they are not running to represent an external association (a party).

The three categories of Independents analysed did run for different reasons. Temperamental Independents were more likely to run to continue family representation in political life, to achieve policy goals, and because they are interested in politics. Policy Independents ranked being asked to run by an organisation as more important, while for community Independents running to represent the local area was a significant incentive. Approximately a quarter of Independents expressed some anti-party sentiment during their campaign, although temperamental Independents displayed the lowest level. It is unclear what motivation this factor played in their decision to pursue an Independent candidacy.

To determine which incentives were more important to Independents, the mean scores given by the candidates can be compared (see table 4.17). For all three categories of Independents, representing their local area was the most important incentive, followed by the rather vague expressive desire to 'achieve certain values'. Six of the incentives fell within a range of between 7.8 and 8.8, with being asked to run by an interest group and to continue family representation of far less importance; the average score given by Independents for these incentives is 4.8 and 3.2 respectively. Admittedly, these low scores also reflect the absolute nature of the two factors compared to the others, that is, the answer to both was either yes or no, which meant that the vast majority of scores clustered around the two extremes of the scale of importance.

There was not a great deal of difference in the overall ranking of each of the incentives by the three separate categories of Independents. Policy

Independents rated winning a seat as more important than being interested in politics and achieving certain policy goals. They also rated the highlighting of an issue as more important an incentive than their interest in politics, in contrast to temperamental Independents, who reversed the order of importance of these two factors. The main differences between Independents and party candidates echoed the findings of the earlier sections: highlighting an important issue is of greater significance to Independents, while the instrumental aim of winning a seat, and somewhat surprisingly, the expressive incentive of political interest are more important to party candidates.

Table 4.17. Mean importance of incentives

Incentive	Policy Comm Temp				
	Ind	Party	Ind	Ind	Ind
To represent local area	8.8	8.8	8.7	9.2	8.6
<i>To achieve certain values</i>	8.3	8.2	8.2	8.6	8.0
To achieve certain policy goals	8.2	8.0	7.6	8.5	8.5
<i>To highlight important issue</i>	7.9	5.9	8.2	8.0	7.7
<i>Interested in politics</i>	7.9	8.6	7.5	7.7	8.4
To win a seat	7.8	8.2	8.0	7.5	7.9
Asked to run by group or organisation	4.8	3.7	5.5	4.4	4.5
To continue family representation	3.2	2.9	2.9	2.5	3.8
N	179	325	56	57	67

Note: These figures are the mean score of importance given to each incentive on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means 'not at all important' and 10 means 'extremely important'. The figures in italics refer to expressive incentives, while those in normal text are instrumental incentives.

Having examined directly why Independents choose to run, we need to look at the indirect factors that they may not refer to, but which may certainly be important elements in their candidacy.

4.8 Models of candidate emergence

It was outlined in chapter 2 that there are three main models of candidate emergence: the psychological, sociological, and rational (Parry, Moyser and Day 1992: 9). Because the first has declined in relevance since the 1970s, and because it is very difficult to determine its significance from a quantitative

study, the focus of this chapter is on testing the influence of the latter two models.

(i) Sociological

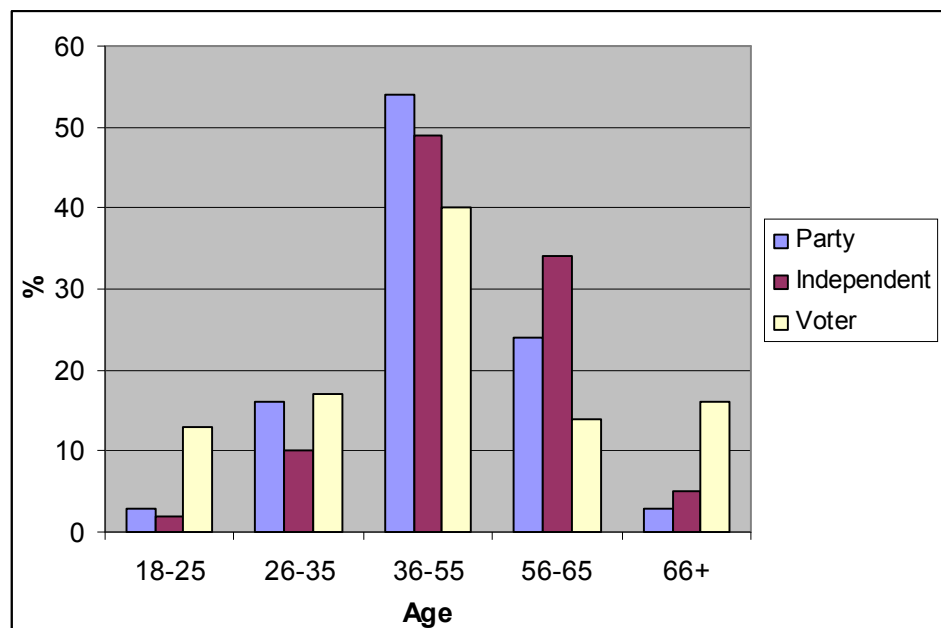
As stated in chapter 2, the sociological model predicts that candidates' decision to run is a function of their socio-economic background. Applying this model, it is unlikely that we will find results that predict exactly whether an individual will run for election as an Independent; however, the aim of this section is find out whether there are any characteristics particular to Independents that distinguish them from first, the wider electorate, and second, party candidates. This activity in itself is a significant contribution to the literature, since there is little to no information available on Independent candidates; understanding who they are might help us understand why they run.

Since the choice for most would-be Independent candidates is 'Independent or nothing' (not 'Independent or party'), it could be argued that in this case only a comparison of Independent candidates and the electorate is necessary; however, any disparities found between the two groups might only reveal what distinguishes the public from candidates in general. Any difference between voters and Independents is only of significance to this study if this is not the same difference as that between voters and party candidates. If it turned out to be the case (that Independents and party candidates shared the same socio-economic characteristics), a study of voters and Independents would simply reveal what distinguishes candidates from the former group, and not what distinguishes Independent candidates, the central question posed by this chapter.

The rest of this section looks at the socio-economic characteristics of Independent candidates, party candidates, and voters. The data for voters comes from the 2002 Irish National Election Study. An analysis of the three different types of Independents was also conducted, but for reasons of space, this is not included; however, reference is made to any significant findings that this analysis highlighted.

In relation to age, survey respondents were only asked their year of birth, so without knowing the exact date, what follows is a very close estimation of their age, which at most could be a year out. The average Independent was aged 51 in 2004, slightly older than both party candidates (aged 48), and voters (47). There is quite a large range of ages, with the oldest Independent born in 1930, and the youngest in 1984 (18 is the minimum required age for local election candidates).

Figure 4.1. Age Profile of Candidates and Voters

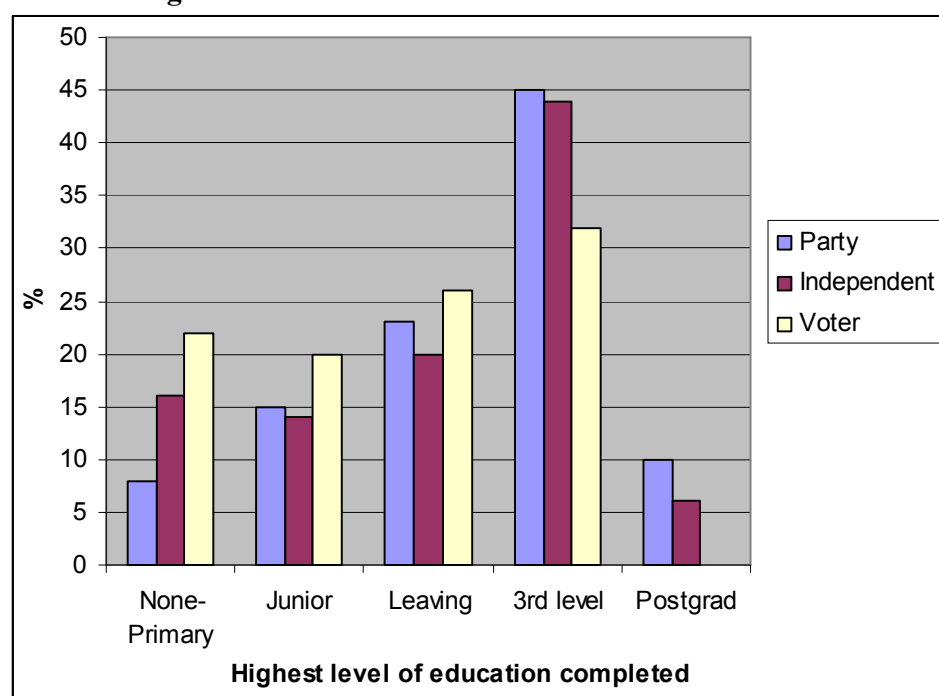


Source: author's analysis of aforementioned 2004 candidate survey conducted for this thesis. Data on voters comes from author's own analysis of the 2002 INES. These sources apply to all the remaining figures and tables in this chapter, with the exception of the final three tables: table 4.22, table 4.23, and table 4.24.

From figure 4.1 above, we see that there is a difference in the age profile as 34 percent of Independents were aged over 55 years, in contrast to just 24 percent of party candidates (significant at a $p < .01$ level). Independent candidates are far more likely to be drawn from the 56 to 65 age category than the average voter, while there are fewer Independents in the younger age groups, reflecting their generally older profile.

In line with findings from other studies (see Norris and Lovenduski 1995: 100–101), candidates, being a political elite, had achieved a higher level of education than the public, with 53 percent having some form of third-level education,⁷⁷ in contrast to 32 percent of voters. This difference was also repeated amongst the candidates themselves, as 34 percent of those from a party have at least a degree, in contrast to 23 percent of Independents (see figure 4.2 below). Further, 16 percent of Independents, twice the proportion of party candidates, left education with just a primary level qualification; Independents were also more likely to have left school after their Intermediate Certificate.⁷⁸ In general, those running Independent had lower levels of education than party candidates. Of the Independent categories, policy Independents were more educated, as 63 percent of them have a third-level qualification, in contrast to just 43 percent of community Independents, and 44 percent of temperamental Independents (differences significant at a $p < .05$ level).

Figure 4.2. Education level of candidates and voters



Note: There was no data available in the INES on the postgraduate qualifications of voters.

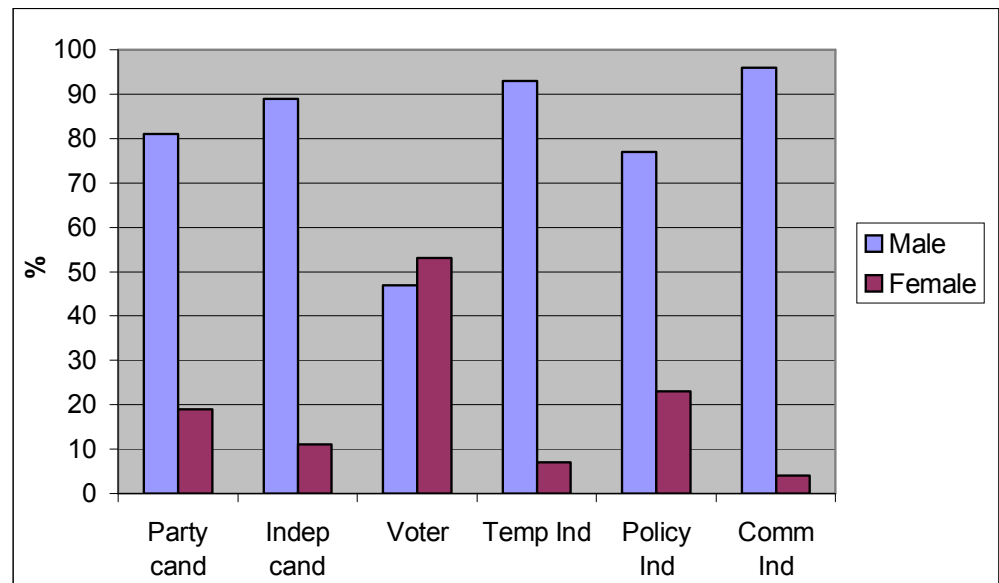
⁷⁷ Either a certificate, a diploma, a degree, a masters, or a PhD.

⁷⁸ The precursor to the Junior Certificate.

In terms of gender, the profile of the candidates followed a tradition of under-representation of women in Irish politics, as 84 percent of all respondents were male. However, almost twice as many party candidates (19 percent) as Independents (11 percent) were female, while women were significantly more represented amongst policy Independents (23 percent) than either community Independents (3 percent) or temperamental Independents (7 percent) (at a $p < .01$ level) (see figure 4.3 below). Why did fewer women stand as Independents? One possible hypothesis may be that the obstacles that inhibit women standing for office in the first place are even greater as an Independent candidate, who tend to go against the grain without the support of a party organisation. In addition, the conservative social and cultural mores of Irish society may frown upon individual female candidacies. For example, Nora Owen, former Minister for Justice, said that she would never go into a public house on her own (where political ‘clinics’ or ‘surgeries’ are usually held), which she admitted did affect her ability to campaign, as it made her more dependent upon the assistance of party helpers (Hannon 2004: 52). The demands of political life that deter women from running may be even greater as Independent candidates, since they would not have the support of a party network. Finally, many women enter politics because of their family connections to previous incumbents.⁷⁹ Because there have been a lot more party TDs and councillors than Independents, the familial gateway to politics for women is far likelier to exist among parties than Independents (assuming of course that those who maintain a tradition of political representation within a family take up the same affiliation as their forebears).

⁷⁹ In 2007, 23 percent of female candidates had a family relation who had previously held office at either local or national level, compared to 13 percent of male candidates with such a link. Source: analysis of data taken from www.electionsireland.org.

Figure 4.3. Sex of candidates and voters



Involvement in the community and/or local organisations can also influence one to participate in politics. For example, if individuals are members of a local residents' association or a community group, this can socialise them into becoming a political animal, and if they seek even more political activity, the next rational step might then be to run for office. Milbraith agreed with this hypothesis, claiming that 'persons who are active in community affairs are much more likely than those not active to participate in politics' (1965: 17). In addition, the very act of being sociable and meeting like-minded individuals can be an important factor in stimulating a desire for candidacy. Running for office requires one to get other people to make the effort of travelling to a polling station to declare, 'yes, I like this candidate above all others, and I want him/her to represent me in office'. To gain people's votes therefore requires one to socially interact with the electorate; if one is not very sociable they are hardly likely to run for office, as politics is a very social occupation (Milbraith 1965: 75). Table 4.18 below shows the importance of group membership as 43 percent of Independents belonged to a local community or residents' association. The only significant difference between Independents and party candidates is that the latter were twice as likely to be members of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) (at a $p < .01$ level). Amongst Independents,

temperamental Independents were significantly more likely to be IFA members than either policy or community Independents (at a $p < .01$ level), while there were more members of residents' associations and trade unions amongst community Independents than either of the other two categories (although the differences were not significant at a $p < .05$ level).

Table 4.18. Organisation Membership at time of election (%)⁸⁰

Status	Community/ residents' assoc.	IFA/other farming assoc.	GAA	Trade union	Professional organisation
Party	41.2	12.3	29.2	14.5	9.5
Independents	43.0	10.6	17.3	12.9	6.2
– Policy Inds	37.5	7.1	12.5	8.9	5.4
– Comm Inds	50.9	5.3	17.5	15.8	8.8
– Temp Inds	40.3	17.9	20.9	13.4	4.5
Electorate ⁸¹	–	–	16.3	35.1	–

The last, and often the most important, socio-economic variable is the occupation or class profile of the candidates. As mentioned above, it has already been stated that higher socio-economic status is directly linked with higher rates of political participation. The survey respondents were asked to state their occupation, their rank or grade, and where appropriate, the number of people employed.⁸² These were then classified into six of the seven class categories identified by Goldthorpe (1987: 40–43): salariat, routine non-manual, petty bourgeoisie, skilled workers, semi- and unskilled workers, and farmers.⁸³ There were no significant differences in the make-up of Independents and party candidates, but community Independents were more likely than temperamental Independents to be working in routine non-manual jobs (significant at $p < .05$ level), and less likely to be farmers (significant at

⁸⁰ Q31, candidate survey: 'At the time of the 2004 local election were you a member of any of the following groups?'

⁸¹ Data was only available for voters' membership of the GAA and a trade union.

⁸² Q34, candidate survey: 'What is/was your occupation, outside of politics? If appropriate, please state the rank or grade, for example, Civil Service, Gardaí, etc. If proprietor or manager, please state the number of employed. If farmer, please state acreage farmed.'

⁸³ The final category is agricultural labourers, which is excluded from the analysis because none of the respondents was employed in this sector.

p<.01 level), who comprised one-fifth of the latter category (see table 4.19). Overall, policy and community Independents were more middle-class in their profile than temperamental Independents, although the differences are not significant at a p<.05 level. The main difference between Independents and the electorate was the same as that between any type of candidate and voters: very few blue-collar workers run for political office.

Table 4.19. Occupation of candidates and voters

Category	Party	All Policy Community			Temp	Voters
		Inds	Ind	Ind		
White collar	45	38	46	40	30	50
Petty bourgeoisie	11	12	11	16	11	6
Skilled	14	13	9	19	12	11
Semi- & unskilled	6	8	11	4	11	24
Farmers	14	11	9	4	19	9
N	294	159	49	49	61	2,498

(Party and Independents) Pearson's chi-square=2.48 (p=0.779)

(Independent categories) Pearson's chi-square=8.17 (p=0.612)

Note: the 'white collar' category includes both the salariat and those working in routine non-manual jobs.

While this section has detailed the descriptive differences between the backgrounds of Independents, party candidates, and voters, it would be helpful to construct a model that looks at the collective influence of these variables in explaining why some choose to run as Independent candidates. With the dependent variable a binary outcome (i.e. whether or not one ran as an Independent), the most suitable tool to assess the influence of the explanatory variables is logistic regression. However, a number of caveats inhibit the undertaking of this analysis. The first is that we need a dataset comprising those who chose to run for office and those who chose not. If an election study fortuitously included a reasonable number of election candidates in its sample (it did not), such an analysis would be possible, as we would be able to analyse the differences between those who did not run (the voters) and those who did (the candidates). However, it can sometimes be difficult to explain and predict the occurrence of rare events with a sample size in the thousands, where the

event occurs dozens, if not hundreds, fewer times than the non-event (King and Zeng 1999: 693). One problem is that there can be a bias in the reporting of probabilities, which tend to be underestimated. Because the former far outweigh the latter, Relogit, a software designed to predict rare events would be suitable. A preliminary effort at this was attempted for this thesis with the merging of the datasets from the candidate survey and the Irish National Election Study from 2002. However, this method was fraught with difficulties, among them the two samples being picked at different points in time (not to mention their being two separate samples), which could have an effect on the responses given, not to mention the candidates not being a subset sample derived from the sample of voters (i.e. they are two entirely separate samples). In addition, the two surveys were conducted under different auspices: voters were offered financial incentives to respond, which was not offered to candidates. Had such incentives been offered to the latter, it may have resulted in a different type of response. To sum, the two surveys were conducted under different conditions, which would undermine the validity of conclusions drawn from a merged dataset.

Even if a single dataset of voters and candidates was available, there might be a number of problems regarding the presumptions of the model. Of the three million voters eligible to run for office, there may well be a large number who would never consider a career in politics, and for whom the choice would never materialise. Analysing why such voters chose not to run would pose a number of problems regarding validity, and might be the same as including non-voters in an analysis of voting preferences after an election. Consequently, it could well be better just to focus on those for whom the decision to run is an actual choice. Compiling a random sample of such individuals would be an extremely expensive and time-consuming task, beyond the framework of this thesis.

Another method could be, using the candidate survey, to look at why some choose to run as Independents rather than party candidates. While such a method is valid to assess why some vote for an Independent rather than a party candidate, it is not valid for candidates because they do not have a free choice

to run for any party. Most Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and Labour candidates were selected (i.e. the party had the ultimate power to decide on their candidacy), and very few individuals had such a choice to decide whether to run as an Independent or a party candidate. As stated earlier, for most Independents, the choice was Independent or nothing, not Independent or party.

Given both the highlighted difficulties in attempting such analyses and the lack of suitable data, table 4.20 below presents a summary of the key sociological characteristics of Independents vis-à-vis both party candidates and voters, as well as the three separate categories of Independents. Some of the data re-states what was covered in previous tables and graphs, but the overall picture of a typical Independent candidate is a man in his fifties, who continued his education after gaining a Leaving Certificate, works in a non-blue collar occupation and is most likely member of an important social network, be it a residents' association, the GAA, or another such organisation. It is important to state that most of these traits are common to all candidates, and what is interesting from table 4.20 is that there are not many differences between the socio-economic background of Independents and party candidates. In other words, understanding how socio-economic characteristics affects candidate emergence for all also provides insights for Independents. The main sociological differences between voters and candidates are related to sex, occupation and education. Looking at some of the differences between the three categories of Independents, policy Independents comprise more women and more educated individuals. Community Independents are more likely to be members of a residents' association and more likely to be male (although not at a reasonable level of significance), while temperamental Independents are more likely to be farmers and reside in the countryside.

Table 4.20. Socio-economic background of candidates and voters

Socio-economic traits	Policy Community Temp					
	Ind	Party	Voter	Ind	Ind	Ind
Age	51.1	48.0	47.2	49.2	53.3	51.2
Male	89.3	82.9	47.8	76.8*	96.5	92.5
Member community residents' association	43.2	41.0	n/a	37.5	50.9	40.3
GAA	17.3	29.2*	16.3	12.5	17.5	20.9
White-collar	43.1	50.0	50.1	46.3	4.40	30.1*
Blue-collar	10.1	6.0	24**	11.4	4.3	11.1
Farmers	13.3	15.0	9.3	9.2	4.3	19*
3 rd level education	49.7	54.3	32.3*	62.2*	43.1	44.3
Rural area or village	41.8	36.7	47.6	41.8	30.4	50.8
N	180	320	230	60	58	61

Note: Age refers to the average age of each category. All other figures are proportions exhibiting that particular trait; for example, 89.3 percent of Independents are male.

Details of voters' membership of community residents' associations not available from the INES.

Figures succeeded by an asterisk(s) are where the proportion with a characteristic has a voting preference significantly different from that of those without that characteristic, using three levels of significances.

Despite these findings, it needs to be stated that they come with the caveat that the vast majority of people would never consider running for office, even if they possessed all the desirable attributes of Independent candidates. For example, most males in their fifties with a third-level education do not run for office. Nevertheless, the aim of the above table is to highlight the main differences in the socio-economic background of candidates and voters.

(ii) Rational model: Applying calculus of candidacy to Independents

Needless to say, there are flaws in the sociological model, as the model predicts only that people with certain characteristics are more likely to run than other people – not that all Independent candidates will have these characteristics. The other model of participation looked at here is the rational model, which relies

on a cost-benefit approach to determine whether it is in an individual's best interests to run as an Independent.

This model is examined because the rationality of both those voting for Independents and those running as Independent candidates is sometimes questioned (Weeks 2005). The crux of the argument is that an Independent has little chance of winning a seat against the might of the political party machines; consequently, the incentives motivating Independents to run for office have no bearing on their decision to contest an election, because the chances of an Independent winning a seat are minuscule. The logic of this argument rests on the equation $pB > C$, which in layman's terms says an individual will run for office only when: the benefits accrued from winning a seat (B), times the probability of winning a seat (p), are more than the costs of contesting the election (C).

Individuals who run for office when $pB > C$ are considered strategic, since they are doing so at the most opportune moment (Collet 1999: 68–69). Most of the literature on minor party and Independent candidates concludes that they are not strategic because the probability of these candidates winning a seat is so small; it is reasonable to expect then that any analysis of their decision to run for office will confirm this assumption (ibid; Aldrich 1995: 52).

However, such studies were written in contexts (predominantly the US) where Independents' probability of victory is a lot lower than is the case in Ireland. In the latter country, the situation is quite different. The success of Independent candidates has already been alluded to in chapter 3, where it was shown that in the 1940s, one in every three Independents won a seat to the Dáil. The substantial increase in the numbers of individuals running as Independent candidates since the 1970s has lowered this success rate, but almost one in seven Independents still managed to win a seat at the 2002 general election, a reasonable rate of success, comparatively speaking.

Based on the above information, it could be argued that Independents are more likely to run in Ireland, simply because their probability of victory is higher than in other liberal democracies. The ideal method of using the calculus of candidacy to explain Independent emergence in Ireland would be to

calculate the values of p , B and C for Independent candidates in a whole host of countries (as well as for each individual Independent). If it was found that value of pB less C was greatest in Ireland, then it would be reasonable to conclude that Independents run in greater numbers in that country because it is a more rational decision for them to do so than in other political systems. The problem is that it would cost a great deal of resources, predominantly financial, to conduct such a study, which may not even produce valid results, given the difficulty in producing suitable measures of the variables.

The best we can therefore do is to look at the importance of rationality within Ireland. While candidates were asked to state the costs and benefits of running in the pilot survey, the responses indicated the difficulty in assessing how to measure them. For example, one respondent may validly claim that a major cost in running was a loss of time to spend with one's family, while another may say it was the loss of potential earned income. How is one to determine which of these costs was more important, and indeed to determine whether these may have been major costs for one candidate, while relatively minor for another? Given the untold difficulties in measuring these variables, it was decided not to calculate the calculus of candidacy for Independents vis-à-vis party candidates. However, attempts to measure the values of p and B were undertaken, as the following section indicates.

(iii) Estimating the probability of victory (p)

It is difficult to gauge precisely each candidate's probability of winning a seat. Black's method of measuring p was replicated, which involved asking candidates to indicate which of five statements most accurately reflected their confidence in winning a seat (Black 1972: 150). These are:⁸⁴

'I felt fairly certain of winning';

'I thought I could win, but I felt the election would be close';

'I thought the election could go either way';

'I expected to lose, but I thought if I worked, I could make it a close race';

⁸⁴ Q26, candidate survey: 'Which one of the following statements most accurately reflected your confidence in winning a seat at the local elections?'

‘I felt fairly certain of losing’.

Undoubtedly, there are problems with this post-election method, because most respondents are likely to overestimate their chances of victory and give a large value for p . There is also the caveat that candidates’ electoral performance may have affected the level of pre-election confidence they reported after the polls; for example, those who lost the election could be likely to underplay their confidence. Table 4.21 seems to confirm the validity of Black’s premise, as 58 percent of Independents believed they could win a seat, while a further 21 percent felt it could go either way. In other words, only one in five Independents went into the election expecting to lose (even though 70 percent of them eventually did so). That being said, the proportions of candidates winning a seat did vary in accordance with their perception of victory, with a correlation of +0.43 (significant at a $p < .001$ level). For example, of those fairly certain of winning, 53 percent of Independents and 74 percent of party candidates won a seat, while of those who expected to lose, but felt they could make it a close race if they worked hard, less than 4 percent of Independents and 9 percent of party candidates won a seat. The proportions that won seats amongst the confident held fairly constant for the three categories of Independents, although it is noticeable that policy Independents were significantly less confident of their chances than temperamental Independents (at a $p < .05$ level).

Table 4.21 Candidates’ Self-perception of victory (%)⁸⁵

Confidence of victory	Inds	Party	Policy Ind	Temp Ind	Comm Ind
Fairly certain of win	27	33	18	33	27
Could win, but close	32	40	34	30	29
Either way	21	14	25	18	21
Expect loss, but could be close	15	11	16	11	20
Fairly certain of loss	6	3	7	8	4

(Party and Independents) Pearson’s chi-square=12.04 ($p=0.017$)

(Independent categories) Pearson’s chi-square=6.27 ($p=0.617$)

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Without the self-perceptions of potential candidates who did not run, it is impossible to tell whether individuals ran as Independents (rather than remain an ordinary voter) simply because they had higher expectations of victory than the average member of the voting public. What has emerged, however, is that one-quarter of Independent candidates were fairly certain of winning a seat, one-half of for whom such confidence was not misplaced. It is noticeable that evidence of over-optimism was greater amongst Independent than party candidates; almost three-quarters of the latter group expecting to win a seat were successful. While these results do contain a health warning because of their post-hoc nature, if this was to have an effect, we might have imagined Independents to have a lower rate of optimism. As a result, the finding that twice as many Independents were fairly certain of winning a seat as compared to the number that actually did is significant. We might have expected Independents to underplay their chances, but this may reflect the success Independents have in winning seats at local elections across Europe, especially in Ireland. This high level of expectation may be one of the reasons why a large number of Independent candidates continue to contest Irish elections, at both local and general level.

Another factor that might increase the value of p in Ireland compared to other countries is the operation of the single transferable vote electoral system. Both the candidate-centred nature of this system and the presence of multi-member constituencies increase an individual's chances of being elected (Sinnott 2005: 120), compared with plurality electoral systems; for example, 12 percent of the vote would guarantee a candidate a seat in a 7-seat constituency. 63 percent of Independent candidates from the 2002 general election ($n=16$) agreed that PR-STV was a contributory factor in explaining the significance of Independents in Ireland.⁸⁶ While this relationship is explored in greater detail in chapter 7, for now we can say that PR-STV certainly increases the value of p as

⁸⁶ Source: pilot survey carried out in February 2004 prior to the June 2004 candidate survey. The question was worded: 'Do you think STV is an important factor in explaining the significant presence of Independents in Ireland?'

compared to plurality systems, which place Independents at a major disadvantage, as they have to beat all the party candidates to win a seat.⁸⁷

(v) Benefits (B)

It tends to be assumed that no material benefits can be gained by running as an Independent. Such candidates usually fare very poorly at elections, and even if an Independent does manage to win a seat, in most western parliaments they have little to no impact, and are usually perceived as a wasted seat. The ostracised position of an Independent MP representing Kidderminster Hospital and Help Concern in the United Kingdom House of Commons since 2001 illustrates this point.

However, as was shown in chapter 3, Independents do perform much better at elections in Ireland than in most countries. In addition, they manage to exert an impact on the national stage. One of the major benefits accruing to Independents has been the securing of ‘pork’ for their constituencies in return for supporting minority administrations, details of which were provided in the last chapter. A classic example was the aforementioned ‘Gregory Deal’ negotiated by the eponymous Independent TD, which has motivated some Independents to run to procure their own ‘deal’ for their respective community.

The perception held by some is that life as an Independent can be more rewarding than on the government backbenches, which a temperamental Independent TD (Jackie Healy-Rae) alluded to on his election in 1997.⁸⁸ Had he been elected as a TD for the party from which he had sought an official nomination (Fianna Fáil), he would have been a powerless backbencher. His election as an Independent secured him a far more influential position as one of the ‘Gang of Four’ whom the government was dependent on. In light of this evidence, many Independents elected to the Dáil do not think they are irrational

⁸⁷ This explains why on almost all the few occasions when Independents have won a seat to the British House of Commons, one of the two major parties did not field a candidate in the respective constituency.

⁸⁸ When asked by the media what kind of influence they can wield, Independent TDs recurrently state that they have as much power as any party backbencher; see for example: an interview with Michael Lowry Independent TD on *The Constituency*, RTÉ Radio 1, broadcast 16 December 2006; an interview with Jerry Cowley Independent TD on *Today with Pat Kenny*, RTÉ Radio 1, broadcast 2 May 2007.

actors, as they aim to match the achievements of such individuals. Even though it can be argued that very few Independents actually manage to gain a ‘deal’ for their constituency, the possibility that this could arise is the key factor, since it enables the Independents to campaign on their potential ability to deliver largesse.

This mindset was outlined in detail by three Independent TDs elected in 2002: Jerry Cowley, Finian McGrath, and Marian Harkin. Cowley stated that ‘Independent members have the capacity, which they have utilised in the past, to exert an effect on Government above and beyond their numbers...Independents have the know-how to do that, to represent people’s real needs and to do something about meeting them’. He further claimed that ‘Independents can best represent the issues of concern in a constituency by cutting out the middle man’ (Cowley 2005). Harkin referred to their ability to influence legislation by drafting amendments,⁸⁹ which McGrath vindicated with his five amendments to the 2005 Health Bill that the government accepted.⁹⁰ He claimed that ‘Independent TDs are at least as effective at present as any other backbencher in the Dáil’.⁹¹ These Independents also emphasised the importance of being free to speak out on any issue on behalf of their constituents without having to toe a party line imposed by a whip. Hence Cowley’s assertion: ‘Catherine [Murphy – an Independent TD] can do as much as any government/non-government backbench TD in the Dáil, and even more, as she will not be prevented from speaking out by any party whip’.⁹² This is an important benefit, because Independents value the freedom to act on their own, without the curtailing influence of a party. They can attach themselves to any cause, without the need to stick to a party line. These three TDs were deliberately chosen as examples because they are high-profile politicians who were wooed by parties before and after their election to office, yet chose to remain Independents. They must feel that the reasons to run Independent are valid and sincere.

⁸⁹ Source: *Saturday View*, broadcast on RTÉ Radio 1, 19 March 2005.

⁹⁰ Source: Finian McGrath, personal correspondence with author, 11 November 2005.

⁹¹ Source: ‘Independents reply to ‘irrational’ attack’, *Sunday Business Post*, 3 April 2005.

⁹² Source: *Ibid.*

In Australia, Costar and Curtin also believe that Independents can be effective, as their reaction to Brennan's declaration (Costar and Curtin 2004: 7) regarding the 'irrelevance' of life outside party (quoted in chapter 2) is to say 'that situation had undoubtedly changed by...2001' (ibid.). They list a number of policies and financial commitments made by the government in rural areas to tackle problems highlighted by Independents. These included a \$850 million grant to local government for road infrastructure, \$163 million to improve telecommunications, and an \$83 million fund for community projects (Costar and Curtin 2004: 12). At the same time, the authors tempered the influence Independents can have by acknowledging 'that they are only able to increase government accountability and transparency if and while they exercise a numerical hold over a parliamentary chamber' (2004: 26), sentiment which Independent Senator for Tasmania, Brian Harradine agreed with (Costar and Curtin 2004: 53).

The main reason why previous studies have implied it is irrational for Independents to run is because they have assumed a priori that the same calculus applies to Independents as to party candidates. However, in addition to Independents having a higher value of p in Ireland than is expected in other systems, the following paragraph shows that for some candidates, p may not matter at all. In other words, the rationality of the latter's decision to run may not be affected by their odds of winning a seat

The benefits of running largely depend on the nature of the candidate's aims. This refers back to section 4.7 on whether the incentives to run are of an instrumental or expressive nature. For example, if Independents' aims are instrumental, largely dependent on the electoral outcome, they might consider that the only tangible benefit is winning a seat. By implication, if those running for this reason would like to be considered rational, they will only do so if they have high expectations of winning a seat, because a low value for B probably implies $pB < C$. However, those motivated to run out of expressive incentives will have a high value for B unaffected by the potential electoral outcome. For such candidates, the calculus may well be $B - C$, with rationality expressed as running when B outweighs C . The large number of Independents (77 percent)

who said ‘to highlight an important issue’ was an important motivation (see table 4.10) implies that candidacy may well have been a rational decision for these individuals.

(v) Costs (C)

Even if p is discounted for Independents running primarily for expressive reasons, if the costs of running (C) are higher than the perceived benefits (B), the calculus implies that it would be irrational for Independents to run. As it happens, the value of C in Ireland is relatively low compared to other liberal democracies. Until 2001, the sole requirement to run as an Independent at a general election was the lodging of a financial deposit, which stood at £300 when it was scrapped after a successful legal challenge by an individual who claimed that it discriminated against Independent candidates. The deposit was partially reintroduced in 2007 with new legislation that required Independent candidates to either lodge a deposit of €500 or provide the verified signatures of 30 registered voters. Even as it stands, such obligations pale in comparison to the rules under party list systems in operation across Europe that require would-be candidates to forsake their independence and form a party list if they wish to appear on the ballot paper. A list system was introduced in Belgium partly for this very reason, to prevent the ‘intervention of ‘independent personalities’’ (Duverger 1959: 244). Both Benoit (2005: 247) and Farrell and McAllister (2005: 88), writing on Hungary and Australia respectively, have linked the prominence (or lack of) of Independents to the electoral rules, and it seems fair to say that the ease of candidacy, if not directly encouraging Independents to run, certainly does not act as a disincentive. Table 4.22 details the requirements for ballot access in ten democracies. This is adapted from a similar dataset by Abedi (2004: 93–94), which included 18 countries. The column headed ‘country rank for ease of access’ measures the degree to which it is easier to run in one system than another (which Abedi termed the ‘degree of centralisation’ (2004: 92–94). This was calculated according to the individual ranking given to each country based on how it scored for each of the three ballot variables detailed in table 4.22. Notably, Ireland is the second least

cartelised system (after Luxembourg), which goes some way to supporting the hypothesis that it is easier for Independents to run in Ireland than in most other political systems.

Table 4.22. Ballot access

Country	Number of petitioned electors required for candidacy	Deposit (euro equivalent)	Proportion of vote needed for refund of deposit	Country rank for ease of access
Australia	50	210	4%	6.5
Canada	50	700	Refunded if campaign expenses provided	17
Finland	150	None	N/A	3
France	None	150	5%	4.5
Ireland	30	500	On average 5%*	2
Japan	None	19,000	20% of valid vote divided by the number of members elected	11
New Zealand	2	150	25% of votes of the successful candidate	4.5
Norway	500	None	N/A	12
Sweden	1500	None	N/A	16
United Kingdom	10	750	5%	13.5

Source: Abedi 2004: 93–94; Norris 2005: 87–91; individual government websites; <http://aceadmin.at.org/ace/epic-en/pc>

Note: the United States is not included here, because the regulations vary between states. Nevertheless, such regulations tend to be quite stringent, and usually require a petition of tens of 1000s of voters, acting as a strong disincentive to the emergence of Independent candidates (Norris 2005: 87–91).

* Formally, a candidate needs to win 25 percent of the quota to have their deposit refunded. The quota varies according to district magnitude, but since the median magnitude is four, in the average constituency a candidate needs 25 percent of the quota (20%), which is 5 percent of the total vote.

The major costs for most candidates are the financial resources required to fund a campaign (which Broten described as a major hurdle hindering the success of Independent candidates in Canada (2002: 22), as is the case for Independents in most systems). While stories of the tens of millions of dollars

spent at elections in the US are well-known, by comparison far less is spent at Irish elections. Since expenditure limits were introduced in 1998 for general elections, the maximum candidates could spend in a 3-seat constituency for the 2007 general election was €30,150, €37,650 in a 4-seat constituency, and €45,200 in a 5-seat constituency. Although these limits only applied to the three-week period prior to the election, it was estimated that the largest party, Fianna Fáil, which ran 106 candidates in 2002, spent €2.2 million in the 2002 campaign⁹³ (Collins 2003: 35), still a relatively minor figure compared to the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been spent at recent presidential elections in the US. While no expenditure limits apply to local elections, on average each candidate spent just over €3,500 in 2004, while Independents spent €3,100 each (for more details see chapter 5). In a country where the average industrial wage is over €29,000, such expenditure is relatively paltry, indicating the low financial costs required to run as a candidate.

While it has not proven possible to determine the calculus of candidacy for Independents, and whether pB (or even just B) is greater than C for them, the previous sections have provided a brief indication of the values they may take for Independent candidates. To provide empirical evidence of whether their decision to run can be considered rational or strategic, Schlesinger's idea of the importance of opportunity structures is adopted in the next section. To recap, this stated that individuals are more likely to run in a situation that favours their candidacy, which explains why Labour candidates rarely run in the rural constituency of Mayo for example (where the party has managed to win a seat at just one election, back in September 1927).

(vi) Are Independents strategic in their decision to run?

While candidates usually do not have a practical choice of running in any constituency they want,⁹⁴ they do have the option of deciding whether or not to

⁹³ Comparative figures for the 2007 election are not yet available.

⁹⁴ While candidates are free to run in any constituency, they typically run in the area where they reside to maximise the impact of the 'friends and neighbours' voting effects referred to in chapter 2. Exceptions can occur in Dublin, where this pattern of voting behaviour may not be as prevalent, and because the constituencies are territorially smaller.

contest the election. If the candidates are rational, the opportunity structures within their constituency will affect their decision to run. Black echoed a similar idea, when he examined the influence of structural incentives on candidates' ambition (Black 1972). Within the framework of this study, such structures include the district magnitude, the local history of Independent presence and support for such candidates, and the number of incumbents running. To predict why Independents run, candidates' strategic nature is measured by examining the variation in the number of Independent candidates across electoral constituencies, replicating the methods of Collet (1999: 77–82) and Canon (1990: 97–102). Since this method uses aggregate-level, rather than survey, data, it would have been possible to conduct this analysis with general election data. However, for two reasons, local election data is used. First, because the rest of this chapter, as well as the following one, is based on local election data, using a similar data source is required for reasons of consistency. Second, the considerably greater number of constituencies at local level (180) than at general elections (42 in 2002) renders it more suitable for statistical analysis.

Table 4.23. Mean number of Independent candidates at constituency level in 2004 local elections

Region	Mean no. Ind cand.	N	No. Ind. cllrs (2004)	Mean no. Ind cand.	N
Dublin	1.2	30	0	1.1	117
Leinster (ex. Dub.)	1.6	53	1	2.6	51
Munster	2.0	53	>1	3.1	12
Connacht	1.6	30			
Ulster	1.7	14			
Presence of Ind TDs (1997+2002)					
			0	1.5	114
City Council	1.6	47	1	1.5	44
County Council	1.7	133	2	2.8	22
District Magnitude					
			Previous Level of Support (%) (1991)		
3-seat	0.7	25	0–5	1.1	97
4-seat	1.7	46	6–10	1.8	27
5-seat	1.7	53	11–15	2.5	26
6-seat	1.8	30	16–20	2.0	24
7-seat	2.3	26	>20	2.6	29
Previous Level of Support (1999)					
			Previous Number of Inds (1991)		
0–5	0.8	75	0	1.2	43
6–10	2.1	27	1	1.5	50
11–15	1.7	25	2	1.4	36
16–20	2.2	24	3	2.6	25
>20	2.7	41	>3	2.3	26
Margin of victory 1999 (votes)					
			Margin of victory 2004 (votes)		
<50	1.6	39	<50	1.6	38
50–100	1.6	44	50–100	2.0	41
101–200	1.9	36	101–200	1.7	46
>200	1.7	61	>200	1.5	55
Previous Number of Inds (1999)					
			Number of Incumbents running (2004)		
0	0.9	40	0–3	1.2	50
1	1.3	59	4	1.9	47
2	1.7	40	5	1.7	45
>2	2.9	41	6–7	2.0	38

Note: ‘Previous level of support’ refers to aggregate vote for Independents at a prior election.
‘Margin of victory’ refers to the number of votes separating the candidate who won the last seat in a constituency, and the highest-placed runner-up.
Source: For local elections: Various issues of Department of the Environment and Local Government. *Local Elections*. Dublin: Stationery Office, 1991–2004.
For general elections: issues of Department of the Environment and Local Government. *Election results and transfer of votes in general election for Dáil and by-elections*. Dublin: Stationery Office, 1997–2002.

Table 4.23 provides descriptive statistics on the mean number of Independent candidates per constituency (Local Electoral Area) at the 2004 local elections, according to a range of electoral variables. It appears that the decision of individuals to run as Independents did display some evidence of strategic, rational behaviour, and was not simply a random decision disregarding their potential chances. District magnitude appears meaningful, since three times as many Independents ran in 7-seat as compared to 3-seat constituencies. Of course, this could also be because a 7-seater covers a larger population than a smaller constituency, and if one in every x voters runs as an Independent, then the larger the population of a constituency, the more Independents will stand. To account for this, we can look at the number of Independent candidates per seat, which was 0.23 in a 3-seater, 0.43 in a 4-seater, 0.34 in a 5-seater, 0.30 in a 6-seater, and 0.33 in a 7-seater. These figures do not provide evidence of a rising number of Independent candidates in line with a rising district magnitude, and the correlation coefficient between the two variables has a low value of +0.15. In a simple bivariate analysis such as this it is impossible to tell the exact influence of district magnitude, but it is something that is explored in greater depth in table 4.25, which controls for the collective influence of a number of variables.

Other relevant factors affecting the emergence of Independents include the history of presence of, and support for, Independents. For example, Allen and Brox found that there was a significant positive correlation between the votes accrued by third party and Independent candidates across a number of different presidential elections in the US (2005: 628–630). Looking at the Irish case, over three times as many Independent candidates ran in Local Electoral Areas (LEA) in 2004 where Independents had won over 20 percent of the first preference vote at the previous local elections of 1999, as compared to LEAs where they had received less than 6 percent of the vote. Similarly, on average three Independents ran in LEAs where more than two had run in 1999, as against a mean of less than one in constituencies where no Independents ran in

1999.⁹⁵ The numbers of, and vote for, Independents at the preceding election to 1999 (1991), also appear to influence Independent emergence in 2004. An additional measure of the presence of Independent support within a constituency is the number of incumbent Independent councillors. This indicates that the LEA has a history of electing Independents, as well as the existence of an ‘Independent vote’ to tap into. It does appear that this matters, as well over twice as many Independents ran in constituencies that had an incumbent Independent as those that had none.

While the presence of safe seats may not be as evident in multi-seat constituencies using the single transferable vote, it may be possible to determine whether some are more ‘open’ than others. By open, it is implied that there is a greater chance of success for challengers than in other constituencies. This is measured by the number of incumbent councillors contesting the election, and the marginality of victory in 1999, as well as that of 2004. The latter is a proxy measure for whether a close race was expected. The marginality is the difference in votes between the n^{th} -placed and the $n+1$ -placed candidate in an n -seat constituency after all counts have been completed. It might be expected that if Independents are rational actors, they might be more likely to run in open constituencies, where fewer incumbents were running, where the margin of victory in the 1999 contest was narrow, and where a similarly close result was expected in 2004. While the evidence regarding incumbency is inconclusive (see table 4.23), it appears as if marginality in neither 1999 nor 2004 affected the number of Independents running.

While table 4.23 highlighted some of the possible factors affecting Independents’ decision to run, these need to be included in a multivariate analysis to determine their collective influence. With the number of Independent candidates per constituency as the dependent variable, ordinary least squares regression is the chosen methodology, given the linear relationship between the variables and the satisfying of the assumptions of this method. Although the dependent variable is of a discrete nature (with 7 values:

⁹⁵ Of course it is worth bearing in mind that this could be because the same individuals may have ran in both 1999 and 2004.

0–6), which violates the regression assumptions of normal distribution of error, it is deemed acceptable to use because the number of values is not very small, and the responses are not concentrated on just a few of these values (see table 4.24 below).

**Table 4.24. Numbers of Independent candidates
per Local Electoral Area, 2004**

Independent candidates	LEAs
0	35
1	60
2	39
3	23
4	15
5	7
6	1
Total	180

All the independent variables listed in table 4.23 are included in the regression analysis, which is detailed below in table 4.25.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ There is undoubtedly a positive relationship between some of the independent variables. For example, the number of Independent candidates running in 2004 may be related to the number of Independents that ran in 1999 simply because the same individuals ran in both elections. However, a correlation matrix between all these variables did not reveal any correlation coefficients with a value greater than 0.60, an acceptable level of collinearity (Pennings, Keman and Kleinnijenhuis 2006: 163).

**Table 4.25. OLS Regression of Number of Independent Candidates
at LEA level on Electoral variables**

No. of Ind. cands 1999	0.26***	(0.08)
No. of Ind. cands 1991	-0.02	(0.07)
Vote for Inds. 1999	0.02*	(0.01)
Vote for Inds. 1991	0.01	(0.01)
District Magnitude	0.15*	(0.08)
No. of Ind. cllrs in LEA	0.56***	(0.17)
No. of Ind. TDs 1997 and 2002	0.25*	(0.12)
No. of minor party candidates	0.04	(0.10)
Margin 1999	0.0005	(0.0006)
Margin 2004	-0.0005	(0.0005)
Dublin	-0.14	(0.40)
Leinster	0.17	(0.23)
Munster	0.52*	(0.23)
Urban	0.16	(0.32)
Incumbents running	-0.08	(0.07)
Constant	-0.15	(0.45)
Adj. R ²	0.49	
F	11.85	
N	177	

Note: Table reports unstandardised regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses.

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Source: issues of Department of the Environment and Local Government. *Local Elections*.
Dublin: Stationery Office, 1991–2004.

Both the number of Independents running in 1999 and the vote for these candidates were significant at the p<.05 level, while the coefficients for the 1991 equivalent of these variables did not reach a desired level of significance, with the number of Independents running in 1991 having a negative effect. Other significant variables include the district magnitude, the number of Independent councillors in the local constituency, and if candidates were running in Munster. Not surprisingly, the presence of incumbents had a negative effect on the propensity of Independents to run for office. The coefficient of determination indicates that almost 50 percent of the variation in

the number of Independents can be explained by the model. These results suggest that Independents' decision to run is motivated by strategic, or rational, incentives. The only opportunity structures that they appeared to ignore are related to the marginality or status of the seats within the constituency. As was mentioned when discussing these variables, the idea of marginality or open/closed seats is not as relevant in multi-seat constituencies as in single-seat districts. For example, just 17 of the 180 LEAs in 2004 saw the full set of incumbents returned. As such, Independents' failure to act strategically in relation to these variables may simply reflect the inadequacy or unsuitability of the variables, rather than indicate irrationality on the part of the candidates. It may also reflect the fact that there is no way of knowing in advance just how marginal a given constituency will turn out to be.

4.9 Conclusion

To understand why Independents decide to run for office, a straightforward open-ended question in the postal survey could have been used to ask Independent candidates why they decided to run, but this would probably have resulted in 'safe', politically correct responses that would have been difficult to code and would have shed little new light on candidate emergence.

Instead, this chapter has explored a number of methods to determine why some individuals decide to run as an Independent candidate. Several approaches to answer this question were assessed because it is difficult to devise one formal model that caters for all possible reasons, and because different avenues to explain candidate emergence have been explored in the literature. To begin with, the classic instrumental/expressive incentive divide indicated that Independents are motivated by different factors than party candidates. However, it was not necessarily the case that Independents have only expressive aims in mind, as they also run to achieve some instrumental goals, chiefly to represent the local area and to achieve certain policy goals. The three types of Independents are also affected by different incentives. Community Independents tend to be more locally-oriented, policy Independents are concerned with representing the interests of particular

organisations, while temperamental Independents are driven by policy concerns and an interest in politics. When comparing Independents with party candidates, it seems that Independents are more policy-seeking than office-seeking as they ranked achieving policy goals and particular values as more important than winning a seat. As a consequence, having more Independents in parliament could have an effect on policy outcomes, especially if they are given opportunities (on committees or via private member's bills, for example) to promote their policies.

The reality for Independent candidates is that they do not have the option of running in or outside a party: their choice is limited to a non-party candidacy or nothing at all. Because 99-plus percent of the population choose the nothing option, why then do a couple of hundred individuals choose this electoral route? Two models were explored to answer this question. The first looked at the socio-economic background of both candidates and voters, and found that this did account for the emergence of some Independents. Men were more likely to run than women (as is the case in most liberal democracies, regardless of affiliation), while those over 35 years of age, those with a university education, and members of trade unions were all more likely to run as Independents than those not possessing these characteristics. Anti-party sentiment was not a significant factor, although individuals who felt that voting behaviour ought to be guided by choice of candidate, rather than party, were more likely to run as an Independent. This could be because if such individuals believed that party is the key determinant of voter choice, they would see little point in running as an Independent candidate.

Although it was not possible to draw definitive results from the analysis of the relevancy of the $pB > C$ equation to the emergence of Independents, it was shown that the value of C is probably lower in Ireland than many other liberal democracies; the values of p and B is also higher, because of the 'pork' Independents extract from minority governments dependent on their support. Consequently, running as an Independent in theory is not as irrational an act as is the case in other political systems. As such, capable individuals, and not just political cranks (as is the case in other countries), run as Independents in

Ireland, because they know they have a reasonable chance of electoral success. This explains some of the vote that Independents accrue, because good candidates will always attract a vote, regardless of affiliation, especially in a system where there is a strong personal vote (see chapter 2). An additional test of Independents' rationality involved assessing whether they are more likely to emerge in constituencies with more favourable opportunity structures. It was found that the numbers of Independents running per constituency was not a haphazard pattern and did demonstrate some element of a strategic nature, as they were more likely to run in constituencies with a traditional presence of Independent candidates, a stronger vote for such candidates, and where a greater number of seats were available. This confirms that the emergence of Independents does exhibit an element of rationality, and that they are more likely to run in circumstances that are more conducive to their success. By implication, a removal of circumstances, such as lowering of the district magnitude in constituencies, or an increase in the costs to run as an Independent, could then have a negative effect on the future numbers that decide to run for office as an Independent candidate.

While understanding the motivation of Independents is important, it could be argued that their candidacies only really matter if their campaigns have a positive impact on the electorate. With this in mind, the next chapter examines the nature of Independents' electioneering. The variation in the intensity of their campaigns is assessed, before it is analysed if it makes a difference to their electoral performance.

Chapter 5: Independents' electoral campaigning. Does it make a difference?

5.1 Introduction

Despite the significance of Independents in Irish politics as outlined in chapter 3, the stark fact remains that some Independent candidates are very successful while many are not. A number of reasons can be put forward to explain such variation: some candidates may come from a family steeped in political tradition, some may have lot of money to spend on their campaign, some may be incumbents, some may have very charming personalities, while some may simply be more capable candidates than others. This chapter explains the divergent performances of Independents by focussing on their campaigns, namely whether the strength of candidates' campaign activities makes a difference to the electoral outcome.

To recap, the central question this thesis is concerned with is why Independents have a significant presence in Irish politics. Accounting for this requires an explanation of their electoral success, which can be conducted by two means: first, by an examination of candidates' campaigns, and second, by assessing the motives of voters. The latter is the subject of the next chapter, while this chapter focuses on the former, chiefly whether campaigns really do matter for Independents. There are three core sections in this chapter. First, the nature of Independents' campaigns are examined, and whether their efforts differ from those of party candidates. Also of interest is whether there is a diversity of campaigning within the category of Independents themselves, a question that is important because there are significant differences in the votes Independent candidates receive at elections. Such information is necessary, because the main problem for those researching political campaigns is a lack of data concerning what actually takes place during the campaign (Geer and Lau 2006: 270). This study therefore provides important data on a relatively under-researched area.

The second section examines what determines the level of campaigning undertaken by Independents, which looks at the influence of a number of

factors, among them the candidates' record of membership of local associations, their experience of campaigns, and their confidence of winning a seat. The final section assesses the influence of campaigning upon Independents' electoral performance, again looking at the differences between Independents and party candidates and within the Independent category. My hypothesis is that campaigning matters more for Independents than party candidates, because they cannot rely on a party label or on the national campaign of an external organisation to boost their support levels.

5.2 Campaigns

(i) Definition of a campaign

An analysis of campaigns and their effects requires an adequate definition of what they entail, and what is their purpose. Campaigns have been described as 'organised efforts to inform, persuade and mobilise' (Norris 2002: 128), with the ultimate aim being to maximise electoral gains (Farrell 1995: 2–3). One of the assumptions of this chapter is that almost all candidates aim to maximise their vote, a Downsian assumption which most academics agree on (see Johnston 1987: 13; Farrell 1995: 33). While some candidates may be more interested in policy-seeking (or maybe even office-seeking) than simply vote-seeking, (especially perhaps Independents more so than party candidates – as was shown in the last chapter), if they fail to attract sufficient levels of votes, neither policy-seeking nor office-seeking goals are likely to be achieved. Consequently, in practice all candidates will strive for the best electoral performance possible no matter what incentives they are primarily concerned with.⁹⁷

(ii) Local elections

Most studies have examined the impact of local campaigning at national, first-order elections. This would have been the ideal scenario for this chapter, since

⁹⁷ This claim must be tempered with the practical reality of vote management by the larger parties, where party strategists attempt to distribute the vote evenly amongst their candidates to maximise the number of seats won. This does not have any major consequences for this assumption, as candidates will still seek to maximise their vote to a certain level, and in any case, it does not apply to Independents.

survey data from general election candidates could have been compared with the voter data from the 2002 INES. Because the Taoiseach did not facilitate this need by calling an early election, the dataset of local election candidates from 2004 is used again here. In any case, it was indicated in the last chapter that the findings from a study of local elections are still applicable to the national level, and that there are a number of advantages that result from focusing on the local arena. A few additional advantages related to campaigning include the prevalence of ‘premodern’ campaigning at local elections, as witnessed in the UK, the US, Australia, and Canada (Norris 2002), which means that at local elections we are more likely to find campaign effects differentiating the performance of Independents. Moreover, in Ireland there are no limits on campaign expenditure in local elections, unlike at general elections. When such limits exist, a problem arises where a lot of major party candidates spend close to their limit, rendering it difficult to account for the variation in the vote between these candidates. For example, two candidates may have spent equal amounts, yet there may have been a large difference in the intensity of their campaigns.

5.3 How to measure campaign activity

As described above in chapter 2, a variety of methods have been employed to measure the level of campaigning conducted by candidates. Probably the most common is to use their expenditure returns, especially since this information is often gathered by local authorities and can be attained relatively easily and cheaply. The few studies of campaign effects in Ireland have been dependent on such data (Benoit and Marsh 2003a, 2003b). However, this method may have its limits, as it is not always clear that money is a true measure of campaign activity, because it cannot account for the full range of activity (see Denver and Hands 1997: 242–3). Some elements of campaigning do not cost any money, and cannot be accounted for by expenditure returns. For example, door-to-door canvassing and distributing election leaflets are just some of the many aspects of a campaign conducted by unpaid volunteers. In addition, some resources, such as posters and leaflets, can be carried over from previous

campaigns, and do not have to be declared in the official expenditure returns. The deviating effect this could have when measuring the effect of campaign activity is evident when considering a hypothetical example where one candidate spends €1,200 on 200 glossy new posters, while another candidate spends just €120 on 20 new posters, but also uses 200 posters from a previous campaign. From the expenditure returns, the first candidate having spent ten times more on posters than the second candidate would suggest that (s)he erected ten times as many posters, giving a false impression of the reality where actually the second candidate had erected more posters.

In addition to the possible inaccuracies concerning the validity of expenditure as a measure of campaign activity, we also do not know if all spending has an equal effect. For example, it may be the case that devoting campaign funds to novelty items such as badges and car bumper stickers has little effect, whereas buying posters might provide far more ‘bang for their buck’. These examples highlight the flaws in limiting an analysis of campaigning to the effects of being ‘well-heeled’; it is also necessary to examine whether being ‘well-soled’ matters, that is, how physically active candidates are in their campaigning (Marsh 2004b). This chapter aims to overcome such limitations by analysing the effects of both campaign activities and expenditure returns. Aside from accounting for the discrepancies that may arise by using expenditure as a proxy measure, using both sets of data means the accuracy of expenditure as an estimator of campaign activity can be determined. This is important to assess, because if it is found that there is a weak correlation between the two variables (as Carty and Eagles found in Canada (1999: 76)), it poses consequences for the reliability of expenditure as a surrogate measure of campaign activity.

5.4 Campaign analysis

Determining the impact of a campaign requires the identification of a number of key factors. Denver and Hands identified seven main components of a local election campaign: preparation, organisation, election workers, canvassing, literature, use of computers, and polling day operations (1997: 248). Using this

as a framework, it can be seen that there are three general elements to a campaign:

1. The preparing and planning of a campaign.
2. The level of campaign resources available to a candidate.
3. The activities carried out during a campaign.

The following sections analyse the performance of Independents vis-à-vis party candidates in relation to these three elements of campaigning, to examine whether there are differences in the nature and intensity of their campaign activities, and more importantly whether such differences affect their electoral performance.

Of course, the level of campaigning is not constant across constituencies, where variations occur due to the influence of certain variables. These include the size of the constituency (both in terms of population and territory) and its geography (whether it is mainly urban or rural). Denver and Hands claim that the most important constituency variable is the marginality of its seat (1997: 56); because the majority of seats in the UK are 'safe' in the sense that the incumbent MP has a very strong chance of retaining his/her seat, challengers are more likely to mount a weaker campaign in safe as opposed to marginal constituencies, where the outcome is not so clear-cut.

For a number of reasons, marginality has less of an effect on campaigning in Ireland, and is not really applicable to this study. The presence of multi-seat constituencies means that a popular incumbent does not severely restrict the possibilities for challengers; other seats are available, and a lower proportion of votes is required to win a seat than in single-seat constituencies. Even if a party has a solid core vote in a constituency that ensures it a certain number of seats at every election, it is usually not clear which exactly of the respective party's candidates will win the seats. This is especially so, because in many instances parties run more candidates than the number they expect to win a seat (Weeks 2007b). Even a candidate who expects to attract little support in an area still has an incentive to campaign there to attract lower preferences for themselves or their party.

With the three aforementioned components of campaigning as a framework, the same categories of candidates as chapter 4 (party candidates, Independents, and the three sub-categories of Independents: policy Independents, community Independents, and temperamental Independents) are analysed in the following sections.

5.5 Measuring the impact of campaign activity

(1) Preparation

Respondents were asked three questions about their campaign preparation: when they decided to run for election (in terms of how long before polling day), the length of their active campaign, and how far advanced their preparations for the campaign were (on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 denotes no preparation, and 10 all preparation was completed) when the election was officially called four weeks before polling day.

Table 5.1. Campaign Preparation

Group	When decided to run (weeks)	Active campaign length (months)	Campaign preparation (0–10)
Party	92	3.7	7.2
Independents	69	2.3	5.5
– Policy Inds	89	2.7	5.9
– Comm Inds	55	1.9	4.9
– Temp Inds	55	2.4	5.7

Active campaign: Party and Independents: T-statistic=6.82 (p=0.000); Independent categories: Pearson's chi-square=15.17 (p=0.367).

Campaign preparation: Party and Independents: T-statistic=6.87 (p=0.000); Independent categories: Pearson's chi-square=17.73 (p=0.605).

Source: For when decided to run: Q3, candidate survey: 'Thinking back to when you decided to run for election, how long before polling day on June 11 did you make this decision?'

Campaign length: Q4, candidate survey: 'Turning towards your active campaign to win a seat, how long did this last?'

Campaign preparation: Q5, candidate survey: 'How far advanced would you say your campaign preparation was when the election was officially called on May 13? Please indicate on a scale of 0–10 where 0 means 'no preparation' and 10 means 'all preparation' for your campaign was completed?'

We can see from the above table that Independent candidates made their decision to run much later than party candidates, on average over five months later. Indeed, as many as 22 percent of party candidates decided to run five years previously, at the last election in 1999 (in contrast to 13 percent of Independents); this may reflect an element of 'postmodernism', as permanent campaigns (those in a state of continuous preparation) are a feature of such a phase of electioneering (Denver and Hands 1992: 108). Policy Independents decided to run almost ten months in advance of the other two types of Independent candidates. This could be because the former are usually involved in campaigns to highlight particular issues outside of election periods; running as an official candidate is simply a natural progression of their political involvement.

The length of candidates' active campaigns and their levels of preparation when the election was called reveal similar patterns. Independents were active for two and a half months, over five weeks less than party candidates; they were also less prepared than party candidates when the Minister for the Environment and Local Government announced the date of the election. Independents' mean score (5.5) indicates that they crammed almost half of their preparations into the last month of the campaign. Given the narrow range of possible scores for the latter two preparation variables, there was not as much variation between the three categories of Independents; nevertheless, given the early decision of policy Independents to contest the election, it is not surprising that they undertook more preparation for their campaign than both community Independents and temperamental Independents.

The three measures of campaign preparations indicate a clear pattern: Independents were significantly less prepared than party candidates, a not altogether surprising finding. Parties tend to plan their election campaigns well in advance of polling day, whereas Independents usually do not have the resources to match this level of preparation.

(2) Campaign resources

Candidates' level of campaign activity is generally dependent on the resources available to them, and this section examines three key resources: a campaign team, a personal computer, and an electoral register.

(i) Campaign Team

A traditional premodern campaign resource is a team of workers to carry out various thankless tasks, ranging from the sealing of envelopes to knocking on doors. The perception here is that Independents are at a disadvantage because they do not have the resources of party volunteers to call on, instead relying solely upon their own personal contacts. However, as table 5.2 below shows, all categories of Independents were able to call on almost as many daily helpers as party candidates. The size of Independents' overall campaign team was significantly lower than party candidates (at a $p < .01$ level), but practically speaking it is not a huge difference.

Table 5.2 Volunteer workers

Group	Daily	Total
Party	5.8	30
Independents	5.4	23
– Policy Inds	5.3	25
– Comm Inds	5.1	22
– Temp Inds	6.0	22

Source: For daily team: Q6, candidate survey: 'What was the average number of volunteer workers you had on a typical campaign day?'

For total team: Q7, candidate survey: 'Approximately how many people in total would you say helped in your campaign?'

(ii) Personal Computers

One of the most important features of a modern electioneering campaign is a personal computer, which saves candidates enormous amounts of time and money (Denver and Hands 1997: 51). Prior to its emergence, candidates (or usually a team of volunteers) spent countless hours on menial manual tasks such as the compilation of canvassing lists (the equivalent of 'knocking-up' lists in the UK) and the writing out of electors' names and address for

correspondence purposes, which could take days on end. Computers can now do all this work effortlessly and much more quickly, allowing candidates to concentrate their resources on other areas of the campaign. In addition, leaflets, posters, and newsletters can now also all be produced relatively cheaply from the comfort of the candidate's home, thus helping to lessen the impact of the gulf in resources between Independents and party candidates. The communications revolution means that one individual can run a modern campaign on their own without the need for a backroom team; the widespread availability of the internet means that candidates need not even leave their own home to promote a campaign.

Table 5.3. Use of Computers (%)

Group	% Used computer expert	Computerised register	Monitor lists	Correspondence	Internet
Party	33	35	19	73	25
Independents	32	18	10	51	26
<i>T-statistic</i>	<i>0.23</i>	<i>4.026</i>	<i>2.65</i>	<i>4.953</i>	<i>-0.247</i>
<i>P-value</i>	<i>(0.821)</i>	<i>(0.000)</i>	<i>(0.008)</i>	<i>(0.000)</i>	<i>(0.813)</i>
– Policy Inds	36	17	17	54	24
– Comm Inds	26	10	2	52	30
– Temp Inds	31	29	9	48	22
<i>Chi-square</i>	<i>1.16</i>	<i>5.59</i>	<i>5.53</i>	<i>0.45</i>	<i>0.69</i>
<i>P-value</i>	<i>(0.558)</i>	<i>(0.061)</i>	<i>(0.063)</i>	<i>(0.799)</i>	<i>(0.709)</i>

Source: For computer expert: Q19, candidate survey: 'Did your campaign organisation have a designated computer specialist/expert?'

For register: Q19, candidate survey: 'Did you use a computerised electoral register?'

For lists: Q19, candidate survey: 'Did you use a computer to monitor voters canvassed and responses received?'

For correspondence: Q19, candidate survey: 'Did you use a computer for correspondence with voters, e.g. to print letters and address labels?'

For internet: Q19, candidate survey: 'Did you promote your campaign on the Internet?'

As table 5.3 indicates, Independents matched party candidates in terms of the use of a designated computer specialist, but then lagged behind their party counterparts when it came to actually using a computer, raising the question what they employed the expert for. A computerised electoral register,

which can be of great assistance when compiling canvassing lists and sending out election literature, can be purchased for a nominal fee, and yet only 18 percent of Independents used this resource, as against 35 percent of all party candidates. Fewer than 10 percent of Independents used a computer to draw up canvassing lists, as against twice as many party candidates, and only half of Independents used a computer for correspondence with voters, whereas 73 percent of party candidates did so. Independents' use of computers matched party candidates only when it came to promoting their campaign on the internet, with 26 percent of Independents doing so, as against an average of 25 percent of party candidates. Since computers are now an essential tool of a modern election campaign, Independents' under-use of this resource is an example of how they can struggle against the might of party machines, especially since they usually have to provide such resources from their own pocket.

(iii) Electoral Register

Any ambitious candidate needs to have an electoral register, which contains details of electors' names and addresses, to mount a successful campaign. Without it, they might canvass streets of unregistered voters, or be blissfully unaware that friends and neighbours who have promised to vote for them may be registered in a different electoral ward. Independents expecting to win a seat recognised this importance as 92 percent of them used an electoral register. Despite the high numbers professing to use an electoral register, just as with computers, it was an under-utilised resource by Independents, as only 13 percent used it to write personal letters (less than half the proportion of party candidates), and 48 percent used it to monitor canvassing (19 percent fewer than party candidates). In addition, 37 percent used the register to draw up a list of potential supporters amongst the electorate, but this was also significantly less than the 53 percent of party candidates who used the register for this task. There was not a great deal of variation amongst the Independent categories in the activities which the register was used for. One difference was that very few community Independents used it to write a personal letter, although more of

them did use the register to maintain records of their canvassing than either policy Independents or temperamental Independents.

Table 5.4. Use of Electoral Register (%)

Group	% Used register	Personal letter	Record of canvas	Estimate potential support
Party	86	29	67	53
Independents	76	13	48	37
<i>T-statistic</i>	<i>2.80</i>	<i>4.023</i>	<i>4.13</i>	<i>3.408</i>
<i>P-value</i>	<i>(0.005)</i>	<i>(0.0001)</i>	<i>(0.000)</i>	<i>(0.0007)</i>
– Policy Inds	72	18	45	39
– Comm Inds	76	7	57	38
– Temp Inds	78	14	40	35
<i>Chi-square</i>	<i>0.59</i>	<i>3.10</i>	<i>3.45</i>	<i>0.18</i>
<i>P-value</i>	<i>(0.744)</i>	<i>(0.213)</i>	<i>(0.178)</i>	<i>(0.912)</i>

Source: For register: Q20, candidate survey: ‘Did you use an electoral register in the organisation of your campaign?’

For letter: Q20a, candidate survey: ‘Did you use the electoral register to send (a) personal letter to voters?’

For canvas: Q20a, candidate survey: ‘Did you use the electoral register to maintain records of voters canvassed and responses received?’

For potential support: Q20a, candidate survey: ‘Did you use the electoral register to draw up (a) list of potential supporters amongst (the) electorate?’

(3) Campaign activities performed

Having examined the resources available to candidates, this section analyses the type of campaign activities carried out. Ever since $n+1$ candidates have contested n -seat constituencies, a variety of tactics have been employed to engineer a successful campaign. Achille Lauro, the shipping magnate and Monarchist Party mayor of Naples in the 1950s, used to distribute one shoe to voters on the eve of the election, and if he was elected, they would be rewarded with the essential other shoe (Gundle 1992: 194–5). While Independents cannot afford to distribute free footwear (besides the undoubted illegality of such a manoeuvre), there are other cheaper (and legal) tactics they can employ to maximise their vote.

(i) Type of Campaign Activities

To determine what their campaign did involve, candidates were asked to identify which of ten standard election activities they undertook (see table 5.5). These were: door-to-door canvassing, distributing election material on the streets, sending letters or postcards to voters, telephone canvassing, erecting posters, speaking on the radio, television appearances, press conferences, speaking at public meetings, and organising public rallies.

Door-to-door canvassing is by far the most popular election activity, carried out by over 95 percent of Independents and 99 percent of party candidates.⁹⁸ Its prominence is an example of the continued strength of premodern electioneering in Ireland, which according to one 2002 general election candidate persists because ‘where this is carried out effectively it is by far the best method of making direct contact with individual voters’ (Fleming et al. 2003: 60). ‘Poster-wars’ have been described as another feature of premodern campaigning (see Farrell 2004), and indeed a conspicuous feature of the Irish landscape during an election is the sheer volume of posters adorning every type of upright structure, be it telegraph pole, lamppost, or even tree. While 75 percent of Independents put up posters, this still lags significantly behind the 86 percent of party candidates engaging in this activity ($p < 0.01$). This difference may again reflect the gulf in resources, as on average a glossy standard-sized colour poster cost €6 in 2004, or it may be due to other factors. For example, one Independent refused to erect posters for environmental reasons, and also because he believed that posters only had a negative effect, as their oversaturation of the landscape often annoys the public.

While political and/or public meetings are no longer as popular as they were in the pre-television age, they can still often be an important medium for candidates to get their message across, and to show the public where their alignments lie on certain key issues. Any candidate worth his/her salt attends

⁹⁸ Canvassing can have two meanings, either to simply find out voters’ allegiances, or to persuade voters to support their candidacy (see Denver and Hands 1997: 117–119). However, when discussing their campaign activity, candidates often fail to specify which meaning they have in mind. To avoid confusion in the questionnaire, I did not define what I understood by canvassing, which means it is used here as an umbrella term that encompasses both meanings.

these meetings, since those present are usually regular voters, constituting a ready-made bundle of votes to a candidate who can champion their cause. Independents did not obviously share this belief in the importance of such meetings, since just 34 percent of them spoke at public meetings, in contrast to 43 percent of party candidates, a difference significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 5.5. Election activities undertaken (%)

Activity	Party	All Inds	Policy Inds	Comm Inds	Temp Inds
Door-to-door canvassing	99	96	100	93	93
Distributing leaflets	55	48	52	45	49
Sent letters	23	42	24	18	28
Telephone canvassing	22	13	15	16	7
Erected posters	86	75	81	63	79
Spoke on radio	66	52	57	48	49
Television appearance	7	6	7	11	0
Press conference	7	7	6	9	2
Spoke at public meeting	43	34	37	30	33
Organised public rally	10	8	9	11	5

Source: Q14, candidate survey: 'What types of election activities did you undertake to promote your campaign?'

Two activities which can cost considerable amounts of money, and therefore may be out of the reach of many Independents, were telephone canvassing and sending personal letters or postcards to voters. Only 13 percent canvassed by telephone, compared to 22 percent of party candidates ($p < .05$), both relatively low figures in contrast to its run-of-the-mill presence in the United States. Nearly twice as many party candidates (42 percent) as Independents (23 percent) sent correspondence ($p < .00001$), which may reflect the (illegal) custom of the former using prepaid Oireachtas envelopes obtained from party colleagues in their constituency, a perk which Independents could not avail of.

The extensive coverage of local elections by local radio stations renders it a vitally important resource to candidates. Since the national media are usually just focussed on the national trends and issues, local candidates tend to

clamour for exposure of their campaign and issues. Independents' campaign efforts were again lacking in this arena, as only 52 percent of them spoke on radio during the campaign, in contrast to 66 percent of party candidates ($p < 0.01$). However, it is not the case that all Independents had access to the airwaves if they wanted it; it is safe to presume that all would have gone on if they had the chance, but obviously the radio stations deemed that some of them were not worthy of coverage.

In the other four activities, Independents equalled the efforts of their party counterparts. 50 percent of them walked the streets distributing election literature, matching the party candidates probably because this activity didn't cost anything, apart from a decent pair of walking shoes. Just 6 percent of Independents made television appearances, 7 percent gave press conferences, and 8 percent organised public rallies, proportions which were all approximately the equal of party candidates. These low figures are not surprising, since national television is rarely interested in the local contests (what is surprising is that as many as 6 percent of Independent candidates got to make an appearance on television at all, especially since there are no regional television stations in Ireland, and only four national channels), press conferences are more a feature of national campaigns for general elections, and public rallies are no longer an important element of modern campaigns. Again, there was not a great deal of variation in the range of activities carried out by the three sub-categories of Independents.

(ii) Election Literature: Posters and Leaflets

Perhaps the most obvious sign of electioneering is the posters candidates erect, and the leaflets they distribute, throughout their constituency. Leaflet is a somewhat vague term, as it includes a wide array of election literature, ranging from constituency newspapers to flyers to glossy pamphlets detailing information about the candidate. With the widespread use and availability of personal computers, it is now relatively easy to produce a high quality and professional leaflet, without having to expend large sums on a professional designer and printer. The most time-consuming task involves distributing them,

and candidates rely on a team of volunteers to drop these in letterboxes and hand them out at large gatherings of people. As with any campaign activity that costs money, Independents trailed behind party candidates, distributing on average 7,690 leaflets, 37 percent fewer than the 12,194 handed out by the latter ($p < .000$). Not surprisingly, there was a huge difference in the numbers distributed in urban and rural areas; the former are a considerably smaller geographical size, making it far easier for candidates to cover. Independents handed out 15,434 in the constituencies covered by the eight city councils, almost three times as many as the 5,461 they distributed across the county council boroughs. Despite the discrepancies in the volume of literature distributed, approximately 70 percent of the electorate received leaflets from Independents (based on evidence supplied from the candidate survey), close to the equivalent figure for party candidates (see table 5.6 below).

Posters are a much more costly item of expenditure than leaflets, which the availability of a personal computer cannot help to lower, since a professional printer is usually required to produce them. Some Independents get round this expense by retaining their posters from previous elections. While some may question their value, posters often provide an invaluable perception of a competitive presence in a local area, even if the evidence is to the contrary. Demonstrating their disadvantage in terms of financial resources, Independents erected on average 157 posters each, considerably fewer than the 197 party candidates put up, a difference significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 5.6. Posters and Leaflets distributed by candidates

Group	Posters	Leaflets	% Electorate covered
			by leaflets
Party	197	12,194	75
Independents	157	7,690	70
– Policy Inds	180	7,130	72
– Comm Inds	129	6,287	64
– Temp Inds	154	9,782	71

Posters: Party and Independents: T-statistic=2.40 (p=0.02); Independent categories: Pearson's chi-square=15.17 (p=0.367).

Leaflets: Party and Independents: T-statistic=3.54 (p=0.0004); Independent categories: Pearson's chi-square=17.73 (p=0.605).

Source: For posters: Q16, candidate survey: 'How many election posters did you put up during your campaign?'

For leaflets: Q15, candidate survey: 'How many election leaflets did you distribute during your campaign?'

For electorate covered by leaflet: Q17, candidate survey: 'Approximately what percentage of the local electorate did you distribute leaflets to?'

(iii) Polling Day

Candidates continue their campaign right up to polling day, and their activities on the day of the election can be important in swinging a few extra votes in their direction. It is the culmination of candidates' campaigns, and if they cannot get their supporters out to vote, the weeks and months spent canvassing would have been a waste of time. Driving voters, especially elderly people, to the polling station is still an important task, as is monitoring the turnout of potential supporters identified in the previous weeks' canvassing, especially if they are noticeable by their absence. Table 5.7 shows that when multiple resources were required, Independents were at a disadvantage compared to party candidates. Considerably fewer of them drove voters to the polling station (two-thirds the proportion of party candidates), canvassed by telephone (one-quarter the proportion of party candidates), or monitored turnout (two-thirds the proportion of party candidates). Independents could not call on a political party headquarters to supply manpower on election day, instead relying upon friends or volunteers. It was only with activities that they could perform themselves, such as last-minute leafleting and driving a loudspeaker van around the constituency, that they did not deviate from the comparative party figures.

There was not very much variation between the three types of Independents in the terms of the proportions carrying out these activities.

Table 5.7. Polling Day activities

Group	Drive voters to polling station	Last- minute leafleting	Door-to-door canvassing	Telephone canvassing	Driving loudspeaker van	Monitoring turnout
Party	62	30	20	21	23	48
Independents	42	23	15	7	24	35
<i>T-statistic</i>	<i>4.29</i>	<i>1.67</i>	<i>1.38</i>	<i>4.06</i>	<i>-0.25</i>	<i>2.80</i>
<i>P-value</i>	<i>(0.000)</i>	<i>(0.09)</i>	<i>(0.167)</i>	<i>(0.000)</i>	<i>(0.801)</i>	<i>(0.005)</i>
– Policy Inds	40	22	16	10	22	40
– Comm Inds	41	23	16	4	27	25
– Temp Inds	44	25	14	5	19	33
<i>Chi-square</i>	<i>0.17</i>	<i>0.08</i>	<i>0.15</i>	<i>2.58</i>	<i>0.91</i>	<i>3.21</i>
<i>P-value</i>	<i>(0.917)</i>	<i>(0.960)</i>	<i>(0.928)</i>	<i>(0.275)</i>	<i>(0.635)</i>	<i>(0.201)</i>

Source: Q21, candidate survey: ‘Thinking back to polling day, did you or your campaign team perform any of the following activities?’

(4) Campaign expenditure

One final measure of campaign activity is what candidates spend in their fight for a seat. In the absence of accurate details on the intensity and nature of campaigns, candidates’ expenditure returns have often been used as a surrogate measure of campaigning. This study does not do so for two reasons. First, we have a direct measure of campaign activities obtained from survey data, and second, while expenditure is a good measure of campaign intensity, as referred to at the beginning of this chapter, it does not always tell the whole story. For example, Denver and Hands found that election expenditure in Britain explained only half of the variation in their index of campaigning (Denver and Hands 1997: 255). Just because a study of the previous local elections showed that money matters (Benoit and Marsh 2003a, 2003b), this does not mean that pouring funds into a campaign guarantees success. Expenditure matters simply because campaigning matters, and the latter usually costs money. Where candidates invest enough in the important campaign activities, *ceteris paribus*, this will lead to a greater vote return.

Because spending is not a direct measure of campaign intensity, it is therefore included as an additional independent variable, rather than being a dependent variable in its own right. Table 5.8 below shows that the average amount spent by an Independent was just under €3,000, €600 less than the equivalent figure for party candidates. While this difference is not a huge amount, it needs to be taken into account that both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael ran an average number of three candidates per constituency. Looking at these two parties then, the former spent approximately €13,000 in each constituency and the latter almost €9,000. While these are the more accurate figures to use when assessing the differences in campaign expenditure by Independents and parties alike, it is also valid to analyse the candidates separately; this is because the decentralised and candidate-centred nature of local elections means that party candidates run their campaigns largely independent of party headquarters.

Independents may have spent almost as much as party candidates, because spending matters more for Independents (something that Benoit and Marsh found (2003b: 14)). This is not a surprising result, since the lack of a party label (or in marketing terms a ‘brand’) results in an absence of information about the Independent candidates, which means that money spent on publicising their candidacy has a greater impact and increases the public awareness of their candidacy, given the low profile from which an Independent’s campaign starts out. Johnston also found this hypothesis verified in Britain (1987: 151), as did Welch in US primaries, where party label is irrelevant (Welch 1976).

Table 5.8. Campaign Expenditure

Group	Absolute amount (euros)	Proportion of total expenditure in constituency (%)
Party	3,622	9.8
Independents	2,950	7.9
– Policy Inds	2,618	6.7
– Comm Inds	3,283	7.0
– Temp Inds	2,709	9.0

Source: Candidate expenditure returns supplied to author by individual county councils.

5.6 What makes a strong campaign?

It was stated previously that there are three major elements to a campaign: planning, the level of resources available, and campaign activities undertaken. Following Denver and Hands' methodology (1997: 248–9), these can be subdivided into seven main components: the level of preparation, canvassing, campaign team, literature, resources, polling day activities, and political experience of campaigns.⁹⁹ All but the last of these variables have already been described in this chapter. Some of these variables were summated scales of answers from the candidate survey, and they are detailed below:

Preparation: The three questions detailed in table 5.1 above measured candidates' level of preparation – when they first decided to run for election (in weeks prior to polling day); the length of their active campaign (on a scale of 1 to 8); and how far advanced their campaign preparation was when the election was called (on a scale of 0 to 10). These were combined into a summative scale, which was the mean score of the three variables. To test the reliability of this scale, the reliability coefficient, or Cronbach's alpha, is calculated. This statistic takes values between 0 and 1; with the closer alpha is to 1 the more reliable the scale. In this case, the alpha coefficient was a very low value of 0.04, which points to the inadequacy of combining these three measures. However, because the mean score for when they first decided to run was eighty-three, this meant it had a dominant influence on the summative scale. This variable may also not be a very accurate measure, since some candidates, especially incumbents, may have made a decision to run a long time before they actually started their campaign, whereas other candidates deciding to run closer to election day, may actually have had longer active campaigns. The weakness of this variable is confirmed when, on its exclusion, the Cronbach's

⁹⁹ One of Denver and Hands' variables, 'organisation', assessed how far in advance an election agent was appointed, and whether there were any other campaign officers. This variable has not been included in my analysis, since a lot of Independents did not have campaign officers, and some appointed themselves as election agents. In addition, a new variable, political experience, is included.

alpha rises to a respectable 0.65. The adjusted preparation scale therefore consists of just the original latter two variables, and ranges from 1 to 18.

Literature: Because the amount of literature used during a campaign varies in accordance with the size of the local electorate, the index used is the number of leaflets distributed as a proportion of the electorate. However, because some candidates may have delivered more than one leaflet to voters around their home base, and none to voters further away, this measure may not capture the overall spread of their distribution. To account for this strong possibility, this measure is then averaged with the proportion of the electorate that candidates said they delivered leaflets to.¹⁰⁰

Campaign resources: this assessed candidates' use of a computer and electoral register on nine grounds, namely, whether they had a designated computer expert; whether they used a computerised electoral register; whether they used a computer for canvassing lists, or for correspondence with voters; and whether they promoted their campaign on the internet. Candidates were also asked whether they used an electoral register; whether they used an electoral register to send letters to voters, to keep canvass returns, and to draw up lists of potential support amongst the electorate. For each activity performed, candidates got one point, with the maximum score therefore nine. An additive scale was used because it refers the number of uses (for the campaign) a candidate from these two key resources (a computer and an electoral register). When constructing an additive scale it is important that each of the component variables are of equivalent importance, and that the significance of one or more variables is not undermined by their inclusion in an additive scale that affords other less important variables equal significance. This problem does not arise when measuring resources as all the components are all of relatively equal significance. Additive scales were also used by Denver and Hands for the construction of their resources scale (1997: 249–250), so replicating their methods facilitates comparison between their study and this one, as well as

¹⁰⁰ Q17, candidate survey: 'Approximately what proportion of the local electorate did you distribute leaflets to?'

ensuring that a reliable method is applied. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the nine measures was 0.65.

Campaign team: the mean of the average number of campaign workers on a typical campaign day and in total during the campaign. There was no fixed upper limit, and the Cronbach's alpha for the two measures combined was 0.61.

Canvassing: two measures were merged into one variable: the proportion of households in the constituency with which the candidate made face-to-face contact; the proportion of households the candidate's campaign team made face-to-face contact with. The maximum score was 100. The alpha coefficient for this scale was 0.69.

Polling day: candidates got one point for every one of six possible polling day activities performed. These were: whether voters were brought to the polling station; whether last-minute leaflets were distributed; whether there was door-to-door or telephone canvassing; whether they drove around the constituency in a loudspeaker van; and whether the turnout of potential supporters at polling stations was monitored. The maximum score was six and the Cronbach's alpha was 0.58.

Political experience: This was a summative scale of a number of variables that measured candidates' prior experience of political activity, including: whether candidates were involved in other political campaigns;¹⁰¹ whether they ever sought a nomination, stood for office, or held a post within a local council, the Dáil, or a post within a political party;¹⁰² whether they had ever been a member of a local residents' association, the Irish Farmers' Association, the Gaelic Athletic Association, a trade union, or a professional organisation.¹⁰³ With each candidate receiving one point for each of these fifteen activities, the scale ranged from 0 to 15. Despite the large number of measures within this variable, the Cronbach's alpha was 0.68.

¹⁰¹ Q25, candidate survey: 'Aside from your 2004 local election campaign, have you ever been involved in any other political campaign(s)? Please refer to both election and issue campaign(s).'

¹⁰² Q30a, candidate survey: 'Have you ever sought a nomination to contest elections to positions in any of the following bodies?'; Q30b: 'Have you ever stood for office in any of the following bodies?'; Q30c: 'Have you ever held a post in any of the following bodies?'

¹⁰³ Q31, candidate survey: 'At the time of the 2004 local election were you a member of any of the following groups?'

The scores for each category of candidate according to these scales are presented in table 5.9 below. The results confirm what was already established in previous sections: Independents campaign considerably less than party candidates. This pattern is repeated for each composite variable, as the intensity of campaigning by party candidates was approximately 25 percent greater than the level conducted by Independents. For example, the former used either the electoral register or a computer for one more activity than Independents; party candidates had three more campaign volunteers, and they carried out two main activities on polling day, compared to just an average of 1.4 by Independents. Looking at the different categories of Independents, the main divergence appears to be between temperamental Independents and policy Independents, the former of whom campaigned significantly more than the latter. One can only speculate why this is the case, but it may be a function of temperamental Independents' previous life in a party that could afford them greater access to resources, or it may reflect their greater levels of experience that provide them with more knowledge of how to run a campaign.

Table 5.9. Campaign Activism

Group	Prepa- ration	Campaign Leaflets	Campaign Resources	Campaign Team	Canvas- sing	Polling Day	Political Experience
Party	11.8	68.6	3.8	17.7	56.8	2.0	3.9
Independents	8.8	55.6	2.8	14.2	52.4	1.4	2.6
<i>T-statistic</i>	<i>7.90</i>	<i>3.54</i>	<i>4.79</i>	<i>2.72</i>	<i>3.34</i>	<i>4.15</i>	<i>5.78</i>
<i>P-value</i>	<i>0.000</i>	<i>0.000</i>	<i>0.000</i>	<i>0.007</i>	<i>0.001</i>	<i>0.000</i>	<i>0.000</i>
– Policy Inds	7.8	50.1	2.6	13.5	50.3	1.4	2.0
– Comm Inds	9.1	61.0	2.8	13.9	50.6	1.4	2.4
– Temp Inds	9.6	55.3	2.9	14.9	54.9	1.5	3.3

Source: 2004 candidate survey.

Note: For the last three rows, figures succeeded by an asterisk(s) are where the proportion with a characteristic has a voting preference significantly different from that of those without that characteristic, using three levels of significances.

5.7 What determines campaign strength?

At this stage, it has been shown that Independents campaign significantly less than party candidates. This finding was hardly any surprise, and while it has been speculated that this is due to a greater stock of resources available to party candidates, this hypothesis has not been verified. It is important to find out why this variation occurs, as this will provide an insight into what determines the level of campaigning carried out by candidates, and also what factors affect campaigning as an activity. For example, it may be the case that active levels of campaigning are a product of age, or perhaps ideological enthusiasm stemming from membership of an interest group or association.

The difficulty in undertaking such a task is that there is no clear single measure of campaigning. A variety of proxies could be used, such as the amount spent on the campaign, the number of election leaflets distributed, or the number of households canvassed. To do so would involve omitting most of the various elements that go into a campaign as described in the previous section; to overcome this problem, we need to devise an index that incorporates all the various campaign activities into a single dependent variable. Such a method is only valid if there is a common structure underlying the various campaign variables. To do this, Denver and Hands' method is replicated, where they used a principal components analysis to determine whether there is an applicable single dimension to campaigning (see Denver and Hands 1997: 250–252).

The aim of principal components analysis is to establish whether there is an underlying structure that accounts for variation amongst a group of variables. For example, using this method on the aforementioned seven measures of campaigning, it appears that there is not a common dimension, which is indicated by the weak correlations of the separate indices with the principal component. However, the reason for this appears to be the weakness of the political experience variable as a valid measure of campaigning, hardly a surprise since it does not directly measure campaign activity. When political experience is excluded from the analysis, a single component solution is

produced with which all six variables are significantly correlated, and which explains 37 percent of the variance in the data (see table 5.10). A general rule of thumb for factor analysis is that the factor loadings should be at least +0.35 (Pennings et al 2006: 77). Another rule of thumb that loadings should be .7 or more is quite a high hurdle, which can often be difficult to attain with data acquired from real-life events. Consequently, lower levels of between 0.25 and 0.40 are acceptable for exploratory analysis (Garson 2008). The factor loadings reported in table 5.10 meet these requirements, with a range of between 0.36 and 0.44. Although the loadings are not very strong, they are moderately so, and the key is that theory guides the formulation of a campaign index, not arbitrary cut-off points. The loadings, although not as high as those attained by Denver and Hands (1997: 251), indicate that the various measures of campaign intensity do have an underlying common structure, which with the aid of principal components analysis, can be used to devise an overarching measure of campaigning.

Table 5.10. Indices of campaigning: Principal components analysis

Campaign indices	Factor score coefficients
Preparation	0.44
Literature	0.36
Campaign Resources	0.44
Campaign Team	0.40
Canvassing	0.39
Polling Day	0.44
Eigenvalue	2.19
Proportion variance	0.37
N	502

Source: 2004 candidate survey.

Using principal components analysis, an index of factor scores is formed that is a measure of the campaign strength for each candidate. These scores are normalised around a mean of zero, which means that they are all relative to each other. For example, as table 5.11 below indicates, Independents' average score was -0.62, which means they campaigned less than the average candidate, whereas party candidates had a positive score of

+0.35, indicating their campaigns were stronger than average, which confirm findings already established. The campaign scores also reveal that temperamental Independents campaigned more intensely than policy Independents, confirming the finding from table 5.10.

Table 5.11. Campaign scores from factor analysis

Group	Index
Party candidates	+0.35
Independents	-0.62
– Policy Inds	-0.92
– Comm Inds	-0.57
– Temp Inds	-0.46

Source: 2004 candidate survey.

To determine what does influence the level of campaigning, table 5.12 below presents the results of a multivariate regression analysis of the campaign index on a number of variables, which are: confidence of victory,¹⁰⁴ incumbency status, political experience, age, the importance of a request from a group or organisation in candidates' decision to run, and membership of a local residents' association. Other independent variables tested in provisional models included whether councils were city or county (as an approximate measure of the urban-rural divide), whether candidates live in large towns/cities or the countryside, the size of the electorate, and candidates' vote at the previous local elections of 1999. However, all of these were found to have non-significant influences on campaign intensity when included in the multivariate analysis, and hence were excluded from the final model. It is perhaps surprising that size of the electorate was non-significant, as one would imagine the more electors, the more campaigning candidates have to undertake. However, because of the small geographical size of local election constituencies, candidates are generally expected to canvass most, if not all, of the LEA, regardless of their population densities, which may explain the variable's non-significance.

¹⁰⁴ Q26, candidate survey: 'Which one of the following statements most accurately reflected your confidence in winning a seat at the local elections?' The five responses were: 'I felt fairly certain of winning; I thought I could win, but I felt the election would be close; I thought the election could go either way; I expected to lose but thought if I worked, I could make it a close race; I felt fairly certain of losing.'

Table 5.12 OLS Regression of Campaigning on various factors

Campaign variables	Party candidates	Indepen- dents	Policy Inds	Comm Inds	Temp Inds
Confidence of victory	0.30***	0.53***	0.71***	0.44***	0.46***
Political Experience	0.05	0.13**	0.18	0.08	0.12
Incumbent	0.01	-0.05	-0.47	0.05	0.09
Asked to run by group/organisation	0.04	0.08**	0.02	0.15***	0.13**
Age	-0.02***	-0.03***	-0.03*	-0.03*	-0.03*
Member of local community assoc.	0.35**	0.52**	0.35	0.21	0.57
Constant	-0.16	-1.81***	-2.58**	-1.14*	-1.80*
R ²	0.15	0.35	0.42	0.44	0.37
N	279	157	49	50	58

* Indicates significance at 0.05 level; ** Indicates significance at 0.01 level; *** Indicates significance at 0.001 level.

Confidence of victory held its significance across all categories, indicating the more certain a candidate was of winning a seat, the harder they campaigned. However, this is a qualified result, because of the post-election nature of the questionnaire. Those who campaigned more intensely may have felt more confident of winning as a result, rather than this confidence affecting their level of campaigning. Political experience was significant for Independents, meaning that the wider the range of political activities conducted by candidates in their lifetime, the harder they campaigned. This could also be because the more experience accrued, the greater the level of access to resources, and hence the greater the capacity to campaign harder. While Independent challengers did campaign harder than incumbent councillors, this was not a significant effect.

Since a higher proportion of Independents than party candidates were asked to run by a group or organisation (35 percent of Independents said this was very important in their decision to run, as against 19 percent of party candidates), it was worth testing the influence of this variable on campaign intensity. The hypothesis is simply that if candidates were asked to run by an organisation, they are likely to campaign harder because they will have access to more resources (from the respective organisation); in addition, organisations may also approach candidates with better electoral prospects in the first place.

This hypothesis was confirmed for Independents and rejected for party candidates, as indicated by the significance (or lack of) of the respective coefficients. Finally, the negative direction of the age variable indicates that the younger Independents were, the more likely they were to campaign more intensely. This is hardly a surprising discovery and is probably related to higher levels of fitness and mobility possessed by younger candidates. It could also be because younger candidates have less of a foothold in the constituency, and therefore need to campaign harder than older, more experienced, candidates to establish name recognition.

When looking at the breakdown of results for the separate categories of Independents, most of the variables held their significance, with the exception of the political experience variable, and surprisingly 'being asked to run by a group' for policy Independents (surprising because they might have been expected to be promoted by issue-based groups). These results indicate that the respective variables had a pretty similar effect on all the various categories of Independents, also indicated by the different r-squared values hovering around the 0.40 mark. It is worth noting that this is over twice the influence these variables have in predicting the level of campaigning conducted by party candidates, which had an r-square of 0.15, indicating that this model provides a greater prediction of what determines Independents' level of campaign intensity vis-à-vis party candidates. It is probably easier to predict Independents' activity because it occurs from their own impetus, in contrast to party candidates whose level of campaigning may be dependent on an unpredictable external influence, namely, directions from their party. These results are not necessarily implying that some candidates do not campaign harder because they choose not to. Rather, the intensity of their campaigning depends on a number of resources, such as age and political experience, which are beyond the control of the candidate. However, what can be predicted is that if there are a greater number of candidates in possession of these attributes, they could be expected to campaign harder. If campaigning itself is then shown to have a positive effect on the vote candidates accrue, the results from table

5.12 could have important meaning for an interest group looking to nominate an Independent to run for election.

5.8 Does campaigning matter?

The previous sections showed two clear trends in relation to the campaign activities of Independents: although their level of campaigning is far less intense than party candidates, it is much easier to predict and is dependent on a few important variables. While the differences in the intensity of campaigning carried out by the sub-categories of Independents were also highlighted, some may validly question the necessity of this information, bar the provision of such descriptive data that was heretofore not available. Nevertheless, the information becomes relevant when it is used in a multivariate model to assess the determinants of the vote for the different Independent categories. Since the central research question of concern here is to account for the support Independents attract, the crucial aspect of campaigning is whether it makes a difference to their electoral performance, that is, is the main reason why some Independents receive far more votes than others simply because they campaigned more intensely?

The review of the literature in chapter 2 showed that there is a new wave of academic research indicating the importance of campaigns in affecting the electoral performance of political parties and candidates. Apart from Benoit and Marsh's analysis of expenditure returns, to date there has been no known study of the impact of actual campaign activities upon candidates' electoral performance in Ireland, a lacuna which this section aims to address. With the percentage of candidates' first preference votes as the dependent variable¹⁰⁵ the influence of the seven main components of campaigning is assessed by including them as independent variables in an ordinary least squares multiple regression analysis. In addition to these variables, several other important aspects of a candidate's campaign are included, notably their status as an

¹⁰⁵ While Denver and Hands argued that change in vote share is a more appropriate variable (Denver and Hands 1997: 277), this is not really sufficient for Independents, as it would not be a valid method to look at the difference between the vote one Independent received at a preceding election and the vote another got in the same constituency five years later.

incumbent or challenger, and the size of the electorate in the constituency. The latter needs to be controlled for because one of the most important factors determining how many votes candidates win is the number of available voters. Expenditure is also included in the analysis to assess its merits as a proxy for campaigning. The results of this regression are presented in table 5.13 below.

Only one direct campaign activity had a significant effect on Independents' vote: the number of leaflets distributed. Political experience and incumbency also had a significant positive effect on Independents' vote, with incumbent councillors winning more than 4 percent of the vote than Independent challengers. Two campaign variables had negative coefficients: resources and polling day activities, which implies that the more uses extracted from a computer and the electoral register, and the more campaigning conducted on the day of the election, the fewer votes won by Independents. The size of the electorate also had a negative effect, which implies that the more voters in a constituency, the lower percentage of the total vote won by Independents. Because this effect also held for party candidates, this might suggest that it is difficult to retain a certain quota of the vote as the population increases, resulting in a greater fragmentation of the vote amongst more candidates.

Looking at the campaign effects for the different types of Independents, campaign variables only have a significant effect for temperamental Independents. The sole variables with coefficients that reached a desired level of significance for policy and community Independents was incumbency. These results are not surprising given the low numbers involved in the samples. The model's predictive value was greatest for policy Independents, which had an r-squared value of 0.45, above the Independent average of 0.31, while it performed poorly for community Independents with an r-squared value of 0.15.

Table 5.13. OLS Regression of Vote on Campaign variables

Campaign variables	Party		Temp		Comm
	candidates	Independents	Inds	Policy Inds	
Leaflets	0.00001	0.0001*	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001
Posters	0.005	0.004	0.005	0.003	0.006
Preparation	0.19*	0.15	0.20	0.10	0.12
Resources	0.17	-0.05	0.22	0.07	-0.42
Canvassing	-0.01	0.01	0.0004	0.01	0.002
Campaign team	0.05*	0.03	0.08*	0.005	-0.06
Polling Day	-0.02	-0.17	-0.80	0.25	0.76
Political Experience	0.02	0.32*	0.64*	-0.26	0.52
Incumbent	4.82***	4.21***	0.87	6.20***	5.84**
Electorate	-0.0002***	-0.0002***	-0.0003**	-0.0001	-0.0002
Expenditure	0.0001	0.0002	0.0004*	0.0001	0.0003
Constant	7.40***	4.31***	5.51*	3.39*	6.59
Adj. R ²	0.31	0.31	0.38	0.45	0.15
N	290	170	65	56	56

* Indicates significance at 0.05 level; ** Indicates significance at 0.01 level; *** Indicates significance at 0.001 level.

Note: the dependent variable is percent of first preference votes.

One important finding from the regression analysis is the poor performance of expenditure as a predictor of candidates' vote. With the exception of temperamental Independents, the regression coefficients for this variable did not reached a suitable level of significance for any category of candidate. This poses a number of important questions concerning the relevance of expenditure as a proxy for campaigning. It may not be as wholly reliable a measure of campaign activity as imagined, something which one of the few other studies of local electioneering also found (see Denver and Hands 1997: 255). This premise is also backed up by the weak correlations between the expenditure on posters and the numbers of posters erected (+0.24), and the expenditure on election material and the number of leaflets distributed (+0.25). This is a significant finding and is something that could be explored in future studies of campaigning.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has produced three main findings:

- (1) Independents have fewer resources than party candidates, with the result that they campaign at a lower intensity. Despite the heterogeneity within the Independent category, there is not a great deal of disparity in the level of campaigning conducted by the three different types of Independents; this indicates that Independents' nature or ideological background does not affect the intensity of their campaigning – both community Independents and policy Independents campaign just as hard as temperamental Independents.
- (2) Independents' level of campaigning has a significant positive effect on the votes they receive, and therefore if they want to win more votes, they need to campaign more intensely. Independent candidates need to focus in particular on gaining political experience before they enter the race, and distributing as many leaflets as they can.
- (3) The reason why Independents do not campaign harder is due to a number of factors, including their confidence of winning a seat, their age, their political experience, and their access to resources from an external organisation, be it due to membership or sponsorship. Most of these factors are beyond Independents' direct control, but the latter three suggest that a record of involvement in political campaigns can have a positive affect on the level of campaigning undertaken, and consequently, the extent of the candidates' electoral success. Of course, this is not to suggest that Independents are not campaigning to their maximum capability, but rather the extent of their capabilities would be increased if they had access to more of these resources.

To answer the main question posed in this dissertation, this chapter has indicated that Independents achieve electoral success because they campaign at a significant level of intensity, which more importantly, has a strong influence on the vote they attract. While this is the answer usually given by Independent TDs in any case to explain their success, to date it was difficult to determine the validity of these claims, especially in comparison to the efforts of party candidates. While Independents do not manage to maintain a level of intensity

achieved by their party counterparts, this is not unexpected given the level of resources available to the latter. The important finding is therefore not that Independents campaign less than parties, but that they manage to campaign to the extent that they do. In the absence of comparative data concerning the campaign activities of Independents in other political systems, it is difficult to tell if this explains why there are more Independents in the Dáil than in other west European parliaments. Nevertheless, within the Irish political system, campaigning does yield a return of votes, and the intense levels of activity conducted by some Independents relative to the party candidates explains their level of electoral success. The importance of campaigning means that to win votes at an election, it is not enough either to have money or a nomination from a major party; candidates need to be ‘well-soled’, and in the words of Chubb, one does not have to be a party man to achieve this (1957: 132). It may be the case that in the absence of conducive institutional factors (such as the presence of multi-member constituencies – a theme explored in chapter 7) high-profile campaigns by non-party actors in other systems do not reap electoral rewards. Again though, in the absence of comparative data, this premise can only be speculated on.

This chapter has also highlighted a number of findings that are of interest beyond the Irish political scene. First, expenditure may not be as reliable a measure of campaign intensity as claimed, as many of the items on which money is spent appear to be administrative costs, rather than direct campaign activities. Second, this has the consequence that the influence of expenditure on candidates’ vote may also not be as great as once imagined. While previous studies found expenditure to be significant in analyses that excluded direct measures of campaign activity, when the latter are included, campaign spending lessens in significance, especially for Independents. Despite the onset of postmodern electioneering with expensive activities such as focus group research and niche marketing, it appears that the basic premodern form of a team of volunteers going through such rituals such as door-to-door campaigning is still very much an important element of Irish elections.

Despite the intense levels of campaigning carried out by Independent candidates, it is rewarding only because the electorate are willing to vote for them. A strong supply of Independents would not yield any electoral success if there was not a ready demand expressed through votes in the first place. The next chapter examines what exactly explains this demand for Independent candidates.

Chapter 6: The bases of support for Independents

6.1 Introduction

Despite the increasing presence across the world of, and support for, minor candidates, of which Independents are a type, relatively little is known about what motivates voters to express a preference for these candidates. Analysing why voters support Independents is of crucial importance to understanding the latter's significant presence in Irish politics. Without the backing of the electorate, their candidacies would be seen as meaningless and inconsequential. For example, at the US presidential elections, a large number of minor party and Independent candidates frequently run. However, because the vote they receive is so small, the media tend to ignore them and not detail either their candidacy or vote; consequently, to the average observer it would appear as if there are only two or three candidates in a typical presidential contest. In contrast, at the 2002 general election in Ireland, Independent candidates received almost 200,000 first preferences, which was approximately half the number of votes received by the main opposition party, Fine Gael. With 13 of these candidates ultimately elected (more seats than the combined total of the Green Party, Sinn Féin, and the Socialist Party), an Independent is evidently an important political actor, and yet little is known about why such a large number of people choose to vote for such candidates.

The aim of this chapter is to shed some light on this area by examining the factors that explain voting for Independents. Initially, the socio-economic background of these candidates' support bases is looked at, before focusing on a number of testable theories. This is very much an inductive process, as the theories are developed from both a review of the literature and empirical observation of the Irish political scene.

The various incentives that motivate voting behaviour are grouped into two categories: instrumental and expressive. Adopting the same dichotomy as that applied to candidates in chapter 4, this chapter has the aim of determining whether a vote for an Independent is an instrumental or expressive act, or perhaps a combination of the two. The instrumental factors looked at are

personalism and localism, while the expressive factors considered are party detachment, anti-party sentiment, and a protest vote. The final section groups all these factors into a multivariate model to determine their collective influence.

6.2 Categories of analysis

One problem in analysing Independents as a unitary category is their heterogeneity. As stated in chapter 3, Independents are not a homogeneous collection of candidates, but are rather a residual grouping, namely all those falling outside of the party system. As a result, there may not be any general reasons that explain why some voters support Independents, because the latter are not a single organisation as a party is. For example, concerning the 95 Independent candidates who contested the 2002 general election, there may have been different factors explaining their vote that were unique to each candidate. If this is found to be the case, it raises serious questions concerning the merits of treating Independents as a unitary category. In addition, because Independents cannot offer a manifesto that deals with a wide range of policies, the nature of the vote individual Independent candidates attract depends on the nature of the platform that they are mobilised on. For instance, some Independents cater for distinct social or group interests (Chubb 1982: 101), which was a frequent motivation in running for office up to the 1960s. Examples of this phenomenon included Independent Unionists to represent the Protestant community, and Independent Farmers to cater for agricultural interests.¹⁰⁶ For such Independents, the source of their support may well be specific and contextual to each of their candidacies, and an extensive survey in each constituency would be required to determine the nature of their support. While such a project is wholly unrealistic in terms of finances, it is also not very desirable because it would not contribute that much in academic terms; all it would reveal is why individuals in a particular Irish electoral constituency voted for a particular candidate. What can be done, however, which is more beneficial and less of a burden on resources, is to group such Independents into

¹⁰⁶ Further details of such Independents are provided in chapter 3.

several sub-categories that reflect the nature of their candidacies. The three categories chosen for analysis are, for reasons of continuity, those used in the previous chapters, namely temperamental Independents, community Independents, and policy Independents. Throughout most of the following sections, patterns of voting behaviour for each of these types of Independents is examined, in addition to the overall broad category of all Independent candidates. The data used in this chapter come from the 2002 Irish National Election Study. Independents were grouped into the three aforementioned categories following a qualitative analysis of their respective candidacies; the same method of categorisation used in the previous chapters was adopted. The first area that is examined is to determine the social bases of support for Independents – who exactly votes for them, and can we predict an archetypal Independent voter based on their socio-economic background?

6.3 Social bases of Independent support

Although originally classified by Whyte as ‘politics without social bases’ (1974), it has since been shown that there is some element of social structuring to voting behaviour in Ireland (Sinnott 1995: 168–199; Laver 2005; Marsh et al. 2008: chps. 2–3). While some of the findings regarding the background of Independent voters were detailed in chapter 2, these were quite limited in their analysis as the respective authors did not have access to a full-scale election study. Using the INES from 2002, it is now possible to provide a detailed background of Independent voters, especially since 200 individuals identified themselves as such in the INES, a reasonable sample size. The aim of this chapter is to determine whether support for Independents is a product of certain socio-economic factors, namely class, occupation, age, education, sex, religiosity, and region.

(i) Class

This section uses the Goldthorpe scheme (1987), which proposes seven categories of class that are related to income, security of tenure, prospects of promotion, and position within a company. To elucidate, (1) the salariat consist

of professionals, managers, and those in positions of authority. (2) The routine non-manual are those employed in routine work, such as retail services, while (3) the non-manual class are the petty bourgeoisie, who consist of self-employed business persons. There are two types of manual workers: (4) the skilled and (5) the semi- or unskilled. The final two groups are (6) farmers who own land, and (7) agricultural labourers who do not. Because of the minuscule numbers corresponding to the last category in the INES, they are included in the semi/unskilled category.

As table 6.1 indicates, there are no clear patterns of support for Independents across the various classes. None of their support bases per category was much different (at a reasonably acceptable level of significance) from the vote Independents attracted from all other categories. For example, the difference between the 9 percent share of the vote they attracted from white-collar workers and the 11 percent from the petty bourgeoisie was small enough that it could have been due to random sampling error, and is not a 'real' difference. The average vote per category veered between 8 and 10 percent, with none of the differences between the separate categories significant at a $p < .05$ level. Table 6.1 also contains details of the vote for Independents according to occupation-related variables, including union membership, sector of employment, and working status. These findings also underline the heterogeneous pattern of Independents' support base, as close to the same proportion of union and non-union members, private and public sector employees, and full-time and part-time workers all vote for Independents. Looking at the respective figures for the three types of Independents in table 6.1, there are no significant differences in the proportions within each sub-category sharing the various types of occupational-related characteristics.

Table 6.1. % Voting Independent by Class and Occupation

(1) Vote for all Independents			(2) Breakdown of vote for Independent categories		
Class	% Vote Independent	N	Temp Ind	Policy Ind	Comm Ind
White-collar	8.7	756	43.6	54.6	57.6
Petty Bourgeoisie	11.1	107	8.1	5.2	6.1
Skilled manual	6.8	194	14.5	9.1	9.1
Semi/unskilled manual	10.5	433	27.4	27.3	1.5
Farmers	7.1	166	6.5	3.9	25.8
N			62	77	66
<i>Pearson's chi-square</i>	2.61		10.45		
<i>P-value</i>	(0.625)		(0.235)		
Trade Union Member	9.1	522	40.1	38.7	34.5
Not Union member	8.9	984	59.0	61.3	65.5
N			61	75	58
Private Sector employee	8.2	1121	63.8	66.7	64.9
Public Sector employee	11.1	359	36.2	33.3	35.1
N			58	75	57
Working Status					
Full-time	8.9	821	50.0	55.6	42.1
Part-time	9.5	175	14.1	7.4	18.8
Unemployed	8.1	58	3.1	1.2	5.8
Retired	8.8	169	17.2	6.2	14.5
Student	11.8	108	1.6	8.6	8.7
<i>Pearson's chi-square</i>	1.91		11.32		
<i>P-value</i>	(0.734)		(0.214)		
N			64	81	69

Note: Figures in the 2nd column refer to the proportion within the respective sector that voted for an Independent, with the 3rd column the total number of individuals within that sector. For example, 756 people were classified as white-collar, of whom 8.7 percent voted for an Independent.

Because the proportions voting for the sub-categories of Independents were quite small, the 4th, 5th, and 6th columns detail the proportions within the respective sub-category of Independents that exhibit such a characteristic; for example, 43.6 percent of temperamental Independent voters are white-collar. The figures in italics detail the numbers within each sub-category of Independent.

Source: Analysis of INES 2002; figures succeeded by an asterisk(s) are where the proportion with a characteristic has a voting preference significantly different from that of those without that characteristic, using three levels of significances. Weighted data.

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

(ii) Age, education, and sex

Age does not reveal many more significant results than class and occupation (see table 6.2). One pattern is that young voters (those aged 18 to 24 years) are more likely to vote for Independents, while middle-aged voters (aged 35 to 44) are less likely to. This may suggest that Independents attract something of a protest vote from a youth, a hypothesis that is explored later in the chapter. It could also suggest that the cohorts entering the electorate have lower levels of party identification than older voters. This is in line with other accounts of declining party identification in the Irish electorate (see section 6.6)

It is interesting though, that as few as 6 percent of voters for temperamental Independents were aged under twenty-five, in contrast to 30 percent of policy Independent voters. Those voting for temperamental Independents usually do so as a hangover of loyalty from previous elections to a particular candidate, something that young voters would not have had sufficient time to develop. Policy Independents may also attract a protest vote, especially if they are campaigning on a single issue; as was stated in the previous paragraph, young voters may be more attracted to such candidates. However, without further analysis of the motives of these voters, such a hypothesis cannot be empirically verified.

Education is also a weak predictor of the Independent vote. The lowest support levels for Independents were amongst those who left school after completing their Junior/Intermediate Certificate (usually at the age of fifteen). However, a low level of education does not denote a tendency to shy away from Independents, as the highest level of support for Independents was amongst those with either no education or who did not progress beyond primary school. Looking at the sub-categories of Independents, those voting for community Independents were significantly more likely to have qualified with at least a university degree than those voting for either policy or community Independents. There was no significant difference in the proportions of men and women voting Independent, but supporters of temperamental Independents were far more likely to be male, and those voting for community Independents

were more likely to be female, differences that were both significant at a $p < .05$ level.

While religion also failed to reveal any significant findings, the urban/rural divide does suggest some level of diversity to Independents' support base. Those residing in city areas were significantly less likely to vote for Independents, especially temperamental Independents, but in a bivariate analysis it is not clear why this is the case. It is also worth noting that almost half of the voters for community Independents reside in rural areas, which is probably due to the greater numbers of this type of Independent running in rural as opposed to urban regions (the ratio was 60: 40 from the respondents to the 2004 candidate survey). To conclude this section, it is evident that Independents have a heterogeneous base of support, with only a few sociological variables found to have significant levels of influence. These results were not altogether surprising for two reasons. First, because Independents are not a homogeneous category, one would not expect to find sociological biases in the vote they attract. Second, social structures are usually seen as weak predictors of voting behaviour in Ireland anyway (Sinnott 1995: 181–183; Laver 2005: 183). It is difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions from the variables that were found to have a significant effect, but they do provide tentative foundations from which to construct a multivariate model in later sections of this chapter.

Table 6.2. % Voting Independent by Age, Education, and Sex

(1) Vote for all Independents			(2) Breakdown of vote for Ind. categories		
Age	% Vote Ind	N	Temp Ind	Policy Ind	Comm Ind
18–24	13.0*	204	5.6*	30.3*	18.6
25–34	7.6	318	16.7	21.9	17.9
35–44	6.6	311	18.5	9.8	16.5
45–54	7.8	286	18.5	14.2	19.2
55–64	10.2	213	20.4	10.8	10.4
65+	8.6	270	20.4	13.0	17.3
N			54	75	64
<i>Pearson's chi-square</i>	3.86		8.20		
<i>P-value</i>	(0.570)		(0.609)		
Education					
Uni. degree	8.2	208	8.1	9.6	15.8*
Diploma/Cert	9.7	285	28.4	20.1	11.6
Leaving Cert	8.9	453	18.8	24.2	35.1
Junior Cert	6.0*	373	14.3	17.8	6.5*
None or primary only	10.8	449	30.4	28.0	30.9
N			64	82	69
<i>Pearson's chi-square</i>	5.97		7.78		
<i>P-value</i>	(0.310)		(0.456)		
Sex					
Male	8.9	859	65.8*	42.4	41.7*
Female	8.8	914	34.2*	57.6	58.3*
N			59	74	64
Religiosity*					
Regular attender [†]	8.1	1086	31.5	33.3	35.2
Not regular attender ^{††}	9.1	594	20.8	47.9	31.3
N			61	79	68
Region*					
Open Country	10.3	783	24.2	31.8	44.0***
City	5.8**	627	12.8**	69.2	18.0
N			62	75	62

Note: Figures in the 2nd column refer to the proportion within the respective sector that voted for an Independent, with the 3rd column the total number of individuals within that sector. For example, 204 people were classified as being under 25 years old, of whom 8.7 percent voted for an Independent.

Because the proportions voting for the sub-categories of Independents were quite small, the 4th, 5th, and 6th columns detail the proportions within the respective sub-category of Independents that exhibit such a characteristic; for example, 5.6 percent of temperamental Independents are under 25. The figures in italics detail the numbers within each sub-category of Independent.

Source: Analysis of INES 2002; figures succeeded by an asterisk(s) are where the proportion with a characteristic has a voting preference significantly different from that of those without that characteristic, using three levels of significances (*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001).

[†] This category ranges from those attending a religious service at least once a week to those attending several times a week.

^{††} This ranges from those attending a religious service at the most once every few months to those who never attend.

* Because the options under the religiosity and region labels both offer two extremes, e.g. either a devout or extremely irregular attender of religious services, there are a significant number of correspondents who fall between these two poles. This explains why the percentages for the Independent sub-categories do not sum to 100 percent.

6.4 Voting incentives

Explaining voting patterns has always been an important subject area in political science, as it seeks to understand human behaviour concerning the vital component of any representative democracy, namely elections. Reflecting this significance, numerous theories and models have been propounded to explain voting behaviour. One of the most important dichotomies is between those who vote for instrumental reasons, that is, to achieve an outcome (Brennan and Lomasky 1993: 23), and those voting as an act of self-expression, where the utility derives from participation in an event (Fiorina 1976). These are the same nature as the incentives motivating individuals to run for office that were described in chapter 4. The aim of the following section is to determine whether people vote for Independents for either instrumental or expressive reasons.

6.5 Instrumental incentives

Probably the two dominant instrumental voting incentives are to have one's preferred government elected, and to have one's policy preferences implemented (across which there can be some overlap, as the achievement of the former can result in the latter). Lacking the necessary numbers, and operating in a party system, Independents cannot form a government on their own to satisfy the first incentive. While the importance of choosing a Taoiseach as a voting incentive could not be determined from the INES, analysis of such a question from the 2002 RTE exit poll found that those citing this as an important influence were extremely unlikely to vote for an Independent (less than 1 percent) (Garry et al. 2003: 133).

In relation to the second incentive, an Independent does not have the resources to devise a complex policy programme, and even if one could, (s)he would not be able to implement it. As a result, it is reasonable to suggest that voters who want to pick a candidate that can deal with a variety of national policies would be unlikely to vote for an Independent. To test this premise in a rather crude manner, a number of bivariate and multivariate models were constructed using the INES data that included voters' policy preferences as the

independent variables. Not one of these variables proved a significant predictor of the Independent vote. For example, knowing a voter's opinion on environmental issues, taxation, immigration, Northern Ireland, or even European integration, proved of no benefit in predicting whether or not they voted for an Independent candidate. This could be for one of three reasons. First, it is important to remember that Irish voting behaviour in general has a tradition of not being policy-motivated. Second, since Independents cannot form a government to deal with a national policy, they would not be expected to attract support from voters concerned with such issues. Third, the diversity between the various Independent candidates could make it unlikely that we would find evidence of general policy motivations that explained voting patterns for 95 different Independents.

The lack of significance of these two types of incentives would therefore seem to suggest that voting for Independents is not motivated by instrumental factors, but rather is an expressive action. However, although Independents cannot hope to produce major policy outputs, they can focus on specific issues, which depending on a number of circumstances, they can aim to deal with. These issues are usually localised concerns, and there are many examples of Independents who run to highlight and address a local grievance. Recent examples include candidates elected on the back of a protest vote over the proposed closure of a local hospital in their constituency. Because the sole *raison d'être* of these Independents is usually to resolve an issue, the bulk of their support must be motivated by instrumental incentives.

If people are voting for Independents because of their abilities to deal with an issue, this implies that Independent TDs must have some level of power. The dominant reason usually given why Independents are not elected to other west European parliaments is because they are not able to wield any power, being in effect legislative pariahs. However, in the Irish political system, Independents can, and have, exerted power at local, and sometimes at national level. For example, of the governments formed after the nine general elections held since 1980, five have been dependent on the support of Independent TDs. This powerful position has been used to deliver considerable

particularistic benefits for their constituencies (see Weeks 2007a), and has motivated support for other Independents who run to achieve a similar level of influence.

Because each one of the scores of Independents running for office may be mobilised on a different local issue, it is difficult to determine the influence of these issues from national survey data. However, in the INES, respondents were asked why they gave their first preference vote to a particular candidate. 34 percent of those who gave it to an Independent cited a policy-related reason, compared to less than 9 percent of party voters, a considerable difference.¹⁰⁷ The issue most frequently cited by Independent voters was the retention of their local hospital and/or health services. This certainly seems to be tentative evidence of an instrumental nature to the vote for Independents. Whether the latter can actually achieve these policy outputs is another matter, and in this context largely immaterial; the key point is that some of those voting for Independents are motivated by instrumental incentives.

Within the literature, two other instrumental factors have been cited as explanations for the Independent vote (see chapter 2). The first is personalism, whereby voters want a candidate they personally know elected to office, in the hope that this will prove advantageous in the voters' dealings with government agencies. This is deemed instrumental because it involves voters picking whom they deem to be the best candidate; party attachments (an expressive motive) are second to such concerns. The second incentive is localism, whereby voters want a local candidate elected in the hope that the latter will represent the interests of the region, perhaps securing some form of largesse. The following section assesses the influence of both personalism and localism on the vote for Independents.

It needs to be stated that it is rarely the case that any incentives can be placed neatly in a box and categorised as purely instrumental or expressive. Consequently, there may well be some expressive nature to a personalistic and/or localistic vote; an example would be someone voting for a local candidate from their locality to express a territorial allegiance. However, the

¹⁰⁷ Source: author's own analysis of INES.

aim in this chapter is to classify voting motivations according to the dominant nature of the incentive. In this case, it was felt that both personalism and localism are more instrumental than expressive.

(i) Personalism (Candidate-centred political culture)

Voters in most political systems are drawn towards parties, and evaluate their political allegiances in terms of party. Even where they can choose between candidates, as occurs in countries using the single-member plurality electoral system (examples being the UK, Canada, and India), it is generally agreed that the element of a ‘personal vote’¹⁰⁸ involved is very minor relative to the importance of candidates’ party affiliation (with the exception of the US, where the term originated). In such systems, Independent candidates, lacking a party label, are at a major disadvantage electorally, and are likely to receive very few votes, except perhaps from the few who interpret ‘Independent’ as a ‘brand’.

Ireland, however, is sometimes seen as an exception to this rule, as electors frequently state that candidate is a more important influence upon their voting decision than party (Sinnott 1995: 196), a feature that Mair described as the ‘central dynamic of Irish electoral behaviour’ (1987b: 104).¹⁰⁹ This is often said to be in part a result of a localistic and personalistic political culture, working in tandem with an electoral system that gives voters considerable freedom to choose among candidates across party lines (see Mair 1987a: 67; Laver 2005: 191). Localism in the electoral context can be defined as when voters evaluate the issues, parties, and candidates in relation to their own locality, while personalism involves voters supporting candidates based on the latter’s personal attributes (see chapter 2). Politicians in turn respond to the joint demand of personalism and localism by undertaking a large amount of constituency work and canvassing for votes for themselves, sometimes with

¹⁰⁸ A personal vote is understood as ‘that portion of a candidate’s electoral support which originates in his or her personal qualities, qualifications, activities, and record’ (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987: 9). Systems where the element of a personal vote is strong are said to exhibit a personalistic or candidate-centred political culture. These three terms (personal vote, personalism, candidate-centred culture) are used interchangeably throughout the chapter, generally referring to the same phenomenon.

¹⁰⁹ It is worth noting that there is a degree of scepticism concerning the importance of candidate vis-à-vis party (see Mair 1987a: 92; Sinnott 1995: 171).

little mention of their party affiliation. This personalistic appeal is further reinforced by the presence of multi-member constituencies that produce intra-party rivalry, impelling candidates to canvass for votes on a personal and local, rather than a party, basis. Choosing a candidate on the basis of personalistic factors is an instrumental act, as voters' utility derives from the election of their preferred candidates. The former group prefer to have in office someone they know for a variety of reasons; voters may simply have more faith and trust in an individual they personally know, or they may hope that such a relationship will benefit on them in their dealings with various state services.

In light of this, Ireland is often referred to as possessing a candidate-centred, as opposed to a party-centred, political culture. While the extent of the former has been the subject of much academic debate (see Mair 1987a: 67; Laver 2005: 191–3; Marsh 2007), it is generally agreed that its levels far exceed those in most other liberal democracies. For example, Laver calculated that in 2002 40 percent of voters were 'dyed-in-the-wool' candidate supporters, in contrast to 37 percent who were party voters (2005: 192–3). This is relevant for Independents, because if competition is just between candidates, Independents will fare better electorally, *ceteris paribus*, since they can compete on a more level playing-field against party candidates, without being disadvantaged by their lack of partisan affiliation. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that party politicians also appeal to this candidate-centred culture, and if all candidates exploit the importance of this factor in equal measures, this cancels out its effect (Marsh and Mitchell 1999: 173).

While it would be appealing to employ a cross-country comparison to examine the relationship between the level of candidate-centred voting and support for Independents, there would be little point given the relatively non-existent support for Independents in other systems. However, it is worth noting the experience of four countries that also have a considerable personal vote, namely the US (see Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987), France, Finland (Esaiasson 1992; Pesonen 1995), and Japan (Curtis 1992: 227–228). While Independents receive very few votes in the US, it could be argued that a candidate-centred culture has resulted in loosely-disciplined parties, where in

effect party MPs are quite ‘independent’ actors in the sense of being autonomous of their party (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987: 15; Webb 2002c: 445–6). It is only the ambiguous nature of this relationship between party and MP that prevents them from running as Independents; were discipline enforced it is quite conceivable to imagine that the numbers of successful Independents would be akin to Irish levels.¹¹⁰ This is also the case in France, where some have argued that partisanship is even less important than in the US (Converse and Dupeux 1962 in Abramson et al. 1995: 364); this has resulted in the election of the ambiguously titled *non-inscrit* candidates (see chapter 1). In Finland, while Independent candidacies are not permitted and parties are more disciplined, the latter are not all-dominant, and it is not unknown for personalities (especially media or sporting celebrities) outside of party politics to succeed electorally, sometimes even forming their own personalised list independent of an established party (Esaiasson 1992: 205). In Japan, where ‘the fundamental characteristic of Japanese election campaigning continues to be the centrality of the individual politician’ (Curtis 1992: 227–228), this has produced a similar effect to Ireland, resulting in the election of Independent candidates. Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) members in Japan who fail to secure an official party nomination often run their own election campaign as an Independent, using their extensive personal organisation, known as *kōenkai*. The LDP has gone some way to formalising this occurrence by not running a candidate in some constituencies; instead, aspirant members are encouraged to run, with the official nomination being awarded post-hoc to the ‘Independent’ LDP candidate who wins a seat (Reed 2003).

In addition, a candidate-centred culture appears to be a feature of small island states, largely due to the tight-knit communities and high levels of social interaction that are a feature of such systems. In a study of island states referred to in chapter 2, Anckar attributes the lack of party politics in many of these islands to the strength of personalism. For example, he quotes a former President of Kiribati who claimed that ‘people vote on a personal basis; there is

¹¹⁰ In any case, studies of the few successful Independent candidacies in the US have consistently referred to the candidates’ personal profile as the major reason for their electoral victories (see Avlon 2004; Collett 1999; Sifry 2003).

little knowledge of or concern for a candidate's political affiliation' (Anckar 2000: 277). While Anckar's study did not include Ireland, employing his criteria of geographical and population size would qualify it as a small island state. Although it cannot be tested here, it is certainly a valid proposition that a candidate-centred culture is an intervening variable in the relationship between a country's geography and its presence of Independents.

While this brief look at the comparative experience gives a flavour of the expected relationship between the personal vote and support for Independents, this section is solely devoted to an analysis of Irish voting behaviour, namely by testing whether candidate-centred voters are more likely to vote for an Independent than party-centred voters. Despite this premise being one of the more commonly cited reasons explaining the Independent vote (see Chubb 1957: 132; Carty 1981: 58; Busteed 1990: 41), it has yet to be subjected to any empirical analysis.

To determine the impact of a candidate-centred culture, two questions were used from the INES. The first asked respondents which 'was more important in deciding how they cast their first preference vote... – the party or the candidate him/herself?' As Laver correctly indicated, this could provide ambiguous answers, because some of those choosing the candidate option could be party supporters who vote according to their candidate of preference within the same party (Laver 2005: 192). To clear up this ambiguity, a second question asked 'If this candidate had been running for any of the other parties would you still have given a first preference vote to him/her?' Those who answered positively, and also chose the candidate option in response to the first question, are considered 'pure' candidate-centred voters.

Table 6.3. Influence of candidate and party on Independent vote

<i>If candidate ran for other party, would you give them 1st preference?</i>	<i>Which was more important in deciding your 1st preference vote?</i>		
	<i>Party</i>	<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	2.1**	8.2	10.5
No	0.2***	13.6*	4.4***
Depends	2.8**	16.3***	14.0***
Total	0.9***	11.4	

N=1,773 (weighted); *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Note: Figures denoted refer to the proportion who cast a first preference vote for an Independent candidate. For example, of those who said party was more important in deciding their first preference vote, 0.9 percent voted for an Independent, whereas 11.4 percent of those who said candidate was more important voted for an Independent. The figures in the non-total cells are a cross-tabulation of the two questions. For example, amongst those who said they would not vote for a candidate if they ran for another party and that party was more important than candidate in deciding their first preference 0.2 percent voted for an Independent.

Figures succeeded by an asterisk(s) are where the proportion with a characteristic has a voting preference significantly different from that of those without that characteristic, using three levels of significance.

Table 6.3 above provides details of the vote for Independents according to these two questions. Not surprisingly, very few of those who said party was more important in deciding how to vote gave their first preference to an Independent (0.9 percent), whereas 11 percent of those who said candidate was more important voted for Independents (a difference significant at a p<.001 level). Those who said party was more important were less likely to vote for an Independent, regardless of their opinion as to whether they would still support a favoured candidate who changed party colours. Emphasising the importance of candidate-centred voting for Independents, those who would still vote a candidate if they ran for another party were more than twice as likely to vote for an Independent (10.5 percent) than those who would not vote for such a candidate (4.4 percent). However, in contrast to what we might have expected, the ‘pure’ candidate-centred voters were not more likely to vote for an Independent than other voters. Amongst these candidate-oriented voters, there appears to be some sort of loyalty to the Independent brand, because the support levels for Independents rises to 14 percent amongst those who would not support the candidate if they ran for another party and 16 percent from

those who said it depended on the party. This could be because some supporters of Independents may be opposed to the idea of their preferred candidate running for a party, in particular specific parties. It could also be due to the wording of the question, which was loaded against Independent voters, because there is not ‘another party’ if a candidate is an Independent. Such candidates have rejected the party life full stop, rather than simply adopted a ‘label’, which is why this question attracted a lot of negative responses from Independent voters.

Table 6.4. Influence of candidate on categories of Independent voters

<i>If candidate ran for other party, would you vote for them?</i>				
<i>Candidate was more important in deciding 1st preference vote</i>	Yes	No	Depends	N
Temp Inds	62.5	17.5	20.0	60
Policy Inds	43.5*	30.4*	26.1	49
Community Inds	60.0	15.0	25.0	40

Note: Weighted data; *p<.05.

Figures succeeded by an asterisk(s) are where the proportion with a characteristic has a voting preference significantly different from that of those without that characteristic, using three levels of significance.

Note: Figures in the rows denote the division of those voting for the sub-categories of Independents according to the their (the voters) willingness to vote for a candidate who ran for another party. For example, of those voting for a temperamental Independent, 62.5 percent said they would still vote for the candidate if (s)he ran for another party, 17.5 percent said they would not, while 20 percent said it depends.

Table 6.4 looks at the breakdown of Independent voters for the same two questions, detailing for those who said candidate is more important, whether they would vote for the candidate if the latter ran for another party.¹¹¹ Not surprisingly, the highest proportion of candidate-centred voters was amongst those voting for temperamental Independents, at 63 percent, significantly more than the comparative 45 percent of those voting for policy Independents (at a p<.05 level). Since those voting for temperamental Independents may have

¹¹¹ The comparative figures for those who said party was more important are not included, as the size of the sample for each category was between 4 and 5.

already crossed over from a party to express their loyalty to a candidate, they would be more likely to retain this attachment should the candidate choose to further change their clothes. Because policy Independents are often in conflict with the policies of established parties, if one of these candidates joined a party, it may well be seen as a betrayal of their stance, explaining why these Independents' supporters are less open to them running for a party.

Summing up the evidence presented in this section, it does seem as if individuals who are oriented to candidates are far more likely to vote for Independents than those oriented towards parties. Independent candidates are especially dependent on their personalistic appeal, since they cannot fall back on the attraction of a party label to deliver votes. One other factor that was said to help produce, if not facilitate, this candidate-centred culture is localism, which is the subject of the next section.

(ii) Localism

As mentioned above, often cited as working in tandem with personalism to produce a political culture conducive to Independents is localism, a feature whereby voters have an affection for, and their values and attitudes oriented on, their locality. For a candidate to perform well at Irish elections, they generally have to be born, reside, and work in the locality, as well as promising to address local issues of concern to their constituents. Evidence of the strength of localism in Ireland is the relatively large number of voters who can identify a local representative (75 percent in 1976), in contrast to lower figures for the UK (65 percent) and the US (33 percent) (Sinnott 1995: 170–171).¹¹²

One of the effects of localism is that elections are usually run on local issues, rather than national policies. This has consequences for Independents in two ways. First, because it is difficult for a single candidate without the backing of a party organisation to run for office on a wide-ranging platform of national policies (with the exception of some candidates mobilised on a single national issue, such as abortion), Independents usually restrict their focus to

¹¹² It needs to be stated that this is also probably related to the high ratio of TDs to population in Ireland.

parochial issues. The importance of localism ensures that this narrow range of policies is not a major disadvantage at election time.

In addition, most Independent candidates do not have a national profile, and are almost entirely dependent on their local persona to deliver a vote. This is because ‘people won’t vote for an Independent they don’t know’ (Ted Mack, former Independent MP in Australia).¹¹³ If localism was not a feature of Irish political culture, and the electorate was mobilised on national issues and what candidates could achieve for the country as a whole, Independents would receive a minuscule vote (unless in the rare example that they had a high-profile image acquired from other areas in their life, such as sporting prowess).

Second, a major feature of localism is the ‘friends-and-neighbours effect’, whereby voters prefer a candidate who resides in close proximity to them. Sacks (1976: 145–160), Parker (1982), Gallagher (1999: 676–678), and Kavanagh 2007 (160–163) all found empirical evidence of this phenomenon, indicated by the strength of support for a candidate being directly related to how close voters lived to him/her. The consequences of this are that ‘a local man running for office has a strong claim on his village’s vote, regardless of his party or religion’ (Sacks 1976: 146), which implies that Independents, regardless of their merits as a candidate, can expect to attract support from such localistic voters. In addition, candidates with a little known profile can be expected to benefit more from the friends and neighbours effect than well-established party candidates (Tatalovich 1975: 811 in King 2000: 262). Gallagher found evidence of this in 1992 in the constituency of Laois-Offaly, where an Independent candidate, who won just 0.2 percent of the overall constituency vote, received almost 17 percent of the vote in his home base (Gallagher 1999: 676–678), a finding also confirmed by King in a similar analysis of voting patterns in the constituency of Clare in 1997 (King 2000: 283).

Evidence of a positive relationship between Independents and localism has already been found in Australia, where a survey of 250 people who voted

¹¹³ Source: *The National Interest*, Radio National, 12 September 2004; transcript available @ <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/natint/stories/s1196548.html>

for an Independent MP found that the most important issue in their decision to vote for him (cited by 76 percent of respondents) was because 'he's an effective independent local member' (Costar and Curtin 2004: 53). The importance of this was emphasised by the finding that a majority of the MP's supporters disagreed with his stance on a major national issue concerning asylum seekers (ibid.); for such voters, it was local policies that mattered. It must be emphasised, however, that this does not necessarily establish a clear link between localism and support for Independents. All politicians, and not just the latter, appeal to localistic concerns, and if it is found that it affects all their votes equally, it cannot be used to predict the Independent vote.

To determine the significance of the relationship between localism and support for Independents, a number of variables were constructed using questions from the INES. These were: the nature of incentives listed to vote for a candidate; whether the first preferred candidate was deemed to be good at working for the local area; and voters' perception of the performance of the local economy during the lifetime of the outgoing government. As shown in table 6.5 below, the evidence indicates that locally-oriented individuals are significantly more likely to vote for Independents. The latter attracted 15 percent of the vote from those citing localistic factors as the main reason for giving a first preference vote to a candidate, over twice the 7 percent support from those not influenced by local factors, a difference significant at a $p < .01$ level.

Table 6.5 Influence of localism on vote for Independents

(1) Vote for all Independents			(2) Vote for Ind categories [†]		
Localism main voting incentive ^a	% Vote Ind	N	Temp Ind (n=51)	Policy Ind (n=65)	Comm Ind (n=57)
Yes	15.2***	483	46.0	53.0	37.9
No	6.7*	1215	54.0	47.0	62.1
			100.0	100.0	100.0
Candidate good at working for local area^b					
10	12.7*	731	54.9	44.6	57.9
0–5	4.3**	165	3.9	6.2	1.8
			58.8 [‡]	50.8 [‡]	59.7 [‡]
Local vis-à-vis national economy^c					
Better	6.8	339	26.9	35.1	24.3
Same	6.9	1018	50.0	42.9	28.4
Worse	15.8***	405	23.1	22.1	47.3
			100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Weighted data; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Figures succeeded by an asterisk(s) are where the proportion with a characteristic has a voting preference significantly different from that of those without that characteristic, using three levels of significance.

[†]Figures in these columns denote the division of the respective Independent categories according to the three measures of localism.

[‡]These figures do not add up to 100 percent, because those giving a score of between 6 and 9 are not included.

^aSource: question a1 from INES: ‘Thinking about the candidate you gave your first preference vote to, what was the main reason you voted for that particular candidate rather than any other candidate?’

Answers listing specific local issues or related to the ability of the candidate to deliver for the local area were coded as localistic factors.

^bQuestion b31 from INES: ‘How good (do) you think (your first preferred) candidate would be in terms of working for this area?’

^cQuestion b46 from INES: ‘I would like you to think about changes in the economy in the area around here since the general election 5 years ago in 1997. Do you think this area has been doing better than the rest of the country; the same as the rest of the country or worse than the rest of the country?’

This pattern was repeated when voters were asked to state how good their preferred candidate was at working for the local area. Those giving their first preferred candidate the maximum score on a scale of 0 to 10 were almost three times as likely to vote for Independents as those giving the candidate a low ranking of between 0 and 5 on the same scale. In addition, of those who felt the

local economy had suffered vis-à-vis the rest of the country since 1997, one in six voted for an Independent.

Since it is reasonable to assume that localism would benefit all types of Independents, regardless of their motives for running, it is not surprising that there are no major differences in attitude between the sub-categories of Independent voters. The only significant finding is that voters for community Independents are twice as likely as those supporting other Independents to believe that the local economy had suffered. Given the even greater than average localistic bent of such candidates, this is not an altogether unexpected result.

The importance of a candidate-centred and localistic culture is recognised by candidates at election time, as they attempt to make contact with most voters, in a belief that it makes a difference to their vote return. If anything, it can be a useful means for candidates to make voters aware that they are in the race, and for voters to be able to put a face to a name, which can be especially important in light of the significance of the personal vote. These two elements also help foster a brokerage culture that was referred to in chapter 2 – in other words, it encourages Independents to take part in constituency work that feeds the localistic and personalistic demand. Independents' lack of a party label and their inability to form a government has the effect that they are especially dependent on these services to deliver votes at election time. It is therefore perhaps not a huge surprise that King found that Independent TDs devoted more hours to constituency work (approximately 68 hours per week) than party TDs (47 hours) (King 2000: 201), although he does provide the qualification that this is because Independents have less staff to help them with such duties (King 2000: 202).¹¹⁴

Overall, these findings are not surprising, since they confirm a relationship already suggested throughout the literature, and validated by Marsh

¹¹⁴ 63 TDs were surveyed, of which 59 were party TDs, and four Independents. The TDs were surveyed in September and October 1999 as part of a PhD dissertation carried out by King (2000). Respondents were asked six questions concerning the nature and volume of their constituency work. See King (2000: 361) for more details on the survey.

and Mitchell in 1997 (1999: 170–174) and Garry et al. in 2002 (2003: 133–134). Because most Independent candidates tend to campaign solely on local ‘parish pump’ issues (see chapter 4), they are likely to just attract a localistic vote. It is only if they are mobilised on a national issue (such as abortion in 1992 and 1997) that they will receive support from more nationally-oriented voters.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, both personalism and localism are not new to the Irish political scene. It may therefore be the case that the attitudes stemming from these features have remained pretty constant, yet support for Independents has fluctuated. If this was the case, it would imply that those voting based on personalistic and localistic factors did not always favour Independents. However, it may also be the case that these factors have always facilitated support for Independents, and that the strength of the Independent vote has only increased in recent years because these attitudes are becoming more prevalent. In the absence of more election study data, it is unfortunately not possible to test these premises, but it is important to recognise their plausibility.

6.6 Expressive incentives

Along with instrumental incentives, voting for Independent candidates may also be due to expressive factors. Because this is the value placed on the act of voting and is not dependent on the outcome of the vote (Brennan and Lomasky 1993: 23), candidates with little chance of winning a seat are not at a disadvantage. This facilitates Independent candidates, the majority of whom are perceived to be also-rans in the race to win a seat. Three different expressive motives are examined in the following section, two of which are related to the non-partisan nature of Independents’ label. These involve individuals supporting Independents as a product of their detachment from parties, or more pointedly as a conduit to express their dissatisfaction with parties. Both these motives are of a negative nature, and this tends to follow the general theme explored by others who have looked at expressive voting for Independents and minor party candidates (see Hillygus 2007: 231). The other expressive

incentive analysed is also concerned with negative sentiment; this involves assessing whether Independent voters are protest voters.

(i) 'They're not parties'

One common factor used to explain voting behaviour is partisanship, whereby someone votes for a party because they identify with it. The seminal work of Campbell et al. in the 1950s first identified the importance of voters' attachments to parties in explaining their voting behaviour (see Campbell et al. 1960). The simple answer as to why people vote for Independents could thus be because the voters see themselves as Independents. However, transferring the model of party identification to Independents can be a difficult task for a number of reasons. First, can we really speak of individuals voting for non-partisan candidates for partisan reasons? Second, the concept of party identification involves the establishment of loyalty to a party label, an allegiance that usually holds constant as the electoral representative of the party (the local candidate) changes. This implies that it may be difficult to speak of an Independent label akin to a party brand, as it would be most unlikely for voters to identify with Independents at an early age, and to stick with them as the nature and type of Independent candidate in their local constituency varies across elections. In addition, voters often identify with parties as a rational information-economising device. Rather than devoting considerable time at every election to the study of the policy platform of each candidate and party in order to decide whom to vote for, individuals can reach a decision as to which party comes closest to their own policy preferences, and then stick with it through most elections, safe in the knowledge that although the party candidate may often change, the party's appeal will remain pretty constant. This time-saving method cannot be applied to Independents, who do not have a central party headquarters determining their policies. As such, their respective platforms can vary radically from one Independent candidate to the next, with the implication that the policy positions of each Independent at every election have to be studied. This task is made additionally difficult because of the

limited media coverage afforded to Independents, and the limited resources such candidates have to promote their policies.

While the above examples highlighted the difficulty in using party identification to explain voting for Independents for positive reasons, this does not render the model entirely useless, as it can be applied using a reverse logic. It is a reasonable assumption to make that in a political system with extremely high levels of party identification, the vote for Independents would be minuscule (given the fact that so few would identify with Independents). However, in a system where significant proportions of the electorate did not identify with a party, it would be fair to assume that Independents have a greater chance of receiving more votes, *ceteris paribus*. Party identification could thus be used to explain Independent voting in a negative fashion, where its absence explains why some individuals choose to vote for Independents. In this light, while the party identification model says that people vote for Labour Party candidates because they are Labour, one does not vote for an Independent because one is something (that is, 'Independent'), but because the candidate is not something (a party). To sum up, people may be voting for Independents because they are not parties. The following sections test this premise by looking at two variables that measure this, party attachment itself (or lack of), and anti-party sentiment.

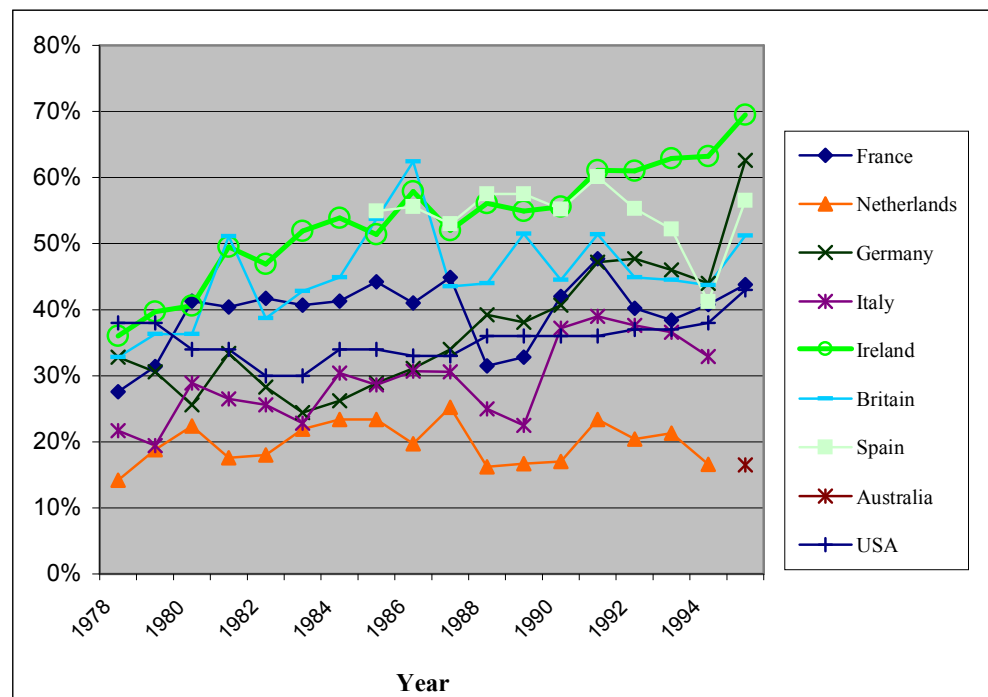
(ii) Declining party identification

As explained above, one of the main paradigms used to explain vote choice is the party identification model. Since Independents are not a party, and lack an accompanying 'brand label', they are at a major disadvantage at elections, because it is very difficult for voters to identify with them. If levels of party identification amongst the electorate are thus quite high in a political system, Independents will attract very few voters (Marsh and Kennedy 2003: 11).

Conversely, we expect that Independents will attract greater levels of support in systems where there is less attachment to parties, since they have fewer brand loyalties to compete against. Examining the comparative evidence from the Eurobarometer surveys in figure 6.1, Ireland has consistently had one

of the highest levels of party detachment,¹¹⁵ which may explain why it experiences the highest level of support for Independents. From an initial level of 37 percent in 1978 (when it was first measured by the Eurobarometer), as many as 70 percent in 2002 said they did not feel close to any particular party, a level unmatched in any other western democracy. At the same time, this detachment cannot be a direct cause, because since 1996 a majority of voters in Germany, Spain, and Britain no longer feel close to any party (see figure 6.1), and yet the vote for Independents at national parliamentary level in these countries remains minuscule.

Figure 6.1. Levels of Party detachment



Source: Eurobarometer surveys 1978–1994; Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) database 1996–2002. Percentages given are those who said they do not feel close to a party.

While it is difficult to examine the effects of party detachment on Independent voting on a comparative basis, it is possible to do so within the Irish framework. For example, when only 37 percent said they were not close to any party in 1977, just 5 percent voted for Independents; when 71 percent said they were not close in 2002, 10 percent voted for Independents. Indeed, a

¹¹⁵ For a discussion on party identification in Ireland see Marsh 2006.

simple correlation over this period between the Independent vote and the level of detachment produces a rather high coefficient of +0.75. While this does not necessarily establish cause and effect, the presence of a large proportion of non-identifiers is an important point. It means that Independent candidates in Ireland are fishing in a large well-stocked pool compared with Independents in most of the other countries for which we have data. As well as providing an explanation of the vote for Independents, this could also act as an inducement to mobilise potential candidates. Whatever the exact link, using the INES, it is possible to build on this finding and test the nature of the relationship between party identification and support for Independents.

It is worth recalling that an attachment to a party is a product of socialisation, first undergone as a child, and usually from within the family. As a result, the voting background of parents is often a crude, but powerful, determinant of voters' identification, and by consequence, their voting habits. By implication, this model puts Independents at a disadvantage, as their lack of a brand name means it is very unlikely that a sense of identification with Independents is passed down through family generations. This is because when a voter is loyal to an Independent, it is to the candidate, and not the label. Consequently, when the politician concerned retires from office, the attachment usually dies. The only form of identification that could possibly be passed on is a loyalty to a local personality, and there are examples of dynastic allegiances being transmitted from one generation to another, as in the case of the Byrne dynasty in Dublin and the Blaney dynasty in Donegal. Unfortunately, we cannot determine the validity of this premise from the INES, since respondents were not given the option of Independents when asked to state who their parents usually voted for.

Nevertheless, it is still worth looking at the voting habits of Independent voters' parents to determine if there is any pattern explaining their vote. The vast majority of respondents (87 percent, where they knew) recalled their parents voting for one of the traditional parties (Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour), in contrast to just 2 percent who recalled one of their parents voting for an 'other' party (that may or may not have included Independents). Table

6.6 highlights the voting patterns of Independent voters' parents, which is not a great deal different from the voting behaviour of the national electorate. A number of bivariate analyses were tested to see if someone was more likely to vote for an Independent based on a parent's partisanship, but none of these revealed any significant relationships. This seems to confirm the heterogeneous nature of support that Independent candidates attract. It also confirms the hypothesis that Independent voting is not a habit inherited from one's parents, a notable finding, because parents' political preferences have been affirmed as significant predictors of voting behaviour for parties, especially in Ireland (Laver 2005: 196). The fact that parents are not so influential for Independent voters indicates that it is a distinct type of voting behaviour, deviant from the common patterns of party voting. In other words Independent voting is something different, and this is one of the factors that makes it interesting.

Table 6.6. Voting patterns of Independents' parents

Party	Parents' vote (%)	N	% Strong supporters
Fianna Fáil	38.1	136	59.6
Fine Gael	17.6	63	57.1
Labour	5.0	18	50.0
Other parties	3.6	13	53.8
Did not vote	2.0	7	—
Don't know	27.5	98	—

Note: Parents' vote refers to the voting habit of both parents of those who gave a first preference to an Independent candidate in 2002. 'Strong supporters' refers to the proportion that said their parents were a strong supporter of the party they usually voted for. For example, 38 percent of Independent voters' parents usually voted for Fianna Fáil, of whom 60 percent could be considered strong supporters of the party.

Source: 2002 INES.

Looking at the direct influence of party attachment, of the 785 respondents who identified a party they were close to,¹¹⁶ just 7 (less than 1 percent) named an Independent, and only one of these actually voted for an

¹¹⁶ Source: question e28/e29, INES: 'Do you usually think of yourself as close to any political party? Which party is that?'

Independent. No one said they felt closest to an Independent, and just 3 of 684 respondents (less than 0.5 percent) said they felt closer to an Independent than to one of the political parties.¹¹⁷ This seems to indicate that very few voters are attached to Independents per se, in line with the previous finding that very few, if any, voters inherit from their parents a voting predilection for Independents. The problem with these questions is that they all asked what party a voter felt close to, without including the option of an Independent candidate. The bias of this wording against Independents explains the very small number of voters expressing a closeness to such candidates.

While it is difficult to interpret what exactly this means regarding the levels of attachment to Independents, what can be examined is how many voters said they were not close to a party, a detachment that can be considered a form of independence. Since party attachment militates against Independents, it can be hypothesised that amongst a non-attached electorate, Independents are not disadvantaged by their lack of a party label, and as a consequence will receive a higher level of support from such voters. The evidence described in table 6.7 below appears to back up this hypothesis. Those who said they were not close to a party are almost three times as likely to vote for Independents (12 percent) than those who are close (4 percent) (a difference significant at a $p < .001$ level), a pattern that is repeated for those who said they don't feel closer to one party than another (although not in the same ratio). Looking at the sub-categories of Independents, there are two patterns of note. The first is that a higher proportion of temperamental Independent supporters feel close to a party than supporters of the other types of Independents (not surprising given the former's history of association with a party). In light of this finding, the second is somewhat surprising, notably that significantly fewer temperamental Independent supporters than those of the other Independents feel closer to one party than another. This occurs because the proportions of temperamental Independent supporters feeling close to a party and closer to one party than another are not too different. In contrast, supporters of policy Independents and

¹¹⁷ Source: question e31, INES: 'Do you feel yourself a little closer to one of the political parties than the others?'

community Independents are more than twice as likely to feel closer to one party than another than simply feeling close to a party. Without further evidence, it is difficult to explain why this is the case.

Table 6.7. % Vote for Independents by level of party attachment

Party attachment	% Vote		Temp Policy		Community
	Ind	N	Ind	Ind	Ind
Close to party	4.2***	489	19.2	15.4	15.8
Not close	11.8	1112	80.8	84.6	84.2
N			52	65	57
Closer to one party than another	9.0	440	16.2**	38.8	41.5
Don't feel closer	13.1*	588	83.8**	61.2	58.5
N			40	50	44

Note: weighted N. Proportions do not total 100 percent as don't knows are not included. Figures succeeded by an asterisk(s) are where the proportion with a characteristic has a voting preference significantly different from that of those without that characteristic, using three levels of significance.

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Source: 2002 INES.

It appears that detachment from parties is conducive to increased levels of support for Independents. If the levels of party identification therefore continue to decline at a steady rate, this could well result in a rise in the vote for Independent candidates (Mair and Weeks 2005: 156). The next section continues the theme of whether such candidates' non-partisan status is a major explanatory factor in the vote they attract. It looks at the extent to which individuals vote for Independents as an expression of their dissatisfaction with parties.

6.7 Anti-Party Sentiment

A factor frequently cited to explain support for non-establishment candidates is disillusionment with political parties (Abedi 2004: 27–28; Allen and Brox 2005; Belanger 2004). For example, the fortunes of populist parties have been linked to the public's increasing dissatisfaction with party establishments

(Abedi 2004: 115–177). Since Independents are non-party politicians, it is quite reasonable to expect that someone voting for such a candidate is manifesting some kind of negative expression about parties, an assumption echoed throughout the relevant literature (see chapter 2). If this is the case, it would be an important finding, because radical right or neo-populist parties have now emerged, and secured electoral office, in most European democracies. This has not happened in Ireland, however, as the only trace of a neo-populist movement, the anti-immigration Immigration Control Platform, has not had an electoral impact to date (although O'Malley (2006) has argued that Sinn Féin are a neo-populist party). It may be the case that anti-party sentiment is channelled through the conduit of Independents, rather than any specific party.

In countries where parties are seen as important stalwarts of democracy (for example, the UK), Independents are frowned upon, and seen as an irresponsible form of politics, which explains the minuscule levels of support they receive. However, in Ireland, because of the underlying level of anti-party sentiment (see chapter 2), Independents are openly tolerated, and the persistence of this sentiment could be one of the factors explaining their persistence throughout Irish political life. Some of the Independent candidates certainly believe it to be an important factor, as evidenced in the negative statements made about parties in a sample of literature from the 2004 local elections (see chapter 4). At the same time, following on from the previous sections, it needs to be stated that in a candidate-centred political culture where the voting decision is based to a significant extent on the personality, rather than the party affiliation, of the candidate, voting for an Independent need not necessarily imply anti-party sentiment.

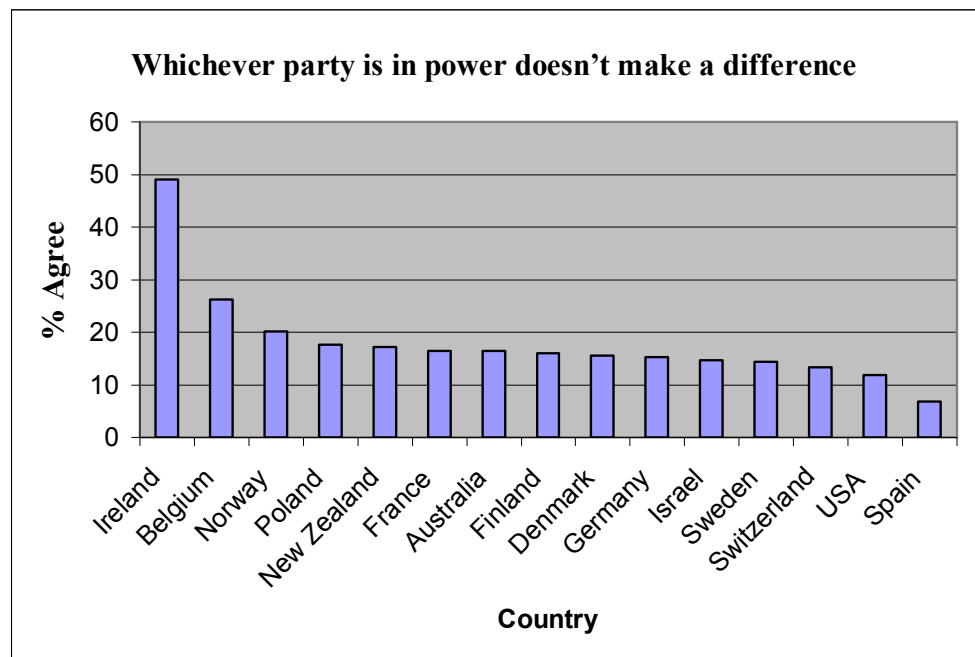
Since there are various definitions as to what constitutes anti-party sentiment, there are a number of measures to empirically test for its existence. However, because the only forms of anti-party sentiment of interest to us are disaffection with the concept of parties *per se*, and with specific political parties, for the purposes of this section, only survey evidence and aggregate vote returns are examined. The hypothesis is simply that those expressing anti-

party sentiment are more likely to vote Independent than those not expressing such sentiment.

Surveys usually avoid straightforwardly affective questions about parties, because of the strong probability of receiving instinctively negative responses, and instead they tend to ask whether parties cater for people's interests, or if parties are useful in contemporary society. One such question from the CSES dataset asked voters if they felt it makes a difference concerning whichever party is in power.¹¹⁸ Using this data, figure 6.2 indicates that anti-party levels are far higher in Ireland (at 49 percent) than elsewhere; indeed, they are almost twice that of the next placed country, Belgium (at 26 percent). This is an important finding, because it seems to indicate the presence of a strong level of anti-party sentiment that acts as a demand for non-party candidates. In other countries, such as Belgium and Norway (those with the highest levels of anti-party sentiment after Ireland), even if the demand from voters is present, there is usually no supply of Independent candidates to vote for. In other countries there might be the supply of candidates without the demand from voters (the US being a prime example). In Ireland, however, there seems to be both a demand for, and supply of, Independents.

¹¹⁸ Although this measure may reflect the sameness of potential government options, rather than anti-party sentiment. The merits of this measure were already discussed in chapter 4.

Figure 6.2 Attitudes to political parties



Source: CSES data, Module 2 (2001-2004). Question: 'Some people say it makes a difference who is in power. Others say that it doesn't make a difference who is in power. Using the scale on this card, (where ONE means that it makes a difference who is in power and FIVE means that it doesn't make a difference who is in power), where would you place yourself?' The question in Ireland was 'It doesn't really matter which political party is in power, in the end things go on much the same.' Figures given for Ireland are for scores between 5 and 7.

Despite such evidence of high levels of dissatisfaction with parties in Ireland, a relationship with support for Independents can only be deduced if those expressing such sentiment are found to be more likely to vote for such candidates. Two types of questions determining the levels of anti-party sentiment are extracted from the INES. The first looks at dissatisfaction with specific political parties, and the second examines dissatisfaction with the concept of parties per se.

There are several indicators of disaffection towards specific parties. The first asks voters the probability of their voting for a party. When Independent voters are compared to party voters (see table 6.8), there are no significant differences between the two categories in terms of their probability of not voting for any of the six parties listed (at a $p < .05$ level). Even when we look at their probability of voting for one of these parties, Independent voters are only

less likely to vote for Fianna Fáil, and in fact are more likely to vote for Sinn Féin and the Greens than party voters, hardly concrete evidence of anti-party sentiment (all three differences were significant at a $p < .05$ level). Those voting for temperamental Independents expressed higher probabilities than the other two categories of Independents of voting for Fine Gael, Labour, and the Progressive Democrats (see table 6.9). This is probably because such individuals are recently departed party voters, who would be more likely to veer back towards a party if their favoured candidate decided to return to his/her original party fold.

Table 6.8. Likelihood of voting for parties

Party	Won't vote for a party		Will vote for a party	
	Ind voters	Party voters	Ind voters	Party voters
FF	23.9	20.2	49.4*	63.2
FG	32.0	35.4	32.6	37.1
Lab	40.1	36.2	29.9	29.2
PD	35.0	33.7	30.0	30.8
GP	34.3	38.4	35.9	26.5
SF	60.3	65.7	22.9*	15.4

Note: Weighted data; * $p < .05$

Figures succeeded by an asterisk(s) are where the proportion with a characteristic has a voting preference significantly different from that of those without that characteristic, using three levels of significance.

Note: Figures are percentages. The columns compare the proportions of Independent and party voters according to their willingness to vote for specific parties.

Source: Question b55, INES: 'We have a number of political parties in Ireland, each of which would like to get your vote. How probable is it that you will ever give your first preference vote to the following parties? Please use the numbers on this scale (1 to 10) to indicate your views where '1' means 'not at all probable' and '10' means 'very probable'.'

Probability is measured on a scale of 1-10, and has been recoded where 'won't vote for a party' refers to those who gave a probability of voting for a party between 1 and 3, and 'will vote for a party' refers to those who gave a probability of between 7 and 10.

Table 6.9. Independents' likelihood of voting for parties

Party	Temp Ind		Policy Ind		Community Ind	
	Will vote	Won't vote	Will vote	Won't vote	Will vote	Won't vote
FF	50.0	28.9	49.2	21.5	48.3	24.1
FG	40.4	38.5	26.2	26.2	33.3	31.6
Lab	37.3	29.4	32.3	36.9	21.1	52.6***
PD	38.5	26.9	24.6	35.4	25.8	41.4
GP	35.3	39.2	35.9	28.1	36.2	36.2
SF	13.5*	59.6	29.2	60.0	25.8	60.3

Note: Weighted data; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Figures succeeded by an asterisk(s) are where the proportion with a characteristic has a voting preference significantly different from that of those without that characteristic, using three levels of significance.

Note: Figures are percentages. The columns compare those who voted for the three categories of Independents according to their willingness to vote and not to vote for specific parties.

'Will vote' and 'won't vote' has the same meaning here as in the previous table.

Source: see table 6.8.

The weakness of this variable in predicting Independent support is further confirmed in table 6.10 below where the probability of voting for a party is cross-tabulated with support for Independent candidates. There were no differences in the vote for Independents between any of the groups, sorted according to their probability of not voting for a specific party. For example, of those who said they would probably not vote for Fianna Fáil, 12 percent voted for an Independent candidate, while 11 percent of those who would probably not vote for Labour voted for an Independent.

Table 6.10. % Voting Independent by probability of voting for party

Party	Won't vote	N	Will vote	N
FF	11.5	374	8.0	1138
FG	9.0	634	9.0	689
Lab	10.7	661	10.4	556
PD	10.3	610	9.5	585
GP	8.9	683	12.8	530
SF	9.2	1175	13.6	324

Note: Percentages are those voting for Independents, based on their willingness to vote for a party, again using the same measures as the previous two tables. Source: see table 6.8.

Figures succeeded by an asterisk(s) are where the proportion with a characteristic has a voting preference significantly different from that of those without that characteristic.

Another method that measures the degree of attachment to parties is the feeling thermometer scale. For reasons of space, this is not explored in depth here, but it is enough to note that it displayed the same pattern as above, with no significant differences (at a $p < .05$ level) between Independent and party voters in the temperature of their feelings to any of the six parties. This reinforces the above findings that disaffection with specific parties is not a major factor explaining a propensity to vote Independent. This can also be confirmed by an examination of voting transfer patterns, as Independents have far lower rates of transfer solidarity than any of the parties (which could result if none of the Independent candidates expressed any solidarity for each other). Whatever the measure of negative sentiment towards specific parties that is used, all the evidence indicates that Independent voters hold no more hostile attitudes to parties than party voters themselves.

Moving beyond specific parties, the second element of anti-party sentiment examined is disaffection with the concept of political parties (which was referred to in figure 6.2). This is measured from the responses to the statement 'It doesn't really matter which political party is in power, in the end things go on much the same'. It implies that there is something at fault with the established parties and party system, with an emphasis on the inability of parties to fulfil a meaningful function. Admittedly it is not a perfect measure of anti-party sentiment, because people might think that parties do a great job but that given their similar policy positions it doesn't matter which of them is in power. However, it is one of the standard comparative measures of such sentiment that has been used in other election studies and in the CSES (see above and chapter 4), because it is assumed that most voters perceive some difference between the parties. In any case, it is a plausible independent variable when it comes to explaining support for Independents. Applying a Downsian logic, if all the existing parties converge to much the same position this leaves gaps in the market that others can move in to fill; in this case, Independents: hence the presence of single-issue Independent candidates at Irish elections in recent years (see chapter 3). There could also be an element of free-riding involved on the part of the voters: because they believe that the

country is going to be in safe hands no matter which party is in power, they can indulge themselves by voting for someone they hope will provide particularistic benefits for their constituency.

As detailed below, such disaffection (whatever its exact nature) does appear to motivate support for Independent candidates, as those who echoed this sentiment were almost twice as likely to vote for Independents (11 percent), compared to those who disagreed (6 percent). There is no significant difference in the levels of anti-party sentiment expressed by the supporters of the three sub-categories of Independents.

Table 6.11. Influence of anti-party sentiment on Independent vote

Doesn't matter which party is in power	% Vote		Party	Policy	Comm
	Ind	N	Ind	Ind	Ind
Agree	11.2	817	63.3	61.0	58.9
Disagree	5.9**	712	36.7	39.0	41.1

Note: weighted data. Figures succeeded by an asterisk(s) are where the proportion with a characteristic has a voting preference significantly different from that of those without that characteristic, using three levels of significance.

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Source: Question b54_5 from INES: 'It doesn't really matter which political party is in power, in the end things go on much the same.'

The evidence is rather mixed concerning the strength of the relationship between anti-party sentiment and support for Independents. This is probably because parties themselves sometimes preach and even profit from such sentiment. While there is a clear link with general party disaffection, this does not necessarily materialise into a distancing from specific parties, since Independent voters are no less likely than party voters to vote for any particular party. However, it does appear that when there are no perceived differences between the parties, Independents are more likely to profit.

6.8 Protest vote

Because Independents cannot form a government, and because so much of political life is about parties, Independent politicians are often viewed as outsiders in the political scene. Consequently, it can be hypothesised that a vote for such candidates is an expression of protest of some sorts, whether it be against parties (as was tested above), the political system, or some other such issues.

Voting for an outsider might be an expression of alienation from the political system, a theme already explored for Independents in Australia (Costar and Curtin 2004: 33), and in the US (see Keith et al. 1992: 171) (and also for third party candidates in the US; see Allen and Brox 2005: 631–633). A number of questions in the INES measured the alienation of the electorate, and the responses of Independent voters are compared with party voters in table 6.14 below. This details the mean level of agreement given to statements of expression about the political system (on a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 means strongly agree and 7 strongly disagree). The main finding is that there is no significant difference (at a $p < .05$ level) between the scores of Independent and party voters on any of these indices. This means that those casting a first preference for an Independent candidate are no more alienated than those voting for a party. This is not altogether surprising, because if dissatisfaction with the political system was a cause of independence, we would expect a far higher level of support for Independent candidates (Keith et al. 1992: 177). There were some differences between Independent voters, depending on the nature of the candidate they voted for. Those supporting policy Independents tended to be less alienated than those supporting temperamental Independents. This could be a reflection of their voting for a candidate with the aim of affecting policy – if such voters were alienated they would be unlikely to vote for policy Independents in the first place.

Table 6.12. Political alienation

Expression of alienation	Party voters	Ind voters	Temp Inds	Policy Ind	Comm Ind
<i>Politics too complicated^d</i>	4.20	4.05	4.19	3.75	4.19
<i>No influence^e</i>	3.72	3.79	4.25	3.55	3.57
<i>Better informed^f</i>	3.54	3.38	3.60	3.60	2.95
<i>Government no influence^g</i>	2.98	3.03	3.44	3.11	2.51

Note: Figures given are the mean score of alienation on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means that respondents strongly disagree with the statement, and 7 that they strongly agree with the statement.

^d Question b54_1, INES: ‘Tell me to what extent you agree with this statement: Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on.’

^e Question b54_2, INES: ‘Tell me to what extent you agree with this statement: The ordinary person has no influence on politics.’

^f Question b54_3, INES: ‘Tell me to what extent you agree with this statement: I think I am better informed about politics and government than most people.’

^g Question b54_4, INES: ‘Tell me to what extent you agree with this statement: In today’s world, an Irish government can’t really influence what happens in this country.’

It was stated earlier in this chapter that some Independent voters are motivated by instrumental incentives arising from concerns over local issues. It was also stated that individuals favouring resolution of certain national policy issues were unlikely to vote for an Independent because of the minimal effect such candidates can have on national policies. However, this does not necessarily mean that Independent voters are not concerned with such policies. Where individuals believe that the government has failed to deal adequately with a national issue, and where they fail to see how opposition parties can credibly deal with the respective issue, such individuals may feel impelled to vote for an Independent candidate. This would constitute both a protest against the incumbent government’s policies and against the alternative offered by the opposition.

To determine the validity of this premise, it is necessary to examine the levels of support for Independents amongst those who believe the government have handled a policy well against those who believe they have not. The four main issues of importance cited by voters at the 1997 and 2002 general elections were (in no particular order) the economy, health, housing, and crime.

Replicating the analysis of Marsh and Kennedy (2003), the support for Independents was estimated from those who attributed responsibility to the government for the management of the aforementioned issues (see table 6.13 below).

Table 6.13. Vote for Independents by issue concern

	Economy		Health		Housing		Crime	
	<i>Better</i>	<i>Worse</i>	<i>Better</i>	<i>Worse</i>	<i>Better</i>	<i>Worse</i>	<i>Decreased</i>	<i>Increased</i>
% Vote Ind	8	17	6	12	7	13	8	11
N	972	107	419	672	683	472	65	667
Temp Ind	74.1	25.9	19.4	80.6	32.5	67.5	7.7	92.3
Policy Ind	81.3	18.7	22.7	77.3	55.6	44.4	12.5	87.5
Comm Ind	84.4	15.6	41.4	58.6	51.4	48.9	0.0	100.0

Note: The figures concern only those who attributed responsibility to the government for management of these issues. The first row of figures details the vote for Independents amongst those who deemed an issue had got better or worse. The latter three rows detail the proportions of each category of Independent voters' rating of the state of an issue.

As can be seen, those who believed that the economy, the health services, and the housing situation, deteriorated over the lifetime of the government were twice as likely to vote for Independents as those who thought such issues had improved. Although crime did not wield any significant differences in the proportions voting Independent (at a $p < .05$ level), the pattern of increased support from disgruntled voters continued. Of the different Independent categories, those voting for temperamental Independents aired the highest levels of protest. We might have expected supporters of policy Independents to be the most aggrieved, but this result may reflect the numbers of dissidents who split with their respective parties over such issues. These results certainly point to an expressive protest vote on the part of Independent voters. While they do not feel alienated from the political system, they are certainly aggrieved over the country's key issues.

Although the previous sections have highlighted the possible importance of both instrumental and expressive incentives in explaining support for Independents, it is difficult to determine which are the most important variables from multiple bivariate analyses. A multivariate model is

required to control for the influence of some of the variables to determine which relationships are spurious and which hold their significance when other factors are accounted for. This is done in the next section.

6.9 Multivariate analysis of Independent vote

Having looked in detail at the influence of a number of variables on the support for Independent candidates, this section gauges their collective influence in a multivariate model. There are a number of measures that can be employed as the dependent variable (support for Independents). The first repeats the method of the previous sections by using a dichotomous variable, namely those who cast a first preference vote for an Independent (where the values are 1 and 0). The second measure is voters' probability of ever casting a first preference for an Independent (on a scale of 1 to 10). The advantage of this measure is that there are far more values involved and that it may account for individuals who intend to vote for an Independent but for a variety of reasons fail to do so. In addition, some, such as Tillie (1995), have argued that this is a far more reliable measure of voters' preferences than voting returns, because it can measure the utility individuals give to a potential vote for each party. Although a discrete variable with 11 values, it is still possible to conduct a linear regression analysis, as was done for similar data from this study by O'Malley (2008). The number of values for this variable is not very small, and the responses are not concentrated on only a few values.

In the following analyses, both these measures are employed, the first in a binomial logistic regression (because of the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable) and the second in an ordinary least squares regression. The independent variables for inclusion are those used in the previous sections to measure the importance of the instrumental and expressive incentives. These are:

- Local issue: identified as main voting incentive for candidate of choice (1/0)
- Local candidate: how good candidate is at working for local area (0–10)

- Local area: performance of local vis-à-vis national economy (1–3: better, same, worse)
- Candidate-centred vote: vote for candidate rather than party, and would still vote for candidate if they changed party (1/0)
- Party detachment: not close to a party (1/0)
- Anti-party sentiment (general): (7 point scale: strongly disagree—strongly agree)¹¹⁹
- Anti-party sentiment (specific): probability of casting a first preference for a party (1–10)
- Protest at alienation: level of agreement (on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is strongly disagree and 7 strongly agree) on four statements measuring alienation
- Protest over issues: believe to have deteriorated since last election (1/0)
- Socio-economic characteristics: member of GAA (1/0); resident of city (1/0); regular church-goer (defined as someone who attends at least three to four times a month) (1/0); university degree (1/0); female (1/0).

¹¹⁹ See above question b54_5.

Table 6.14. Models of Independent vote

	Binomial Logit	PTV Ind
<i>Instrumental incentives</i>		
Localism		
Voting incentive	1.66*	0.27*
Local economy	1.62*	0.02
TD good for local area	1.29***	0.15***
Personalism		
Candidate-centred	1.11	0.10
<i>Expressive incentives</i>		
Party identification		
Close to party	0.49**	-0.22
Anti-party sentiment		
Anti-party general	1.02	0.03
Anti-party specific		
Fianna Fáil	0.94 [†]	0.02
Fine Gael	0.94 [†]	0.05*
Labour	0.92 [†]	0.05*
PD	1.02	0.12***
Greens	1.06	0.23***
Sinn Féin	1.06	0.26***
Protest – Alienation		
Politics too complicated	0.92	-0.04
No influence	0.98	0.08*
Better informed	.89	-0.002
Government no influence	1.00	-0.07
Protest – Issues		
Economy	1.50	0.32
Health	1.93**	0.49***
Housing	1.24	0.19
Crime	1.36	0.19
Socio-economic		
GAA	1.43	0.35*
City	0.36**	-0.12
Regular church-goer	1.26	-0.02
University degree	1.06	0.13
Female	0.75	0.06
Constant	-4.05***	0.76
N	1525	1833
R ²	0.12	.22

Note: Binomial logit model: Odds ratios are reported. Source: 2002 INES.

*** significant at .001; ** significant at .01; * significant at .05; + significant at .10.

Goodness-of-fit tests:

Log likelihood = -326; Lrchi2=86.64 (0.000)

Hosmer-Lemeshow statistic: Pearson's chi-square=3.47 (p=0.90)

McFadden's R^2 : 0.117

McFadden's adjusted R^2 : 0.047

Maximum Likelihood R^2 : 0.062

Adjusted Count R^2 : 0.019

Cragg and Uhler's R^2 : 0.147

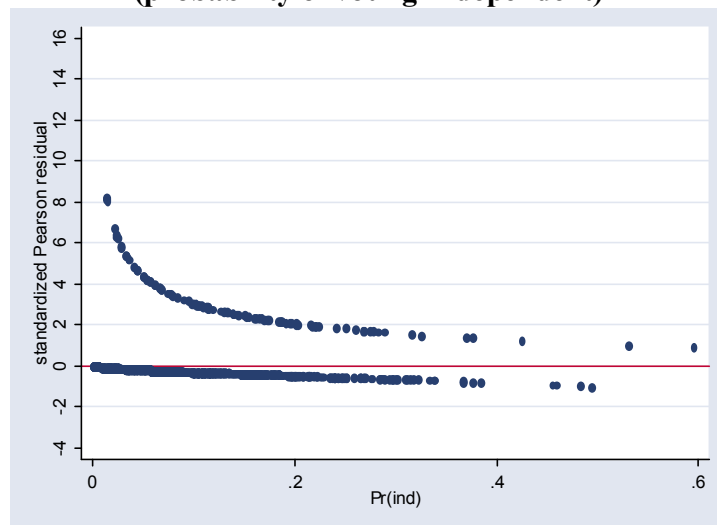
McKelvey and Zavoina's R^2 : 0.247.

First looking at the binomial model, the variety of goodness-of-fit tests presented indicate how well the model fits the data. The log likelihood chi-square tells us that the model as a whole is significant (at a p level <0.000). Perhaps the most relevant here is the Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness-of-fit statistic, which stems from a contingency table containing the patterns formed by the predictor variables that were combined into ten groups. This test of association produces a chi-square to assess how well the predicted and observed frequencies match (Chen et al 2008). Consequently, we are looking for a low chi-square and a high p-value, which would indicate that there is not a substantial difference between these frequencies. The high p-value of 0.90 indicates that the model fits the data well. However, overall it does not offer a very high predictive level as the various r-squared values are quite low, in line with findings from similar analysis by Marsh et al (2008).

Dealing with the diagnostics for the binomial model, the three standard diagnostic statistics for logistic regression are detailed below: the Pearson residual, the deviance residual and the Pregibon leverage, all of which are graphed in figures 6.15–6.17 detailing the plots of the statistics against the predicted values. Pearson residuals are the standardized difference between the observed frequency and the predicted frequency (Ibid.); in other words, they measure the relative deviations between the observed and fitted values. Deviance residuals assess the relationship between the upper limits of the observed and the fitted log likelihood functions. The Pregibon leverage, which is the diagonal of the hat matrix, measures the leverage of observations (Ibid.). Looking at the three graphs below, they indicate that some cases are far away from a lot of the other cases. Such cases might need further scrutiny because

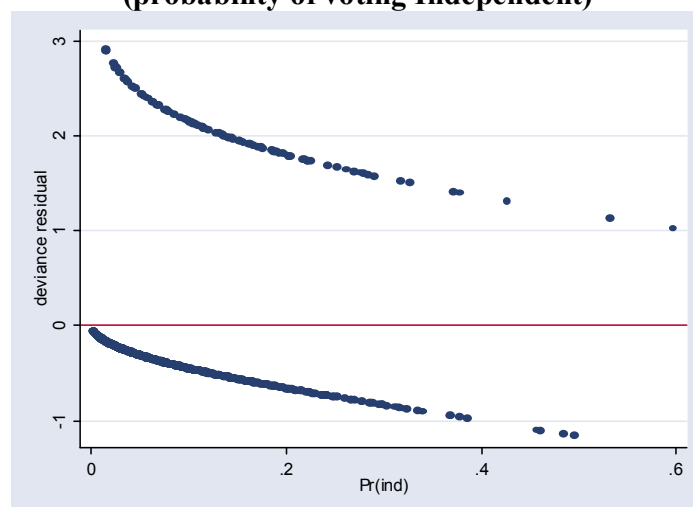
they have quite a high Pearson and deviance residual. However these large residuals are the product of the predicted probability of the outcome (i.e. voting Independent) being quite low. In any case, these particularly deviant cases do not have very high leverage, which means that the logistic regression output would not be very much different if these cases were excluded. A preliminary regression model with and without these cases confirmed such assumptions.

Figure 6.3. Pearson's residuals vs. predicted values of ind (probability of voting Independent)



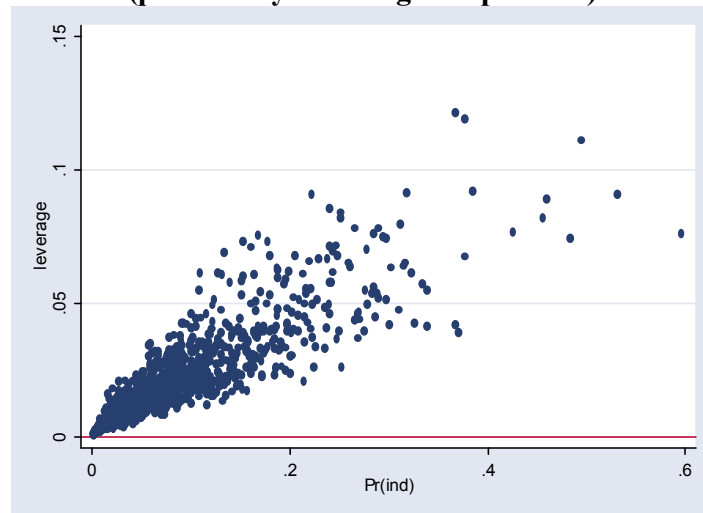
Source: 2002 INES.

Figure 6.4. Deviance residuals vs. predicted values of ind (probability of voting Independent)



Source: 2002 INES.

**Figure 6.5. Leverage vs. predicted values of ind
(probability of voting Independent)**



Source: 2002 INES.

From the discussion in this and preceding chapters, it is obvious that there are disadvantages attached to an Independent status that explains why they attract fewer votes than party candidates. For example, Independents' lack of a partisan label ensures that voters cannot identify with them and form an enduring attachment; it also means that voters are less exposed to their candidacy, and may not even be aware of it. In addition, Independents are usually not nationally-oriented, and cannot form a government, nor formulate a complex policy. Therefore, not surprisingly, the variables that prove more significant in table 6.14 are those that help candidates overcome such disadvantages, for example, increasing levels of party detachment, and where voters are locally-oriented rather than nationally-oriented. Both personalism and general anti-party sentiment fail to hold their significance, although when the latter is directed towards specific parties, it does increase the tendency to vote for an Independent. One possible reason why personalism is not significant is because of the strong relationship between it and localism. Voters tend to know a candidate personally when the latter hails from the same locality as the voter. Consequently, while it may appear that some are voting for a candidate for personalistic reasons, this may really be a product of localism. The results of the multivariate analysis lend some weight to this hypothesis.

A sense of alienation does not exert any great influence on the Independent vote, although grievance over the state of the health service was an important factor. The latter is hardly a surprising finding in light of the numbers of Independents elected on this ticket in 2002. Of the socio-economic variables, the binomial model indicated that those living in cities were less likely to vote for Independents, while those who regularly attended church were more likely to. There were only a few differences in the results between this model and the probability to vote (PTV) model (the second model), as the latter indicated that GAA members were less likely to vote for Independents, but it did not yield a significant effect for party detachment. The different r-squared values (and their equivalents) are not very strong for the two respective models, which means that it is harder to predict a vote for Independents, in contrast to parties. In relation to the overall contribution of both instrumental and expressive factors, it is not the case that the vote for Independents is either purely instrumental or expressive. This model indicates that the Independent vote is dependent on localism, but also party detachment, anti-party sentiment, and a protest vote. A multinomial regression analysis of the different Independent categories would have been helpful, but their sample sizes were too small for valid and reliable analysis.

6.10 Conclusion

Writing in the 1970s on what determines electoral success in Ireland, Ayeartst stated that ‘the ideal candidate is one who is well known, well liked and, if he has had previous service in elected office, has proven to be accessible and useful to his constituents – all of which characteristics are non-partisan’ (1971: 185). This would explain why Independents in Ireland have a greater chance of electoral success than in other countries; a candidate does not have to be a party man to possess such attributes.

The importance of non-partisan voting incentives was stressed in this chapter. It was shown that an Independent candidate who panders to local concerns and makes themselves accessible to constituents, who protests about a key local issue (preferably reproaching a few parties in the process), and targets

floating voters will receive a positive return on their investment at election day. Independents' non-partisan status is therefore an important factor behind their electoral success. Candidates new to the electoral field not only have to attract votes, but also have to try and persuade voters to abandon the party they supported at the last election in favour of a different one. *Ceteris paribus*, Independents are therefore at an advantage, since they are not asking voters to jump from one party to another, but rather just to leave their preferred party, a less demanding leap. This hypothesis was verified as party detachment and anti-party sentiment were both found to be important predictors of support for Independents, notably across all three sub-categories of Independent candidate.

A key finding was that a vote for Independents is not just an expressive protest vote. Some of those voting for an Independent have instrumental goals in mind, and believe that there is more chance of these being achieved by an Independent than by a party candidate. This finding has a normative value, especially if we believe that parties are a key component of a stable parliamentary democracy, because it suggests that parties are not adequately fulfilling some of their functions in society. This result could also be due to the nature of the electoral system, as PR-STV enables voters to cast a preference for both Independent and party candidates. If a system such as SMP was in operation, where voters had just one preference, they might not be as impelled to rank an Independent above a party candidate, especially if their vote was motivated by instrumental incentives. This is something that is explored in the next chapter.

Finally, it was debated earlier in this dissertation as to whether we can really speak of an Independent vote in the collective sense. The analysis of general incentives showed that there are variables beyond the contextual nature of an Independent's candidacy that explain why some people are more likely to vote for Independents than others. This was also confirmed by the similar findings concerning what influences the vote for the sub-categories of Independents. These are important results, because they provide additional validity to a study of Independent politicians. It is not the case that the latter are a grouping of individual candidates with no common characteristics. Chapter 4

indicated that there are similarities between Independents, and that there are some common factors explaining their emergence. Chapter 5 indicated the presence of some common campaign variables explaining Independents' vote, while this chapter has indicated the influence of several important general incentives that motivate voters to express a preference for such candidates.

Overall, this chapter has continued the theme of the previous chapters by finding that localism, personalism (although not when the former is controlled for), and a general detachment from parties (be it apathy or an open hostility) are all important factors in accounting for the significant presence of Independents in Irish politics. While it may appear that these factors provide a sufficient explanation, their occurrence in other countries has not resulted in electoral successes for Independents. This may be because one other intervening variable alluded to in the literature has yet to be considered – the electoral system, PR-STV. Assessing its contribution is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 7: Independents and PR-STV

7.1 Introduction

Having looked in the previous chapters at what influences the behaviour of both candidates and voters in relation to the phenomenon of Independents, this chapter examines the influence of an institutional feature, the electoral system: Proportional Representation by the Single Transferable Vote (PR-STV). It was shown in chapter 2 that this is frequently referred to as a major contributory factor explaining the significance of Independents, but, rather surprisingly, this relationship is rarely subjected to any form of empirical verification.

One way of undertaking such a study is a comparative quantitative analysis with the vote for Independents as the dependent variable, and the independent variables comprising different features of electoral systems, such as district magnitude or ballot structure. Two problems arise preventing such a study. The first is the aforementioned lack of variation in the Independent vote in most liberal democracies (it is pretty negligible), while the second is the lack of variation in electoral systems – only one other lower house of parliament, the Maltese House of Representatives, uses PR-STV, where the vote for Independents is virtually non-existent. If PR-STV is the direct sole cause of Independents, we expect the latter to be present where PR-STV is in operation, and absent where a different electoral system is used, all other things being equal. However, as was just stated, Independents are present under some non-PR-STV systems, and are also absent in some polities that use PR-STV. This does not necessarily mean that PR-STV is not a contributory factor to the significance of Independents, but what can be tested is to look at the effects of PR-STV on Independents in a system where both occur, by testing some of the hypotheses from the literature concerning the influence of Independents. Consequently, this chapter follows the format of the previous chapters in that it looks at the effect of particular variables on the significant presence of Independents within the Irish context. This also has the effect of controlling for variables that might limit the effects of an electoral system if a cross-country

analysis was employed; the presence of a party-centred political culture is one such factor.

The justification for such a chapter stems from the frequent references to the positive relationship between PR-STV and Independents in the literature. It may be the case that such assumptions derive from the rarity of both a significant Independent vote and PR-STV in any western democracy; when both are present within the same political system, it is only natural that some would infer that a causal relationship exists between the two (although Gallagher does warn against the temptation of attributing too much causal power to STV because of its ‘distinctiveness’ (2005: 529)). The aim of this chapter is to determine the validity of this assumption, by looking at the two main effects of electoral systems—mechanical and psychological. The mechanical effects considered are the multi-member constituency, the system of transfers, and the electoral formula. The psychological effects examined are how PR-STV influences Independent candidates’ decision to run, and electors’ propensity to vote for them.

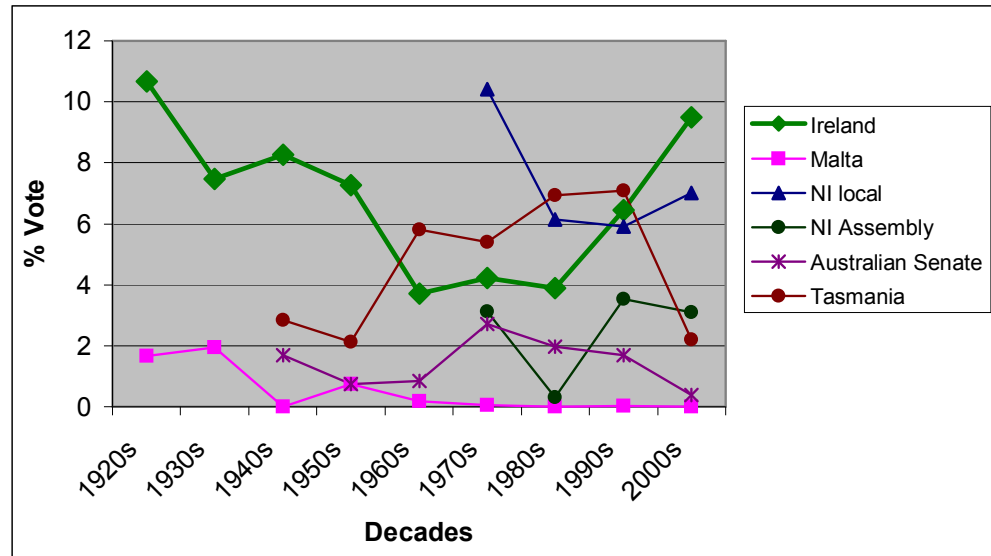
7.2 PR-STV in other countries

PR-STV has been employed in a number of other democracies besides Ireland (almost all of which are Anglo-American), including Malta, Australia, Northern Ireland, Estonia, as well as in parts of mainland Britain, the United States, and Canada. Evidence concerning the vote for Independents in these countries can provide another step in examining the relationship between such a vote and PR-STV. It has already been established in chapter 3 that the vote for Independents is pretty minuscule, if not non-existent, in most liberal democracies outside of Ireland. If it is found that Independents attract substantial levels of support in countries using PR-STV, it suggests that the system is conducive to their electoral success.

Figure 7.1 below details the vote for Independents in the systems that have used PR-STV. Only two boast levels of support that come close to matching the comparative Irish figures, the Northern Ireland local councils and

the Tasmanian state assembly in Australia, albeit intermittently, while the Independent vote is fairly negligible in both Malta and the Australian Senate.

Figure 7.1. Performance of Independents under PR-STV



Sources: Dieter Nohlen. 2001. *Elections in Asia and the Pacific: A Data Handbook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; <http://www.maltadata.com>; <http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections>

Looking at the size of the various assemblies, it seems to be the case that Independent candidates fare better in larger arenas, as these afford Independents a greater opportunity to win a proportion of seats that match their vote return. This follows on from the finding of Farrell and McAllister that assembly size has a positive effect on the proportionality of results under PR-STV systems (2006: 88). Consequently, since minor political actors are usually penalised by disproportional results, increasing proportionality will benefit Independents. A positive correlation coefficient of +0.55 between assembly size and the proportion of seats won by Independents in Ireland, Malta, Northern Ireland, and the Australian Senate ($n=97$, where the unit of analysis is an election) seems to confirm this hypothesis. What this means for Ireland is that because the Dáil is easily the largest assembly using PR-STV (the closest in size is the Northern Ireland Assembly with 108 members), it may explain why Independents are more successful there, which may then have the knock-on effect of encouraging people to vote for Independents. It may simply be the

case that the small size of the other assemblies using PR-STV to elect their members prevents the electoral system from fulfilling its potentialities to promote a significant Independent presence, although of course this hypothesis cannot be rigorously tested.

The proportional nature of PR-STV is one of the major ways in which it contributes to the significant presence of Independents, because it helps to ensure that the latter can receive a seat return approximate to their overall vote. In fact, PR-STV is the only proportional representation (PR) system under which (1) Independents can run on their own, and (2) Independents' share of seats comes close to matching their share of the vote. Under a list system, Independents cannot run on their own; under a mixed-member system, they can only run in the single-member constituencies, where SMP is in operation. Consequently, where an electorate willing to vote for Independents is present, PR-STV will encourage both Independent candidates to run and people to vote for them because it does not act as a bar to Independents realising a seat return proportionate to their support.

One case not featured in figure 7.1, but is worth mentioning, is Scotland, which used PR-STV for the first time at local elections in May 2007. The number of Independents elected to the councils actually fell by 26 (out of a total of 1322 seats) from the 2003 elections that used the single-member plurality system (SMP) (Baston 2007). However, this was because Independents were not minor candidates in some regions of Scotland, but tended to comprise the dominant groupings on more than a few councils, where Independents had gone unchallenged by parties for years. The introduction of PR-STV reduced the bonus of seats over votes that these Independents received, and also encouraged parties to run candidates in these districts. So while PR-STV actually reduced both the vote and seat share of Independents on these councils, this was because of the reversal of traditional roles in certain regions, where it was the parties that comprised the minor candidates. These results do not change the expectations we have for PR-STV.

While the aforementioned examples of Tasmania and Northern Ireland do seem to give some credence to the 'PR-STV causes Independents'

hypothesis, the problem is that both these cases involve second-order regional elections, where Independents often have greater electoral success than at the first-order national level. For example, in Britain, the United States, and France, three countries using a candidate-centred plurality system to elect their national parliament, Independents receive very minimal levels of support at general elections, very rarely having anyone elected to parliament; however, at local elections in the same three countries, Independent candidates attract a significant vote. It is therefore neither consistent nor reliable to assess the influence of PR-STV on the vote for Independents by comparing elections to the national parliament in Ireland with elections to local assemblies in other countries. The only comparable national assemblies using PR-STV have been the Australian Senate and Malta, neither of which have been hotbeds of Independent support. Even though the vote for Independents has been increasing in the former in recent years, it can be argued that if second-order chambers are to be excluded from the analysis, then the Australian Senate cannot be included in any comparative study.

The problem then is that this leaves us with just Malta, where an Independent candidacy has been described as ‘a virtual invitation to electoral defeat’ (de Mino and Lane 2000: 190), and the mean vote for Independents since the 1950s has been less than half of 1 percent. It may simply be the case that Malta is an anomaly, whose political culture is resistant to Independents, making their success impossible regardless of the electoral system in operation (an argument given further credence by the election of Independents in all other countries and regions using PR-STV). As a result, there is little point conducting comparative research with two cases, one of which has no variation. In addition, this is because one could just as easily turn the argument on its head, and claim that PR-STV results in two-partism, based on the experience of Malta, which has one of the purest two-party systems in the world; the case of Ireland might simply be an anomaly. The point of this example is to indicate that Malta can be used to defeat any argument concerning the positive relationship between PR-STV and Independents, and that it would be highly unfair, since it is just one deviating example (that is, an outlier), which may not

accurately reflect the true relationship between the two variables concerned. It just so happens in this case that it is the only other available example. As such, the conclusions made in this chapter all come with the caveat of Malta, but this should not deter us from conducting a systematic analysis of the relationship between PR-STV and Independent success in Ireland. To engineer the latter, what can be done is to replicate the methods of previous chapters by examining the variation within Ireland, and to determine whether this is due to different features of the electoral system.

7.3 Measuring the effects of electoral systems

When considering the influence of electoral systems, it is worth bearing in mind the claims of both Duverger and Rae that while electoral systems can act as brakes to halt the development of small parties (including Independents), none can accelerate their development (Duverger 1959: 205; Rae 1967: 69). Applying this to Independents, the central question of this chapter needs to be re-phrased to ask not whether PR-STV causes the proliferation of Independents, but whether it is less of an obstacle to Independents than other electoral systems.

The problem in examining the influence of an electoral system upon a single variable (namely the vote for Independents) is that there is a variety of factors at play in the voting process, and it can be difficult to isolate the effects of a single institutional feature. In addition, the relationship between the respective variables can be two-way in causality. Taagepera and Shugart highlighted this quandary when pointing to the difference in opinion between academics such as Sartori and Duverger who believe that electoral systems influence politics, and Grumm and Quintal who maintain that politics affects electoral systems (Taagepera and Shugart 1989: 53). Taagepera and Shugart correctly point out that neither is wrong, since the relationship between electoral systems and politics works both ways (*ibid.*); therefore, while PR-STV can influence the presence of Independents, it is also possible that PR-STV may have been adopted because of the esteem in which personalistic and

non-party politics was held in 1920s Ireland – if this was the case PR-STV is simply be reinforcing a phenomenon that would have been present anyway.

When looking at the consequences of electoral systems, there are two main areas to examine: the mechanical and psychological effects (what Rae called the proximal and distal effects (1967: 63–4)). The former is a short-term reaction, while the latter are long-term effects that are in themselves a reaction to the perceived short-term consequences. The following sections look at the influence of both these types of effects on Independents.

7.4 Mechanical effects

The effects of three aspects of PR-STV are examined in this section: district magnitude, electoral formula, and the system of transfers.

(i) District Magnitude

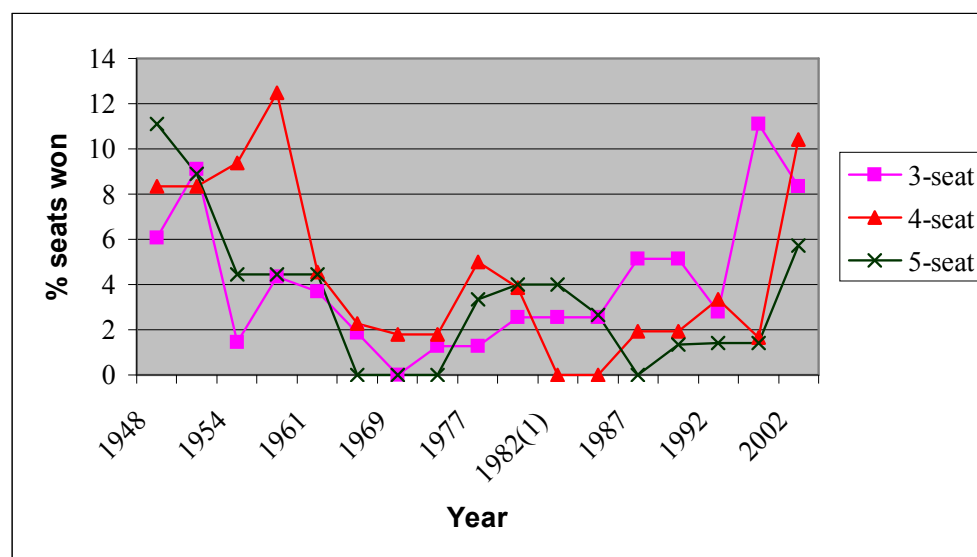
Constituency size, or district magnitude, has probably the greatest proximal effect of any feature of an electoral system (Rae 1967: 138–140). Put simply, the greater the number of seats available in a constituency, the greater the chance Independents have of winning a seat (Ross 1959: 64–66). This is because proportionality¹²⁰ tends to be higher when district magnitude is larger, ensuring that minor political actors, which Independents tend to be, have a greater chance of winning a seat. Independent TDs also share this belief, which is evident by their complaints whenever the state's Constituency Commission revises the magnitude of existing constituencies downwards to reflect population changes (see O'Brien 2004a).

Testing this hypothesis is relatively straightforward, and involves an analysis of electoral victories of Independents by district magnitude. Between 1948 and 2002, Independents won 98 seats in total. Their victories were spread evenly across the constituencies, with 35 elected in 3-seat constituencies, 32 in 4-seat constituencies, and 31 in 5-seat constituencies. On this evidence, it would seem that constituency size has little effect on Independents' electoral

¹²⁰ Pure proportionality is defined here as when a party (or candidate) that wins X percent of votes wins X percent of seats. Increasing proportionality implies a move closer to achieving pure proportionality.

fortunes, with their greater rate of success in 3-seaters being something of a surprise. However, looking deeper into the data, this is because there were far more 3-seat constituencies prior to the establishment of the independent Constituency Commission in 1980.¹²¹ For instance, from 1948 to 1977, on average approximately one half of all constituencies had a district magnitude of three, but since then this proportion has been lowered to close to one-third. Consequently, we need to look at the proportion of seats won by Independents according to constituency size, which is detailed in figure 7.2 below.

Figure 7.2. % Seats won by Independents at Dáil elections, 1948–2002



Source: issues of Department of the Environment and Local Government. *Election results and transfer of votes in general election for Dáil and by-elections*. Dublin: Stationery Office, 1948–2002.

It is evident that since the late 1980s, Independents have won more of the seats available in 3-seat than 5-seat constituencies. Looking at the overall trend since 1948, Independents have won 3.8 percent of the seats in 3-seat constituencies, 4 percent in 4-seaters, and 3.4 percent in 5-seaters. Rather than contradict the

¹²¹ Before this time, decisions concerning the size of constituencies were made by the Minister for Local Government. Since the incumbent was usually a member of one of the two large parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, they favoured small-seat constituencies where these parties could receive a share of seats that was greater than their share of votes.

initial results found when looking at the absolute numbers of seats won, these findings confirm the trend that Independents' rate of electoral success does not increase in line with rising district magnitude. This is an important finding, since it contravenes a popular belief held in political circles.¹²²

(ii) Electoral formula

In any election it can be difficult to guarantee strict proportionality, especially in constituencies with low district magnitudes, essentially because seats are whole units. As a consequence, when the district magnitude is increased, there will generally be less of a deviation between the proportion of votes and proportion of seats won by a party or group of candidates. For example, under SMP, one candidate in each constituency wins 100 percent of the seats (the single seat available), despite not winning 100 percent of the votes, a pattern, which if repeated across constituencies on a nationwide basis, can create considerable discrepancies. This explains why under SMP in the UK, Labour can win 63 percent of seats with 43 percent of the vote in 1997 and 62 percent of seats with 40 percent of the vote in 2001.¹²³

Under PR-STV, however, a candidate does not need to attract a plurality of votes to win a seat, but rather simply requires $(VV/(n+1))+1$ votes in an n-seat constituency (where VV= the number of valid votes cast, and n=the number of seats); for example, this amounts to 25 percent of the vote in a 3-seat constituency, and so on.¹²⁴ By implication therefore, the larger the district magnitude, the lower the proportion of votes required to win a seat. As a result, the presence of multi-member constituencies is often stated to be one of the major reasons explaining the success of Independents in Ireland (Mitchell 2001: 197), as they do not need to win more votes than every other party (as would be the case under SMP), but rather a fraction of the overall vote, which is as low as 17 percent in 5-seat constituencies. Both Garvin and Ayearst attest to this influence when noting that the gradual reduction in constituency size in

¹²² See for example, *The Constituency*, RTÉ Radio 1, 4 November 2006.

¹²³ Source: *European Journal of Political Research*, Data Yearbook, 1997 and 2001.

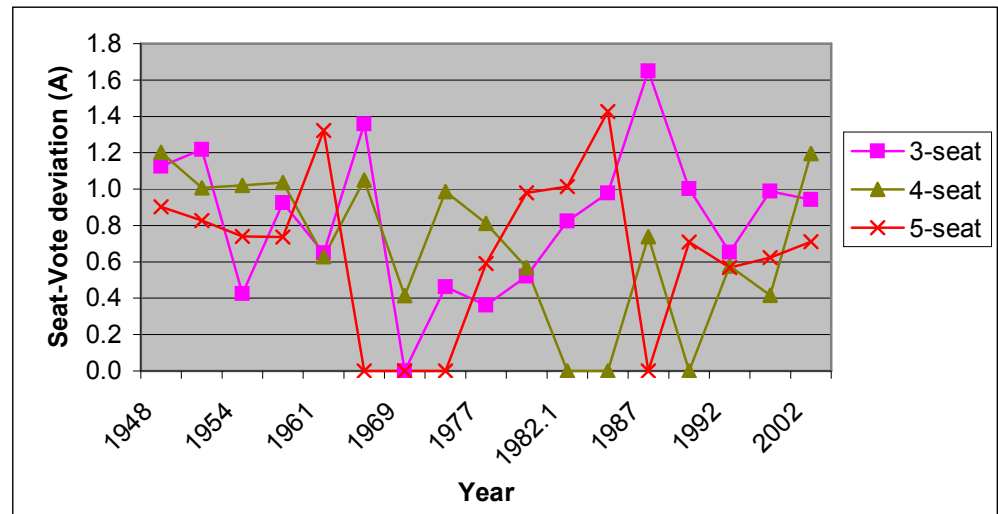
¹²⁴ In many cases, candidates do not always need to reach this target, known as the quota.

Ireland lowered Independents' chances of winning a seat (Ayearst 1971: 114; Garvin 1972: 367).

The influence of district magnitude can be tested by looking at whether proportionality increases in line with an increase in district magnitude. If indeed the presence of multi-member districts benefits Independents, they will receive more 'bang for their buck' the higher the district magnitude, the latter of which will therefore be positively correlated with the index of proportionality. This tends to be a general law in studies of electoral systems (see Taagepera and Shugart 1989: 120), resulting in the recognition of district magnitude as 'the decisive factor', since it determines much of the relationship between seats, votes and parties (Taagepera and Shugart 1989: 124). The validity of this 'law' can be determined by calculating the 'advantage ratio' (A), which is the ratio of the percentage of seats won to the percentage of votes (first preferences) won (Taagepera and Shugart: 68).¹²⁵ If A is therefore greater than one, Independents are receiving a bonus of seats over votes; if A is less than one, they are receiving fewer seats than what their vote might otherwise entitle them to.

¹²⁵ This comes with the caveat that lower preferences also decide the destination of seats, but are excluded from the calculation of the seat-vote deviation. This is because their inclusion would entail the double-counting of some votes, creating inaccurate results (see below for a further discussion). If all of the preferences listed on every vote were made available, the inclusion of lower preferences when calculating this deviation would be in some way possible, but it would still leave the problem of needing to weight the different preferences, an impossible task because we do not know what weight each voter attaches to their respective preferences.

Figure 7.3. Seat–vote deviation by District Magnitude, 1948–2002



Source: issues of Department of the Environment and Local Government. *Election results and transfer of votes in general election for Dáil and by-elections*. Dublin: Stationery Office, 1948–2002.

In general, ‘allocation rules’ (the number of seats in an electoral district) tend to penalise small parties (Taagepera and Shugart 1989: xiii). As figure 7.3 indicates, the case of Independents falls in line with this theory, as their seat return usually fails to match their vote return. To borrow a phrase from Taagepera and Shugart, Independents are ‘underpaid’ for their vote (ibid.). In fact, they have been ‘penalised’ at every general election held between 1922 and 2002, as their national percentage of seats won has always been less than their percentage of votes won. Even when such figures are broken down by constituency size, it is obvious from figure 7.3 that A has only exceeded one on only two occasions since the 1960s: in 1989 (in 3-seat constituencies) and 2002 (in 4-seat constituencies). In theory, if district magnitude does have a positive effect on Independents’ seat return, then A will increase in line with district magnitude. However, this does not prove to be the case, as A declines in line with a rising district magnitude. The mean A in a 3-seater was 0.75, in a 4-seater 0.61, and 0.51 in a 5-seater, while the overall correlation between district magnitude and A is -0.27 , verifying the negative nature of the relationship

between the variables, contrary to our expectations.¹²⁶ From this evidence, it seems to be the case that the lower the district magnitude, the greater return of seats for Independents from a given vote. The mechanics of district size do not affect Independents' seat return, an important finding because it is (1) contrary to the aforementioned widespread assumption that A increases in line with an increase in district magnitude (see Rae 1967: 115; Taagepera and Shugart 1989: 19, 120),¹²⁷ and (2) contrary to the general beliefs held in the Irish political system by both the candidates and the media.¹²⁸ One reason for this may be related to Independents' status as local notables in the community. Because their vote is usually concentrated in a small area, they might be expected to perform better in a smaller constituency where they can focus their resources. In a larger constituency, this could be more difficult.

In fact, even in the lowest possible form of district magnitude, where there is just one seat available (at by-elections), Independents are not hampered, as their average A is greater than one. Between 1948 and 2005, Independent candidates won 7 of the 42 by-elections contested by an Independent (17 percent), with an average 12 percent of the first preference vote.¹²⁹ This supports Gallagher's contention that the reduction in the district magnitude of constituencies did not directly affect Independents' seat return: 'if the revisions have been responsible for the decline of

¹²⁶ It could be hypothesised that this is because more 'no-hope' Independents run in 5-seaters. However, an analysis confined to Independents winning more than 5 percent of the first preference vote confirms the above findings, with an average A of 0.83 in 3-seat constituencies, 0.69 in 4-seat constituencies, and 0.66 in 5-seat constituencies. A correlation between A and district magnitude also confirms this negative relationship, with a coefficient of -0.17 .

¹²⁷ This was also an assumption of the Citizens' Assembly into electoral reform in British Columbia, Canada. One of the main advantages of PR-STV repeatedly stated by the authorities was that the greater proportionality engineered by multi-member constituencies would facilitate the election of Independents.

¹²⁸ Examples of these beliefs include: (1) the aforementioned complaints from recurrent complaints from Independent TDs whenever the district magnitude of a constituency is reduced (see O'Brien 2004a); (2) a radio programme *The Constituency*, where the presenter, referring to the creation of two new 3-seat constituencies to replace an old 5-seat constituency, noted that 'the division was bad news for... the Independents. They tend to do better in 4 or 5-seat constituencies where they can accumulate sufficient transfers to get elected' (*The Constituency*, RTÉ Radio 1, 4 November 2006; available online @ <http://www.rte.ie/radio1/theconstituency/1111740.html>)

¹²⁹ This comes with the caveat that Independents only contested 42 of the 78 by-elections during this period, and it may have been the case that no Independent candidate emerged in 36 of these cases because they were perceived to have no chance of winning a seat.

Independents...it has been by adversely affecting their ability to win votes rather than by making it harder for them to win seats from a given number of votes' (1975: 505). He finds that smaller constituencies do not affect proportionality and there is not greater seat-vote deviation in smaller constituencies, but this may be because there is not much variation in the district magnitude itself, i.e. the highest magnitude might not be high enough to produce pure PR results. A district magnitude of five or six is generally accepted as the minimum level needed to guarantee relative proportionality in a multiparty system (Taagepera and Shugart 1989: 114). Because there is little variation in district magnitude in Ireland, and because it is quite low, the best we can therefore say is that the *existing* district magnitude has little effect on Independents' performance.

The existence of a small number of larger constituencies between 1923 and 1944 does permit an extension to the testing of the relationship between district magnitude and proportionality. However, looking at the respective 7, 8 and 9-seat constituencies that were in operation during this period, the A for Independents was not any higher (in many cases quite lower), averaging 0.25 in the 7-seaters, 0.86 in the 8-seaters, and 0.27 in the one 9-seat constituency (and this during the zenith of Independents' electoral performances). The only reason why A was considerably higher in the 8-seat constituencies was because of the sizeable first preference vote specific Independents attracted in these districts that would most likely have assured them of seats in constituencies with lower district magnitude in any case.

Before concluding this section, it is worth stating that these results come with a minor health warning. The percentage of seats won is not just due to the percentage of first preferences received, but also to the number of lower preferences. Thus, the determination of proportionality as the ratio of seats to first preferences has to be taken with a slight grain of salt, as it produces an 'artifactual scatter' (Taagepera and Shugart 1989: 227), because the role played by lower preferences is not taken into account. Since the details of the breakdown of all lower preferences are not given at elections, it is difficult to tell what exactly would be the effect on A if all preferences were included.

However, looking at the data available from the three constituencies using electronic voting in 2002 in the next section, it is shown that Independent candidates received a greater proportion of votes as the value of the preference increased (see Figure 7.4). This suggests that including lower preferences in the calculation of the index of proportionality would simply give A a lower value, but it cannot be deduced if this would be a uniform decline across constituencies of differing district magnitude. In addition, because we do not know the weight that voters attach to each of their preferences, it would be extremely difficult to calculate a reliable measure of deviation using lower preferences, as the value placed on a preference varies from voter to voter.

Nevertheless, this ability of Independents to attract lower preferences points to the attraction of the non-party label in a candidate-centred electoral system where voters may be more likely to prefer non-partisan candidates over the rivals of their preferred party (if they have a specific party preference). The importance of transfers is analysed in the next section.

(iii) Transfers

The system of transferable votes works on the basis that where a candidate's vote is either not enough to get him elected or is more than necessary, his votes are reallocated to the next available preference on his ballot papers. Since transfers help to decide the outcome of most seats,¹³⁰ a candidate's ability to attract lower preferences is vital to ensuring electoral success. While party candidates can rely upon transfers from fellow running mates¹³¹ (a phenomenon known as 'transfer solidarity' (Gallagher 1978)), Independents might be at a disadvantage, because unless they have an explicit pact formed with other Independents in the constituency, they have no equivalent of a running mate from whom they can expect to receive a large proportion of transfers. This was the rationale behind the decision of Independents in Tasmania to come together

¹³⁰ 110 winners of seats (out of a possible 165) at the 2007 general election would not have won a seat on first preferences alone. Source: author's own calculations.

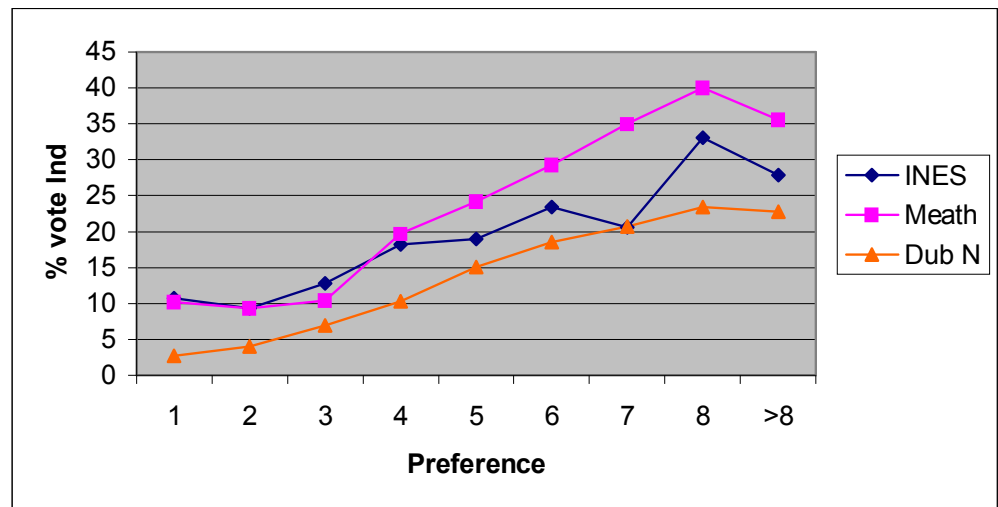
¹³¹ The intra-party transfer rate for the two main parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, used to reach very high levels in past elections (up to 90 percent in the case of the former party), but has since declined to figures of between 60 and 65 percent at the 2002 election (Gallagher 2003: 105).

and form party groupings when PR-STV was introduced in 1910 (Sharman 2002: 62). At the same time, it could also be argued that the transferable vote favours Independents (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2005: 362). Because of Independents' non-partisan status, there could be an increased likelihood of a party voter, having voted for the candidates of their supported party, casting their immediate preferences for an Independent, rather than a rival party candidate(s), something which the Electoral Reform Society in the UK referred to in their supporting of the Sunderland Commission's decision to recommend the adoption of PR-STV for Welsh elections (2002: 6). In this manner, it might be expected that Independents fare better under PR-STV, where voters get to express a preference for more than one party and/or candidate, especially because they can benefit from being a voter's second choice. This is in contrast to a list system, or SMP, where only the first choice of voters is taken into account.

Thanks to the data available from the constituencies using electronic voting in 2002, it is possible to determine which of the above two premises is correct.¹³² If indeed Independents' non-partisan status does increase their likelihood of receiving lower preferences from party supporters, we would not expect this effect to kick in until after the third preference cast by voters. This is because the main parties (Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael) run between two and three (and sometimes four) candidates in a constituency, which means that voters for these parties would probably not begin to cast preferences for Independents until they reached their fourth preference.

¹³² In 2000 the Irish government decided to introduce electronic voting and counting at public elections. It was first used on a pilot basis in three constituencies (Dublin North, Dublin West, and Meath) at the 2002 general election, following which it was planned to have electronic voting adopted for all future elections, beginning with the 2004 local and European elections (for more details see Weeks 2003). A dataset containing details of every vote cast in the three pilot constituencies, including all the preferences, was published by the local authorities, and made available online to the public at www.meath.ie and www.dublinreturningofficer.com. This data is analysed in figure 7.4.

Figure 7.4. % Preferences won by Independents



Source: author's analysis of INES and electronic voting data.

Figure 7.4, which details the proportion of preferences received by Independents using the INES and the electronic voting constituencies of Meath and Dublin North,¹³³ seems to confirm the positive effect the system of transfers has for Independents.¹³⁴ While their percentage of the vote hovers around the 10 to 12 percent mark for the first three preferences, from the 4th to the 8th preferences it rises consecutively (with a slight exception in the INES) to a mean of approximately 33 percent of 8th preferences (where n=139). The strength of this relationship is confirmed by a large correlation coefficient of +0.86 between the preference ranking and the Independent vote.¹³⁵ The benefits of the transferable vote are also confirmed by an analysis of transfer patterns from 2002. When votes were distributed from either an elected or eliminated

¹³³ Dublin West was excluded because no Independents ran in this constituency.

¹³⁴ This is not to imply that it is necessarily 'good' for a candidate or a party to win a greater percentage of lower preferences than of higher ones. Since transfers alter the sequence of winning candidates in fewer than one in seven cases (Sinnott 2007), it is also plausible to claim that it is better to win a greater percentage of higher preferences than lower ones. The credibility of the latter argument is not being denied; it is simply being claimed that Independents' non-partisan status delivers them a larger number of higher preferences than might be the case if they were party candidates.

¹³⁵ Some may claim that it is rather obvious that minor candidates receive proportionally more of the lower preferences, since voters have no one else left to cast a preference for. This would certainly be the case if all voters cast a preference for every candidate. However, looking at the electronic voting data, the mean number of preferences cast is less than four, and in most cases where a preference was given to an Independent, there were still a number of candidates left in the race (Laver 2004: 522).

candidate who had no running mate left in the race, 25 percent of transfers went to Independents.¹³⁶

Having verified that the transferable vote does prove advantageous for Independents, an important follow-on is to determine whether it actually makes a difference to their electoral performance. This can only be the case if most of the preferences of each voter are taken into account, something that rarely, if ever, happens at Irish election counts. For example, when party candidates are elected with a surplus, most of their next available preferences transfer to their party running mate. Even if there are no running mates remaining because of either election or elimination, the available surplus usually amounts to less than 1,000 votes, and owing to the particular method used to distribute the surplus at Dáil elections, only a fraction of votes are examined for their next available preference. In addition, Independents are more likely to capitalise on their large number of lower preferences only at later counts when the latter come into play. However, by this stage most Independent candidates have been eliminated, meaning they cannot benefit from the disproportionately large number of lower preferences cast in their favour. As a result, I would not expect transfers to have a major impact on Independents' electoral performance.

This theory can be tested by comparing Independents' position in the electoral contest after the first count to their position when they leave the electoral contest, that is, when they have been either elected or eliminated. This is done in figure 7.5 below, which provides details of the number of places all Independent candidates moved in total during their respective election counts. For example, for the last observation in 2002, Independents jumped an aggregate of 11 places because of transfers, and fell five places.¹³⁷ Looking at Independents' overall performance, there was not as much movement during the counts as might be expected. Of the 845 Independent candidates who ran

¹³⁶ Source: Author's own analysis of transfer patterns.

¹³⁷ Two lines are provided on the graph, because one line depicting the average change could mask the fluctuation of Independents. For example, one election where Independents jumped 11 places, but also dropped 11 places, would have the same score as an election where not one Independent moved any place due to transfers.

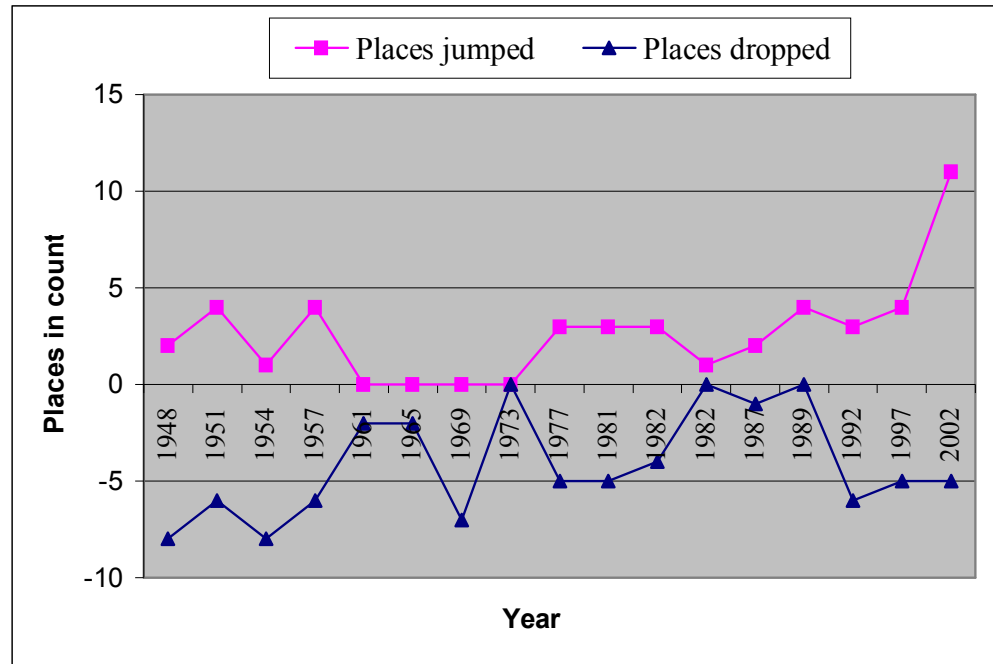
between 1948 and 2002, just 100 had their position in the count altered by transfers. Of these 100, 41 candidates jumped an aggregate total of 45 places, while 59 dropped 70 places, which seems to indicate that transfers have a greater negative impact on Independents' electoral performance. However, the effect of transfers is limited, since the vast majority of these candidates either drop or jump just one place. As a result, only a small number of the 845 Independents either won seats (17 candidates) or lost (7) them due to transferred votes.

The relative lack of places shifted may be due to an element of luck, with the mobility between candidates depending upon their proximity to one another in the count. For example, if an Independent is just a handful of votes in front of or behind another candidate after the first count, there is a greater chance of their trading places than two candidates who are separated by 1,000 votes. In addition, transfers might be expected to have more of an impact the longer a candidate remains in the count, especially so for Independents, whose potential transfers are dispersed across the full spectrum of candidates, meaning they need to remain in the contest long enough to receive the full benefit of these transfers. Because most Independent candidates are eliminated in the early counts, this may explain why transfers do not have a major effect on their final ranking. Such a premise would seem to be confirmed by Jesse's finding that Independents receive a lower proportion of transfers than might be expected given their share of the first preference vote (2006: 15). Since his study is based on an analysis of transfers distributed at elections, its running contrary to the finding in figure 7.4 that Independents receive a large proportion of lower preferences would seem to confirm the inaccurate picture that an analysis of actual transfers distributed can sometimes portray.

Looking at figure 7.5 below the overall effect of transfers seems to vary across elections, and it can be reasonably hypothesised that the more votes Independents receive, the longer they remain in the contest, and by implication, the increased odds of transfers affecting their final position. A strong positive correlation coefficient of +0.80 between the Independent first preference vote

and the total number of places changed at each election confirms the nature of this relationship.

Figure 7.5. Effect of transfers on Independents' performance, 1948–2002



Note: Figures denote the total number of places jumped and dropped during the election count by Independent candidates at each election. Source: issues of Department of the Environment and Local Government. *Election results and transfer of votes in general election for Dáil and by-elections*. Dublin: Stationery Office, 1948–2002.

To conclude this section, we can see that in theory we expect the transferable vote to favour Independents as they do attract a considerably larger number of lower preferences. However, the impact of transfers is lessened for three reasons:

- (1) Only a low proportion of these preferences come into play in the election count, with the effect that Independents do not receive any great advantage from the transferable vote.
- (2) The electoral weakness of a lot of Independents means that they do not benefit from transfers due to their early elimination from electoral

counts.¹³⁸ At an election, first preferences are the key determinant of seats (Sinnott 2007), and if candidates do not achieve a sizeable proportion of these, they have very little chance of winning a seat.¹³⁹ Being the second preference of a lot of voters in a constituency is of no use if there have not been enough first preferences cast in the candidate's favour.

- (3) The small district magnitude means that it is difficult for candidates outside of the winning positions after the first count to overtake their rivals with transfers. For example, in 2002, 146 of the 165 candidates in a winning position after the first count held on to win a seat.¹⁴⁰ If constituencies used a larger district magnitude, more positions might be altered by transferred votes, which could benefit Independents.

These are important findings, since the significance of the transferable vote for Independents is sometimes over-exaggerated. The effect of transfers for non-partisan candidates is strongly dependent on which candidate is being eliminated and who the Independent faces competition from. For example, if a Fianna Fáil candidate is eliminated and an Independent is competing with another Fianna Fáil candidate for a seat, then transfers will work against the Independent. However, if it is a Fine Gael candidate being eliminated instead and the Independents' rival is from Fianna Fáil, then transfers will benefit the Independent. More than anything else, Independents (as is the case for most candidates), need enough first preferences to ensure they have a reasonable chance of winning a seat. Unless a different set of counting rules is adopted that takes into account more of the preferences (such as the Borda count), and unless the district magnitude is increased, the potential of the transferable vote to affect Independents' electoral performance will remain limited.

¹³⁸ Of course, candidates with a low level of support are going to lose no matter what electoral system is in operation.

¹³⁹ Very few winning candidates have less than half a quota of first preferences.

¹⁴⁰ Source: author's own analysis.

7.5 Psychological effects

The underlying premise behind this section is that actors respond to changing institutional structures. The effects of an electoral system need not just be proximal. When political actors (both candidates and voters alike) recognise such effects, this can influence their behaviour, resulting in an additional indirect effect of electoral systems, known as psychological or distal (Rae 1967: 63–64). Katz agrees with this logic, arguing that because different electoral rules provide different rewards, it is reasonable to expect them to have ‘an immediate impact on the calculations of politicians’ (1980: 13). The distal effects examined in the following sections look at whether PR-STV induces either candidates to run as Independents, or electors to vote for them. When examining the psychological effects of the electoral system, it could be argued that Independents’ motivations for running are quite important, because such effects are built on the assumption that the principal motive of Independent candidates is to win a seat. However, even where Independents’ primary incentive has expressive connotations, examples being to publicise an issue, to fly the Independent flag, or to make a protest, it is reasonable to assume that all Independents still want to win a seat. I am not claiming that Independents draw up a cost–benefit analysis to determine which constituency will maximise their chances of winning a seat; rather, in constituencies where more favourable conditions to run exist, we expect more Independents to run than in constituencies where less favourable conditions exist. The findings from the 2004 candidate survey appear to back up my assumptions. When asked to rank the importance of ‘to win a seat’ (on a scale of 1 to 10) as a motivation in their decision to run for election, only 12 percent of Independents (n=133) said it was not important (measured by a score of between 1 and 4 on the aforementioned scale).¹⁴¹ It could also be argued that the post-hoc nature of the survey might encourage those candidates who attracted few votes to lower the

¹⁴¹ Q1, candidate survey: ‘Thinking back to the time you decided to run as a local election candidate, why did you choose to run for election? How important were the following reasons in motivating your decision to run for election? Can you please rank how important each of these reasons were on a scale of 1–10 where 1 means ‘not at all important’ and 10 means ‘extremely important’.’

importance of winning a seat as a motivation, and to stress more expressive incentives. However, almost 70 percent of Independents said that to win a seat was an important motivation in their decision to run (those giving a score between 7 and 10), which while lower than the respective figure of 81 percent of party candidates, is still very high.

7.6 Why Independents run

(i) Ease of candidacy

As indicated in chapter 4 one of the reasons why more Independents run in Ireland than in other western European countries is simply that Independent candidacies are permitted under PR-STV, but not under the list system that is prevalent on the European mainland (and which deliberately discourages ‘independent character’ (Duverger 1959: 297)). For example, Chubb argues that with the introduction of PR-STV in Ireland in the 1920s, ‘there was an optimistic rush of Independent candidates encouraged by PR’ (Chubb 1957: 133). When the Australian Senate adopted PR-STV in 1949, there was an increase in the number of minor party and Independent candidacies (Donovan 2000: 477). Farrell and McAllister also hypothesise that the growing number of Independents in elections to the Australian House of Representatives may well be because of an ease in the requirements of candidacy, predominantly that the size of the electoral deposit has not increased in line with inflation (2005: 88). Similarly, the number of Independents contesting council elections in Scotland under PR-STV in 2007 increased by approximately 12 percent on the comparative 2003 figure running under SMP, a considerable rise, especially given that the number of wards decreased by 75 percent (which led to a 50 percent reduction in the number of major party candidates) (Baston 2007: 34–35). Independents themselves appear to believe in the positive influence of PR-STV, as a pilot survey of 20 Independent candidates from the 2002 general election by this author found that 63 percent of them agreed that PR-STV does

facilitate their presence.¹⁴² Whether this is a direct manifestation of the effects of the electoral system, or whether the candidates are simply agreeing with common hearsay, is another matter.

One could argue that it is not strictly true that that Independents cannot run in list systems. In some cases, such as the Netherlands, Finland, and Norway, they are allowed to form their own personalised lists (at local elections, these are sometimes called non-partisan lists: see Aars and Ringkjøb 2005). However, if they do so, such ‘Independents’ have to include a number of other candidates on their list, and usually adopt a label, features that are anathema to the whole idea of an Independent as a single non-partisan candidacy. In other words, Independents are allowed to run in such systems if they concede some of the crucial features that make them Independents in the first place. This can act as a major psychological disincentive to genuine Independents running (Duverger 1959: 297) because ‘it militates against the independent character’ (ibid.), thus highlighting the major contrast between PR-STV and list systems. The former is concerned with choosing between candidates, while the latter is focussed on choosing between parties. It therefore seems reasonable to assume then that a non-party candidate would be more likely to run under PR-STV than under a list system (in addition to the ease of candidacy referred to in chapter 4).

In general, it is quite difficult to quantify whether PR-STV makes it any easier for Independents to run than any other electoral system. The reasons behind this have already been outlined in previous sections, namely the lack of comparative variation in the Independent vote, and in the operation of PR-STV. However, what can be looked at is the variation within the PR-STV system in Ireland, to test if the number of Independent candidates varies in accordance with certain features. One such element that has been referred to a number of times is the multi-member constituency (Mitchell 2001: 197). The following section examines whether Independents are more likely to run the larger the district magnitude.

¹⁴² Candidates were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement (on a five-point scale) ‘PR-STV gives Independents a better chance of election than other voting systems.’

(ii) *District Magnitude*

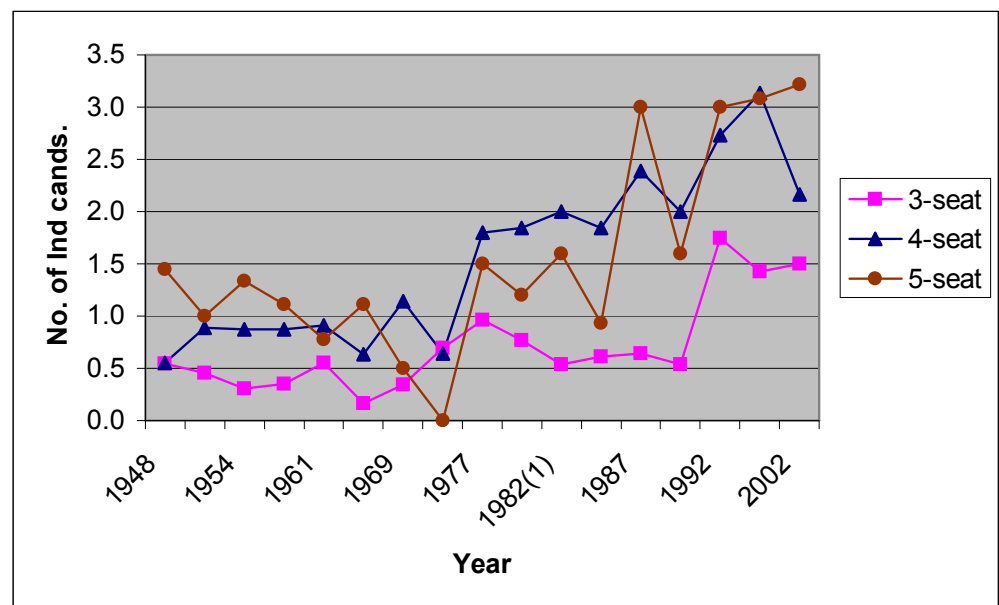
It has already been established above that when looking at the effects of an electoral system, district magnitude is one of the foremost variables to consider. It plays a significant role in determining the proportionality of an electoral system, because the greater the magnitude, the more equitable the distribution of seats. This has a significant effect on minor candidates, such as Independents, who will therefore have more chance of winning a seat the larger the district magnitude (even though it was found above that this perception is inaccurate). Stemming from this relationship, it can be hypothesised that, given the aforementioned assumption that Independent candidates, *ceteris paribus*, are utility-maximisers, we expect more to run the higher the district magnitude, because the percentage of votes required to win a seat declines accordingly. This explains why ten times as many Independents run per constituency in Ireland than in elections to the British House of Commons (see chapter 4). This assumption is also confirmed by the 2004 candidate survey, where the proportion of Independents who said they expected to lose declined in accordance with a higher district magnitude.¹⁴³ 40 percent of Independents expressed such tones in 3-seat constituencies (n=10), 29 percent in 4-seat (n=45), 21 percent in 5-seat (n=53), 14 percent in 6-seat (n=35), and 12 percent in 7-seat constituencies (n=34).

Looking at the raw numbers of Independents running between 1948 and 1977, 102 ran in 3-seat constituencies, as opposed to just 71 in 5-seat constituencies, which would seem to contradict our expectations. However, such figures are due to the greater number of 3-seat constituencies in operation during that time period, and when the Constituency Commission reduced this number in 1980 in favour of more 5-seaters, almost immediately the pattern was reversed. As a result, between 1981 and 2002 a total of 106 Independents

¹⁴³ Q26, candidate survey: 'Which one of the following statements most accurately reflected your confidence in winning a seat at the local elections?: I felt fairly certain of winning; I thought I could win, but I felt the election would be close; I thought the election could go either way; I expected to lose, but I thought if I worked, I could make it a close race; I felt fairly certain of losing.'

ran in 3-seat constituencies, compared to 249 such candidates in 5-seaters, a pattern more in line with our hypothesis. Given the importance of the number of constituencies in determining the quantity of Independents running, to accurately test the hypothesis we need to look at the average (rather than the absolute) number of Independents per constituency, details of which are provided in figure 7.6 below.

Figure 7.6. Number of Independent candidates per constituency



Source: issues of Department of the Environment and Local Government, *Election results and transfer of votes in general election for Dáil and by-elections*. Dublin: Stationery Office, 1948–2002.

The evidence indicates that district magnitude does have a distinct effect on the number of Independent candidates running, since far more run in 5-seat (1.8 on average) than 3-seat (0.7) constituencies (although there is not much difference between the numbers running in 4 and 5-seat districts). A positive correlation coefficient of +0.41 between the average number of Independent candidates and the district magnitude confirms the nature of this relationship. Of course, it could also be argued that we might expect more Independents to run in 5-seaters because there is a larger population in these constituencies. To control for this factor, we can look at the mean number of Independent candidates per

seat across the same time period, which was 0.2 for 3-seaters, 0.4 for 4-seaters, and 0.3 for 5-seaters. This lessens the value of the findings from figure 7.6, as it suggests that district magnitude has less of an effect on the emergence of Independent candidates. This is confirmed by the low correlation coefficient of +0.12 for the relationship between the average number of Independents per seat and the district magnitude. These conflicting results mean that the exact psychological effect of district magnitude is difficult to determine.

In addition to the potential psychological effect of district magnitude, one additional reason why PR-STV encourages individuals to run is because they see other Independents attracting a significant number of votes under the electoral system; that is, demand feeds supply. However, this then begs the question of whether PR-STV does really encourage people to vote for Independents, or whether they would do so regardless of the electoral system in operation. This is the focus of the next section.

7.7 Why people vote for Independents

(i) Candidate-centred system and political culture

It was shown in the previous chapter that the candidate-centred, personalistic and localistic culture favours Independents. Chubb claimed that PR-STV was in some ways conducive to the development of these cultural features (1957: 132). To briefly rehash the argument that was already covered in chapter 4, PR-STV, being a candidate-centred system operating in multi-seat constituencies, fosters intra-party competition that encourages candidates to compete for votes on a personalistic and localistic basis, chiefly in terms of what goods and services they can provide for their respective constituency (Carty 1981: 134) (what is often referred to in the Irish context as brokerage (see Gallagher and Komito 2005)). Logically, one would expect that this argument does not apply to Independents or indeed, party candidates who have no running mates (Gallagher 1987: 33). However, because this particularistic style of competition is so pervasive, all candidates have no option but to participate in brokerage politics, or risk the wrath of the electorate on polling day.

Katz's conclusion is that this culture results in all politicians being virtual Independents, with party unity in effect, an illusion (1980: 108). He argues that 'the matters of real importance to the deputies are constituency services, and on these matters deputies who must electioneer independently continue to act independently' (ibid.). While Katz's claims concerning the illusion of party unity are probably too far-fetched, he is arguing along the right track. Having a party label is not enough to ensure electoral success in Irish politics; one must also possess an ability to provide, or to be seen to provide, 'pork' for the local constituency.¹⁴⁴ In essence, all candidates therefore need to be capable Independents (as Katz would define them), which means that politicians without the backing of a party can be electorally successful. In such a climate, it is no surprise then that capable individuals not drawn to any party do run for office as Independents, and do manage to win a seat.

While the relationship between the culture and the success of Independents is not in doubt, the relationship between the electoral system and the culture is somewhat tenuous. The idea that 'PR-STV causes brokerage' is often touted by those clamouring for reform of the electoral system, and was part of the motivation behind the then Minister for the Environment's initial forays into possible electoral reform in the late 1990s (see Dempsey 1999). He was not the only politician to claim the existence of a positive relationship between PR-STV and brokerage, as John Boland (a former Fine Gael minister) maintained that brokerage (or clientelism as he called it) was 'spawned and has been nurtured' by PR-STV (1991: 42), a line of reasoning that both former cabinet minister Gemma Hussey (1990: 57–61) and former Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald (1991: 49–50) agreed with (both quoted in Gallagher 1996: 509). Academics are more reluctant to attribute cause to the electoral system, as there are a number of weaknesses in the logic underlying the 'PR-STV causes

¹⁴⁴ There has been some disagreement in the literature over whether politicians can actually intervene to provide largesse for their constituents (See Gallagher and Komito 2005: 245–249). Some side with Bax, who contended that they can 'pull strings' (1976: 49), while the majority tend to agree with Sacks' claims that politicians' ability to deliver pork is an illusion, that they are merely dispensing 'imaginary patronage' (1976: 7–8). Regardless of what is true, of importance is the belief by voters that it is an important function of a deputy's role; all aspirant candidates therefore need to participate in brokerage politics, whether it is real or not.

brokerage' argument, most of which are highlighted by Gallagher (1987: 31–36; 1991: 44–45; 1996: 508–509, 512–513; 2005a: 525–526). He referred to the assertion of Bogdanor that electoral systems are not crucial factors in shaping the relationship between a TD and his constituency, but are rather 'passive elements' (quoted in Gallagher 1996: 299). Gallagher says that there is 'no logical basis' to the claim that candidates of the same party cannot compete on anything other than brokerage services, because there are usually quite clear differences between candidates of the same party (1987: 32). Other relevant points of his include the existence of brokerage politics prior to the introduction of PR-STV, its widespread prevalence in other political systems that don't use PR-STV (an example being the UK, which uses SMP, where ironically an argument used against PR-STV is that it would lessen the brokerage load of deputies) (Gallagher 1996: 514) (see also Farrell and McAllister 2000: 18; Mezey 1979), and its practice amongst party TDs with no rival running mates (Gallagher 1987: 33).

The operation of PR-STV in other countries is also not very convincing in relation to the veracity of the relationship between PR-STV and brokerage. A comparison between Ireland and another system using PR-STV, Tasmania, found that although PR-STV does have a 'certain "social logic" tending towards that "style of politics"', brokerage is only 'associated with', not caused by the electoral system (O'Connell 1983: 61). Likewise, a mock ballot survey using PR-STV in London during the 1994 European Parliamentary elections found no evidence of 'friends and neighbours' voting by the electorate (Bowler and Farrell 1996). These findings led Gallagher to 'the inescapable conclusion...that if people want assistance from their public representatives, they will demand this assistance whatever the electoral system, and members of Parliament will feel obliged to render such assistance' (1996: 514). As a result, the most that can be said is that PR-STV is not a disincentive to the flourishing of a brokerage culture. It may be the case that personalism and localism might have dissipated under a party-centred electoral system, such as PR-List, that would have facilitated political parties' taking a firm hold of the political

system, and that the greatest influence PR-STV could therefore have on Independents was not to have a negative effect.

This is similar to Duverger's thesis that electoral systems, rather than yielding a causal effect on party systems, tend to have a preventive effect (1959: 205). For example, his argument was that single-member plurality systems can hinder the development of multi-party politics in a country, and in the same manner, I suggest that a party-centred system might have had a negative impact on the flourishing of brokerage politics in Ireland.

While there is little evidence to vindicate the claim that PR-STV causes brokerage, it certainly seems reasonable to suggest that the candidate-centred nature of PR-STV creates a positive institutional environment suitable to the maintenance of a brokerage-style political culture (see Chubb 1957: 132; King 2000: 197–198). This candidate-centred element is explored in the next section.

(ii) Candidate-centred system

PR-STV allows voters to choose candidates rather than parties (unlike list systems), and because voters can rank candidates against one another (in contrast to other candidate-centred systems such as SMP), the voting decision is not solely about the evaluation of parties, but also candidates (Taagepera and Shugart 1989: 237). In such an environment, candidates without a party label are at much less of a disadvantage than under a party-centred electoral system, which explains why they attract greater levels of support. If Independents can match party candidates in terms of ability and capacity for hard graft, they have a reasonable chance of success under PR-STV.

If a comparative analysis to test the validity of the relationship between a candidate-centred electoral system and Independent success is undertaken, the puzzle of the minuscule vote for Independents in most countries using SMP arises. However, this occurs because SMP is a categorical system, defined as one that asks voters to choose one party (Rae 1967: 17). Such a system lessens the impact of the candidate-centred nature of the ballot because each party fields only one candidate, who encapsulates the party, leading to a blurring of the distinction between the party and its candidate. What distinguishes the

candidate-centric focus of PR-STV from that of SMP is the ordinal nature of the PR-STV ballot, which allows voters to rank order parties and/or candidates (Rae 1967: 17). When an electoral system is both ordinal and candidate-centred, it encourages politicians to cultivate personal support (Farrell and McAllister 2006: 11), which explains why Independents can also attract a sizeable vote under the Alternative Vote in parts of Australia, and under the Single Non-Transferable Vote in Japan before its abolition in 1993. One could undermine this hypothesis by pointing to the cases of both Malta and the Australian Senate, two of the few cases where PR-STV is actually practised, and yet the Independent vote is not particularly significant, especially in the former. However, the ballot papers used in these two systems do not have the same candidate-centred structure as the Irish variant of PR-STV, as candidates are grouped according to party affiliation,¹⁴⁵ meaning that they are similar to the design of a ballot used in party-list systems (Farrell 2006).

The formulation of PR-STV as a candidate-centred system stems from its origin as a product of Victorian liberalism, whose aim was to maximise individual choice (Bogdanor 1984: 77). As such, under PR-STV voters were given a choice between candidates, with the aim of minimising the role of parties in the electoral process (Mackenzie 1957: 62). This lack of control PR-STV affords to parties is one of the reasons why the system has not been adopted in more countries; the modern political party preferred to increase its power over the choice of the electorate, rather than lessen it (Farrell, Mackerras and McAllister 1996: 42; Farrell and McAllister 2000: 33).¹⁴⁶ Indeed, the refusal by most parties to countenance PR-STV when adopting a new electoral system provides an element of tacit recognition of these claims. This also explains why there are no Independent MPs in Malta – the modern parties

¹⁴⁵ In Malta candidates are grouped on the ballot paper in a vertical fashion according to party status; in Australia each party's list of candidates are grouped horizontally above a line, with Independents listed below the line (unless they agree to unite and form their own 'Independent' list). Although still PR-STV, the party-centred nature of these ballots is more of an inducement to party-centred voting than the candidate-centred ballot design used in Ireland.

¹⁴⁶ Although open list systems also allow voters to choose among candidates, they are still party-centred systems that do not permit Independent candidacies

existed prior to the introduction of PR-STV, preventing the evolution of a candidate-centred culture.

The main argument here is that PR-STV in Ireland being more conducive to Independent success than other candidate-centred electoral systems practised elsewhere is related to the timing of its introduction. PR-STV facilitates Independents only if it is introduced before a modern party system has developed, and preferably where there is already in place a tradition of successful Independent candidacies. Because candidate-centred electoral systems were introduced in other states only after party systems had already developed and Independents had died out, there was little chance of their generating a new wave of successful Independent politicians. This explains why very few Independents have won seats in areas that adopted PR-STV after the formation of their respective party systems, which includes Malta, Estonia, Northern Ireland, and the Australian Senate, whereas Independents have done so in Tasmania, where PR-STV was first introduced as early as 1919. It also explains why Independents continue to win seats on Scottish local councils in 2007, as the vast majority of their victories came in regional areas where there is a strong tradition of non-party politics, that is, where party systems have not yet developed.

In relation to Ireland, because PR-STV was introduced there before parties had taken a stranglehold on the political system, it facilitated the development of a candidate-centred culture that was entrenched by the time the party system had stabilised. Rather than nullifying such a culture, the new parties instead had to operate within its confines. They could not impose a candidate upon a constituency; (s)he had to originate from the local area and needed a personal following within the locality. This enabled the electorate to vote for a party while still retaining their loyalty to the local candidate. This practice is still much in evidence today, as parties are careful to pick candidates from different areas of a constituency, to avoid losing votes to rival local candidates (see Weeks 2007b). It was this pattern of competition that led Katz to describe Irish parties as being comprised of 'independent entrepreneurs, each

out to do as much as he can for as many individual constituents as possible' (1980: 108).

This candidate-centred culture is not a fictitious hypothesis invented to support the veracity of the relationship between PR-STV and Independents. Evidence of its existence comes in the form of support party dissidents attract when they run as Independents. When a politician leaves a party to contest future elections as an Independent, most of their voters tend not to follow the candidate's path of defection, and remain loyal to the party. As a result, within most political systems, even those using candidate-centred electoral systems, a politician's decision to leave a party and run as an Independent usually spells the end of his political career. Ireland, however, proves an exception to the norm, as the method of casting multiple preferences enables voters to support both their preferred party and a party dissident. For example, a voter could cast their first preference for a party dissident, and their next immediate preferences for the party that the aforementioned candidate left. A perusal of the electoral record of party dissidents appears to confirm this hypothesis (see chapter 3). Although dissidents do lose some votes, this is only to be expected, especially if such candidates were ejected from the party due to their involvement in a scandal. Most of the dissidents retain a considerable level of support, with almost half retaining their seats, a level of success unheard of in other liberal democracies.

Chubb (1957: 135) and Mair (1987a: 67) cite similar figures, although the latter concludes that they show how poorly party dissidents fare. Since a considerable number of Independents are dissidents, and since the vote they attract comprises a significant proportion of the Independent vote (averaging 25 percent at the three elections from 1992 to 2002: see chapter 3), it is reasonable to infer that PR-STV facilitates the Independent vote because it gives dissidents a reasonable chance and hence does not discourage party splits.

(iii) No wasted vote – can vote sincerely

The final reason why PR-STV could facilitate Independents is that it may encourage electors to vote sincerely. One of the arguments put forward as to

why Independents receive few votes under SMP is what Duverger (1959) referred to as the psychological effect of the wasted vote (Lakeman and Lambert 1958: 110). The mechanical effects of an electoral system that penalises Independents by ‘underpaying’ them in terms of seats can have a resultant psychological effect in that voters may decide not to ‘waste’ their vote for a candidate who has little chance of winning a seat. However, just as some candidates’ incentives may be more expressive than instrumental, so too some voters may not be overly concerned about the final outcome, as their main motivation may have been to protest or to publicise an issue. The following logic does not apply to such voters, who will support their preferred candidate regardless of the electoral system in operation.

Ceteris paribus, a voter would be expected to vote for the candidate or party they most preferred. However, when the preferred candidate is not expected to garner much support, some voters, to maximise the utility of their vote, may be inclined to switch to a candidate who can have a greater impact on the electoral contest. This is known in the literature as ‘sophisticated’, ‘tactical’, or ‘strategic’ voting. Abramson et al. have shown that in the US the presence of SMP resulted in supporters of Independent presidential candidates such as Ross Perot voting for either the Republican or Democrat candidates because they believed Perot had no chance of winning the election (1995). Such actions result in Independents performing more poorly than might have been expected, which itself encourages even greater levels of strategic voting. This type of voting is especially prevalent under SMP, which explains why prominent Independent candidates in the UK, to counteract the possibility of strategic voting, usually attempt to persuade opposition parties not to field a candidate in order to allow the Independents a free run against the incumbent party. In three of the five cases where Independents have been elected to the House of Commons since the 1970s, at least one of the major parties in the respective constituencies agreed not to field a candidate.

We expect strategic voting to be relatively non-existent under PR-STV, because of both the complexity of the system (Bartholdi and Orlin 1991), and because the transferable vote enables voters to cast preferences for all

candidates. For example, if PR-STV had been used in the US presidential election of 1992, supporters of Perot could have given him their first preference, but could also have given a preference for the party candidates. Consequently, electors could vote for an Independent, while also stating which of the major parties they would like to occupy the White House. As a result, under PR-STV Independent supporters are not discouraged from casting their vote for such a candidate (Mitchell 2001: 198). However, some, such as Ross (1959: 67), have claimed that PR-STV as practised in Ireland disadvantages Independents because of the low number of seats per constituency, a theory that was validated in the above section 7.3. To briefly recap, the more seats on offer in a constituency, the fewer votes that are required to win a seat, a factor that helps minor candidates such as Independents. The low district magnitude in Ireland means that some voters may be discouraged from casting a preference for Independents, even though it was stated above that it is not expected that strategic voting exists under PR-STV. This can occur for two reasons: (1) not all voters may understand the rationale of the system, and (2) the median number of preferences cast on a ballot is four (Laver 2004: 522), which means that voters are unlikely to favour listing a large number of preferences to facilitate a sincere vote. The rationale of such voters may be that where they believe an Independent to have little chance of winning a seat, there is not much point giving them a preference.

A tentative finding in support of the hypothesis that ‘PR-STV encourages sincere voting which helps Independents’ was the rise in the vote for Independents in elections to the Australian Senate when it replaced preferential bloc voting with PR-STV in 1948 (Donovan 2000: 477). However, Laver’s analysis of simultaneous SMP and PR-STV elections held in Northern Ireland between 1973 and 1975 found that Independents got the same vote under the two different systems (1976: 214) (although this may have been because the systems were used for elections to different types of arena). Testing the existence of sincere or strategic voting is difficult, because a wholly valid and reliable test would require simultaneous elections held under PR-STV and a system that encourages strategic voting – SMP preferably – for the same set

of voters. One way of testing this hypothesis is to replicate the methodology used by Abramson et al. where they looked at the difference in the proportions who favoured a candidate (using the thermometer scale) and those who actually voted for the same candidate (1995). Unfortunately, while the thermometer scale was used to record feelings towards parties in the 2002 INES, it was not used to evaluate Independent candidates. Nevertheless, a similar measure of attachment is the probability of voting for a party (already referred to in chapter 6), which asks respondents the probability (on a scale of 1 to 10) of their casting a first preference vote for a party or an Independent.¹⁴⁷ Because there was a strong similarity between the proportions giving a probability of 9 or 10 to vote for either Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and Labour, and the proportion of the electorate who did cast a first preference for these parties,¹⁴⁸ it is reasonable to assume that the former is an accurate measure of potential support for a party and/or candidate. If the difference between the proportion who said they would probably vote for a party and the proportion that ultimately did is negligible, this denotes the existence of sincere voting; if there is a substantial difference between these proportions, we can assume that this is evidence of strategic voting, all things being equal. Testing this hypothesis, 22 percent of respondents said they would very probably (those giving a score of 9 or 10 on the aforementioned scale) give their first preference to an Independent candidate, over twice the actual proportion that did (9.5 percent). In addition, of those who said that they would probably vote for an Independent (again those giving a score of 9 or 10), only 26 percent cast a first preference for an Independent. Because there was no such difference in the equivalent proportions for the three main parties, this acts as a controlling factor; following the logic of Abramson et al., it seems reasonable to assume that because three-quarters of Independent supporters voted for a party candidate,

¹⁴⁷ Question b55: 'We have a number of political parties in Ireland, each of which would like to get your vote. How probable is it that you will ever give your first preference vote to the following parties? Please use the numbers on this scale (1 to 10) to indicate your views where '1' means 'not at all probable' and '10' means 'very probable'.'

¹⁴⁸ 41.5 percent gave a probability of 9 and 10 for Fianna Fáil (its first preference vote was 41.5 percent); 18.6 percent gave a similar probability for Fine Gael (22.5 percent first preference vote); 12.5 percent a probability for Labour (10.8 percent first preference vote).

this is evidence of strategic voting. One possible reason that could explain the difference in proportions is the absence of Independents in a constituency; however, in 2002 Independents ran in all but four constituencies, cancelling this out as a possible factor.¹⁴⁹ Admittedly, this is far from a perfect measure of strategic voting. It may well reflect voters' expression of the position that they would be quite willing to vote for an Independent candidate, but at the actual election there was no such candidate that they liked. Indeed, because the nature of the vote for an Independent is very much dependent on the candidates, few decide in advance to 'vote Independent' as an ideological expression no matter who the Independent is. In spite of these reservations, this measure still provides evidence of a potential Independent vote that does not emerge. While there may be other reasons accounting for its non-emergence, this measure has been accepted as evidence of strategic voting in reputable research. Lacking a better measure of strategic voting, it is the most suitable available, and whatever one's reservations, certainly provides reasonable foundations on which to evaluate the consequences of strategic voting for Independent candidates.

This section set out to test whether PR-STV helps Independents because it encourages sincere voting. Contrary to expectation, it was found that strategic voting occurs under this system, and that it militates against Independents, who fail to realise almost three-quarters of their potential support. There are several possible factors accounting for the presence of strategic voting, which include the low district magnitude in operation, and the lack of optimism amongst voters concerning the electoral fortunes of Independents (which may be a product of the first factor). In the absence of available data, these are questions that remained unanswered within the framework of this study.

7.8 Conclusion

The relationship between PR-STV and Independents has been explored in this chapter. The lack of variation in both these variables prevented a cross-country

¹⁴⁹ This relationship was also examined in just the constituencies where Independents ran, but the results were repeated: only one in four of those who said they would probably cast a vote for an Independent did so.

comparison, and the most that could be accomplished was to examine the relationship between the two within Ireland.

Despite these limitations, a number of significant findings were produced. First, contrary to common perception, it was found that Independents' success in winning seats is not dependent on district magnitude, as in fact, their largest proportion of victories have come in single-seat constituencies (at by-elections). Second, and related to the aforementioned finding, Independents' seat–vote ratio is not dependent on district magnitude. It has been assumed to date that Independents are likely to receive more seats for their votes the larger the district magnitude, but the relationship between the two was found to be negative. These two results could have important repercussions for Independent candidates, who regularly complain whenever the number of seats in their respective electoral districts is reduced by the Constituency Commission.

Independents' non-partisan status and lack of running-mates does not prove a hindrance to their ability to attract preferences. It seems that once voters have cast a preference(s) for their favoured party, they are more willing to cast a lower preference for an Independent than a candidate of a rival party. However, what again may come as a surprise to some is that an analysis of Independents' cumulative performance reveals that, taken as a whole, they have actually suffered rather than profited from transfers. This runs contrary to the common belief that transfers help Independents. In theory transfers help them, because as was stated above, Independents receive a disproportionately large number of lower preferences (in relation to their share of first preferences). However, in practice, transfers provide little to no benefit, because most of these preferences do not come into play in the election count.

Finally, the candidate-centred nature of PR-STV was examined. It is frequently stated that because PR-STV promotes a personalistic, particularistic, and localistic political culture (see chapter 2), it encourages people to vote for Independent candidates. However, it was argued that the veracity of the relationship between PR-STV and the culture is very much in doubt for two main reasons: (1) the particular culture was in place long before the

introduction of PR-STV, and (2) a similar type of culture is evident in a lot of systems that do not use PR-STV. Despite this, there still remains a direct positive link between the candidate-centred system and Independents in terms of the nature of the political competition it fosters. Although it did not prove empirically possible to test this hypothesis, it was shown that PR-STV is more conducive to candidate-centred behaviour than SMP because of the latter's categorical nature, which results in a blurring of distinction between the candidate and the party. In addition, it was also argued that of key importance in promoting such a culture is the timing of the introduction of the electoral system. Introducing PR-STV when a strong party system has already evolved will not engineer a candidate-centred culture, but if it is introduced when the political system is in a state of flux, it can help to engineer candidate-centred competition, thereby facilitating Independents.

Summarising these different aspects of PR-STV, a number of conclusions can be reached about the general manner in which it helps Independents more than any other electoral system:

1. It is a form of PR, which, compared with non-PR systems, helps small groups and parties, a category that Independents almost always fall into. It is the only PR system that both allows Independent candidates to run on their own and ensures them a seat return approximately equitable to their vote. This proportionality is engineered by the presence of multi-member constituencies, where an Independent needs to attract only a fraction of the first preference vote to win a seat, in contrast to SMP, where they would have to beat every single party in the contest.¹⁵⁰
2. Unlike other forms of PR, PR-STV is a candidate-centred system that permits candidates to stand alone and not as part of a party (in almost all list systems, Independents can only run under the plurality element of mixed-member systems; the list option in PR systems is generally not

¹⁵⁰ The aforementioned success of Independents at single-seat by-elections must be noted here, as it may lessen the importance of PR. However, in addition to Independents contesting only half of the by-elections held between 1948 and 2007, it is also worth noting that government parties historically fare poorly at by-elections, which may exaggerate the Independent vote. Such candidates may not attract as much support if single-seat constituencies were the norm.

available for Independents, although candidates can get round this in some systems by running as part of a personalised list). While there is no clear-cut evidence that this fosters candidate-centred political competition, PR-STV certainly does not discourage its presence and may support its continuing existence in the face of party competition.

3. It helps 'centrist' candidates, those who are acceptable to everyone, which is not true of other PR and non-PR systems. Numerous examples of popular 'centrist' candidates who win very few votes under plurality systems spring to mind, including Ralph Nader in the US presidential election of 2000, and François Bayrou in the French presidential election of 2007. Outside of voters' first preferred candidate, both individuals would probably have been the preferred option of a large majority of the electorate, but this was of little comfort to the candidates under the respective plurality systems in operation. PR-STV helps centrist candidates via two means. The first is that strategic voting is not necessary under PR-STV. The second is related to the system of transfers: extremist candidates usually receive proportionally fewer transfers than first preference votes because of their polarising nature; Sinn Féin are a prominent example. Centrist candidates, on the other hand, profit from transfers because party voters are more willing to give them a lower preference than a candidate from a rival party. It was found that Independents, as centrist candidates, do receive a substantial number of lower preferences. Their only problem is benefiting from these, as they need to receive enough first preference votes to remain in the electoral contest when such transfers are distributed.

To conclude this chapter, it has been shown how various aspects of the PR-STV system affect Independents' significance in Irish politics. However, at the same time, we must be careful not to attribute too much causal influence to the electoral system, since PR-STV does not create an Independent vote. This is testified by its relative non-existence in Malta, and by the decline in both the vote and seat share of Independents at Scottish local elections when PR-STV was used there for the first time in May 2007 (Curtice 2007: 213). It is

therefore the case that neither school of thought regarding the influence of electoral systems is wrong in the case of Ireland. There is merit in the argument of cultural modernisationists that it is the political culture that explains the presence of Independents, but there is also much to be said for the argument that the electoral system facilitates the expression of this culture in terms of its influence upon political competition. The most that can therefore be said is that PR-STV is not a disincentive to Independents unlike SMP or list systems. It encourages Independent candidates to run, and provides an incentive to candidate-centred behaviour by both candidates and voters alike; however, it does not magically produce an Independent vote out of thin air – it facilitates its expression.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The main aim of this dissertation has been to explain what accounts for the significant presence of Independents in a political system, with a specific focus on the Irish arena. This case was chosen because the level of success achieved by Independents in Ireland is unrivalled compared to other western democracies. The success referred to is both the number of votes and seats Independents win at general elections, as well as the influence they wield on the process of government formation. While this is frequently referred to in the relevant literature, to date there has been very little academic analysis of this topic. Consequently, the aim of this dissertation was to shed some light on this area by adopting a number of approaches to explain the significance of Independents.

One method of doing so would have been a comparative cross-country study, but such is the lack of variation in both the Independent vote and the numbers of Independent parliamentarians across western Europe, this has not proved feasible. Instead, this study has adopted the comparative case study approach, which enables a comparative analysis of the variation in significance achieved by Independents across the Irish system. While this dissertation is largely written in the Irish context, comparative theories were tested, and the results of the analysis produced findings of importance beyond the case of Ireland.

Establishing the reasons for the presence of a significant political actor within one system requires a number of different approaches. It is not enough just to look at Independents as a singular feature, seeking to explain their presence as a historical phenomenon. This is because Independents are not akin to a party and cannot rely on tradition or party loyalty to maintain their levels of support across different decades and political generations.

As a result, the focus of this dissertation involved breaking down the factors that explain the significance of Independents and examining each of these factors separately because it is not possible to assess them all as a whole

in one model. The structure involved was to assess the motives of those who run as Independents, those who vote for the latter, and the effect of the electoral system on the motives of both these groups.

The main conclusion was that there is no one single reason that explains the significance of Independents. Looking at the nature of the candidates, their socio-economic background and political attitudes do not greatly differ from those of party candidates. Given the limited resources available to Independents, their level of campaigning reaches a relatively intense level, which has a strong effect on their vote. It also seems as if the Irish electorate do not have a disdain for Independent candidates, and are prepared to reward candidates who satisfy the personalistic and localistic demands of voters; importantly, one does not have to be a party person to satisfy such demands. This culture whereby parties are not viewed as the sole means of political representation is facilitated by a conducive electoral system, but we must be careful not to attribute too much influence to the latter. As was shown in chapter 7, PR-STV does not create an Independent vote. These conclusions are further fleshed out in the following sections.

8.2 Categorisation of Independents

Because the topic of Independents has been very much under-studied to date, a number of quite different areas had to be explored. The first issue tackled in this dissertation involved clarifying the electoral presence occupied by Independents in Irish politics. As was shown in chapters 1, 2 and 3, because there is no agreed definition of what constitutes an Independent, there is no definitive compilation of data available that details their electoral history. In addition, Independents tend to be included with minor parties in an ‘others’ category when summaries of results are provided. This is not just the case in the academic literature, but also applied to the official election results published by the relevant government authorities up until the 1990s. Consequently, compiling the details of Independents’ electoral record involved (1) clarifying what constitutes an Independent (see below for further analysis of this), and (2) trawling through the relevant data to produce summaries of Independents’

performance at each Dáil election. The latter involved detailing for each general election the total number of votes and seats won by Independent candidates. While this may seem quite basic information, to date it has not been available in a single compendium, and was therefore an important contribution. These results indicated that Independents had a very successful period in the early decades of the state, when as many as one in three such candidates were elected. While they entered a period of decline following the consolidation of the two-and-a-half party system in the 1950s, in contrast to Independents in other states, this decline was not terminal. Since the 1970s, both the numbers of Independents and the vote for these candidates has been on the rise. Although some of these Independents were dissidents who fell out with their political party, the total of such candidates is far outweighed by the number of non-dissidents. This indicates the renewed interest in Independent candidates on the part of the Irish electorate, which follows a similar pattern to the general comparative experience that in recent years has seen Independent parliamentarians emerge in some systems for the first time since the 1950s.

8.3 Typology of Independents

Before assessing the significance of Independents, a clarification of who and what they are was required. This involved explaining what exactly constitutes an Independent politician, and providing a typology of the different types of Independents contesting elections, with the ultimate aim of tracing some linkage and similarities between the 1,000 Independent candidates who ran for office between 1922 and 2002.

The term 'Independents' refers to a plurality of Independent candidates. However, it is also used in the colloquial sense as a collective term to describe all the various individuals that run under this title, akin to a party label. The major problem with this is that, to state the obvious, Independents are not a party. While most parties can be expected to comprise of a collection of politicians sharing similar ideological preferences and beliefs, who agree (and are usually compelled by a party whip) to pursue an agreed programme of policies, it was shown that this description does not apply to Independents.

Because the latter are very much a heterogeneous group, and yet are referred to as a unitary body that implies a degree of homogeneity, it was felt necessary to clarify and classify the different types of Independents that have run for office.

Before doing so, it was first necessary to establish a working definition of an Independent, because there is no agreement on the characteristics of the concept. It was shown that it is very difficult to identify any type of individual, especially in political life, who is entirely neutral and non-partisan. In reality, true independence is somewhat of a utopian myth, and therefore outside the confines of this study. The relevant electoral authorities do not provide much assistance in solving this quandary as they restrict their definitions to political parties. Consequently, any organisation or individual that does not gain legal recognition as a party falls into the residual category of ‘non-party’, which includes both organisations that aspire for party status and genuine Independents.

In many instances, scholars tend to avoid a definition, or simply refer to all politicians calling themselves an ‘Independent’; in some cases, even members of minor parties are included within this category. Two of the main reasons why there is no agreement over what constitutes an Independent involve the personal attributes associated with the adjective ‘independent’, and because it is difficult to clarify what an Independent is not, that is, a party. For the purposes of this study, LaPalombara and Weiner’s definition of a party was adopted, that requires an organisation to demonstrate six key characteristics (1966: 6). Consequently, a minimalist definition of an Independent was applied in this dissertation – a non-party candidate. Given the broad nature of this categorisation, it included a number of different types of Independents, of which four were identified: the ‘pure’ Independent that is not affiliated with any party; the ‘gene pool’ Independent who is associated or aligned with (but ultimately independent of) a party; the nominee of an interest group; and the representative of a micro-party. While an analysis of these four categories would have been adequate, inductive reasoning indicated a further division of sub-categories worthy of analysis.

Focussing on the latter, while different types have previously been identified, some of the categories were very much contextual and could not be used either to link the different Independents that have contested elections across the decades or to aid a comparative theory of Independents. Consequently, a comprehensive categorisation of Independents was necessary, and to facilitate this, a qualitative study of the background of every Independent candidate who ran for the Dáil between 1922 and 2002 was conducted. This necessitated a trawl through both primary and secondary sources, but it was also aided beforehand by some inductive theorising beforehand based on empirical observation of the Irish election scene.

Six families of Independents were identified: remnants of former parties, corporatist Independents, ideological Independents, community Independents, temperamental Independents, and micro-parties. While the latter three constitute categories in their own right, the first three families include Independent Unionists, Independent Nationalists, Independent Farmers, Independent Business candidates, left-wing Independents, and Independent Republicans. These six families can constitute the basis for any future comparative work on Independents, in particular the devising of a theory or typology of Independents. The electoral performance of these ten different types of Independents since 1922 was detailed and analysed, while an archetypal example of each of these types of Independents was profiled. Although some of this material was historical in nature, it was necessary both because of the limited stock of knowledge available on the topic, and to act as a foundation from which to inductively develop formal theories and hypotheses to explain Independents' significance.

It was shown that the overall nature of these Independents has changed from a nationally policy-driven outlook prevalent amongst the categories present in the early decades of the state to a more local orientation amongst the more recent categories. This is evident in the nature of support offered by Independents to minority administrations during these periods in time. In the 1920s, some Independent TDs willingly supported the minority Cumann na nGaedheal administration, secure in the knowledge that the government would

enact national policies that they (Independents) were in agreement with. However, when minority Fianna Fáil administrations negotiated the support of Independent TDs in the 1980s and 1990s, the latter were not so easily giving of their parliamentary vote, and for these Independents, the main focus was to secure particularistic benefits for their local constituencies. Not only has the content of the arrangements changed, but this also reflected a change in the nature of Independent candidates, who have evolved from a pro-establishment grouping to something of an anti-establishment category. This was an important finding, because it shows that although Independents received similar levels of success in the 1920s, the 1940s, and at the turn of the twenty-first century, their presence does not have the same consequence for Irish politics. The large number of Independents in the early Dála did not threaten the stability of the political system, because many of them openly and freely supported the minority Cumann na nGaedheal government. In contrast, the numbers elected since the 1980s have threatened instability, never so more evident than during the 1981–1982 period when there were three elections held over 18 months in part because Independents withdrew their support from two minority administrations.

It is not enough just to provide a categorisation of Independents based on an analysis of the Irish political scene. The phenomenon of Independents needs to be placed within the comparative literature on political competition, voting behaviour, and minor political actors. As such, a comparative framework based on Lipset and Rokkan's socio-economic cleavages and the various typologies of new parties was devised. This cross-tabulated each of the dimensions of political competition against the four main types of new parties, therefore including a possible 32 types of Independents, of which 11 were identified. Most Independents were shown to be prolocutors in that they aim to correct what is the perceived betrayal of principles by the particular political parties. As such, both the presence and persistence of Independents are very much a comment on the nature of the party system.

The aim of this comparative categorisation was to show that Independents are not just a form of deviant electoral behaviour outside of the

comparative theories of voting behaviour and political competition. Rather, the evidence indicated that there is a structured element to the presence of Independents in that they are mobilised along political cleavages, and compete with the parties on typical dimensions of political competition; for example, the left-right spectrum or the centre-periphery cleavage. Consequently, clarification of the electoral presence of Independents and the classification of the different types of such candidates that have contested elections provides the material that can be used for further comparative research, something that heretofore could not be done without such information. For example, details of the electoral performance of Independents according to district magnitude and based on vote transfers provided much of the base material for analysis of the effects of the electoral system in chapter 7.

Given the different types of Independent categories, it was necessary to expose each of these to empirical analysis, and not just the sum grouping of Independents. This was because there may be as much difference between some Independents as occurs between the parties. It was not necessary to examine all the ten types of Independents identified, because some of them are no longer in existence. At the most recent election analysed (2002), there were four prominent types of Independent candidates: community Independents, temperamental Independents, left-wing Independents, and issue-based Independents. These were all analysed within the dissertation, with the latter two merged into one category (policy Independents) to maintain a workable sample size. The separate results for these categories are discussed below.

8.4 Candidate emergence

While chapter 3 provided an insight into the types of Independent candidates, and outlined some of the reasons why they ran for office, chapter 4 provided a more detailed analysis of the incentives motivating the emergence of Independent candidates. Because more Independents run in Ireland (relative to the number of electoral constituencies) than in most other liberal democracies, the sheer presence of Independents goes some way to explaining their

significance. As such, it was necessary to examine Independent candidates' motivations to run for office.

The undertaking of this analysis was based on data acquired from a postal survey of over 500 candidates from the 2004 local elections. This was the first known comprehensive study carried out of the motivations and campaign activities of candidates at an Irish election, and even in the wider comparative world such a study of campaign activities is quite rare. As such, the findings from this study are an important contribution to the literature. Although the survey was conducted at local level, it was shown that its findings are still very much applicable to the national scene (that is, general elections), because local elections are simply a lower tier of politics, rather than an entirely different arena.

First of all, the direct incentives motivating Independents vis-à-vis party candidates were assessed. This comparison was undertaken because if the analysis was confined to Independents, we would have no way of knowing if their incentives to run were quite distinct, or were just the same as any party candidate. The literature generally suggests a dichotomy of incentives into instrumental and expressive factors. The former says that candidates are running with a clear goal in mind, the achieving of which is linked to the electoral outcome; those running with the latter in mind are less concerned with the result of the contest, instead deriving their satisfaction from the act of participation. Deductive reasoning resulted in the hypothesis that party candidates will be more likely to be motivated by instrumental incentives, while Independents will be more expressive in their aims.

However, it was found that there is not a clear dichotomy between the two types of candidates. It is not the case that those running for a party have purely instrumental aims in mind, and that Independent candidates are solely concerned with making an expression. Rather, Independents are motivated by a mixture of both instrumental and expressive incentives. For example, 'representing the local area' was the most significant incentive motivating Independents to run for office, especially community Independents. This confirms the importance of localism in Irish politics, and matches the

motivations of voters, whose prime concern is to select someone to look after the interests of the constituency (Sinnott 1995: 169). In fact, some instrumental incentives were of greater significance to Independents than party candidates. Representing the local area, achieving policy goals, and being asked to run by an interest group were all more important to Independents, indicating that they were not purely expressive individuals looking to make a statement. Independents had clear political goals in mind that they wanted to achieve by being in office.

Two other models of candidate emergence were assessed. The first was the sociological model, and this looked at the influence of Independents' socio-economic background on their willingness to run for office. While Independents were initially compared with party candidates in a number of bivariate analyses, for the purpose of a multivariate model, the former were compared with voters. This is because the choice for would-be Independents is not to either run for a party or as an Independent candidate. There are very few known cases of individuals turning down a party nomination to run as an Independent. Those who run as Independents therefore usually have few, if any, prospects of being selected as a party candidate (the possible exceptions are temperamental Independents, but in any case their decision to run as an Independent tends to materialise because of their failure to secure a party nomination), and for such individuals, the choice is Independent or nothing, not Independent or party. Assessing why, out of 3 million voters, a few individuals decide to run as Independents, provided a few answers to account for their significance. Those more likely to run as an Independent included older voters, men, members of trade unions, university graduates, and those living in rural areas. While this was in line with findings from other studies concerning the emergence of candidates, it did provide some insight into the kind of individual willing to put themselves forward as an Independent. If Independent candidates exhibited radical and eccentric attributes wildly out of sync with the population at large, and which discouraged voters from trusting such candidates with their vote, this could explain the low levels of support attracted by Independents, as is the case in some other political systems. However, because Independents do

not differ a great deal in their background from party candidates, this could enhance the credibility of their candidacy, and may explain why Independents attract such levels of support in Ireland, something which was elaborated on in chapter 6.

The second model of candidate emergence examined was the rational model. The main aim of this was to determine to what extent the pattern of the emergence of Independents is strategic. While it was difficult to formulate a precise model to measure this, it was shown that there is an element of rationality behind the pattern of the presence of Independent candidates. More Independents ran in constituencies with a favourable institutional structure (namely a larger district magnitude), and a favourable political climate (indicated by the presence of a greater number of Independent politicians and a higher level of support for them). It was also shown that we expect the probability of victory (p) for Independents to be higher in Ireland than other liberal democracies, because of their historical success rates (one in three such candidates won seats at general elections in the 1920s and 1930s) and because of the presence of a conducive electoral system, or at least one that Independent candidates perceive to be conducive (see chapter 7 for more analysis). A higher value of p was confirmed by the high rates of confidence of Independents, as one in four of them expressed strong hopes of winning a seat (albeit a post-hoc measure). In addition, Independents accrue lower costs in running for office, and in contrast to other political systems, have been able to provide 'pork' for their constituency. These factors combined suggest that it is far more tempting for Independents to run in Ireland than other political systems. While non-partisan candidates do run in the latter, they have little chance of winning a seat, and so they tend to consist of irrational political actors who would win few votes in any political system. The more favourable conditions in Ireland attract higher calibre candidates who have a greater chance of winning a seat, all things being equal.

8.5 The importance of campaigns

The aforementioned candidate survey had a second purpose: to determine what influence Independents' campaigns had on explaining their significance. Given the lack of information available on Independents' level of resources, as well as both the nature and intensity of their campaign activities, it was also necessary to shed some light on this area and to provide details of Independents' campaigns. It was shown that although Independents campaign less than party candidates, their level of intensity is still approximately two-thirds the rate of the latter.

To determine what affects the level of campaigning carried out by Independents, it was shown that political experience, membership of a local community association, and being asked to run by an interest group all matter. This suggests that it is important for Independents to increase their political capital by networking, as it provides them with greater access to resources, which enables them to carry out a more intensive level of campaigning.

All this contributes to the significant presence of Independents only if campaigning itself influences their vote. It was found that the more Independent candidates campaigned, the more votes they won at an election. Significantly, campaigning was more important for Independents than for party candidates. This confirmed a deductive hypothesis that with the lack of a partisan label to attract followers, Independents are very much dependent on their personal ability to deliver a vote. Factors that had a positive influence on the Independent vote included the numbers of leaflets distributed, the number of posters erected, the level of preparation undertaken, and the number of volunteers on a candidates' campaign team. In contrast, the only campaign activities that mattered in a positive manner to party candidates were the number of posters and campaign workers, with three activities even having a negative effect on their vote return. Overall, the different campaign activities explain up to 60 percent of the variation in the Independent vote, indicating the importance of campaigning in accounting for the significant presence of Independents. It is evidently the case that to be a successful Independent candidate, one needs to have a network of contacts acquired from an affiliation

with important groups, to have a record of involvement in campaigns, and to perform a number of key election activities. However, it is still important to state that the possession of these attributes does not guarantee election, and neither does their absence prevent election. Rather, those who possess these attributes are significantly more likely to be more successful than those who do not.

While the importance of resources to Independents was stressed, it was found that money might not be as significant as heretofore believed. One major reason for this is that expenditure returns are not as reliable a measure of campaign activity as might be expected. Attracting volunteer workers, distributing leaflets, and preparing a campaign are not taken into account by the official returns; even the activities that are (such as expenditure on election material) have a very weak relationship with the actual level of activity conducted. This has important consequences for the validity and reliability of studies of campaigning that are based solely on analysis of expenditure returns. As such, this is a significant finding that has repercussions beyond the focus of this study.

8.6 Explaining the Independent vote

Probably the most obvious factor accounting for the significant presence of Independents was the hardest to explain. Independents achieve electoral success because a significant proportion of the electorate choose to vote for them, and a number of factors were assessed to determine what accounts for the support such candidates attract. The main difficulty in achieving this is related to the aforementioned heterogeneity of the Independent category. For example, the presence of ten categories of Independents might suggest the existence of at least ten different factors explaining their support. Despite this heterogeneity, it was found that there are a number of general factors motivating individuals to vote for Independents. Just as the instrumental–expressive dichotomy was assessed for Independent candidates, it was also applied to Independent voters. It was found that the main instrumental incentives to vote for an Independent revolve around the cultural feature of localism. The presence of a candidate-

centred culture was not as important once the effects of other variables were controlled for. It was shown that there is a strong expressive element to the Independent vote. Individuals drawn to such candidates include those lacking an affective attachment towards any party, although it was shown that general anti-party sentiment is not a significant factor. There is also a protest element attached to the Independent vote, especially centred on specific issues. However, because such a vote does tend to be issue-oriented, the nature of the protest probably varies from election to election. For example, because the state of the health services happened to be the most important issue at the 2002 election, it was the main issue that mobilised an Independent protest vote. As expected, there were not any major differences in the socio-economic background of Independent voters as compared with those voting for party candidates. Most likely this was due to the heterogeneous nature of the candidates. Probably the most significant characteristic of the Independent vote is that it is very much dependent on the nature of the Independent candidate. For example, if an Independent farming candidate runs for election, (s)he will attract a farming vote, in the same way Independent Unionists attracted a Protestant vote. This also applied when looking at the geographical spread of Independent support, which is very much dependent on the emergence of Independent candidates, rather than an actual 'Independent' vote, in the adjectival and ideological sense.

Consequently, we need to be careful about drawing conclusions concerning the demographic nature of the Independent vote. The case of the constituency of Donegal is a significant example, where Independents have been elected at 21 of the 28 general elections held between 1922 and 2002. While the initial conclusion might be that this indicates the presence of a strong ideologically-minded 'Independent vote', an analysis of the Independent candidates that ran in this constituency suggests a diverse range of support. These included Independent Unionists, anti-abortion candidates, Independent Nationalists, Independent Republicans, members of a localised Christian Democrat party, and even a candidate nominated by an interest group mobilised over the issue of a television deflector mast. Consequently this translates into a

diverse 'Independent vote', and it would be reasonable to expect little consistency in the socio-economic background of the voters these candidates attracted.

As a result, this may lead some to question whether an Independent vote really exists at all, or is it just a vote for particular Independent candidates? The importance of the general instrumental incentives of localism and the expressive motives of party detachment and issue grievance suggests that there is an Independent vote in Ireland. However, this is not necessarily tied to an Independent candidate – such voters will generally opt for the candidate who best fulfils their electoral concerns, even if the latter is a member of a party. What can be said therefore is that there is in existence an Independent political culture, where a sizeable proportion of voters are prepared to evaluate the candidates outside of their partisan labels. Where a credible Independent emerges to mobilise voters on these concerns, (s)he will succeed electorally. This explains my unproven assertion that individuals elected as Independents are politicians who would be successful wearing any party clothes, or even none at all.

8.7 The electoral system

PR-STV was shown to have three general effects on Independents: it allows individuals to run on their own, and yet still expect to receive a seat return relatively proportional to their vote return (relative at least to non-PR systems); it is a candidate-centred system; and it helps centrist candidates who appeal to everyone. While this influence of PR-STV on the presence of Independents appears to be widely believed in the literature, the direct mechanical effects may not be as great as imagined. Two such effects include district magnitude and the system of transfers, as it was shown that the influence of both is perhaps overstated. While multi-member constituencies do encourage more Independent candidates to put their name forward for election, Independents' rate of success does not increase in line with a rising district magnitude. This finding could have important consequences, because if the former phenomenon is a direct consequence of the latter, a realisation that Independents do not

perform better in larger constituencies might lessen the psychological effect of the multi-member constituency. However, it was also shown that it is difficult to achieve proportionality with a magnitude of less than five. This could mean that rather than one of the particular existing magnitudes favouring Independents over another, they are penalised by all three sizes that are in operation. It could well be that multi-member constituencies will only truly benefit Independents (that is, awarding them an advantage ratio of at least one) if they are increased in size to values greater than five.

It was shown that the effect of transfers has been that Independents have actually fallen more places in the electoral count than they have jumped, again running contrary to common belief. However, this is not necessarily because Independents receive fewer lower preferences, but is a product of a combination of factors, including Independents' frequently early elimination from counts, and the examination of only a fraction of transfers under the rules of PR-STV.

The important conclusion is that PR-STV does not create an Independent vote; the case of Malta is clear evidence of this. However, the main effect of PR-STV is to support a personalistic, particularistic, and localistic culture that was already in place in Ireland. It was shown that these features are some of the main contributory factors to the significant presence of Independents. It is not exactly clear if this culture would have persisted under a list electoral system for example, but PR-STV has certainly not had a negative effect on the persistence of Independents. This summarises the overall effect PR-STV has on the significant presence of Independents: it did not have a negative effect that would have discouraged a vote for Independent candidates.

8.8 Independents' heterogeneity

Throughout this dissertation, a number of questions have been raised concerning the heterogeneity of the Independent category. The merits of treating Independents as a unitary category were assessed because they are not akin to a party, which consists of members united under a common label. Consequently, this study of Independents needed to also focus on the sub-

categories within this family to determine if there are major differences between the respective categories of Independents. In the chapters on candidate emergence, campaign performance and Independent voters, three sub-categories of Independents were analysed: community Independents, policy Independents and temperamental Independents. Although there were some differences between these groups, they were not major and overall, the same factors explaining the significance of Independents appeared to generally apply across the categories. This is an important finding, because it adds credibility to a study of Independents for the comparative world. For example, finding that there were no general reasons explaining the significant presence of Independents would mean that we would be able to explain the significance only of particular types of Independents. While this would still be an important finding in the context of this dissertation, it would limit the opportunity to extend the research beyond the framework of this study if a cross-country comparative analysis of Independents was desired. We can therefore conclude that although Independent candidates themselves (and perhaps their supporters too) are a heterogeneous category, there are a number of general factors that explain the significance of this category as a whole. Undoubtedly some unique factors may explain why some particular Independent candidates are successful, but this is probably the case for any election candidate, be they party or Independent. What is more important is that beyond these specific factors, this dissertation has highlighted a number of variables that explain why the overall category of Independents is more successful in Ireland than almost any other liberal democracy.

8.9 A unique anachronism?

The debate around Independents appears to suggest that they are both remnants of a bygone era and a political feature relatively unique to the Irish system. However, such claims of exclusivity often tend to be exaggerated, and can sometimes act as a factor motivating less comparative interest in a topic. Although the success Independents have achieved in the Irish political system is unmatched in most other liberal democracies, they are a manifestation of a

comparative feature that is present in a lot of other systems: populism. Although this concept was not explored within the framework of this dissertation, it is worth highlighting the potential this branch of the literature poses for future comparative research. Populism has been defined as an ‘episodic, anti-political, empty-hearted, chameleonic celebration of the heartland in the face of crisis’ (Taggart 2000: 5). There is no one strand or distinct specific form of populism, with the only common theme being ‘appeals to the people’ and ‘distrust of elites’ (Canovan in Taggart 2000: 21), messages which often form the central theme of Independent candidates’ campaigns. For example, an Independent TD stressed in her 2002 election literature that she was ‘only answerable to the people. I offer you the people of this constituency an Independent voice, unconstrained by party politics’.¹⁵¹ In addition, populism is very much a contextual phenomenon that is usually studied in relation to the region within which it appears. All of these different features seem to fit the phenomenon of Independents that was the focus of this study. Further similarities can be identified when looking at the six key themes associated with populism (Taggart 2000: 2):

- It is hostile to representative politics (described as ‘reluctantly political’ by Taggart);
- Populists identify themselves with an ‘idealised heartland’ within their favoured community;
- As an ideology, it lacks core values;
- It is chameleonic, in that it adapts to the colour of its environment;
- Populism provokes a strong reaction to a sense of crisis;
- It contains fundamental dilemmas that render it self-limiting; for example, populists are often opposed to representative politics, and yet it is often only under this form that they find expression and mobilise.

As the following comparison indicates, Independents exhibit all these traits, which provides some merit to the argument that they could be included as part of a future comparative study of populism. To begin with:

¹⁵¹ Source: sample of election literature from Mildred Fox, Independent TD for Wicklow 1995–2007.

- Many Independent candidates are ‘reluctantly political’; some only run as a last straw if all other avenues to resolve an issue have failed. For example, a television deflector candidate nominated by a local interest group for the 1997 election did not desire a political career, and following the resolution of the dispute over the aforementioned deflector, he retired from political life and did not contest the succeeding election;
- Most Independents identify with an idealised heartland within their constituency by their appeal to localistic tendencies; this was shown to be an important incentive to vote for Independents in chapter 6;
- With the possible exception of left-wing Independents and some Independent Republicans, Independents do not have core ideological values, and they can change their policy preferences in a Downsian fashion in accordance with whatever policy is of greatest appeal to the electorate;
- Independents can be chameleonic, and the nature of their respective candidacies often reflects the interests or issues on which they are mobilised;
- Independents very often represent a reaction to a sense of crisis within a region. Whenever a local service is threatened with closure in a constituency, be it health services or education facilities, an interest group is mobilised to campaign for its retention. One of the first actions such a group often threatens is to run an Independent candidate. Consequently, a large number of Independents running for office usually signals a sense of crisis in a constituency over the state of local services.
- There are fundamental dilemmas for successful Independents that limit the success they can achieve. Such individuals often begin their political lives as campaigners, usually protesting against government policies. Becoming a career politician is usually the last thing on these individuals’ minds, but an inability to engineer change outside of the political system can sometimes result in them taking this route. If these

Independents are elected, an isolated presence on the opposition benches can raise further dilemmas, in that they might be tempted to compromise their independence by forming an alliance to realise their policy goals.

Both Canovan (1981) and Taggart (2000) have shown that there is no one 'pure' strand of populism, as it is very much a contextual, rather than a coherent, movement that varies in accordance with the system within which it is present. For example, populism in 1930s Germany was National Socialism, while in tsarist Russia it took the form of the *narodniki* (the nihilists). The above comparison indicates that Independents could be an Irish strand of this phenomenon, although it is most unlikely that any Independent candidate in Ireland would lay claim to continuing the legacy of either of the two aforementioned groups.

Consequently, it can be concluded that Independents are not a unique anachronism. Having identified the key features of populism, Independents appear to be a regional variant of a comparative phenomenon that exists in many different guises, often very much dependent on the contextual background in which they operate. This immediately establishes a comparative context from which Independents can be studied and lays the foundations for future research into this area.

8.10 Wider findings

We have learned that despite their non-partisan nature Independents are not really part of a comparative anti-party movement. While some Independent candidates and voters express open hostility to political parties, this tends to be directed towards specific parties, rather than the concept of parties per se. There is little evidence of the naked antagonism expressed by anti-party movements such as some of the neo-populist parties in Europe. In addition, approximately half of Independent candidates surveyed in 2004 had been a member of a political party at some stage in their careers, and three-quarters of votes for Independents transferred to party candidates, even when there were still

Independent candidates left in the electoral contest. Both these phenomena do not lend support to a hypothesis that Independents are a variant of an anti-party vote that sometimes materialises into support for neo-populist parties in other countries.

The consequence of this is that a surge in support for Independents may not be as great a danger for the stability of parliamentary democracy as say a similar surge for extremist parties. When the latter experience a growth in support in a political system, their presence results in instability, because the mainstream parties are usually not willing to work with extremist parties. Even if these two types of parties do coalesce with each other to prevent stasis, this can have a negative effect on the international standing of a country, with Austria being a case in mind. The formation of a government including the far-right Freedom Party in 2000 provoked outrage from the other members of the EU, and for a few months, Austria was diplomatically ostracised. There were no such political sanctions imposed against Ireland when Bertie Ahern formed a government with the support of Independents in both 1997 and 2007.

Because PR-STV has recently been adopted in a number of political systems, it is important to understand its consequences, especially as it is a relatively under-utilised system. The debates accompanying the adoption or proposed adoption of PR-STV frequently cite the presence of Independents as a consequence, solely based on the Irish experience. For example, this was evident during the debate on the Citizens' Assembly's recommendation of PR-STV as the new electoral system for British Columbia in Canada (see www.bcstv.ca), where Independents were listed as both an advantage and a disadvantage of PR-STV. The finding that PR-STV does not offer as great an advantage to Independents as might be expected is therefore an important normative contribution. For those concerned that the introduction of PR-STV would lead to a proliferation of Independents, thus fragmenting the party system, the evidence presented here indicates that PR-STV does not create an Independent vote. To cultivate the latter, what is needed is a facilitative political culture, which means that possible electoral reform designed to remove the culture of brokerage politics in Ireland (a topic of debate in the

1990s) would not have its desired aim. In addition, when PR-STV was used at the Scottish local elections in 2007, successful Independent candidates did not suddenly emerge in regions with a strong party tradition; rather, they retained their dominance in highland regions where there was already a strong tradition of non-partisan politics.

Since the 1990s there have been some significant changes in the population density of different regions in Ireland. This has demanded a revision of constituency boundaries by the state-appointed Constituency Commission. Although an independent body, there are usually quite heated debates from politicians whenever the commission's recommendations are published, especially if the latter includes a revising downwards of district magnitude. Independents usually feel most under threat from such revisions, but the results of this thesis will ease their concerns somewhat, because the availability of fewer seats has, according to historical patterns, not lessened their chances of winning a seat. This highlights the contribution that this study can make to some real-world policy decisions.

Maintaining a focus on Independents, while their non-partisan nature usually motivates such candidates to appeal for lower preference votes from across the political spectrum, the evidence indicates that the best advice for Independents (as for most candidates in fact) is to focus on acquiring first preferences; transfers do not yield the harvest that some expect or predict.

These results concerning the relationship between PR-STV and Independents are probably the most important in the comparative context, because Ireland is one of the few countries where we can actually measure the real effects of this electoral system. Any future discussion concerning PR-STV needs to take this into account. This dissertation therefore makes an important contribution to the topic of electoral reform, which is frequently up for discussion in both emerging and consolidated democracies.

8.11 Future research

While this thesis focussed largely on the Irish case, there were a number of references to the presence of Independents in other political systems, including

both Australia and the US. It is to be hoped that this study might motivate a similar study of Independents in such systems. While the small number of Independent voters in these countries' respective national election studies restricts the opportunity for a reliable analysis of survey data, there could be a comparative study of Independent parliamentarians, which could include the cases of Australia Japan, the UK, the US, and France. This might help us go some way towards the development of a comparative theory of Independents. Some of the hypotheses formulated and tested here could provide the foundation for the development of such a theory.

While the motives of Independent candidates and the effect of their campaign activities were assessed in chapters 4 and 5, this research came with the caveat that it was based on survey data from local elections. To further test the validity of the findings from this study, it would be useful to replicate the survey at national elections.

Given some of the surprising findings concerning the nature of the relationship between Independents and PR-STV, it is worth providing more attempts to falsify some of the hypotheses by looking at this relationship in other systems. Although it would probably be invalid to compare Dáil elections with local elections in Australia, Scotland, and the US, we could instead compare the latter three with local elections in Ireland. Farrell and McAllister did undertake some cross-national analysis of the effects of PR-STV (Farrell and McAllister 2006), but they did not look at the area of Independents.

One question that was not answered in this dissertation is what the consequences are of the significant presence occupied by Independents in a political system. One direct consequence is the level of power they exert, which has varied from a position of powerlessness and isolation to one of great influence where they can affect the direction of government policy. The crucial dependent variable that determines their power is usually the nature of the administration, whether it is minority or majority. The prevalence of the former in Ireland is a major reason why Independents have had an important role to play in the process of government formation. It has been pointed out that a consequence of this role occupied by Independents is that governments will be

more unstable, because Independents, not subject to the discipline of a party whip, can withdraw their support at any time, without fear of punishment. If anything, if such support is withdrawn over an issue dear to their electorate's heart, it could strengthen an Independent's electoral base. Those who claim that an unstable parliamentary system is a consequence of a significant presence of Independents point to the 1981–1982 period as evidence (when three elections were held over 17 months because Independents withdrew support from minority administrations). On the other hand, the government formed in 1997 that relied on four Independents was the then longest peace-time government in Irish electoral history. Further research would require more systematic analysis to determine whether instability is a consequence of the success of Independents.

Another consequence is the influence Independents wield over government, particularly distributive, policy. Although Independents claim to have successfully extracted patronage from minority governments, the arrangements negotiated between the two sides have generally not been published (one notable exception was the 1982 Gregory Deal, which was read into the parliamentary record). The exact nature of the direct effect Independents have wielded over government policy is something that has not yet been determined, and could be the subject of future research.

Finally, one question often asked by commentators, but which has not been explored here, is the normative value of Independents, especially considering whether modern democracy could survive without political parties. This dissertation did not tackle this area, which is better left to political theorists. However, while it was shown that Independents work perfectly well with parties without necessarily undermining or threatening parliamentary democracy, on their own it would be an entirely different ball-game. Some research has already shown that parties result because a parliament of independent-minded legislators produces inferior quality legislation and irrational outcomes (Aldrich 1995: 30) Future research could expand upon this, perhaps using some empirical evidence from the Irish case. In the absence of examples from modern democracies of parliaments composed entirely of

Independents, it is difficult to predict exactly what the outcome would be for a such a political system. However, it is worth noting the comment of a former Independent MP in the UK, AP Herbert, who admitted that parties are ‘right and necessary’, and that ‘all cannot be fly-halves – there must be a scrum’ (Comfort 1995: 442). Hopefully this dissertation has shed some light on why there is a proliferation of fly-halves in Ireland.

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